MELION AND *BICLAREL*

TWO OLD FRENCH WERWOLF LAYS

Edited and translated by

Amanda Hopkins

Liverpool Online Series
Critical Editions of French Texts

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Timothy Unwin
Glyn S. Burgess

Series Editors

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Introduction[1]

Melion and *Biclarel* are two redactions of a werwolf tale which occurs in several French versions in the high Middle Ages. These include Marie de France's *Bisclavret*, written in the 1160s or 1170s,[2] of which *Biclarel* is a reworking.[3] *Melion*, a Breton lay like Marie's narrative, has close parallels with *Bisclavret*, but significant alterations in plot and tone suggest the working of other influences.

Manuscripts, Editions, Translations

Melion

Melion is preserved in a single manuscript, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 3516, f. 343r, col. 1 – 344r, col. 4, now commonly identified as MS C, although in earlier editions (Horak, Grimes) it is designated P. Written in the Picard dialect,[4] the manuscript is dated around 1268.[5] A second manuscript, Turin, L. iv. 33, f. 60r, col.1 – f. 63r, col. 1, was destroyed in a fire.[6] This manuscript, known as T, was also in the Picard dialect and dated to the early fifteenth century; fortunately, variants were recorded in detail by Horak and are largely reproduced in Grimes.

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[1] Parts of this introduction originally appeared in Hopkins, 'Identity in the Narrative Breton Lay', pp. 63-96. See also Hopkins, '*Bisclavret* to *Biclarel*', pp. 317-23 (for full details of all items mentioned, see the Bibliography).

[2] Burgess and Brook, *Three Old French Narrative Lays*, p. 7. Quotations from Marie's lays are from the edition by Ewert. Unless otherwise stated, English translations of all Old French material throughout are my own.

[3] Marie's text was also translated into Old Norse prose and appears in a collection known as *Strengleikar*. References in the present work are to the edition by Cook and Tveitane, in which the narrative, named *Biclaret*, appears on pp. 85-99.

[4] Tobin, *Les Lais anonymes*, p. 290, cf. pp. 86-89. Quotations from the anonymous Old French lays, other than *Melion*, edited here, are from Tobin's edition.

[5] Burgess, *The Old French Narrative Lay*, p. 93.

[6] Tobin, *Les Lais anonymes*, p. 289. She supplies no further details about the fire.

Melion was first edited by L.-J.-N. Monmerqué and Francisque Michel in 1832, then by Horak in 1882, Grimes in 1928, Peter Holmes in 1952[7] and Tobin in 1976. Tobin's edition has been reproduced by Pagani with a facing Italian translation (1984), and by Micha with a facing French translation (1992). Prose translations of *Melion* exist as follows: into French (Régnier-Bohler, 1979), Dutch (Jongen and Verhuyck, 1985), Spanish (de Riquer, 1987) and English (Nicholson, 1999).

BICLAREL

Biclarel is an extract from the first redaction (A-text) of *Le Roman de Renart le Contrefait*,[8] a text of some 32,000 lines, preserved in MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fr. 1630, anc. 7630[4], de la Mare 284; *Biclarel* appears in f.188 col. a – f.190, col. d. Displaying characteristics of the Champenois dialect,[9] the manuscript dates from the first third of the fourteenth century.[10]

Biclarel was first published by Tarbé in 1851 under the heading 'l'histoire de Biclarel', with some of the Champenois dialectal spellings and word forms converted to standard Francien forms.[11] In 1914, Raynaud and Lemaitre published

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[7] I regret that I have been unable to consult this edition.

[8] *Le Roman de Renart* 'is a specifically medieval reworking of the universal fables best known to modern readers from the collection of Aesop', whose origins are contemporaneous with Marie de France, Chrétien de Troyes, Thomas and Béroul (Gravdal, p. 47). *Renart le Contrefait* ('Renart the Hypocrite') was the last of numerous medieval redactions of the text; the author, as the editors Raynaud and Lemaitre observe, intended 'non pas *imiter* le *Roman de Renart*, mais *se contrefaire* à Renart' (I, pp. v-vi, their emphasis) and to provide a critique of society, particularly church figures (Flinn, *Le Roman de Renart*, p. 369).

[9] 'Mediæval Champagne did not possess a clearly-defined dialect of its own; it was rather a meeting-place of dialectal features of the Centre (Ile-de-France), North and East. The language of Southern Champagne, with Troyes as its capital, is largely identical with that of the Ile-de-France…' (Reid, 'Introduction' to Foerster's edition of *Yvain*, p. xvii, cf. Pope, *From Latin to Modern French*, p. 497, §1324).

[10] Raynaud and Lemaitre, I, p. v.

[11] For example, Tarbé substitutes Francien *e* for the characteristic Champenois *a* before some nasals: thus MS *an, ancore, antier* are rendered as *en, encore, entier* throughout and *san* standardised to *sen* (see Pope, p. 173, §447 (2) and Reid, p. xx. Cf. the works of Chrétien de Troyes for similar dialectal features, for example *Yvain*: 'Il n'a courtoisie ne san / An plet d'oiseuse maintenir' (vv. 98-99)). Tarbé retains other Champenois elements, such as the stressed *ge / gie* forms (cf. Pope, p. 321, §829).

a complete edition of the B-text of *Renart le Contrefait*, and included *Biclarel* in the Appendix among transcriptions of passages from the A-text which had been omitted from the later redaction. The present work provides the first translation of *Biclarel*.

Date and Authorship

Melion

The author of *Melion* is unknown. Tobin describes him as 'un remanieur de vieux motifs, un jongleur professionnel', whose talent is inferior to that of Marie de France (*Les Lais anonymes*, p. 292). Following earlier scholars, Tobin supplies a broad date of composition between 1170 and 1267;[12] from her examination of the internal textual evidence, especially the name of the hero, she posits a narrower date, between 1190 and 1204.[13]

Biclarel

The author of *Le Roman de Renart le Contrefait* provides some autobiographical details. He states that the first version was written between 1319, when he was about forty years old, and 1322; he began the B-text in 1328 and completed it around 1342 (Raynaud and Lemaitre, I, p. vi). Many of Renart's adventures have been omitted from the B-text and other passages rearranged; the religious angle has been developed, and additional passages on theology, hagiography, history

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[12] The earlier date may indicate composition contemporaneous with, even earlier than, Marie's *Bisclavret*.

[13] The narrow dating supposes that the author may have taken his hero's name from Chrétien de Troyes's Melianz de Lis (Tobin, p. 292) in *Erec et Enide*, in which he appears in a list of Round Table knights (ed. Roques, v. 1678), or from an episode in *Perceval*, in which he is beaten by Gawain (ed. Roach, vv. 4816-5601). Internal evidence suggests that Chrétien was writing before 1191 (Lacy, *The Arthurian Handbook*, p. 68). Tobin's *terminus ad quem* supposes that *Melion*'s author used the name before Laȝamon had attached it to Mordred's son in his *Brut*. Tobin notes (p. 291) that R. S. Loomis proposes that the *Brut* was composed after 1204 (Laȝamon refers to Eleanor of Aquitaine, who died in that year, in the past tense), although he admits the possibility of earlier composition around 1189 or 1190. Tobin (p. 291) also refers to a variant of the name, in the form Melahan, which occurs in *La Mort le Roi Artu*, dated around 1230 by Frappier. Tobin also suggests that *Melion*'s author may have known Andreas Capellanus's *Tractatus de amore*, written around 1184 (p. 291).

and science have appeared (Raynaud and Lemaitre, I, p. vi), alterations which Flinn attributes to the sensibilities of the poet's increased age (*Le Roman de Renart*, p. 372), noting (p. 365) that the B-text also displays 'une évolution bien prononcée dans la pensée et le style du poète'.

The author identifies himself only as a 'clerc de Troyes'; he explains that he began to write in order to alleviate boredom, having left the church for a woman (Raynaud and Lemaitre, I, p. v). Flinn observes that he seems to regret his decision (pp. 371-72); as *Biclarel* demonstrates, he certainly evinces a strong misogynous streak.[14]

The Narrative Breton Lay[15]

The sub-romance genre known variously as the narrative lay,[16] the Breton lay and the narrative Breton lay has remained in constant scholarly focus for over two hundred years, yet much about it remains obscure or contentious; and the difficulty of determining the exact nature of the form, and how the medieval world used and understood the term *lai*,[17] means that critics have been unable to agree even the number of extant lays.[18]

The narrative lay in Old French octosyllabic couplets seems to have been produced from the third quarter of the twelfth century; Marie de France is often credited with being the originator of the form (Burgess and Brook, *Three Old French Narrative Lays*, p. 7), and certainly seems to be crediting herself with the

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[14] Perhaps due to his clerical education, perhaps to his personal experiences; or, as Flinn suggests (pp. 397-401), he may have been influenced by his reading of the works of Jean de Meun.

[15] For a fuller introduction to the Breton Lays, see Burgess and Brook, General Introduction, *Three Old French Narrative Lays*, pp. 7-9.

[16] Coined, to distinguish it from the musical form, by Hœpffner (*Les Lais de Marie de France*, p. 47).

[17] U. T. Holmes notes that '[b]efore or after 1200 the use of the word *lai* had broadened to include a tale of any type' (*A History of Old French Literature*, p. 192; cf. Burgess and Brook, p. 89).

[18] In addition to the lays by Marie de France, the other texts generally accepted as lays are those included in Burgess, *The Old French Narrative Lay*. For an overview of the texts and issues, see Burgess and Brook, pp. 7-11.

innovation in her *Prologue* (vv. 28-42).[19] It is generally agreed that the written tales ultimately derive from oral sources, also known as lays, but the precise nature of this material and its relationship to the written lays is still uncertain. By and large, scholars have gradually come to agree on certain defining features of the genre. The texts are short (U. T. Holmes, p. 133), with the Old French lays varying in length between *Chevrefoil*'s 118 lines[20] and *Eliduc*'s 1184 lines. The identification of the narrative as a lay is a feature common to all texts, most often placed in the customary frame of prologue and / or epilogue. The Breton connexion, which appears as a reference to the Bretons as composers of the lay or to a Breton setting (Donovan, *The Breton Lay*, p. 64), is established by Marie in the prologue to *Guigemar* (vv. 19-21). Most of the anonymous Old French lays also include a reference to a Breton setting or to Breton origins. Each lay 'deal[s] with a single "aventure"' (Burrow, *Medieval Writers*, p. 82) or 'a single idea' (Donovan, *The Breton Lay*, p. 34), and is an autonomous narrative. The supernatural and the *merveilleux* feature frequently, more so amongst the anonymous narratives.

Melion, Biclarel and the lay

Strictly speaking, of the two narratives edited here, only *Melion* is a lay. Although the characteristic prologue is omitted, along with any reference to Brittany or the Bretons, the author clearly identifies the genre in the epilogue (v. 591).

Biclarel, on the other hand, at no point identifies itself as a lay and is integrated within the longer work from which it is taken. Given these conditions, can the text be deemed a lay? Tarbé publishes the narrative under the neutral heading 'l'histoire de Biclarel'; but Raynaud and Lemaitre emphasise *Biclarel*'s

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[19] Marie's canon was early the subject of much passionate critical contention, and over the years several lays now ascribed to anonymous authors have been attributed to her. Marie's lays are now agreed to comprise *Guigemar, Equitan, Le Fresne, Bisclavret, Lanval, Les Deus Amanz, Yonec, Laüstic, Milun, Chaitivel, Chevrefoil* and *Eliduc*.

[20] At 48 lines, *Nabaret* is shorter, but generically contentious (see Burgess and Brook, pp. 10-11 and 81-82).

generic origins and establish a *rapprochement* with Marie's lay: 'Ce vers et les 459 suivants, forment la *Loi de Béclarel*, ont été publiés par Tarbé… Voy. une autre version sous le nom de *Loi de Bisclavret* dans les poésies de Marie de France…' (II, p. 235, n. 1).[21]

Raynaud and Lemaitre offer two separate matters for consideration. The first is that *Biclarel* might be accorded status as a Breton lay by virtue of being an analogue of *Bisclavret*, a proposition which may be further supported by the existence of the other werwolf lay, *Melion*. Although some details of *Biclarel*'s plot differ from Marie's *Bisclavret*, the differences are not so crucial as to reduce the analogue's proximity to its source, as the editor Warnke concludes from his close comparison of the texts: 'weicht diese Erzählung vom Lai nur in unwesentlichen Dingen ab' ('this story differs from the lay only in irrelevant matters'. *Die Lais der Marie de France*, p. ci). Nor do the differences place the narrative in another generic category.[22]

Second, and following Tarbé's earlier publication of the extract as a tale in its own right, is the editors' implication that *Biclarel* can be read as an autonomous narrative, as well as part of a framed text; and that this autonomy, together with the narrative's brevity, aligns it with the lay form. *Biclarel* certainly makes sense outside the context of *Renart le Contrefait*. Indeed, it would be possible to expunge the antimarriage discourses specifically framing the tale (vv. 1-12 and 457-60 in the present edition) without the main narrative suffering any loss of meaning. The excisions would result in an abrupt opening, an effect not without precedent amongst the lays (for example, *Tyolet* and *Melion*), and a unique one-line closure, 'Ceste [av]anture avint [a]lors' (v. 456). This brief phrase, simply

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[21] In their introduction, however, the editors refer to *Biclarel* as 'l'histoire de Béclarel' (I, p. xxii), although they again refer to generic origins in reference to *Renart le Contrefait*'s *Laüstic*: 'Ce vers et les 154 suivants … comprennent *Lai de Laustic*, dont une autre rédaction, œuvre de Marie de France, a été publiée…' (Renaud and Lemaitre, II, p. 233, n. 1).

[22] *Renart de Contrefait* is a patchwork of 'contes de Renart, de faits-divers, de réflexions morales et satiriques, allégoriques et religieuses, de dissertations et de développements de toutes sortes' (Flinn, p. 364), unified only by the presence of Renart himself (pp. 364-65). The verse elements of *Renart le Contrefait* are composed in the same poetic form, octosyllabic couplets, as the lays.

in evoking the original *aventure* and the idea of the truth of the tale, echoes a motif reiterated in many of the lays. *Melion*'s author declares the truth of his narrative, 'Vrais est li lais de Melïon' (v. 591), as does Marie at the end of *Bisclavret* (vv. 315-18). *Avenir*, the verb used in *Biclarel*, occurs elsewhere to express the truth of a narrative (see *Lanval*, vv. 1-2). Busby points out that Renart identifies his authority for the truth of the werwolf story as a Grail book ('"Je fout savoir bon lai breton"', p. 596, see *Biclarel*, vv. 47-50).

The identification of *Biclarel* as a lay, tacitly proposed by Raynaud and Lemaitre and adopted — not without reservation — by the present editor, is attractive and has some support; yet the absence of generic self-identification in the narrative remains problematic.

Summaries of the texts

Melion

Melion, a knight in Arthur's court, vows never to love a lady who has loved or spoken of another man. Angered, the ladies of the court ostracise Melion, whose unhappiness makes him lose interest in chivalric pursuits. To cheer him, Arthur gives him a valuable fiefdom, where he hunts and recovers his good spirits.

While pursuing a stag, Melion meets a lady, riding alone, who tells him she is the daughter of the King of Ireland and that she has come to meet him, for she has never been loved by a man, nor will she love any but him. The knight is delighted and marries her at once. They live together happily for three years and have two children.

One day, they go hunting, taking a squire. Melion draws his wife's attention to a large stag, but she immediately swoons and, weeping, declares that she will die if she does not eat meat from the stag. Distressed, Melion promises that he will obtain the venison by transforming himself into a wolf, using a ring with two magic stones. He undresses, urges his wife to keep the ring safe so that he can turn back into human form, and tells her to touch his head with one of the stones.

As soon as she does so, he turns into a wolf, retaining his human mind, and follows the stag.

His wife at once leaves for the harbour and Ireland, taking with her the squire. Melion returns with the meat, but cannot find his wife. Realising where she has gone, he goes to the harbour and stows away on a ship going to Ireland. There he begins a war of attrition, killing livestock. The peasants go to the king, who dismisses their complaints. Melion persuades ten wolves to join him: for a year they kill livestock and peasants, and no-one can stop them. One day, a peasant sees the wolves lying up and tells the king, who kills all the wolves except Melion, who mourns his lost companions.

Just as he has given up hope, he sees a ship approaching Dublin. He recognises the shields hung over the side: it is Arthur's ship. The ship docks and Arthur sets up camp. Melion enters Arthur's tent and lies at his feet. Everyone marvels at the wolf's docility. Melion refuses to be parted from the king.

The next day, Arthur and his retinue, including the wolf, go to the Irish king's court. Melion sees the squire who left with his wife and attacks him. Melion is threatened by the Irish king's men, but Arthur protects him, insisting that the wolf must have a reason for his attack. The squire is forced to confess and Arthur demands that the King of Ireland obtain the magic ring from his daughter. She supplies it and Melion is taken to a private chamber, where he changes into human form. His wife is brought before Arthur for judgement, and Melion wishes to transform her with the ring, but Arthur dissuades him. Melion, expressing his low opinion of women, returns with Arthur to Britain, leaving his wife behind.

Biclarel

[An earlier passage in this section of *Renart le Contrefait* describes how a young man asks the narrator, Renart the fox, whether he should marry. *Biclarel* is the third of four stories Renart tells to illustrate his answer.]

Renart speaks of the disadvantages of marriage and introduces the story of Biclarel as an exemplum. Biclarel, a knight of Arthur's court, falls in love and

marries a lady. Biclarel has an unusual trait, which he keeps secret: for a few days each month, he turns into a wolf and lives as a beast in the forest.

One day, when he returns from the forest, his wife comes to meet him, apparently greatly distressed. She addresses him at some length on the subject of openness in marriage and accuses him of staying away because he has a new love. Biclarel reassures her, but eventually reveals his secret in the face of his wife's disbelief. He tells her that, before metamorphosing, he removes his clothes and goes secretly lest anyone steal them, for without the clothes he cannot regain his human form.

His wife realises that she has found a way to rid herself of her husband and marry her lover. She follows Biclarel to the forest and steals his clothes, then sends word to her lover that her husband is dead and she is free to marry. Biclarel discovers the theft of his clothing and realises that he has been betrayed by his wife.

Biclarel remains in the forest. Arthur goes hunting and his hounds corner Biclarel, who runs to the king and kneels in supplication. Arthur pities the wolf and beats back the hounds. He and his knights marvel at the beast's behaviour and demeanour, and they take him to the court, where he behaves impeccably until he discovers his wife and attacks her. Believing that the wolf must have a reason for the attack, Arthur leaves Biclarel to wander amongst the guests, to find out whether he will attack anyone else.

Biclarel searches for his wife who, realising the identity of the wolf, has not returned out of fear. Biclarel finds the lady preparing to depart on horseback. He attacks her again, but she is rescued by the townspeople. Arthur arrives and insists that the lady tell him the truth, under threat of death. She confesses all. The clothes are sent for, Biclarel puts them on and is transformed into human shape. The wife is severely punished.

Renart explains that the tale demonstrates that men should never reveal secrets to their wives.

Structure of the werwolf lays

	Episode	*Biclarel*	*Melion*	*Bisclavret*
i	Prologue: description of werwolves	-	-	5-14
	denunciation of marriage	1-12	-	-
	the meaning of *bisclavret*	-	-	1-4
ii	Introduction: the hero	13-16	1-14	15-20
	the hero and his wife	-	-	21-23
	the knight's lycanthropy	33-50	-	-
iii	The hero's vow and its consequences	-	15-70	-
	Marriage of hero and wife	17-32	71-133	-
iv	Wife asks hero about absences and learns truth	51-256	-	24-119
	Hunt and hero's revelation about magic ring	-	134-182	-
v	Betrayal of hero in beast form	257-81	183-218	120-134
vi	Wolf follows wife and begins war of attrition	-	219-280	-
vii	Hunt: beast seeks king's protection	282-342	-	135-160
	real wolves killed, Melion escapes	-	281-334	-
viii	Beast joins Arthur	-	335-430	-
	Beast at court behaves tamely	343-368	431-485	161-184
ix	First attack by beast	369-388	486-502	185-218
x	Second attack by beast	389-431	-	219-260
xi	Investigation; confession of wife (*w*) / squire (*s*)	432-446*w*	405-520*s*	261-274*w*
xii	Wife returns object relating to transformation	449	521-536	275-278
	Hero regains human form	450-452	537-564	279-304
xiii	Punishment of wife / separation of knight and wife	453-454	565-586	305-314
xiv	Epilogue: danger / folly of marriage	456-460	587-590	-
	truth of tale	455	591-592	315-318

MAIN DIFFERENCES IN PLOT BETWEEN *BISCLAVRET* AND *BICLAREL*

In Marie's tale, Bisclavret's transformations occur weekly and wolf form is not clearly specified. The hero and his wife are already married. The lady's initial approach is not tainted with the dissembling mentioned in *Biclarel* ('faus samblant', v. 58). Her speech to her husband is much shorter and couched in milder terms than the aggressively accusing tone of *Biclarel*; her continued persuasion is mentioned, but not reported. Bisclavret's wife asks for specific details about the transformation, including where he hides his clothes.

Bisclavret's revelation is said to make her afraid. She sends a message to a knight who has unsuccessfully courted her and it is he who removes the clothing.

In *Bisclavret*, the king is unnamed. The beast's gentle nature is observed at court for some time before he attacks his wife's new husband; the king threatens the beast with a stick, but no more is made of the matter. Later, the king lodges in the forest and Bisclavret's wife comes to bring him a gift. Bisclavret attacks her, ripping off her nose. A wise man suggests that the beast must have a reason for attacking; the king has Bisclavret's wife tortured until she confesses. The clothes are brought to the beast, but he shows no interest. The wise man suggests that Bisclavret might be embarrassed in front of the people; the beast is left in a bedchamber and, when the king returns, the knight is lying asleep on the bed. The wife is exiled, and her new husband goes with her. She bears a number of children; many of the daughters are born without noses.

The origins and relationships of the werwolf tales

Belief in werwolves and other wer-animals, as Adam Douglas observes, is ancient and universal (*The Beast Within*, p. 20). Joyce Salisbury notes that, throughout the first millennium of the Christian period, scholars debated the nature of humanity by comparing man with beast (*The Beast Within*, p. 1), and concluded that metamorphosis between species was untenable, although it was apparently more difficult to convince the general populace, and the prohibition against belief in human / animal metamorphosis was often reiterated, suggesting that tales of therianthropy survived in folktale, legend and the popular imagination.

There was a paradox at the heart of the Christian prohibition, however, since the Church increasingly used animal symbolism to represent human qualities (Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces*, pp. xv-xvi). Salisbury traces the twelfth-century interest in beasts as exemplars: *Physiologus*, 'ostensibly a scientific … work on animals that drew Christian morals from the animals portrayed' (*The Beast Within*, p. 109), was translated from Greek into Latin and became the foundation of the bestiaries, whose production was widespread in monasteries in

the eleventh century and by the twelfth had disseminated beyond the cloister (pp. 114-15). At the same time, there was a resurgent interest in animal fables, which became available to a wider audience when Marie de France translated the Latin texts into the vernacular (p. 117). Such fables, with their increasingly humanised animals, featured in beast epic, were incorporated into *Le Roman de Renart* (p. 119) and appeared in sermons (pp. 125-26). In addition, Celtic influences supplied twelfth-century romance with magical animals, such as the talking hind in *Guigemar*, the white boar in *Guingamor*, and the stag in *Tyolet*:[23] and indeed Kathryn L. Holten theorises: 'So much representation of the wolf in literature and legend is anthropomorphic that the rise of the werewolf myth seems almost inevitable' ('Metamorphosis and Language', p. 195).

A single ultimate source is assumed for the medieval werwolf texts. Critics have long thought that differences in structure and plot between *Bisclavret* and *Melion* indicate that two distinct branches developed from the original source and fed the two lays independently: 'The impression that one gets from reading them [*Bisclavret* and *Melion*] together is that they are independent redactions of the same saga, and this appears to be the view of most scholars' (Kittredge, '*Arthur and Gorlagon*', p. 173). Kittredge attempted a reconstruction of X, the proposed source of *Melion* (see Figure 1), based on his reading of *Bisclavret, Melion, Arthur and Gorlagon* and nine variants of the Irish *Märchen* (fairytale) 'Morraha'. This reconstruction led him to believe that fairy elements were introduced into the werwolf tale from a fairy-mistress tale 'of the type exemplified in ancient Irish literature by the *Wooing of Etain* [*Tochmarc Etaine*]. A *fée* abandons the Other World and marries a mortal. Her fairy lover or husband follows her and takes her back with him. Her mortal husband visits the Other World and recovers his wife' (p. 195). Kittredge concludes that X was an Irish tale (pp. 195-97), 'influenced by a different type of story: that in which an

[23] See, for example, Bromwich, 'Celtic Elements', pp. 51-52; Cigada, *La Leggenda medievale*, especially pp. 101-3; Harf-Lancner, *Les Fées au Moyen Age,* especially chapter 9, pp. 221-41; Tobin, 'L'Elément breton', pp. 277-80.

enchanter transforms a man into bestial shape by means of external magic. The role of the magician is played by the faithless wife' (p. 170).

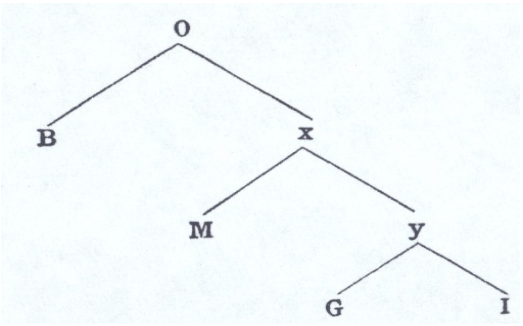

Figure 1.
Relationships of the werwolf tale proposed by Kittredge ('*Arthur and Gorlagon*', p. 175)

O = original source
B = *Bisclavret*
x = separate development of tale
M = *Melion*
y = separate branch of tale, the source of G (*Arthur and Gorlagon*) and I (the Irish tales)

For Kittredge, the lady in X was a *fée*, which is commensurate with her unaccompanied arrival in the forest in *Melion* (pp. 176-77). In X, she has a fairy lover, to whom she returns when she has abandoned her husband (pp. 187-90); in *Melion*, the lady returns instead to her father's kingdom (p. 178): although the squire is inserted into the gap left by the removal of the lover, the narrator makes no comment on the relationship between them (p. 187).[24] In X, as in *Bisclavret*, a single king is involved in both the hunt and the protection of the wolf, a role split between Arthur and the Irish king by *Melion*'s author, to whom Kittredge attributes the inclusion of the Arthurian setting (p. 168). X is also the source of a magical object as the means of transformation (p. 177), although traces of 'genuine werewolf nature' remain in Melion's injunction to his wife to look after his clothes (p. 172, see vv. 167-68); at the *dénouement*, the clothing is forgotten

[24] However, much is assumed or read into the text by scholars. Kemp Malone, for example, rationalises the squire's position in the Irish king's household: 'If we are dealing with a lover of low social station … we find nothing surprising in a different arrangement, whereby the lady provides for her lover instead of the lover providing for his lady. If the lover has nothing to offer the mistress in the way of a home, it is surely natural that the mistress should fall back on her father to help out. At any rate, this is the state of things in *M*[*elion*], where the lady returns to her father and the lady's lover enters the father's service…' ('*Rose and Cypress*', p. 421). Grimes, summarising the text in her edition of *Melion*, makes the bizarre statement that the lady returns to Dublin 'attended by the squire whom she soon after married' (p. 31). Whatever the possibilities of the relationship between Melion's wife and his squire, there is no indication in the surviving MS, nor in Horak's recorded variants, of any such event.

by the author, and restoration of the human shape achieved by the magic ring alone (p. 178).[25]

In '*Rose and Cypress*', Malone challenges Kittredge's reliance on *Tochmarc Etaine*: he sees too many discrepancies to restore the fairy element plausibly, notably that Etain, unlike the wives in *Arthur and Gorlagon, Melion* and the Irish tales, is not wicked. Instead, in order to restore the fairy-mistress tale, F (see Figure 2), he explores the medieval texts through the mirror of *Gul o Sanubar*, an ancient tale found in Hindustani (summarised pp. 397-408), Persian (pp. 408-10 and 414-16) and Arabic texts (pp. 410-14), and concludes that *Melion, Arthur and Gorlagon* and the Irish tales have roots in 'a combination of the werwolf story with an oriental fairy mistress story closely analogous to the extant *Rose and Cypress*' (p. 446). In this story, the wife's lover is not supernatural, but a foreigner of low caste, which, Malone argues, better accords with the squire in *Melion*. In *Gul o Sanubar*, the wife is manifestly wicked, again reflecting *Melion*, in which the wife's 'perversion manifests itself not only in the kind of lover she chooses but also in the treatment she gives her husband. The two things go together and belong properly in *F* rather than in *O*, since we find neither in *B*[*isclavret*], where the wife's conduct is natural enough, however selfish and unsympathetic, while the lover is a perfectly respectable person, belonging to the husband's own social class, and markedly different from the rival lover of X' (p. 418).

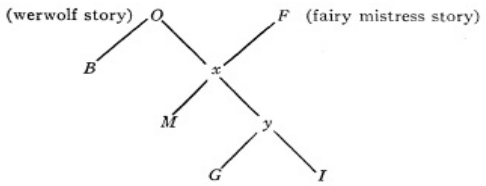

Figure 2
Malone's interpretation of Kittredge's conclusions concerning the relationship of the werwolf texts ('*Rose and Cypress*', p. 416).

[25] A connexion between wolves, nakedness and an inability to speak appears in a different guise in the bestiaries, where '*Lupus* is likened to the Devil because of its deep chest and shining eyes which can render a man speechless at a glance. But being practical, as they so often are, the writers say the man who sees *lupus* before it sees him need only take off his clothes and threaten it with stones for it to run away' (George and Yapp, *The Naming of Beasts*, p. 51).

Grimes follows Kittredge in viewing *Melion*'s source as distinct from that of *Bisclavret*, but Tobin, whilst allowing for the influence of a fairy-lover narrative, disagrees: 'Que l'auteur de *Melion* ait connu le lai du *Bisclavret*, cela paraît assez sûr, mais les détails qui se trouvent dans les autres récits et non pas dans *Bisclavret*, semblent indiquer que l'auteur a puisé à d'autres sources, où la légende du loup-garou a été corrumpue par l'histoire d'une fée…' (*Les Lais anonymes*, p. 295); however, Tobin provides no justification for this assertion. *Melion* displays no definitive evidence of any reliance on, or acquaintance with, Marie's text; the common elements — metamorphosis, treachery and third-party intervention restoring the beast to his human form — are also found in *Guillaume de Palerne* and *Arthur and Gorlagon*, which appear unrelated to *Bisclavret*; and close comparison of the two lays highlights their disparities rather than their correspondences. For example, since *Melion*'s author displays misogynous tendencies (discussed more fully below), it is likely that, had he known Marie's lay, he would have strengthened his own narrative by (re)establishing the squire as the wife's lover in his text, clarifying the wife's treachery by having her condemn herself from her own mouth and having her punished.[26] One point of similarity, the necessity for privacy for the wolf's metamorphosis into human form, may be evidence that *Melion*'s author knew *Bisclavret*; equally, the detail may have arisen independently to avoid the embarrassment of nakedness.[27] On balance, it seems probable that Kittredge is correct that *Bisclavret* and *Melion* derive from separate sources.

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[26] Retribution is frequent in the werwolf texts. In *Arthur and Gorlagon*, the king marries again and inflicts an unpleasant punishment on his first wife, who is forced to remain in court and kiss the lips of her dead lover's embalmed head whenever Gorlagon kisses his new wife. Apart from Melion's wife, only the stepmother in *Guillaume de Palerne* escapes punishment, but, unlike Melion's wife, she confesses her guilt publicly and demonstrates remorse, then willingly makes reparation by transforming the beast back to human form (ed. Micha, vv. 7608-779).

[27] This motif recurs in *Guillaume de Palerne*, in which the stepmother, sole witness of the *démorphose*, the transformation back to human form, handles Alphons's embarrassment sympathetically, placing her own mantle on his shoulders (vv. 7752-79). Biclarel, conversely, transforms himself in public with no hint of shame or modesty.

Few scholars have explored *Biclarel* in any detail, and those who mention it treat it as a mere imitation of Marie's text. Flinn, for example, states that the Clerc de Troyes's *Laüstic* and *Bisclavret* are 'des versions quelque peu différentes de celles de Marie de France. … Dans *Bisclavret* le malheureux héros, appelé Béclarel, est lui aussi vassal du roi Arthur, et à la fin l'épouse infidèle est emmuée par ordre du roi' (*Le Roman de Renart*, p. 432). Busby, however, examines the texts in some detail, and concludes that the Clerc de Troyes was 'working closely from the *Bisclavret*', but that his result was not as close as Flinn believes ('"Je fout savoir bon lai breton"', p. 599).

The Arthurianization of the werwolf tale

One major factor which distinguishes *Melion* and *Biclarel* from *Bisclavret* is the setting: except in *Bisclavret*, the werwolf lay is Arthurianised, with the hero's feudal lord recast as Arthur.[28] Scholars take the authors' adoption of the Arthurian setting to be coincidence. Kittredge, as noted above, believed *Melion*'s author to have reset the tale, and Malone concurs, suggesting that this was 'in order to give his story a connection with the popular and fashionable Arthurian cycle of romances' ('*Rose and Cypress*', p. 445). The Clerc de Troyes supplies his versions of both of Marie's lays with an Arthurian setting, which Busby, echoing Malone's view of *Melion*, believes may be 'betraying a fourteenth-century view of the *lai* as an Arthurian genre' (p. 594), although this is problematic, given the omission of any internal reference to the lay genre.

[28] The Latin prose narrative *Arthur and Gorlagon* depicts Arthur's quest to discover 'ingenium mentemque feminae' (Kittredge, p. 150: the heart and mind of a woman (my translation)) as a frame to the werwolf story. In his notes to Milne's English translation of *Arthur and Gorlagon*, Alfred Nutt concludes that '*Melion* cannot have come from the Welsh original of *Arthur and Gorlagon*, as it lacks the framework, and as it has preserved an opening of which no traces are found in the Welsh tale. For the same reasons it cannot be the direct source of that tale…' (pp. 64-65).

Is it not possible, however, that the authors of *Melion* and *Biclarel* were, in fact, retaining an original setting,[29] one that Marie herself excises from the werwolf tale; or that the Clerc de Troyes used both *Bisclavret* and *Melion* as source material? *Biclarel* clearly uses *Bisclavret* for its main structure, but internal evidence suggests that the author may have known *Melion*. For example, the transformation in *Biclarel* is specified as into wolf-form, unlike *Bisclavret*, but like *Melion*. In addition, Melion's description of his metamorphosis, 'leus devenrai, grans et corsus' (v. 164) is echoed word for word in *Biclarel*, who looks like a 'loups grans et corsus' (v. 43); no similar phrase appears in *Bisclavret*. The narrators of *Biclarel* and *Melion*, furthermore, state the werwolf's retention of his human mind early in the tale. When Melion returns to where he left his wife, 'Molt fu dolans, ne set que face, / Qant il ne le troeve en la place. / Mais neporqant se leus estoit / Sens et memoire d'ome avoit' (vv. 215-18). In *Biclarel*, the retention of the hero's human mind is declared earlier still, with Renart making the connexion between hero and wolf in his introductory material: 'Ne pour ce ne perdoit son san, / Sa memoire ne son asan' (vv. 45-46). Again, when the werwolf fails to find his clothing, 'c'est esmeüs, / Desor voit qu'il est deceüs / Par sa fame qui l'a traï' (vv. 279-81). Conversely, Marie remains silent about Bisclavret's thoughts at the equivalent point in her narrative; indeed, Bisclavret's retention of his human mind is never plainly stated by the narrator, but tacitly revealed through his actions in approaching the king and behaving tamely, and in the comments of the king and his retinue. Similarly, where Marie's condemnation of treachery is implicit and focussed on the wife herself, rather than projected on to all of her sex, *Biclarel* and *Melion* display an overt misogyny, with Melion's denunciation of wives (vv. 587-90) mirrored in Renart's

[29] Cf. *Arthur and Gorlagon*. In 'The Healing of Sir Urry', Malory mentions one 'sir Marrok the good knyght that was betrayed with his wyff, for he made hym seven yere a warwolff' (ed. Vinaver, Book XIX, p. 667). The wife's treachery is familiar from medieval werwolf tales, such as the lays, but, although Malory himself refers to a French source for his works, P. J. C. Field has confirmed to me that no direct source has yet been identified for the reference to Marrok.

disparagement of marriage and condemnation of wives, both in his prologue and epilogue (vv. 1-12, 457-60) and through the narrative itself.

It is, then, not impossible that the Clerc de Troyes knew and was influenced by *Melion*. However, the evidence of *Biclarel* can just as easily support Busby's assertion that the Clerc de Troyes himself recast the narrative into the Arthurian world, for the setting necessitates only minor alterations to his primary model, *Bisclavret*: Biclarel is a knight of Arthur's court (vv. 13-16), and Arthur customarily entertains his subjects at feasts (vv. 287-95). Arthur is mentioned by name only four times in the text (vv. 16, 287, 319 and 329) and no other characters except the hero are named; furthermore, from the time that Arthur calls his hunting-party together to see the strange behaviour of the wolf to the end of the text, he is referred to only as 'li rois', as he is in *Bisclavret*.

Reapplying the same criteria in reverse, there is little in *Bisclavret* to prove that Arthur was not originally the king. If the Clerc de Troyes, a storyteller primarily concerned with producing an antifeminist exemplum, and *Melion*'s author, whose skills Tobin assesses as vastly inferior to Marie's,[30] are thought capable of adding an Arthurian setting, it is certainly possible for Marie to have recontextualised the tale. One, perhaps insurmountable, obstacle occurs, however, in Marie's explanation of the term 'bisclavret' in the prologue: 'Bisclavret ad nun en bretan, / Garwaf l'apelent li Norman' (vv. 3-4). This opens the tale with an undeniably strong Breton connexion, omitted from *Biclarel*,[31] which fits uneasily with the proposition of an original Arthurian setting for the tale itself, since other lays distinguish Arthur clearly as king in Britain or England.[32]

Alfred Ewert argues that it is Marie herself who inserts the Arthurian setting of *Lanval* (*Lais*, p. 173), and he notes that the anonymous *Graelent* 'is an older version in which the Lanval story is not yet linked with Arthur', although both

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[30] See Date and Authorship, above.

[31] The explanation is faithfully reproduced by the Norse translator of *Strengleikar* (p. 86).

[32] Yet, as Norris J. Lacy observes, Arthur 'is also associated with Brittany across the Channel, which began to be colonised … by Britons — whence its name' (*The Arthurian Handbook*, pp. 4-5).

clearly derive from a common source (*Lais*, p. 172). In *Lanval*, Marie portrays Arthur as petulant and neglectful of his obligations, a king too much under his wife's influence, heading a court which measures social value in terms of material worth. The impact is strong; and, given that the werwolf must be rescued by his feudal lord, Marie could not set both *Lanval* and *Bisclavret* in Arthur's court without compromising the narrative logic of her collection, and even her authorial credibility; if she were determined to present the Arthurian court of *Lanval* in a negative light, and if her source for *Bisclavret* were Arthurian and presented a positive Arthur, one setting would have to be altered.

As the examination of *Biclarel* demonstrates, to Arthurianise a text may be a simple matter, and *Lanval* displays similar treatment: Arthur is named only twice (vv. 6, 488), although Gawain (vv. 225, 227, 400, 478) and Yvain (v. 226, 517) are both mentioned. Other evocative references, such as Kardoel (Carlisle, v. 5), the Round Table (v. 15), the Picts and Scots invading England (vv. 7-9) and the temporal setting of Pentecost (11), occur only in the introductory passages and could be easily inserted into a non-Arthurian narrative. Presumably, the removal of references from a source text would be no more difficult for a competent writer, such as Marie. The origin of the settings in these texts remains inconclusive.

Conversely, the Arthurian context of *Melion* is fully integrated. The narrator refers to Arthur by name on fifteen occasions[33] and several Round Table knights have active or speaking roles in the text.[34] The king's interest in foreign affairs, his intention to take on the might of Rome and his visit to Ireland to make peace with the Irish king are far more convincing with Arthur in the role than they would be with an anonymous or unfamiliar king. Melion's identification of Arthur's ship is achieved through his recognition the knights' shields hung over the side and his understanding of their signification, a crucial part of the author's

[33] Vv. 1, 45, 337, 452, 459, 471, 477, 500, 507, 521, 532, 537, 566, 571, 575.

[34] One might also cite the apparent scarcity of female chastity at the Arthurian court, which is echoed elsewhere in the Arthurian opus, including the fabliau-lays, *Cor* and *Mantel*.

presentation of the wolf's human mind and one which demands that the knights' names be familiar to the audience (vv. 351-60). It would seem probable, therefore, that *Melion*'s author was either a more accomplished composer than Tobin allows or that he accessed a source that was already fully Arthurianised.

Werwolves in the Old French lay

Werwolves — men who by whatever means change into lupine form[35] — are central to four Old French romance narratives: the lays of *Bisclavret*, *Melion* and *Biclarel* and the full-length romance *Guillaume de Palerne*, whose composition falls between *Melion* and *Biclarel*, according to the date of 1220 proposed by the editor, Alexandra Micha.[36] All four texts treat the theme similarly in presenting the werwolf as a sympathetic character wronged by a woman — in the lays, a protagonist is locked into wolf shape by his wife, in *Guillaume de Palerne* by his step-mother — but their interpretation of the metamorphosis is handled differently.

Marie de France uses the word 'bisclavret' both as a common noun and as the hero's name; conversely, 'Melion' and 'Biclarel' exist only as the heroes' names, with no generic ramifications; indeed, Beretta reads the absence of any generic dimension of Biclarel's name as 'un indizio, minimo ma non trascurabile, della perdita d'importanza … del tema del lupo mannaro' ('an indication, minimal but not negligible, of the loss of importance of the werwolf theme', 'Una tarda rielaborazione', p. 373).

It has become a convenient commonplace to refer to Bisclavret as a werwolf, but Marie specifies the precise nature of the therianthropy only through her use of the Norman synonym for 'bisclavret' and, although the Norman term suggests

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[35] Karkov observes that 'werewolves in the Celtic, Germanic, and Classical traditions are almost all male, although there are more wolfish women in the Irish tradition than elsewhere' ('Tales of the Ancients', p. 99). The sex of the werwolf reflects men's greater opportunity to travel alone outside the community.

[36] In his introduction, Micha rejects an earlier date of 1194-97 proposed by Paul Meyer (p. 23), a date which overlaps Tobin's narrower dating for *Melion*.

that the transformation is into lupine form, Marie remains unspecific even in her gloss (v. 9). Each of the other narratives designates lupine metamorphosis. In *Melion*, transformation is clearly into wolf form: the word *leus* is frequently used in reference to the transformed protagonist.[37] The image is intensified by the episode in which the transformed hero is joined by ten 'natural' wolves (v. 267ff.):[38] 'le loup y agit en loup, s'associant à d'autres loups' (Milin, p. 53).[39] The narrator of *Biclarel* omits the reference to a synonym from his source and, like Marie, shows a preference for the term 'beste'; but his prologue, whose description is specific to the hero and does not associate him with the genus, indicates wolf shape in terms reminiscent of *Melion* (vv. 39-44).[40]

The act of transformation

In each of the werwolf lays, nudity is shown to be essential to the metamorphosis, perhaps symbolising, as Ménard describes, 'la renonciation à l'humanité et l'entrée dans le monde des bêtes' ('Les Histoires de loup-garou', p. 210), although the more symbolic action, the hero's withdrawal from society into the forest, has already occurred. In the period between the hero's removal of his clothes and his metamorphosis, he stands naked, still a man in form, but separated from his peers and the social order. Only in *Melion* is the ritual nakedness supplemented by magic and, in this lay, the hero is not alone at the moment of metamorphosis into beast form; in the other texts the removal of the clothing is sufficient in itself: 'Puisque les bêtes n'ont pas d'habits et que les vêtements sont

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[37] Vv. 164, 181, 183, 217, 263, 398, 410, 426, 430, 432, 434, 435, 442, 448, 476, 478, 502.

[38] Milin employs the term 'loups naturels' to distinguish wolves from werwolves (*Les Chiens de Dieu*, p. 53). Similar friendly interactions between werwolf and wolf are found in *Arthur and Gorlagon*.

[39] Yet wolf communities are apparently not recognised by medieval commentators: George and Yapp observe that, in the bestiaries, the wolf is described as a solitary creature and packs are never mentioned (*The Naming of Beasts*, p. 51).

[40] In the Old Norse translation of *Bisclavret*, the hero's own description to his wife is imprecise, 'Ec hamskiptumk' ('I change my shape', pp. 88-89), but the narrator specifies the metamorphosis as 'i vargs ham' ('in the form of a wolf', pp. 90-91), the term he has used in the prologue to describe the activities of those who once 'hamskiptuzt ok vurðu vargar' ('changed their shape and became wolves', pp. 86-87).

le propre de l'homme, il suffit d'enlever ses vêtements dans un lieu écarté pour renoncer à la condition humaine et devenir un animal' (Ménard, p. 219).

None of the authors shows any interest in the mechanics of transformation. The details concerning Bisclavret's secret are transmitted by his wife to her lover, who removes the clothing. In *Biclarel*, the wife follows her husband and is apparently present during the transformation; but the Clerc de Troyes displays no more interest in the wonders or practicalities of metamorphosis than Marie:

> Tout bellemant l'a pourcehu
> Jusque[s] ou secret l'a vehu.
> Bien vit ou il sa robe a misse,
> Bien vit sa maniere et sa guisse.
> Sa robe prant et si l'an porte,
> Mont se deduit, mont se deporte. (vv. 261-66)

Similarly, Melion's act of metamorphosis is encapsulated in a few words, as his wife 'l'a de l'anel touchié / Qant le vit nu et despoillié. / Lors devint leu grant et corsus; En grant paine s'est enbatus' (vv. 179-81).

The details of the *démorphose* are of more concern to Marie, yet the focus is still not on the details of the physical alteration, but on the hero's psychological response. In *Bisclavret* the beast ignores the proffered clothes and the wise man intervenes to offer him privacy, lest he suffer 'grant hunte' (v. 288).

In *Biclarel*, too, the knight's own clothes are returned to him; but the narrator has no interest in the psychological implications of shame, and the knight has no hesitation in transforming himself in public:

> Biclarel ont la amené
> Qui par sa feme est si pené.
> Li rois fist que la robe vint;
> Dedans se boute et hon devint.
> Lors a tout son meschief conté,
> Conmant sa fame l'a donté. (vv. 447-53)

Again, the mechanics of metamorphosis are not described, but merely alluded to between reiterations of the wife's wickedness.

In *Melion* the hero's own clothes are not restored to him, nor are they required since the transformation is by magic ring and must be performed by an outside party, making isolation impossible. Like the clothes in *Bisclavret*, the magic ring has been retained by the lady. The delicacy of feeling recurs, however: at the

instigation of Gawain, the wolf is removed to a private chamber 'que il n'ait honte de la gent' (v. 542), and, significantly, after the *démorphose*, Arthur 'Son canberlenc a fait mander, / Riches dras li fist aporter; / Bien le vesti e conrea' (vv. 559-61) before exposing Melion to the public gaze.

WERWOLVES AND SCHOLARS

Scholars have been much occupied by the nature and the terminology of medieval literary lycanthropy, particularly how to distinguish satisfactorily between a wolf-form which occurs in the hero in a temporal cycle (weekly in *Bisclavret*, monthly in *Biclarel*) and a wolf-form achieved by means of a magical device (*Melion*, cf. *Guillaume de Palerne, Arthur and Gorlagon*).

Scholars have proposed a variety of terms, none without problems in application. Close examination of two essays, separated by ninety years — 'An Historical Study of the Werwolf in Literature' by Kirby Flower Smith (1894) and Philippe Ménard's 'Les Histoires de loup-garou au Moyen Age' (1984) — provides an indication of the issues. One type of werwolves is called 'voluntary' or 'constitutional' by Smith (p. 5) and 'véritables' by Ménard (p. 217), which would seem to fit the *Bisclavret* model perfectly; but the critics' definitions for the category include both those who are subject to a metamorphosis which is periodical and due to 'a gift inborn' and those transformed by 'the use of certain magic arts' (Smith, p. 4). Kittredge uses the term 'born werwolf' ('*Arthur and Gorlagon*', p. 195).[41] Montague Summers, whose primary concern is with mythology rather than literature, more helpfully divides lycanthropic states into (i) hereditary or acquired, and (ii) due to magical punishment or revenge (*The Werewolf*, p. 2). Other werwolves are transformed through the malicious

[41] This fortuitous-seeming phrase does not fully distinguish between, for example, Bisclavret, who need only remove or replace his clothing to effect transformation, and Gorlagon, whose metamorphosis involves both a 'congenital talisman' (p. 171), being touched with a rod from a tree, and an incantation. Kittredge reads Melion's magic ring as another 'congenital talisman' (p. 171), although he admits that this is not made clear by the author (p. 171, n. 2), and that *Melion* thus preserves traces of the 'born' werwolf, displayed in the removal of clothing (p. 172).

intervention of another character by means of magic; these Smith designates as 'involuntary' (p. 5) and Ménard as 'faux' (p. 213). Yet, as Suard states, the act or fact of transformation 'ne suffit … pas à définir le garou' ('*Bisclauret* et les contes du loup-garou', p. 268): the basis of the distinction between them is behavioural. The 'voluntary' werwolf displays 'bestial ferocity', being 'the most horrible, the most dangerous of all such creatures' (Smith, p. 4),[42] a trait which is not seen in the general behaviour at court of the lays' werwolves; conversely, the 'involuntary' werwolf is 'kindhearted' and 'beneficent' (Smith, p. 5).[43]

Bisclavret is not the sole example of bestial metamorphosis among the *Lais* of Marie de France. The duplication of the motif sharpens the distinction between magical and inborn metamorphosis, for where the hawk-lover of *Yonec* manipulates his transformations into bird form by the employment of magic,[44] Bisclavret has no control over his metamorphoses.[45] Smith's use of 'voluntary' as an exact term is thus subverted, and the critic's apparent recognition that the behaviour of Marie's werwolf does not conform to the explanation of the type further undermines the definition of the class: 'Exceptional is the fact that, in this case, the author takes the part of the werwolf … We must suppose … that she looks upon the Bisclavret's transformations as an unfortunate necessity which

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[42] Compare Marie de France's description of the generic werwolf (*Bisclavret*, vv. 5-12).

[43] Smith's assessment of the 'involuntary' class is founded primarily on an analysis of the werwolf in *Guillaume de Palerne*, whose role in uniting the eponymous hero with his *amie* and restoring him to his rightful position is so significant that, on being knighted, Guillaume adopts the werwolf as his heraldic emblem (see *William of Palerne*, vv. 2193ff.). The wolf frequently occurs in heraldry, but this use of a werwolf as a device appears to be unique (Menuge, 'The Ward as Outlaw', a paper given to the Sixth Biennial Romance in Medieval England Conference, Robinson College, Cambridge, 1998. See also chapter 3 of Menuge, *Medieval English Wardship in Romance and Law*).

[44] Neither the means nor the mechanics are detailed.

[45] Bloch (*The Anonymous Marie*, pp. 79-81) describes Bisclavret as a 'species-traitor' (p. 81), reading the early moves of the narrative in terms of double treachery, with the lady's fear of her husband's adultery echoed in 'the fact that her husband is not just unfaithful to her, not just amorously double, but unfaithful to his species. And here there can be no doubt' (p. 81). This comparison of the wife's adultery and the husband's therianthropy seems ill-founded: as Marie herself makes clear, both in *Bisclavret* and elsewhere, adultery is a choice and treachery a deliberate act; since Bisclavret's metamorphosis is imposed on him by nature, it cannot be seen in the terms of choice fundamental to treachery.

nature has imposed upon his organization. He is to be pitied as an innocent victim' ('An Historical Study', p. 13).[46] Ménard includes Bisclavret among the 'véritables' werwolves, but, like Smith, seems to recognise a need for qualification which is again based in the paradox of the 'animal doux et sociable' (p. 220) to which Marie clearly applies her sympathies: 'Marie suggère que son personnage agit, poussé par une sorte de fatalité, puisqu'il disparaît périodiquement trois jours par semaine. Cette régularité laisse entendre qu'il est soumis à un destin inexorable' ('Les Histoires de loup-garou', p. 220).

Ménard also includes Melion among the 'véritables loups-garous', characterising the knight's transformations as 'volontaires et périodiques' (p. 213); yet the lay, whose narrative provides a number of details about its protagonist's life prior to the central werwolf episode, nowhere implies that the hero's transformation is habitual, notwithstanding his possession of a magic ring which effects metamorphosis. *Melion* is unique among the medieval werwolf narratives in that, although the change of form is effected by means of magic (cf. *Arthur and Gorlagon, Guillaume de Palerne*) and the knight is trapped in wolf form by the malicious actions of his wife (cf. *Bisclavret, Biclarel, Arthur and Gorlagon*), it is the hero himself who orchestrates the transformation,[47] providing a closer analogue to the metamorphosis of the hawk-knight in *Yonec* than to *Bisclavret* in demonstrating a supernatural manipulation rather than a condition imposed by nature. *Melion* cannot, therefore, unequivocally be included with Ménard's 'faux loups-garous', whose transformations the scholar specifies as both 'uniques et involontaires' and 'due à l'intervention d'un tiers' (p. 213).

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[46] Compare Edgard Sienaert's statement that Bisclavret's 'joie lors de son retour (v. 30), comme sa peur de ne pouvoir recouvrir sa forme humaine si l'on venait dérober ses habits (vv. 72-77), laissent entendre qu'il souffre de son état périodique' (1978, p. 89). Yet the reason for Bisclavret's joy is not made clear in Marie's text: is he glad to have returned to his human form and life, or are his good spirits due to three days free from human responsibilities?

[47] In *Arthur and Gorlagon*, where transformation is achieved by means of a magic branch and a charm, and *Guillaume de Palerne*, where the shape-shift involves a magic ring amongst other items, the metamorphosis is precipitated by another character.

Melion, at once a 'véritable' and a 'faux' werwolf, with the capacity for both gentleness and ferocity, is, like Bisclavret, not so easily categorised.

Smith and Ménard base their definitions on analysis of the werwolf in classical and medieval literature of various kinds, which itself leads to difficulties since the sources they explore are diverse in purpose as well as form. The equation of spontaneous, uncontrollable metamorphoses with intentional, magically self-induced transformations is particularly problematic, since it means that Bisclavret and Biclarel on the one hand and Melion on the other all fall into the 'voluntary' class, despite their differing circumstances. Ménard points out that the 'vocabulaire médiéval ne fait pas de différence entre les deux conditions' (p. 214); and, given the immense difficulty of defining distinct and precise categories and terms to apply to a variety of werwolf conditions, it is not perhaps a matter which should engage the modern critic too deeply.

Man-mind in beast-form

Where Marie is content to demonstrate subtly the fundamental coexistence of man-mind and beast-form by recording the actions of the beast and the reactions of the king and courtiers, *Melion* and *Biclarel* express the combination overtly. In *Melion* the narrator's direction in this matter arises through specific details of plot: the wolf does not approach the king during a hunt to beg for mercy, but enters the tent in which Arthur's company is dining and lies down at the king's feet. In this text, the wolf is first thought to be tame ('privés', vv. 411, 426), then unnatural ('desnaturés', v. 430), and finally courtly ('cortois', v. 432). Indeed, this beast behaves much like a dog, and the narrator's remark that 'leus est, e si ne set parler' (v. 398) seems intended to emphasise speechlessness as a bestial attribute rather than to reflect lupine savagery. The Clerc de Troyes amalgamates the methods, introducing the idea of man-mind in wolf-form early in his narrative and reinforcing the other characters' reported perceptions with his own words. The introductory description of the werwolf in *Biclarel* stipulates that the retention of the man's mind is fundamental to the metamorphosis. Biclarel becomes:

> … conme loups grans et corsus
> Fort cuir et de mambres ossus;
> Ne pour ce ne perdoit son san,
> Sa memoire ne son asan. (vv. 43-46)

On Biclarel's return to his cache, he immediately understands his wife's treachery. Similarly, when Melion fails to find his wife waiting with his clothes and the magic ring, the narrator makes plain that the hero's consternation is that of a reasoning creature, a human being:

> Molt fu dolans, ne set que face,
> Qant il ne le troeve en la place.
> Mais neporqant se leus estoit,
> Sens e memoire d'ome avoit. (vv. 215-218)

Melion's subsequent actions underline the coherent duality further: he deduces that his wife, the daughter of the Irish king, has returned to her homeland, and succeeds in following her. The details of the narrative stress that Melion's behaviour is due to human reasoning, not wolfish instinct: 'Une nef vit que on charga, / Ki la nuit devoit eskiper / Et en Yrlande droit aler' (vv. 220-22); Melion can understand the ship and its purpose, and find out its destination. He then waits until nightfall to hide himself on board, and the next day he is ready to leap off the ship as soon as it arrives in Dublin, presumably at the moment when the crew is most occupied. Later, when Arthur's ship appears, the narrator reinforces the idea of the wolf's human mind through a surprisingly lengthy and detailed description of Melion's recognition of the knights' heraldic emblems:

> Lor escus furent fors pendus,
> Melïons les a coneüs;
> Primes conut l'escu Gawain,
> E puis a ravisé l'Iwain,
> E puis l'escu le roi Ydel;
> Tot ce li plot e li fu bel.
> L'escu le roi bien ravisa,
> Sachiés, de voir, grant joie en a;
> Molt en fu liés, molt l'esjoï,
> Car encor quide avoir merci. (vv. 351-60)

Ohler notes that 'shields were often fixed over the sides [of sea-going vessels] to stop the waves washing over the boats' (*The Medieval Traveller*, p. 38). *Melion*'s author gives the custom a different purpose, presenting the wolf's recognition of

the shields as a perfect example of his complete, and human, understanding of the emblems and their meaning.

Melion

THE KNIGHT AND THE WOLF

In the opening episode of *Melion*, the hero makes a vow that 'Ja n'ameroit pucele, / Que tant seroit gentil ne bele, / Que nul autre home eüst amé, / Ne que de nul eüst parlé' (vv. 19-22). The text has already presented the making of vows by the knights as a sacred, public ritual ('A icel jor lor veu faisoient, / Et sachiés bien k'il le gardoient', vv. 15-16), yet Melion's oath seems strangely profane and lacking in gravity.

The vowing scene serves two functions: first, it provides the means for Melion's withdrawal from the court in order that the *aventure* of the werwolf may occur; second, the knight's naive declaration, with its oblique suggestion that such an innocent lady may be difficult to find, brings into play the idea of misogyny, which will culminate in his open denunciation of women at the end of the narrative.

This frame also achieves a sharp distinction between Melion as man and as wolf. His knightly skills are defined only by their absence: 'Ne voloit mais querre aventure, / Ne d'armes porter n'avoit cure. / … / 'Melïons', fait li rois Artus, / 'Tes grans sens qu'est il devenus, / Ton pris et ta chevalerie?' (vv. 39-40, 45-47). Through his own fault, Melion loses his fundamental social identity, and while Arthur's gift of a beautiful fiefdom suggests the hero's worth, Gaël Milin reads it as 'peut-être une autre forme de marginalisation' (*Les Chiens de Dieu*, p. 81).

It is in the forest of his new estate that Melion comes upon a lady who declares her love for him, as well as her adherence to the conditions of the knight's unhappy vow, and Melion, having apparently learned nothing from his earlier impetuousness, marries her at once. This lady identifies herself as the daughter of the King of Ireland, although when Melion comes upon her in the forest, she travels without retinue, alone; unsurprisingly, given the literary

practices of the period, she remains nameless. The narrator offers no explanation as to why, after three years of happy marriage and two children, the lady decides to be rid of her husband; yet the presentation of events in the text indicates that it is not Melion's lycanthropy which triggers her departure. While Melion and his wife are hunting together, the lady suddenly swoons and declares that she will die unless she eats meat from a stag they have seen. Melion, distressed, uses the magic ring to change himself into a wolf and rushes after the stag. The lady recovers immediately and sets out for Ireland as soon as he has gone, taking with her the magic ring, without which Melion cannot regain his human form. The author offers no explanation whatsoever: is her indisposition genuine or a ruse? Why does she leave? Does she want the ring for her own purposes? Does she care nothing for their children, left parentless behind?

Thus far, the author has depicted his hero as neither particularly intelligent nor sensible: the thoughtless terms of the vow and the hero's subsequent amazement and grief at the ladies' response; his immediate acceptance of the mysterious maiden as suitable wife material; his unquestioning trust in his wife in leaving the magic ring with her and clearly explaining its importance:

> 'Je vos lais ma vie et ma mort:
> Il n'i auroit nul reconfort
> Se de l'autre touciés n'estoie;
> Jamais nul jor hom ne seroie' (vv. 169-72)

— all these paint a picture of an idealistic, impetuous and naive figure. At the end of the lay, the restored Melion's desire to touch his wife with the ring, so that she herself might be turned into a wolf as punishment (vv. 569-70), reiterates this childlike, even childish, quality in the hero.

Between these opening and closing scenes, the focus falls on Melion the wolf, and what a difference there is between man-Melion and wolf-Melion! Indeed, the author seems intrigued by the knight's lycanthropy, and the depiction of the wolf-Melion and his adventures, at almost 370 lines, is longer by some 50 lines than the whole of *Bisclavret*. The *Melion*-poet repeatedly underlines the wolf's retention of human mental and emotional powers, but unlike Marie and her

redactors, the author of *Melion* does not gloss over the wolf's more bestial activities, and Melion's reunion with the king does not follow the *Bisclavret* template of hunt and supplication.

In *Melion*, the wolf's activities are couched in military terms, both emphasising the retention of the man-mind in the wolf's body and providing a contrast to his actions as a man. Melion the wolf is a quick-thinking strategist, who soon recovers from the shock at discovering the disappearance of his wife with the crucial ring. In *Bisclavret*, the hero continues his bestial life in the forest until his fortuitous meeting with the king allows the restoration process to begin; Marie does not describe his return to the empty cache and gives her audience no insight into his reaction at the loss of his clothes and humanity. Conversely, Melion's thoughts are opened by the author: 'Molt fu dolans, ne set que face, / Qant il ne le troeve en la place. / Mais neporqant se leus estoit / Sens et memoire d'ome avoit' (vv. 215-18). In a manner which provides strong contrast to his ineffectual human self, the wolf-Melion acts almost immediately to pursue wife and ring. He follows her trail to the harbour and, realising where she has gone, stows away on a ship to Ireland. He even takes with him the gobbet of venison, which later assuages his hunger, and successfully avoids being harmed by the startled seamen as he leaves the ship. Reaching land, he climbs a mountain to look over the country and then begins to harass the peasants, killing more than a hundred sheep and oxen.

The narrator's comment on Melion's actions illustrates the military, and thus human, quality of the wolf's behaviour: 'Iluec sa guerre comencha' (v. 256); and Melion's behaviour continues to echo qualities of martial leadership as he persuades a pack of real wolves to accept and follow him. The narrator's description here echoes Marie's text: 'Tant les blandi et losenga / Que avoec lui les a menés, / Et font totes ses volentés' (vv. 270-72). The phrase 'blandi e losenga' is exactly that used in *Bisclavret* to describe the wife's persuasion of her husband to reveal his secret (v. 60). Later in *Melion*, the same phrase is used to describe how Melion's wife is convinced to hand over the ring (v. 520). On one

level, ‘blandi e losenga’ may be seen merely as a tag or filler, but on another its use to depict Melion’s co-option of the real wolves is fascinating because of the phrase’s integral connotations of language, of verbal communication: the wolf-Melion cannot speak and, if he could, the wild wolves would not understand him; having used the ring to change his outward form — but, as the narrator underlines, having retained his human mind — the possibilities of his successful communication with wolves is a complex issue.

The formation of the company of wolves also leads to a change in tactics. Alone, Melion kills only livestock; after he recruits the wolfpack, the text refers to attacks on peasants (v. 274) and the killing of peasants (v. 277). The author is careful, however, to avoid any implication that the wolf-Melion himself kills any humans and thus maintains the distinction between the indiscriminately savage wild wolves and the wolf-Melion with his human mind: his lupine ferocity is controlled; he is different from real wolves. For a year the wolves wreak havoc on the land, until at last the king of Ireland is forced to organise a wolf hunt, using boar-hunting nets; here, the author again marks the distinction between Melion, the man in wolf form, and the real wolves. The hunt is successful, and the author teases his audience in making the outcome for Melion at first unclear: ‘Tot sont detrancié et ocis; / Un tos seus n’en escapa vis’ (vv. 317-18), he says, before adding, ‘Fors Melïon, qui escapa / Par deseure les rois lança’ (vv. 319-20). Melion escapes by using his ‘engien’ (v. 322), his human ingenuity, which distinguishes him from the real wolves, and means that he alone of the wolfpack can comprehend the meaning and purpose of the hunting nets and thus avoid them. The author builds on this distinction further in his depiction of Melion’s sorrow at losing his lupine companions: ‘Molt fu dolans, molt li pesa / De ses leus que il perdu a’ (vv. 333-34); here are echoes of the valiant knight Melion, a war-hero grieving for his lost companions, perhaps even, in the construction ‘que il perdu a’, the sense of a war-leader’s failure to take care of his inferiors.

Melion’s reunion with Arthur is a different matter from Bisclavret’s reunion with his king, and again suggests a distinction between the ‘natural’ werwolfery

of Marie's hero and the magically transformed Melion, who, at his lowest ebb, regains his optimism and watches keenly as Arthur's ship approaches the coast, recognising the travellers by their shields, hung over the side of the ship. This scene itself is justification, and perhaps indeed the reason, for the substitution of Arthur for the unidentified king of Marie's text, since the use of the familiar names of the Arthurian world serves to exemplify and accent Melion's human reactions here, allowing the audience a far greater appreciation of the situation than would an unnamed king and knights. The passage emphasises Melion's fundamental humanity in describing, in effective, simply-constructed terms, his understanding of these man-made objects and the meaning of their devices, and in his response to the sight, his resurging hope that he will regain human shape.

The wolf-Melion's subsequent actions are considered. He waits until the company has made camp, then calmly walks into the tent and straight up to Arthur. Here is no suggestion of supplication, rather a sense of the hero taking his rightful place in the court as he approaches Arthur and settles himself at his feet. Arthur feeds Melion meat and gives him wine, and the wolf accompanies him everywhere, refusing to be parted from him. This last point is, of course, also found in *Bisclavret*, but where Marie's narrative continues to present a relationship of suppliant and protector, Melion seems to be trying to perform his rightful human role as escort and entourage, seen especially in the description of man and wolf entering the Irish king's castle: 'Qant li rois monta el doignon, / Li leus li tint par le giron' (vv. 475-76).

This visit to the Irish king's court is, of course, another difference from Marie's lay. In *Bisclavret*, the wolf appears only in the king's own court; and he has spent some time there before his attack on his wife's new husband, and later on his wife, forces the court to realise that the wolf's strange tameness and unusual ferocity must have some reason. Here, the setting for the wolf's attack on the faithless squire has political ramifications, since it takes place in the Irish court and on a member of the Irish king's household; furthermore, Arthur has had little time to judge the degree of his wolf's domestication. Yet Arthur continues

to protect this unusual and recent member of his company like a feudal lord who affords rightful protection to one of his retinue.

This attack is the last in Melion's 'war' and he is soon restored to human form. However, once a man again, he regains all the childishness and naivety his human self displayed earlier, demanding vengeance on his wife and only reluctantly being dissuaded from revenge by Arthur and his fellow knights.

How much the distinction between man-Melion and wolf-Melion and his behaviour in each role is bound to the author's underlying misogyny is unclear. In human form, Melion is apparently a good knight, but he is also foolishly naive: his vow is thoughtless, his reaction to his ostracism immature, his choice of wife unfortunate, his demands for vengeance against her petulant. Yet, in wolf form, Melion proves a competent strategist, demonstrating the military skills which Arthur's affection and respect for him imply, travelling to Ireland as a stowaway, persuading the wolves to follow him and leading the pack in its devastation of the land, planning how best to approach Arthur. Although the narrative leaves many unanswered questions, not least why the hero possesses the transforming ring at all, the presentation of Melion's character is closely bound to plot and structure, and both the narrator's demonstration of the retention of Melion's human mental capacities in his wolf form and Melion's human-form behaviour seem to suggest that it is only as a wolf that his identity becomes mature and complete; which in itself is a paradox, since Melion, of course, is not a true werwolf.

The role of the wife

Kittredge proposes that the lady who becomes Melion's wife is a partly humanised *fée* and that the character of the squire originally represented her fairy lover: the *fée* arrives to fulfil Melion's 'boast' and 'the misfortunes which come upon the hero are a rebuke to his pride' ('*Arthur and Gorlagon*', p. 190). This is problematic in view of the fact that there is no further reference to the hero's vow after its fulfilment in the appearance of the lady (vv. 117-18); neither the protagonist himself nor the narrator explicitly links the hero's misadventures to

the foolish insult of his vow.[48] *Melion*'s narrator uses the lady's *fée*-like qualities, concentrated in the description of her travelling alone at her first appearance and in her inhuman betrayal of her husband, to counter any vestige of sympathy for her. In comparison with the characters of the hero and King Arthur, even compared to the minor figures of the King of Ireland and Yder, the lady serves only as an expedient narrative element without dimension, and the narrator provides no insight whatsoever into her motives. She appears suddenly on the estate which Melion has grown to love so much that 'Ja deduit ne demandast / Que en la forest ne trovast' (vv. 69-70). The lady's appearances and words are few; she is initially greeted with joy by Melion and his retinue, but her later behaviour is neither explored nor explained, but rather roundly condemned by Arthur, by her father, by her husband, and by the narrator through the poem's *dénouement*, which serves as a moral:

> Li rois a sa fille amenee,
> Al roi Artus l'a presentee,
> A tote sa volenté faire,
> Voille l'ardoir, voille desfaire.
> Melïons dist: 'Jel toucherai
> De la piere, ja nel lairai.'
> ……
> Melïons dist: 'Ja ne faldra
> Que de tot sa feme kerra,
> Qu'en la fin ne soit malbaillis;
> Ne doit pas croire tos ses dis.' (vv. 565-70, 587-90)

In *Melion* there is no hint nor possibility of sympathy for the wife: her betrayal of her husband is as callous as it is inexplicable, especially given the reason for his self-generated transformation, his belief that he will save her life. Unlike Bisclavret, Melion is not a habitual werwolf with no control over his metamorphosis: there is no possible threat to the lady. Yet as soon as the wolf Melion has gone,

> La dame dist a l'escuier:
> 'Or le laissons assés chacier.'
> Montee est, plus ne se targa,

[48] Despite being a lengthy passage (vv. 1-60), the episode of the vow is apparently intended primarily as a device to separate Melion from the court. The terms of the vow are revisited in the words of his lady (vv. 111-16), but are never afterwards mentioned.

E l'escuier o lui mena.
Droit vers Yrlande, sa contree,
En est la dame retornee. (vv. 189-94)

If the author of *Melion* allows no place for any positive audience response towards the wife, he fills the vacuum with sympathy for his hero, who is a young knight, a 'bacheler' (v. 5), rather than the counsellor-baron of Marie's text, whose idealistic vow emphasises his youth and inexperience. After their meeting in the forest, the lady is all but effaced. After she abandons Melion, she speaks only once, after the wolf-hunt, when, learning of the survival of one of the band of hunted wolves, she foretells greater trouble from the survivor, suggesting to the audience, if not to the King of Ireland, that she knows the identity of the wolf (vv. 329-30). Thereafter, she makes no further direct appearance in the narrative.

Melion's vow and its repercussions allow the narrator to establish the king's affection for the knight early in the text by depicting them together before the metamorphosis. Troubled (v. 43) by Melion's reaction to the ladies' anger at his vow, Arthur gives the moping young knight a fiefdom, a distant castle with sea views and extensive forests. His affection for the knight is equated to his treatment of the wolf, to which the narrator refers as 'son leu' (vv. 468, 479), prefiguring the king's own proprietary declaration.

In *Melion*, the role of the hunt as a catalyst for change, as a new beginning (Williams, 'Hunting the deer', p. 197), is intensified by its repetition. The hero meets his future wife whilst out hunting, he loses her and his human form on a hunt, and is in turn hunted in wolf form by his wife's father. The dichotomy between the king and the wife, and the qualities each represents, is stronger than in *Bisclavret* or *Biclarel*, for the reunion with the king takes place not in a forest, but in a simulacrum of the court, thus explicitly connecting Arthur with the civilised world of loyalty and reason, and the lady with the ungovernable, inexplicable wilderness, with chaos, with the other: ungovernable womankind.

Biclarel

OPEN MISOGYNY

The prologue to *Biclarel* leaves no room for doubt about the narrator's intentions:

> Trop est cilz fox qui se marie.
> En fame de jolive vie,
> Ce dou tout ne se viaut soufrir
> Et lui a toute honte offrir
> An touz periz d'ame et de cors,
> Dont il ne sera ja jour hors,
> Et qui leurs cuers bien conneüst,
> Ja an telz periz ne feüst.
> Mès por ce nes connoist nus mais,
> Quar un te di, autre te fais. (vv. 1-10)

Keeping the majority of the structure intact, the narrator makes a number of changes which alter the emphasis of his source, *Bisclavret*, in order to produce a wholly misogynous work. Framed by a prologue and an epilogue which denounce marriage, the narrator transforms the poem: 'Avec véhémence, mais sans la moindre originalité, [l'auteur] y développe les clichés les plus rebattus de l'antiféminisme médiéval; entre ses mains, Biclarel devient un *exemplum*, éclairant sur les dangers qu'il y a à se marier, à fair confiance à une femme' (Milin, p. 112). The narrator's building blocks are the basic elements of *Bisclavret*, but with significant changes. The admirer is already established as the wife's lover (vv. 55-56) whom she prefers to her husband. The wife's determined attempt to discover her husband's secret is presented as founded on her wish to be rid of him, while the reduction of the lover's role serves to underline the wife's treachery. In *Biclarel*, the second husband is not attacked by the wolf, and indeed never makes a direct appearance in the narrative at all, which allows the narrator to focus on the wife's culpability. Like Bisclavret, the transformed knight makes two attacks, but both are on the wife.

Biclarel demonstrates the employment of a different technique from *Melion* in order to remove any sympathetic trait from the wife. Although the actions of Melion's lady are central to the plot, her character is almost effaced, but Biclarel's wife dominates the early part of the narrative. She is defined by a deceitful loquacity, typifying the medieval misogynist's view of woman 'as

verbal transgression, indiscretion, and contradiction' (Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*, p. 56). In *Bisclavret*, the wife persuades her husband to reveal his secret in a few lines of dialogue, supplemented by the narrator's descriptions of how she 'le blandi e losenga' (p. 60); in *Biclarel*, her speeches dominate the early part of the text, taking up 132 lines of the opening scene, almost a third of the narrative proper. Her argument encompasses Bisclavret's wife's fear of a rival, but hugely expands her protestations of love, her sorrow at her husband's distrust, and her comments on the *amisté* appropriate to marriage, which in Marie's text are confined to seven lines (vv. 80-86). Because the audience is privy to her adulterous deception, and to the narrator's antimarriage theme, the wife's insistence on her husband's transgression in keeping a secret from her and her promises of faith become deeply ironic. Her repetition of *celer*, *decevrer, couvrir, mentir, anbler* and *secré* becomes a gloss on her own motives, and her speeches demonstrate a connection between garrulousness, gossip and promiscuity, which Carla Casagrande characterises as a typically medieval misogynous frame, in that women's

> intemperate and perverse loquacity was seen not only as a potential source of disorder within family or community but also as a threat to women's chastity, which could never be guarded enough. A woman who talked too much revealed too much interest in the outside world, an unhealthy desire to weave a social network with her words. ('The Protected Woman', pp. 98-99)

To complete this demonstration of her culpability, Biclarel's wife neither persuades her husband to reveal the hiding-place of his clothes nor sends her lover to steal them; rather she herself follows Biclarel and takes the clothes, thus removing herself from woman's confined and proper place. In her gloating words, 'De mari suis desevrée / Pour estre a mun ami livrée!' (vv. 267-68), the narrator leaves 'no position of innocence possible' (Bloch, 'Medieval Misogyny', p. 3). With the theft completed by her own hand, she lies to her lover, telling him that her husband is dead (v. 271).

In each of the texts the husband's self-identification as werwolf and his subsequent betrayal are reflected to a greater or lesser extent in the revelation and restoration of his human identity. In *Melion* the revelation comes from the squire,

but in *Bisclavret* and *Biclarel* the wife herself is forced to reveal the identity of the husband whose power of speech she has stolen with his clothes, in effect becoming her husband's voice and mirroring the confession she has persuaded him to make. The public declaration of the hero's duality is thus juxtaposed with the wife's duality, her treachery, and with the proven courtly behaviour of the wolf, and leads into the punishment imposed on the wife, in which the hero's involvement varies within the texts. The wronged husband's demands for swift and bloody vengeance are a notable feature of the misogynous versions of the narrative. Bisclavret does not attempt, and is not invited, to pronounce his opinion on his wife's punishment; it is the king who decrees that the wife shall go into exile. Melion's wife alone is not formally punished. Although her father gives her into Arthur's power, Arthur does not pronounce judgement. Instead, Melion viciously demands retaliation, from which Arthur and the barons dissuade him, for the sake of his beautiful children (v. 572). Eventually the wife is merely left behind in Ireland when Arthur's retinue leaves, taking Melion with them. Biclarel petitions the king for his wife's death, and the punishment decreed is that she should be 'antre murs mise / Dont onques puis el n'issi hors' (vv. 454-55). The phrase *antre murs* is ambiguous:[49] does it mean imprisonment, or a particularly gruesome method of execution? Whichever is meant, sentence follows a confession in which the lady does not simply admit to her treachery, but condemns the voice of womankind by describing the method employed: 'Toute la verité jaÿ, / Et conmant son seigneur traÿ / Par sa mansonge et par sa lobe' (vv. 441-43).

The form of the wife's confession in *Bisclavret* and *Biclarel*, in indirect speech, signals a shift in power: with the replacement of direct with reported speech, the wife's revelation inaugurates the vocal movement from wife to husband in the restoration of his capacity to speak, all the more evident in *Biclarel*, where the wife has been so strongly identified by loquacity. In *Melion*

[49] I am grateful to Myra Stokes for pointing this ambiguity out to me.

the narrator has defined the husband's metamorphosis specifically in terms of his inability to speak (v. 398), but he gives the hero the final word; the restoration of the man leads first to his desire for vengeance in like form (vv. 569-70), then to the demonstration of his complete disregard for the lady — 'A deables l'a commandee' (v. 581) — and his indifference to her fate (v. 586), and finally to the denunciation of women's honesty in direct speech at the end of the lay (vv. 587-90). In *Biclarel*, Renart himself concludes with a moral:

> Dont voiz tu que folemant ouvre
> Qui a sa fame se descouvre
> Dou secré qui fait a celer,
> S'a touz ne le viaut reveller. (vv. 457-60)

Joyce Salisbury observes that Marie's emphasis on memorial in *Bisclavret* suggests an educational message: 'There was one obvious moral, of course, that one had better select one's wife wisely, and perhaps not trust a woman with a secret' (*The Beast Within*, p. 165); precisely the message imparted, with a heavy hand, by the Clerc de Troyes.

Conclusion

Marie de France's generalised description of man-eating werwolves in her prologue is never reinforced in the actions of her transformed hero, nor suggested by his own admission to his wife: '"En cele grant forest me met, / Al plus espés de la gaudine, / S'i vif de preie e de ravine"' (vv. 64-66). There is a disparity between the depiction of the generic *bisclavret* and the hero of the lay,[50] and most critics regard the former as a key to the underlying, but concealed, ferocious character of the transformed hero, privileging the beast over the man during the metamorphosis. Yet the very disproportion in length between the prolusory passage and the narrative of the reasoning beast, between the general and the particular, invites the reverse interpretation: that Marie's deliberate insertion of the distance is an attempt to explain and thus rehabilitate the genus *bisclavret*.

[50] 'Bisclavret n'est pas un des *garval* du prologue' (Boivin, 'Bisclavret et Muldumarec', p. 155).

Her hero's only violence is against those who have betrayed him, a point which the wise man of the narrative states explicitly:

> 'Ceste beste ad esté od vus;
> N'i ad ore celui de nus
> Que ne l'eit veü lungement
> E pres de lui alé sovent;
> Unke mes humme ne tucha
> Ne felunie ne mustra,
> Fors a la dame que ici vei.
> Par cele fei ke jeo vus dei,
> Aukun curuz ad il vers li,
> E vers sun seignur autresi.' (vv. 241-50)

The attacks are committed in the absence of any other means of communication on his part, again underlined by the wise man's advice that the wife should be pressed to discover why the beast attacked her (vv. 255-58).

The anomaly between the 'beste salvage' and the 'franc e deboneire' animal is reduced in the other lays. *Biclarel*'s introduction to the werwolf makes no mention of the killing or eating of men: the narrator states that Biclarel lives among other beasts and 'char de beste crue manjoit' (v. 42);[51] the only violence on the werwolf's part is against his wife and validated by Arthur's determination to make her reveal why the beast has assaulted her. Only in *Melion* does the werwolf customarily behave ferociously, and here the narrator justifies the ferocity as 'sa guerre' (v. 256), a war of attrition which is the hero's only possible retaliation given his voicelessness and his desperate circumstances. The distancing effect of Marie's use of *jadis* in the prologue is the antithesis of the intimate and sympathetic description of the *bisclavret* of her narrative which undermines the generalised portrait of the werwolf: it is the hero who displays the true nature of the *bisclavret*, the creature of the prologue but a terrifying myth.

The attack on the second husband in *Bisclavret* and on the squire in *Melion* underlines the narrators' just apportionment of blame: the husband is actively involved in Bisclavret's enforced metamorphosis, the squire implicated by the unquestioning transference of his loyalties from his lord to his lord's wife. The

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[51] The eating of raw flesh was itself considered bestial and eating cooked meat distinguished man from animal (Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, pp. 64-5).

completeness of this morality is emphasised by *Biclarel*, in which the second husband, having been presented with the hero's 'death' as a *fait accompli*, is neither attacked nor punished: 'Riducendo questo personaggio ad una fuggevola comparsa, l'autore di RC [*sic*] mira, evidentemente, a scaricare ogni responsabilità sulla donna. Rendendola autrice anche materiale del tradimento ed espondendo lei sola alla furia vendicatrice di Biclarel, egli persegue, un po' rozzamente, l'intento di creare una figura di "cattiva" a tutto tondo'.[52] There are two separate attacks on the second husband in the Old Norse *Bisclaret*, which adds a new dimension to the narrative for, after disposing of the werwolf, 'biuggi sa kono hans er lengi hafði hæn*n*i un*n*at' ('that man who had long loved her came to live with his wife', pp. 90-91) and on the occasion of his attack is 'Rikolega klæddr ok Riddaralega' ('richly arrayed in knightly fashion', pp. 92-3), which suggests that the lover has gained both the 'widow' and her inheritance, and serves to contrast the knightly clothes with his unknightly behaviour.

The narrators of *Melion* and *Biclarel* transform Marie's early neutrality towards the wife, who later condemns herself, into unambiguous misogyny, providing explicit morals and making the poems function to a greater or lesser extent as *exempla*.[53] *Melion* reveals itself to be a corrupted Breton lay: notwithstanding the elements which link it with the archetype (the Arthurian setting; a strong supernatural flavour; the generic self-identification), Lucien Foulet sees its issues as those of the *fabliau*, 'destiné comme tant d'autres à nous montrer la perfidie des femmes' ('Marie de France', p. 45). Misogynous though it is, however, *Melion* does no favours to the male sex either, for its hero is less

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[52] 'Reducing this character's role to a transient appearance, the author of RC evidently intends to shift all responsibility on to the woman. Making her also the inventor of the means of the betrayal and exposing her alone to the vengeful fury of Biclarel, he follows, a little uncouthly, his intention to create a figure of "the wicked woman" in full relief' (Beretta, pp. 373-74).

[53] Cf. Beretta: 'il chierico di Troyes ha stuttato il *lai* di Maria di Francia come *exemplum* atto ad illustrare le insidie della perfidia femminile. Così facendo, ha devuto amplificare al massimo il tema del tradimento, ponendolo al centro del sui interesse e della struttura narrativa' ('The Clerc de Troyes has exploited Marie de France's lay as an *exemplum* enacted to illustrate the deceptions of female perfidy. Having done this, he has had to expand the theme of treachery to its limits, placing it at the centre of his interests and his narrative structure', p. 376).

a figure of sympathy than a naive fool. Rejected by womankind, through his own naivety, the knight fails to make the connection between his vow and the ladies' reaction. Nor does he develop maturity: his vengeful outburst at the end of the poem is in stark contrast to Bisclavret's silent acceptance of the right of his feudal lord to pass judgement.

Biclarel's self-containment is an invitation to consider the section of narrative independently, yet the knowledge that it is an extract cannot be ignored, and it is probable that, had Marie's poem been lost, there would have been no reason to examine *Biclarel* as an entity separate from its frame. One means by which Marie explores the identity of Bisclavret, the opposition between marital love and feudal love, between the treachery of the wife and the generosity of the king, remains the basis of the demonstration in *Biclarel*. Bisclavret's wife appears at the end to be as guilty as Biclarel's: each 'trahit la confiance mise en elle' and 'commet un crime contre l'amour' (Hœpffner, *Les Lais de Marie de France*, p. 149), yet the morality of the later text is compromised by its insertion into an explicitly misogynous frame. Whereas Marie seeks in her collection of poems to balance the depiction of good and evil characters regardless of gender, and to allow characters' own words and actions to speak for themselves with only occasional commentary, the author of *Biclarel* expounds his theme unequivocally and, through the narrator Renart, his presence is a greater force in the text. The effacement of Bisclavret from the judgement of his wife explodes in *Biclarel* into a savagery stronger than that seen in the hero in his beast form and suggests a malicious aspect to the knight. This malice, a construct intended to gratify the author's and the narrator's misogyny, subverts the noble humanity which is the true identity of the beast in Marie's text. The focus is altered: *Biclarel*, as its frame clearly states, is primarily a denunciation of the treachery of women, not the recounting of an *aventure* nor an examination of the identity of the shape-shifter and his relationship with his spouse, his peers and his feudal lord. The author of *Le Roman de Renart le Contrefait* takes a Breton lay and transforms it into a satirical *exemplum,* amplifying the wife's guilt and taking every

opportunity which Marie's text offers to condemn her. The narration of the werwolf tale has moved from woman writer to woman hater.

Chi comenche Melion

Al tans que rois Artus regnoit – f. 343r col. 1
Cil ki les terres conqueroit,
Et qui dona les riches dons
As chevaliers et as barons –
Avoit od lui .I. bacheler;
Melïon l'ai oï nomer.
Molt par estoit cortois et prous
Et amer se faisoit a tos.
Molt ert de grant chevalerie
Et de cortoise compaignie.
Li rois ot molt riche maisnie;
Par tot le mont estoit proisie
De cortoisie et de proece
Et de bonté et de largece.
A icel jor lor veu faisoient,
Et sachiés bien k'il le gardoient.
Cil Melïons .I. en voa
Que a grant mal li atorna:
Il dist ja n'ameroit pucele,
Que tant seroit gentil ne bele,
Que nul autre home eüst amé,
Ne que de nul eüst parlé.
Une grant piece fu ensi:
Cil ki le veu orent oï
En pluisors lieus le recorderent
Et as puceles le conterent;
Et qant les puceles l'oïrent
Molt durement l'en enhaïrent.
Celes ki es canbres estoient
Et ki la roïne servoient,
Dont il en i ot plus de cent,
En ont tenu .I. parlement:
Dïent jamais ne l'ameront,
N'encontre lui ne parleront;
Dame nel voloit regarder,
Ne pucelë a lui parler.
Qant Melïon ice oï,
Molt durement s'en asopli;
Ne voloit mais querre aventure,
Ne d'armes porter n'avoit cure.
Molt fu dolans, molt asopli,
Et de son pris alques perdi.
Li rois le sot, molt l'en pesa,
Mander le fist, a lui parla.
'Melïons', fait li rois Artus,

At the time when King Arthur reigned –
He who conquered lands
And who gave magnificent gifts
To knights and to nobles –
He had with him a young knight;
I have heard him called Melion.
He was very courtly and noble,
And he made himself beloved of all.
He was in a very great band of knights
And a courtly company.
The king kept a very sumptuous household;
It was praised by everyone
For its courtesy and prowess
And its excellence and generosity.
One day they were making their vows
And you may be very sure that they kept them.
This Melion made one vow
Which rebounded on him to great harm:
He said he would never love a maiden,
No matter how noble or beautiful,
Who had loved any other man
Or even had spoken of any.
For a long time matters stood like this:
Those who had heard the vow
Repeated it in many places
And recounted it to the maidens;
And when the maidens heard it
They hated him for it very much.
Those who were ladies-in-waiting
And who served the queen,
Of whom there were more than a hundred,
Held a meeting about it:
They said they would never love him
Nor speak to him;
No lady wished to look at him,
Nor any maiden to speak to him.
When Melion heard this,
He was completely downcast;
He no longer wished to seek adventure
Nor did he care to bear arms.
He was sorrowful, very unhappy,
And he lost his public esteem somewhat.
The king discovered this, it weighed very heavily on him;
He had Melion sent for and spoke to him.
‘Melion’, said King Arthur,

‘Tes grans sens qu’est il devenus,
Ton pris et ta chevalerie?
Di que tu as, nel celes mie.
Se tu veus terre ne manoir, f. 343r col. 2
N’autre cose que puisse avoir,
Se il est en ma roiauté,
Tu l’avras a ta volenté.
Volentiers te rehaiteroie’,
Ce dist li rois, ‘se jo pooie.
Un castel ai sor cele mer;
En tot cest siecle n’a itel.
Beax est de bois et de riviere
Et de forest que molt as chiere.
Cel te donrai por rehaitier,
Bien t’i porras esbanoier.’
Li rois li a en fief doné;
Melïons l’en a mercïé.
A son castel en est alé,
.C. chevaliers i a mené.
Li païs bien li conteça
Et la forest que molt ama.
Qant il i ot .I. an esté,
Molt a le païs enamé,
Car ja deduit ne demandast
Que en la forest ne trovast.
Un jor estoit alé chacier
Melïon et si forestier.
Od lui furent si veneor,
Ki l’amerent de bone amor
Car ce estoit lor liges sire;
Totes honors en lui remire.
Tost orent .I. grant cerf trové,
Tost l’orent pris et descoplé.
En une lande s’aresta
Por sa meute k’il escouta.
Od lui estoit uns escuiers,
En sa main tenoit .II. levriers.
En la lande, qu’est verde et bele,
Vit Melïons une pucele
Venir sor .I. bel palefroi;
Molt erent riche si conroi.
Un vermeil samit ot vestu,
Estoit a las molt bien cosu;
A son col .I. mantel d’ermine;
Ainc meillor n’afubla roïne.

‘What has become of your great sense,
Your prestige and your knightly valour?
Say what’s wrong, hide none of it.
If you want land or a manor,
Or any other thing I may have,
If it is in my realm
You shall have it as you desire.
I would willingly comfort you’,
Said the king, ‘if I could.
I have a castle on the coast;
There’s not such a one in the world.
It has beautiful woods, rivers
And forests, such as you love so much.
I shall give you this to comfort you;
You can enjoy yourself there very well.’
The king gave it to him in fief;
Melion thanked him for it.
He set out for his castle,
And took a hundred knights there.
The country pleased him well,
And the forest, which he loved very much.
When he had been there for a year,
He loved the country greatly,
For there was no pleasure he might desire or ask for
That he could not find in the forest.
One day Melion went hunting,
He and his foresters.
With him were his huntsmen,
Who loved him truly
Because he was their liege lord;
All honour was reflected in him.
Soon they found a huge stag;
Quickly they took and unleashed the hounds.
Melion stopped in a heath
So he could listen for the pack of hounds.
With him was a squire;
He was restraining two greyhounds in his hand.
In this heath, which was green and pleasant,
Melion saw a maiden
Approaching on a handsome palfrey;
The trappings were most splendid.
She was dressed in scarlet silk
Which was sewn well with laces;
Around her shoulders was an ermine cloak,
No queen ever wore better.

Gent cors et bele espauleüre,
Et blonde la cheveleüre.
Petite bouche bien mollee
Et comme rose encoloree;
Les ex ot vairs, clers et rians:
Molt estoit bele en tos samblans.
Seule venoit sans compaignie,
Molt par fu gente et escavie.
Melïon contre lui en va; f. 343r col. 3
Molt belement le salua.
'Bele', dist il, 'jo vos salu
Del glorious, le roi Jesu.
Dites moi dont vos estes nee
Et que ici vos a menee.'
Cele respont: 'Jel vos dirai,
Que ja de mot n'en mentirai.
Je sui assez de haut parage
Et nee de gentil lignage.
D'Yrlande sui a vos venue;
Sachiés que je sui molt vo drue.
Onques home fors vos n'amai,
Ne jamais plus n'en amerai.
Forment vos ai oï loer,
Onques ne voloie altre amer
Fors vos tot seul; ne jamais jor
Vers nul autre n'avrai amor.'
Quant Melïons a antendu
Que si veu erent atendu,
Par mi les flans l'a enbracie,
Et plus de trente fois baisie.
Puis a tote sa gent mandee,
L'aventure lor a contee.
Cil ont veüe la pucele;
El roialme n'avoit tant bele.
A son castel l'en a mené,
Molt ont grant joie demené.
A grant richoise l'espousa,
Et molt grant joie en demena;
.XV. jors a li pas duré.
.III. ans le tint en grant chierté;
.II. fiex en ot en ces .III. ans,
Molt par en fu lies et joians.
Un jor en la forest ala;
Sa chiere feme ot lui mena.
Un cerf trova, si l'ont chacié,

A pleasing figure, elegant shoulders
And blonde hair.
A nicely shaped little mouth,
The colour of a rose;
She had bright eyes, clear and sparkling:
She was very beautiful in her whole appearance.
She came alone without retinue,
And was most elegant and charming.
Melion went to meet her;
He greeted her very politely.
'Fair lady', he said, 'I greet you
From the glorious one, King Jesus.
Tell me where you were born
And what has brought you here.'
She replied: 'I shall tell you about it,
I shall not tell you a word of a lie.
I am of very high birth
And born of noble lineage.
I have come to you from Ireland;
Know that I am entirely your lover.
I have never loved a man other than you
Nor shall I ever love another.
I have heard you greatly praised,
I never desired to love any other
But you alone; never at any time
Shall I have love for anyone else.'
When Melion realized
That his vows were fulfilled,
He put his arms around her waist
And kissed her more than thirty times.
Then he sent for all his people
And told them what had happened.
They looked at the maiden;
There was none so beautiful in the kingdom.
Melion took her to his castle;
They acted with great rejoicing.
He married her very splendidly
And was filled with great joy about it;
The celebrations lasted fifteen days.
For three years he held her in great affection:
He had two sons by her in these three years
And was very glad and joyful about it.
One day he went into the forest;
He took his beloved wife with him.
He found a stag; they chased it

Et il s'en fuit, le col baissié.
.I. escuier o lui avoit
Ki son bercerië portoit.
En une lande sont entré.
En .I. buisson a regardé;
Un molt grant cerf i voit estant.
Sa feme regarde en riant.
'Dame', fait il, 'se jo voloie,
.I. molt grant cerf vos mosterroie:
Veés le la en cel buisson.'
'Par foi!' fait ele, 'Melïon,
Sachiés se jo de cel cerf n'ai
Que jo jamais ne mangerai.'
Del palefroi chaï pasmee, f. 343r col. 4
Et Melïons l'a relevee.
Qant ne le pot reconforter,
Molt durement prist a plorer.
'Dame', dist il, 'por Deu merci,
Ne plorés mais, jo vos en pri.
J'ai en ma main .I. tel anel;
Ves le ci en mon doit manel.
.II. pieres a ens el caston:
Onques si faites ne vit on;
L'une est blance, l'autre vermeille.
Oïr en poés grant merveille:
De la blance me toucerés
Et sor mon chief le meterés
Qant jo serai despoilliés nus,
Leus devenrai, grans et corsus.
Por vostre amor le cerf prendrai
Et del lart vos aporterai.
Por Deu vos pri, ci m'atendés
Et ma despoille me gardés.
Je vos lais ma vie et ma mort:
Il n'i auroit nul reconfort
Se de l'autre touciés n'estoie;
Jamais nul jor hom ne seroie.'
Il apela son escuier,
Si le commande a deschaucier.
Cil vint avant, sel descaucha,
Et Melïon el bois entra.
Ses dras osta, nus est remez,
De son mantel s'est afublez.
Cele l'a de l'anel touchié
Qant le vit nu et despoillié.

And it fled, its neck lowered.
He had a squire with him
Who was carrying his quiver.
They went on to a heath.
Melion looked into a bush:
He saw a huge stag standing there.
Laughing, Melion looked at his wife.
‘Lady’, he said, ‘if I wished,
I would show you a huge stag:
See it there in that bush.’
‘By my faith’, she said, ‘Melion,
Know that if I do not have some of that stag
I shall never eat again.’
She fell from her palfrey, fainting,
And Melion picked her up.
When he could not comfort her,
She began to weep bitterly.
‘Lady’, he said, ‘for the grace of God,
Never cry, I beg of you.
I have on my hand such a ring;
See it here on my ring-finger.
It has two stones in its setting:
No-one has ever seen such work;
One stone is white, the other crimson.
You may hear a great marvel of them:
You will touch me with the white stone
And place it on my head
When I am undressed and naked,
And I shall become a huge strong wolf.
For love of you, I shall capture the stag
And bring some of its meat back to you.
I beg you, for God’s sake, wait for me here
And look after my clothing.
I leave you my life and my death:
There will be no recovery
If I am not touched with the other stone;
I should never again be a man.’
He called his squire,
And ordered him to remove his boots.
He came forward, removed the boots
And Melion went into the woods.
He removed his clothes, remained naked,
And wrapped himself in his cloak.
She touched him with the ring
When she saw him naked and undressed.

Lors devint leu grant et corsus:
En grant paine s'est enbatus.
Li leus s'en vait, molt tost corant
La ou il vit le cerf gisant;
Tost se fu en la trace mis.
Anchois sera grant li estris
Que il l'ait pris ne adesé,
Ne que il avra del lardé.
La dame dist a l'escuier:
'Or le laissons assés chacier'.
Montee est, plus ne se targa,
Et l'escuier o lui mena.
Droit vers Yrlande, sa contree,
En est la dame retornee.
Al havene vint, nef i trova;
As mariniers tantost parla
Qui l'ont mené a Duveline,
Une cité sor la marine,
Qui son pere ert, le roi d'Yrlande; f. 343v col. 1
Des or ot ce qu'ele demande.
Lués qu'ele fu al port venue,
A grant joie fu receüe.
De li lairomes aïtant,
De Melïon dirons avant.
Melïon, ki le cerf chaça,
A grant merveille le hasta.
En la lande l'a conseü,
Tot maintenant l'a abatu,
Puis prist de lui .I. grant lardé;
En sa bouche l'en a porté.
Hastivement s'en retorna
La ou il sa feme laissa,
Mais il ne l'i a pas trovee;
Vers Yrlande s'en est tornee.
Molt fu dolans, ne set que face,
Qant il ne le troeve en la place.
Mais neporqant, se leus estoit,
Sens et memoire d'ome avoit.
Tant atendi k'il avespra.
Une nef vit que on charga,
Ki la nuit devoit eskiper
Et en Yrlande droit aler.
Envers cele part s'en ala,
Tant atendi k'il anuita.
Entrés i est par aventure,

Then he became a huge and strong wolf:
He had got himself into deep trouble.
    The wolf set out, running quickly
To where he saw the stag lying;
He set himself to the scent at once.
There will be great strife before
He has captured or approached it
Before he has any of the meat.
    The lady said to the squire:
'Now let him hunt for a while'.
She mounted, tarried no longer,
And took the squire with her.
Straight towards Ireland, her own country,
The lady went back.
She went to the harbour, found a ship
And soon spoke to the crew
Who transported her to Dublin,
A maritime city,
Which belonged to her father, the King of Ireland;
Now she had what she required.
As soon as she came into the port
She was welcomed with great joy.
We will leave her at this point,
And tell further about Melion.
    Melion, who was chasing the stag,
Harried it intently.
He pursued it on to a heath,
And at once he brought it down;
Then he took a large piece of meat from it;
He carried it away in his mouth.
He quickly went back
To where he had left his wife,
But he did not find her there;
She had set out for Ireland.
He was very sad and did not know what to do
When he could not find her in that place.
But even though he was a wolf,
He retained the reason and memory of a man.
He waited until evening fell.
He saw a ship being loaded
Which was to sail that night
And go straight to Ireland.
He made his way there
And waited until night fell.
He took a risk and boarded it,

Car de sa vie n'avoit cure.
Sos une cloie s'est muciés
Et s'est tapis et enbuissiés.
Li maronier se sont hasté,
Car molt avoient bon oré.
Lors s'en tornerent vers Yrlande;
Cascuns avoit quanque demande.
Il sachierent amont lor voiles;
Al ciel corent et as estoiles,
Et l'endemain a l'ajornee
Virent d'Yrlande la contree.
Et qant il sont al port venu,
Melïon n'a plus atendu,
Ains issi fors de son cloier,
De la nef sailli el gravier.
Li maronier l'ont escrié
Et de lor aviron geté.
Li uns l'a d'un baston feru,
A poi k'il ne l'ont retenu;
Lies est qant lor fu escapés.
Sor une montaigne est alés;
Molt a regardé le païs
Ou il savoit ses anemis.
Encore avoit il son lardé f. 343v col. 2
Ke de sa terre ot aporté;
Grant faim avoit, si l'a mangié,
Molt l'avoit la mer traveillié.
En une forest est alés,
Vaches et bues i a trovés.
Molt en ocit et estrangla;
Iluec sa guerre comencha.
Plus en i a ocis de cent
A cest premier commencement.
La gent ki estoit el boscage
Virent des bestes le damage;
Corant vindrent a la cité,
Al roi l'ont dit et aconté
Qu'en la forest .I. leu avoit
Ki le païs tot escilloit.
Molt a ocis de lor almaille;
Mais tot ce tient li rois a faille.
Tant a alé par la forest,
Par montaignes et par dessert,
Que a .X. leus s'acompaigna:
Tant les blandi et losenga

For he cared nothing for his life.
He concealed himself beneath a hurdle,
Crouched down and was hidden.
The mariners made haste
For they had a fair wind.
Then they turned towards Ireland;
Each of them had what he wished.
They hoisted up the sails
And steered by the sky and the stars,
And the next day at dawn
They saw the country of Ireland.
And when they had come into harbour,
Melion waited no longer;
He came out from his bench
And leapt from the boat on to the shingle.
The sailors shouted at him
And threw their oars at him.
One of them struck him with a stick
And they nearly managed to catch him;
He was glad when he had escaped from them.
He went up a mountain
And looked closely at the country
Where he knew his enemies to be.
He still had his piece of meat,
Which he had brought from his own land;
He was very hungry, so he ate it,
The sea crossing had exhausted him.
He went into a forest,
And found cows and oxen there.
He killed and strangled many of them;
There he began his war.
He killed more than a hundred of them
At this early stage.
The people who lived in the woodland
Saw the loss of their animals.
They went running to the city,
Spoke to the king and said
That there was a wolf in the forest,
Which was ravaging all the land.
It had killed many of their livestock;
But the king thought nothing of all this.
Melion went so far through the forest,
Through the mountains and the wasteland,
That he was joined by ten wolves;
He coaxed and persuaded them so much

Que avoec lui les a menés,
Et font totes ses volentés.
Par le païs molt se forvoient,
Homes et femes malmenoient.
Un an tot plain ont si esté:
Tot le païs ont degasté,
Homes et femes ocioient;
Tote la terre destruioient.
Molt se savoient bien gaitier;
Li rois nes pooit engingnier.
Une nuit orent molt erré,
Traveillié furent et pené.
En .I. bois joste Duveline,
Sor .I. tertre les la marine –
Li bois estoit les une plaigne
Tot environ ot grant compaigne –
Por reposer i sont entré.
Traï seront et engané:
Un païsant les a veüs;
Al roi en est tantost corus.
‘Sire’, dist il, ‘el bois reont
Li .XI. leu colchié s’i sont.’
Qant li rois l’ot, molt en fu liés;
Ses homes en a araisniés.
Li rois ses homes apela.
‘Baron’, dist il, ‘entendés cha!
Sachiés de voir les .XI. lous
En ma forest vit cis hom tous.’
Les rois dont soelent les pors prandre f. 343v col. 3
Environ le bois ont fait tendre.
Qant on les ot tot portendus,
Lors monta, n’i atarga plus.
Sa fille dist avoec venra
Et la chace des leus verra.
Tantost se sont el bois alé,
Tot coiement et a celé;
Le bois ont tot avironé,
Car gent i ot a grant plenté
Ki portent haces et maçues,
Et li alqant espees nues.
Adont i ot .M. chiens hués
Ki les leus orent tost trovés.
Melïon vit k’il ert traïs:
Bien set que il est malbaillis.
Li chien les vont molt angoissant

That he took them with him
And they did all he wished.
They went roaming through the countryside
And attacked men and women.
Matters remained like this for a full year:
They laid waste all the country,
Killed men and women
And ravaged all the land.
They knew how to protect themselves very well;
The king could not trick them.
One night they had roamed widely
And were exhausted and wearied.
There was a wood near Dublin,
On a hillock next to the sea –
The wood was near a plain,
Completely surrounded by open countryside –
And they entered it to rest themselves.
They will be betrayed and tricked:
A peasant saw them,
And at once ran to the king.
'Sire', he said, 'in the round wood
The eleven wolves have laid up.'
When the king heard it, he was very glad,
And he addressed his men.
The king called his men.
'Barons', he said, 'listen to me.
Know in truth that this man here
Has seen all eleven wolves in my forest.'
They had the nets, which they used to capture boar
Stretched around the woods.
When they had been all stretched out,
He mounted and did not delay any longer.
His daughter said she would come with him
And watch the hunting of the wolves.
At once they went to the wood,
In complete secrecy and well hidden;
They surrounded the wood completely,
For there were a great many people
Who carried axes and cudgels,
And some had naked swords.
Now there were a thousand excited hounds,
Which quickly found the wolves.
Melion saw that he was betrayed:
He understood that he was in trouble.
The dogs went for them viciously

Et il vienent as rois fuiant.
Tot sont detrancié et ocis;
Un tos seus n'en escapa vis
Fors Melïon, qui escapa,
Par deseure les rois lança.
En .I. grant bois s'en est alé;
Par engien lor est escapé.
A la cité sont repairié;
Li rois se fait durement lié.
Li rois grant joie demena
Que il des .XI. leus .X. a,
Car molt bien s'est vengié des leus;
Escapés ne l'en est c'uns seus.
Sa fille dist: 'C'est li plus grans;
Encor les fera tos dolans'.
Qant Melïon fu escapés,
Sor une montaigne est montés;
Molt fu dolans, molt li pesa
De ses leus que il perdu a.
Molt a traveillié longement,
Mais ore avra socors briement:
Artus en Yrlande venoit,
Car une pais faire i voloit.
Mellé estoient el païs,
Acorder vout les anemis.
Sor les Romains voloit conquerre;
Mener les voloit en sa guerre.
Li rois venoit priveement,
Ne menoit mie molt grant gent:
.XX. chevaliers od lui menoit.
Molt fist bel tans, bon vent avoit,
Molt fu la nef et riche et grans.
Il i avoit bons esturmans;
Molt par fu bien apareillie, f. 343v col. 4
D'ommes et d'armes bien garnie.
Lor escus furent fors pendus.
Melïons les a coneüs.
Primes conut l'escu Gawain
Et puis a ravisé l'Iwain
Et puis l'escu le roi Ydel;
Tot ce li plot et li fu bel.
L'escu le roi bien ravisa;
Sachiés de voir grant joie en a.
Molt en fu liés, molt s'esjoï,
Car encor quide avoir merci.

And they came fleeing into the nets.
All were cut to pieces and killed;
Not a single one of them escaped alive,
Save for Melion, who fled
By leaping over the nets.
He went into a great wood;
He had escaped by his ingenuity.
The hunters went back to the city;
The king was very pleased.
The king felt great joy
That he had ten of the eleven wolves,
So he had avenged himself well on the wolves:
Only one of them alone had escaped.
His daughter said: 'This one was the largest;
He will still make them all regret it'.
When Melion had escaped,
He climbed a mountain;
He was very unhappy and troubled
About his wolves, which he had lost.
For a long time he had suffered,
But in a short while now he will have help:
Arthur was coming to Ireland,
For he wished to make a peace treaty.
There were conflicts in the land
And he wished to bring agreement to the factions;
He wanted to conquer the Romans,
He wanted to lead them [the Irish] in his war.
The king was travelling secretly,
He did not bring very many people;
He brought with him twenty knights.
The weather was fine, they had a good wind;
The ship was both splendid and large
And there was a good navigator;
It was very well equipped
And supplied with men and arms.
Their shields were hung over the side.
Melion recognized them.
First he recognized Gauvain's shield,
And then he noticed Yvain's,
And then King Yder's shield;
All this delighted him and was pleasing to him.
He recognized the king's shield easily;
Know truly that he was very joyful because of this:
He was very happy about it and rejoiced greatly,
For he believed he would find mercy again.

Vers la terre vienent siglant,
Li vens lor est venus devant,
Ne porent prendre cil le port;
Adont i ot grant desconfort.
A .I. autre port sont torné,
A .II. lieues de la cité.
Un grant castel i ot jadis,
Mais ore estoit tos agastis,
Et qant il furent arivé
Nuis estoit, si ert avespré.
Li rois s'est al port arivés.
Molt s'est traveilliés et penés
Car la nef li ot fait grant mal.
Il apela son senescal.
'Alés', dist il, 'la fors veïr
U jo porrai anuit gesir.'
Cil est a la nef retornés;
Les canberlens a apelés.
'Issiés', fait il, 'ça fors od moi,
Si atornés l'ostel le roi.'
Fors de la nef en sont issu,
Si en sont a l'ostel venu.
.II. chierges i ont fait porter,
Molt tost les firent alumer.
Kieutes i portent et tapis,
Hastivement fu bien garnis.
Adont s'en est li rois issus;
Droit a l'ostel en est venus,
Et qant il i fu ens entré
Liés est qant si bel l'a trové.
Melïons pas ne se targa:
Tostans contre la nef ala.
Pres de la chasvie est arestus;
Molt les a bien reconeüs.
Bien set se del roi n'a confort
Qu'en Yrlande prendra la mort.
Mais il ne set comment aler,
Leus est et si ne set parler.
Et nekedent tostans ira, f. 344r col. 1
En aventure se metra.
A l'uis le roi en est venus;
Tot ses barons a coneüs.
Il ne s'est de rien arestés;
Tot droit al roi en est alés,
En aventure est de morir.

They came sailing towards the land,
But the wind veered in front of them.
They could not reach the harbour;
Now Melion had great despair.
They turned towards another port,
Two leagues from the city.
Once there was a great castle there,
But now it was completely ruined,
And when they arrived
It was night, it had become dark.
The king reached the port.
He was very tired and suffering
For the ship had made him very ill.
He called his seneschal.
'Go', he said, 'and see out there
Where I can sleep tonight.'
The seneschal went back to the ship
And called the chamberlains.
'Come on land with me', he said,
'And prepare lodging for the king.'
They disembarked
And came to the lodging.
They had two torches carried there
And quickly had them lit.
They carried quilts and floor-coverings
And quickly prepared everything well.
Then the king left the ship
And came straight to the lodging,
And when he had gone in
He was glad to find it all so pleasant.
Melion did not hesitate:
He went at once towards the ship.
He halted near the castle
And recognized them very well.
He well knew, if he had no help from the king,
That he would die in Ireland;
But he did not know how to proceed:
He was a wolf and could not speak.
Nevertheless he would go forward at once,
And risk his life.
He came to the king's door;
He knew all the barons.
He did not stop for a moment,
But went straight up to the king,
Although it might mean his death.

As piés le roi se lait chaïr,
Ne se voloit pas redrecier;
Dont la veïsciés merveillier.
Ce dist li rois: ‘Merveilles voi!
Cis leus est ci venus a moi.
Or sachiés bien qu’il est privés.
Mar ert touchiés ne adesés.’
Qant li mangier sont apresté
Et li barons orent lavé,
Li rois lava, si s’est assis;
Devant ax ont les dobliers mis.
Li rois a Ydel apelé,
Se l’assist joste son costé.
As piés le roi jut Melïons;
Bien conut trestot les barons.
Li rois le regarda sovent.
Un pain li done et il le prent,
Puis le commença a mangier.
Li rois s’en prist a merveillier;
Al roi Ydel dist: ‘Esgardés!
Sachiés que cis leus est privés’.
Li rois .I. lardé li dona
Et il volentiers le manga.
Lors dist Gavains: ‘Segnor, veés;
Cis leus est tous desnaturés’.
Entr’aus dïent tot li baron
C’ainc si cortois leu ne vit on.
Li rois fait aporter le vin
Devant le leu en .I. bacin.
Li leus le voit, beüt en a;
Sachiés que molt le desira
Qu’il a del vin assés beü,
Et li rois l’a molt bien veü.
Qant del mangier furent levé
Et li baron orent lavé,
Fors issirent sor le gravoi.
Tostans fu li leus ot le roi;
Onques ne sot cel lieu aler
C’on le peüst de lui oster.
Qant li rois volt aler colchier,
Son lit rova apareillier.
Dormir s’en vait, molt est lassés,
Et li leus est od lui alés,
Ainc nel pot on de li partir, f. 344r col. 2
As piés le roi en vait gesir.

He let himself fall at the king's feet
And would not rise again;
Then you would have seen amazement there.
The king spoke thus: 'I can see marvels!
This wolf has come here to me.
Now know well that he is tame.
Woe betide anyone who touches or approaches him.'
When the meal was ready,
The barons washed,
And the king washed and sat down;
The dishes were placed before them.
The king called to Yder
And sat him at his side.
Melion lay at the king's feet
And recognized all the barons well.
The king glanced at him frequently.
He gave Melion a piece of bread and he took it;
Then he began to eat it.
The king began to marvel at this;
He said to King Yder: 'Look!
You can be sure this wolf is tame.'
The king gave Melion a piece of meat
And he ate it gladly.
Then Gawain said: 'My lords, look;
This wolf is completely unnatural.'
All the barons said amongst themselves
That no-one had never seen such a well-mannered wolf.
The king had wine brought
Before the wolf in a basin.
The wolf saw it and drank some;
You may be sure he wanted it very much,
For he drank deeply of the wine,
And the king watched him closely.
When they had risen from the meal
And the barons had washed,
They went out on to the shore.
The wolf was always with the king;
He did not know anywhere he could go
Where he could be separated from him.
When the king wanted to retire,
He ordered his bed to be prepared;
He went to sleep, he was very tired,
And the wolf went with him;
No-one could make him leave him;
He went to lie at the king's feet.

Li rois d’Yrlande a mes eüs
C’Artus estoit a lui venus;
Molt en fu liés, grant joie en a.
Bien main a l’aube se leva,
Deci al port en est alés;
Ses barons a o lui menés,
Tot droit al port en vint errant.
Molt s’entrefirent bel samblant;
Artus li mostra grant amor
Et fait li a molt grant honor.
Qant il le voit a lui venir,
Ne se volt mie enorgoillir,
Ains leva sus, si l’a baisié.
Li ceval sont apareillié;
Ne targent plus, ains sont monté,
Ore en iront vers la cité.
Li rois monte en son palefroi,
Se son leu a pris bon conroi.
Ne le voloit mie laissier;
Il fu tos jors a son estrier.
D’Artus fu molt li rois joians,
Li conrois fu riches et grans.
A Duveline sont venu
Et el grant palais descendu.
Qant li rois monta el doignon,
Li leus li tint par le giron;
Qant li rois Artus fu assis,
Li leus s’est a ses pïés mis.
Li rois a son leu regardé;
Joste le dois l’a apelé.
Ensamble sisent li doi roi,
Molt par i ot riche conroi,
Molt bien servoient li baron;
De totes pars par la maison
Servi furent a grant plenté.
Mais Melïon a regardé;
Enmi la sale ravisa
Celui ki sa feme enmena.
Bien sot la mer estoit passés
Et en Yrlande estoit alés.
Par l’espaule le vait saisir:
Cil ne se pot a lui tenir;
En la sale l’a abatu.
Ja l’eüst mort et confondu,
Ne fuissent li sergant le roi

The King of Ireland received a message
That Arthur had come to him;
He was very glad and rejoiced greatly.
He rose very early at dawn
And went to the harbour,
Taking his barons with him;
They all made straight for the harbour.
They greeted each other in a friendly manner;
Arthur showed him great love
And did him great honour.
When he saw the King of Ireland coming towards him,
He did not wish to appear haughty,
But stood up and embraced him.
The horses were ready;
They tarried no longer, but mounted,
Then rode them towards the city.
The king mounted his palfrey
And took good care of his wolf;
He did not wish to leave him behind.
All the time Melion was at his stirrup.
The king was very happy to see Arthur,
The retinue was large and magnificent.
They came to Dublin
And dismounted at the great palace.
When the king went up into the keep,
The wolf held him by the skirt of his robe;
When King Arthur was seated,
The wolf placed himself at his feet.
The king looked at his wolf;
He called him near to the table.
The two kings sat together;
The retinue was splendid,
The barons waited on them very well:
In all parts of the dwelling
They were served lavishly.
But Melion looked around;
He noticed in the middle of the hall
The man his wife had taken away with her.
He knew that he had crossed the sea
And had gone to Ireland.
He went to seize him by the shoulder:
The man could not keep him at bay;
Melion attacked him in the hall:
He would have soon killed and destroyed him
Had it not been for the king's servants,

Qui la vindrent a grant desroi;
De totes pars par le palais
Fus aporterent et gamais.
Ja eüsent le leu tué, f. 344r col. 3
Qant li rois Artus a crié,
‘Mar ert touchiés’, fait il, ‘par foi!
Sachiés que li leus est a moi’.
Dist Ydel, li fiex Yrïen:
‘Segnor, ne faites mie bien;
S’il nel haïst, nel touchast pas’,
Et dist li rois: ‘Ydel, droit as’.
Artus s’en est del dois tornés;
Deci al leu en est alés,
Al vallet dist: ‘Tu jehiras
Porcoi t’a pris ou ja morras’.
Melïons le roi regarda;
Celui estraint et il cria.
Cil a le roi merci rové;
Dist k’il contera verité.
Maintenant a le roi conté
Comment la dame l’ot mené,
Comment del anel le toucha
Et en Yrlande l’en mena.
Tot li a dit et coneü
Comment li estoit avenu.
Artus a le roi apelé:
‘Or sai bien que c’est verité;
De mon baron m’est il molt bel.
Faites moi delivrer l’anel
Et vo fille, ki l’enporta;
Malvaisement engignié l’a.’
Li rois s’en est d’iluec tornés,
En sa cambre s’en est entrés;
Le roi Ydel o lui mena.
Tant le blandi et losenga
Qu’ele li a l’anel doné;
Il l’a al roi Artu porté.
Si tost con l’anel a veü,
Melïon l’a bien coneü;
Al roi vint, si s’agenoilla
Et andeus les pies li baisa.
Li rois Artus le vout touchier;
Gavains nel volt pas otroier.
‘Biaus oncles’, fait il, ‘non ferés!
En une chambre l’en menrés,

Who saw the great commotion;
From all parts of the palace
They carried sticks and cudgels.
They would certainly have killed the wolf
When King Arthur cried out:
‘Woe betide anyone who touches him’, he said, ‘by my faith!
Know that this wolf is mine’.
Yder, son of Yrien, said:
‘My lords, you are not doing right at all;
If the wolf had not hated him, he would not have touched him’,
And the king said: ‘Yder, you are right’.
Arthur moved away from the table,
And went right up to the wolf.
He said to the servant: ‘You will confess
Why he seized you or you shall die at once’.
Melion looked at the king;
He gripped the servant and he cried out.
He begged the king for mercy,
Saying that he would tell him the truth.
At once he told the king
How the lady had brought him with her,
How she had touched Melion with the ring,
And taken him there to Ireland.
All this he said and made known,
Just as it had happened.
Arthur addressed the King of Ireland,
‘Now I know well that this is true;
I am very happy about my baron.
Have the ring brought to me
And your daughter, who took it away;
She has played an evil trick on him.’
The King of Ireland left there;
He went into his chamber,
Taking King Yder with him.
He cajoled and persuaded his daughter so much
That she gave him the ring;
He brought it to King Arthur.
As soon as he saw the ring,
Melion recognized it well;
He went to the king, fell on his knees
And kissed both his feet.
King Arthur wanted to touch him,
But Gawain would not permit it.
‘Good uncle’, he said, ‘don’t!
Take him to a chamber

Tot seul a seul priveement,
Que il n'ait honte de la gent'.
Li rois a Gavain apelé,
Si a od lui Ydel mené,
En une cambre l'en mena.
Qant il fu ens, l'uis si ferma,
L'anel li a sor le chief mis;
D'ome li aparut le vis,
Tote sa figure mua. f. 344r col. 4
Lors devint hom et si parla.
As pies le roi se lait cheïr;
D'un mantel le firent covrir.
Qant le virent home formé,
Molt ont grant joie demené.
De pitié li rois en plora,
Et en plorant li demanda
Comment li estoit avenu,
Par pechié l'avoient perdu.
Son canberlenc a fait mander,
Riches dras li fist aporter;
Bien le vesti et conrea
Et en la sale le mena.
Merveillié sont par la maison
Qant voient venir Melïon.
Li rois a sa fille amenee.
Al roi Artus l'a presentee,
A tote sa volenté faire,
Voille l'ardoir, voille desfaire.
Melïons dist: 'Jel toucherai
De la piere, ja nel lairai'.
Artus li a dit: 'Non ferés!
Por vos beaus enfans le lairés.'
Tot li baron l'en ont proié;
Melïon lor a otroié.
Li rois Artus tant demora
Que la guerre tot acorda.
En sa contree en est alés,
Melïon a od lui menés;
Molt en fu liés, grant joie en a.
Sa feme en Yrlande laissa:
A deables l'a commandee;
Jamais n'iert jor de li amee,
Por ce qu'ele l'ot si bailli,
Con vos avés el conte oï.
Ne le volt il onques reprendre,

In absolute privacy
So that he is not shamed in front of people.'
The king called Gawain,
And he took Yder with him;
He led Melion to a chamber.
When he was inside, he closed the door.
He put the ring to Melion's head;
His face appeared like a man's,
All his body changed.
Then he became a man and spoke.
He let himself fall at the king's feet;
They wrapped him in a cloak.
When they saw him shaped as a man,
They felt very great joy.
The king wept for pity over him
And weeping asked him
How this had happened to him;
Through misfortune they had lost him.
He had his chamberlain sent for,
And had rich clothing brought to him;
He dressed Melion and turned him out well
And took him into the hall.
Throughout the dwelling they marvelled
When they saw Melion coming.
The king brought his daughter.
He presented her to King Arthur,
To do with as he wished,
Whether to burn her or have her torn to pieces.
Melion said: 'I shall touch her
With the stone, nothing will stop me'.
Arthur said to him: 'Don't!
For the sake of your beautiful children, let her be'.
All the barons begged it of him;
Melion granted their wish.
Arthur remained there
Until the war was settled.
Then he set out for his own land,
Taking Melion with him;
Melion was very glad, he rejoiced at it.
He left his wife in Ireland.
He commended her to the devil;
She would never again be loved by him
Because she had mistreated him so badly,
As you have heard in the tale.
He never wished to take her back,

Ains le laissast ardoir u pendre.
Melïon dist: ‘Ja ne faldra
Que de tot sa feme kerra,
Qu’en la fin ne soit malbaillis;
Ne doit pas croire tos ses dis’.
Vrais est li lais de Melïon,
Ce dïent bien tot li baron.

Explicit de Melïon

Chi fine Melïon

He would like to have let her burn or be dismembered.
Melion said: ‘It will never fail to happen
That he who believes his wife completely
Will be ruined in the end;
He should not believe all she says’.
The *Lay of Melion* is true,
As all the nobles say.

This is the end of *Melion*.

Here ends *Melion*.

NOTES

Horak used MS C (which he called P, a designation followed by Grimes) for his base text, but lists extensive variants from the Turin MS (T), since destroyed. As these variants are also reproduced in Grimes, I have not reproduced them here; however, I have included T's additions, which Horak absorbs into his main text.

2. 'conqueroit': Monmerqué/Michel read 'conquetoit'. Grimes includes a reasonably complete list of errors made by these editors and by Horak (p. 47).

22. 'que de nul': Horak substitutes 'de qui nus' without support from T or further comment.

36. 'pucelë': Horak and Grimes tacitly substitute 'demoiselle', presumably for metrical purposes. Horak makes no reference to any alternative reading in T.

56. 'itel': to preserve the rhyme, Grimes and Tobin substitute 'son per', based on T's authority: 'En tout le monde n'a son per'.

72. 'si forestier': Grimes, Horak and Monmerqué/Michel read 'li forestier'.

77. 'tost l'orent pris et descoplé': Horak substitutes 'hastieument orent descoplé' from T.

80. 'meute': Grimes, Horak and Monmerqué/Michel emend to 'muete'.

91. 'et': Horak substitutes 'ot' from T.

118. 'atendu': Tobin substitutes 'avenu'.

126. After v.126, T adds: 'l'endemain mandes ses amis / Et tous les homes dou païs'.

137. 'son': Tobin emends to 'sa'.

141. 'estant': Horak substitutes 'gisant' from T.

144. 'mosterroie': Grimes, Horak and Monmerqué/Michel emend to 'mostreroie'.

156. 'manel': Monmerqué/Michel note that this may be read as 'm'anel' or as a form of 'manuel'. Yet the more plausible 'm'anel' results in an unwieldy repetition of 'anel' as the rhyme-word (p. 49 n. 1); this has also been rejected by Grimes, Horak and Tobin.

172. After v. 172, T adds: ‘tenés l’anel ma douce amie / Je vous laise ma mort et ma vie.’

174. MS ‘se’.

177. ‘ses’: MS ‘sest’.

195. ‘havene’: Grimes notes that the usual form is ‘hafne’, citing as example *Guigemar*, vv. 150, 151, 168, and that the first *e* is apparently not counted as a syllable (p. 108 n.).

231. ‘Lors’: Horak reads ‘Il’.

282. After v. 282, T adds: ‘Sy con coustume iert de travail / Esret orent tout le journail’.

295. T substitutes for vv. 295-96: ‘“Amis”, dist il, “el boiz reont / Li .XJ. leu couchiet y sont”’.

301. ‘on’: all editors emend C’s ‘ot’.

330. ‘les’: Horak substitutes ‘vous’ from T.

375. ‘nef’: Horak substitutes ‘mer’ from T.

376. After v. 376, T adds: ‘Hors de la nef en est issus, / A une montaigne est venus. / Une maison avoit dedens; / Jadis i avoit eü gens’.

379. ‘il’: omitted in C and T.

393. ‘de la chasvie’: the precise meaning here is unclear. Tobin substitutes ‘del chastel’, echoing T’s reading ‘del castel’. Horak prints ‘chaivie’ (‘ruin’?) without further explanation (but cf. *chaif*, ‘dilapidated’). Monmerqué/Michel note that ‘*chasvie* paroît signifier *fosse*’ (p. 59 n.2), citing B. de Roquefort’s equation of *chaver* with ditch-digging in *Le Glossaire de la langue romane*. In *Dictionnaire de l’ancien français: Le Moyen Âge* (Paris: Larousse, 1994), A. J. Greimas similarly links *chaver* with *chever*, but also equates the related verb *chaver*[2] with *coucher*, which might result in a meaning closer to *ostel*.

393. ‘arestus’: Grimes emends to ‘restus’, thus restoring the metre of the line.

438. ‘veü’: Horak reads ‘peü’.

446. ‘rova’: Horak reads ‘trova’.

451. ‘a mes’: I have followed Horak, Grimes and Tobin in emending P’s ‘a merveille’ (cf. T ‘a mez’), which better preserves both the metre and the narrative logic.

477. ‘li leus’: Horak, Monmerqué/Michel and Grimes follow C faithfully here in reading ‘et li leus’. The present edition follows Tobin’s tacit omission of ‘et’ to supply a more sound logical and metrical reading.

478. ‘li leus’: P reads ‘et li leus’, which most editors have allowed to stand. I have followed Tobin in omitting ‘et’ to clarify the sense of the line.

536. MS ‘ans .II.’.

562. ‘la sale’: Grimes reads ‘sa sale’.

576. After v. 576, T adds: ‘Quant il ot toute la guerre acordee, / Il s’en revait en sa contree’.

580. ‘Sa’: Horak reads ‘La’.

583. ‘si bailli’: both Monmerqué/Michel and Grimes note that ‘bailli’ should be understood as ‘malbailli’ (cf. v. 589). Monmerqué/Michel offer a possible restoration: ‘Por ce qu’el l’ot si mal bailli’ (p. 67 n.1).

592. Kittredge wonders whether the reference to nobles (‘li baron’) in the following line, ‘ce dïent bien tot li baron’ (v. 592: ‘thus say all the nobles’), should be read as ‘li breton’ (‘*Arthur and Gorlagon*’, p. 168 n.2): the insertion of ‘baron’ may be a transcription error. In the prologue to *Equitan*, Marie describes the Breton composers as coming from the nobility, rather than being professional musicians; the connection is strengthened by her rhyming of *barun* with *Bretun* (vv. 1-2). Perhaps, in *Melion*, ‘li baron’ stands as a synonym for ‘li breton’, aristocratic composers of true adventures.

594. ‘kerra’: Horak transcribes this as ‘herra’, but for sense substitutes ‘crerra’ from T’s model ‘crera’.

Biclarel

Trop est cilz fox qui se marie f. 188 col. a
An fame de jolive vie:
Ce dou tout ne se viaut soufrir
Et lui a toute honte offrir
An touz periz d'ame et de cors,
Dont il ne sera ja jour hors;
Et qui leurs cuers bien conneüst,
Ja an telz periz ne feüst.
Mes por ce nes connoist nus mais,
Quar un te di, autre te fais.
Par Biclaret le peuz savoir
Qui tresbien t'an dira le voir.
Biclarel fu uns chevaliers –
Hardiz et courageus et fiers,
Plains de noblece et de vertu –
De la meson le roy Artu.
Mes de ce trop a blamer fist:
Qu'il crut se que sa fame dist;
Acez de tieux an est ancore.
Amours courut Biclarel sore.
Son cuer an une dame mist,
Et si formant anmer le fist
An li si formant se fia
Que a li panre se lia.
Mout c'est an home folie mise
Quant il pert sa bonne franchise
Et se lie pour sa vie user
An ce qu'il deüst refuser.
Biclarel la dame espoussa
Et quanqu'elle dist il losa;
Molt l'ama et mout la prisoit
Et el lui, sicon le disoit.
Biclarel, sicon Dieu plaissi,
Ot une taiche qui taissi
Et que nulz fors lui ne seüst, f. 188 col. b
Se sa folie ne feüst.
Po avient que hons telz taiche oit,
Quar chascun mois beste il estoit.
Deus jours trestoz antiers ou .IIJ.
Demouroit beste par le bois:
Avec autres bestes onjoit
Et char de beste crue manjoit
Et conme loups grans et corsus,
Fort cuir et de mambres ossus.
Ne pour ce ne perdoit son san,

He is very foolish who marries
A fickle wench:
It is just not worth it for him to suffer
And to expose himself to all that shame
With great risk to soul and body,
From which he will never be free;
And he who understood women's hearts well
Would never be in such peril.
But, on account of this, no-one ever understands them,
For I'll tell you one thing, and you'll do another.
You can know it through Biclarel,
Who will tell you the truth of it very well.
Biclarel was a knight –
Strong and brave and fierce,
Full of nobility and virtue –
Of the household of King Arthur.
But he could be greatly blamed for this:
That he believed what his wife said;
There are still a great many such men.
Love attacked Biclarel greatly.
He gave his heart to a lady,
And she made him love her so violently
That he trusted in her so greatly
That he committed himself to marrying her.
Madness has taken hold of a man completely
When he loses his good freedom
And binds himself to spend his life
Doing what he should have refused.
Biclarel married the lady,
And whatever she said he praised;
He loved her very much and esteemed her highly
And she him, so she used to say.
As it pleased God, Biclarel
Had a trait that he hid
And that no-one but he would have known,
Had it not been for his foolishness.
It is rare that someone hears of such a trait,
Because every month he became a beast;
Two or three whole days
He would live as a beast in the forest;
He would dwell amongst other beasts
And eat the raw flesh of beasts,
And in the form of a big, strong wolf,
With a sturdy hide and bony limbs;
He did not lose his wits because of this,

Sa memoire ne son asan.
Ge te conte tout verité
Et certain conme autorité.
Ou livre dou Grael est mis;
La l'orras, se tu tout le lis.
Trois jours se fu ou bois tenus
Quant a l'ostel fu revenus.
Quant Biclarel dou bois revint,
Sa fame delez lui se tint,
Qui son cuer tout donné avoit
A un chevalier qu'elle anmoit.
Lors l'a par faintise aprochié
Et par faus samblant atouchié,
Humble, antre plorer et rire.
Piteussement li print a dire:
'Sire, quant Dieux qui tout crea
L'asambler de nous otrea
Et vost qu'antre nous deus fusiens
Uns cors et .J. cuer eüssiens,
Uns sanc et une voulanté,
L'uns fust ansinc an l'autre anté,
Sanz couvrir et sanz decevrer,
Ansinc devons andui onerer.
S'ansinque n'est, nous meferrons
Et ancontre Dieu mout errons.
Androit de moi n'i erre mie;
De cuer, de cors suis vostre amie
Sanz couvrir fet ne voulanté;
N'onques mes cuers ne fu tanté
De vous celer rien que ge sante.
Ne cuidiez pas que ge vous mante:
[S'un de me]s pancers vous celoie, f. 188 col. c
[Ge croi] qu'an celle hore morroie.
Dieux ne nous vost pas assambler
Pour les pancers l'un l'autre anbler,
Ne por estre coiz ne cuvers,
Mes por estre a l'un l'autre uvers,
Car se de moi vous vous couvrez,
Au darrier le pis an avrez.
Quant fame et mariz sont ansamble,
Et l'uns le chatel a l'autre amble,
Et chascuns fait sa bource coie,
Il ne peuent tenir bonne voie,
Ne bonne fin tenir ne peulent;
Et conme dui conpaignon veulent

Nor his memory or his intelligence.
I am telling you the truth, complete
And certain, according to authority.
It is set down in the book of the Grail;
You will hear it there, if you read all of it.
He had stayed in the forest for three days
When he returned to the lodging.
When Biclarel came back from the forest,
He kept near him his wife
Who had given her heart entirely
To a knight whom she loved.
Then she approached him with guile,
And tackled him through deception
With great humility, and both tears and laughter.
Piteously, she began to speak to him:
'My lord, when God, who created everything,
Granted our marriage
And willed that between us we should be
One body and have one heart,
One blood and one will,
The one should thus be grafted in the other,
Without concealment and without deception.
Thus we two must honour each other.
If it is not like this, we shall be doing wrong
And transgressing greatly against God.
As for me, I am not transgressing in this:
In heart and body I am your friend
Without concealing action or desire;
Never was my heart tempted
To hide from you anything that I feel.
Do not suppose that I am lying to you:
If I were to hide one of my thoughts from you,
I believe that I should die in that same hour.
God did not wish to join us
So that we could conceal our thoughts from each other,
Nor be sly or secretive,
But to be open with one another,
For if you hide anything from me,
You will have the worst of it in the end.
When wife and husband are joined
And one takes his possessions away from the other,
And each keeps his private purse,
They cannot hold the true path,
Nor can they come to a good end;
And, like two companions, each one

Chascuns fere sa tiranlire;
Lonc temps ne peuent estre sanz ire.
Conpaignie tout un doit estre,
Ne doit couverture ne mestre,
Car quant l'an celle ou met a part
Bonne conpaignie se depart,
Ne jusques lors ne partira
Que li uns par cuvrir ira,
Ou par desdain, ou par malice.
Conpaignie se part par tel vice,
Et Dieux meïmes s'an depart
Si tost con chascuns met a part.
Androit de moi, ge n'i met mie;
Ge n'ai ne sai que ne vous die,
Mes vous savez et si ouvrez,
Par coi conpaignie decevrez
Que vostre cuer me celez tout;
Dieu vous an herra, ge m'an dout.
Ge conparrai vostre pechié
Et si n'i suis point antaichié.'
'Pour coi', dist Biclarel, 'avez
Se mantehu, si non savez?
Ce j'ai rien meffait; si le dites,
Tant respondrai que g'iere quites.'
'Par foi', dit elle, 'et dite soit!
Vous avez ne sai quel recoit
Et a celai quelle privée voie,
Qu'il n['i] est nus qui la vous voie
Fors que isaus que vous voulez, f. 188 col. d
Et cest afaire me celez.
Ne sai se i alez pour bien,
Mes androit moi pour mal le tien,
Et desir ai que le vous die:
A moi qui sui si vostre amie
Conmant pouez vous ja celer
Vostre venir ne vostre aler?
Autre amie querez de moi.
Certes, sire, se poise moi;
G'en ai au cuer si grant annui,
S'il est voir c'onques vous connui.
Car bien suis de vous departie
Quant contre moi fetes partie
Et alez vos chemins cuvers
Qui a moi dussent estre uvers.
Certes, des or ne quier plus vivre

Wishes to keep his own moneybox;
They cannot remain without grief for very long.
Companionship must be uniform,
It must not be concealment or mastery,
Because when one hides or conceals
Good companionship dissolves,
Nor will it leave until such time
As one of them takes to deception
Out of contempt or malice.
Companionship breaks down through such fault,
And God himself will abandon them
Just as soon as each of them goes his own way.
As for me, I will do nothing of the sort;
I have and know nothing that I do not tell you,
But you know something and behave like this,
Whereby you let companionship down,
In that you hide your whole heart from me;
God will hate you for it, I fear.
I shall pay for your sin
And yet I am not in any way tarnished by it.'
'Why', said Biclarel, 'did you
Lie about this if you have no knowledge of it?
If I have done anything wrong, say so,
And my answer will be enough to absolve me.'
'By my faith', she said, 'let it be said!
You have some hideaway or other
And some hidden and secret path,
Where no one sees you
Except those whom you wish,
And you hide this matter from me.
I do not know if you go there to good purpose,
But, as for me, I think it is for wickedness,
And I wish to say this to you:
From me, who am your friend,
How can you ever hide
Your comings and goings?
You are on the lookout for another beloved instead of me.
Certainly, my lord, it grieves me;
I have very great suffering in my heart through it,
If it is true that I ever knew you.
For I am well separated from you,
When you side against me
And take your hidden paths
Which should be open to me.
Truly, henceforth I wish to live no longer

Quant d'amour ne me volez sivre.'
Lors se print la dame a plorer
Et sus li fort la mort orer
Et dist: 'Trop suis pute eürée!
Miaux me vausist estre acourée
Qu'avoir prins mari qui me het,
Qui [a] nulle achoison n'i set.'
Biclarel fu mout esbaÿ
Quant sa fame ansinques oÿ.
'Dame', dist il, 'ne pancez mie
Que ge oie fors vous nulle amie;
Miaux voudroie estre detranchiez
Que g'en fusse ja antaichiez!
Mes j'ai un mien secret couvine
Que nulz ne set ne ne devine –
Fors a Dieu ge ne le diroie –
Que jamés jor honneur n'aroie
N'an nulle court n'iere prisiez,
Se chascuns an iere avisiez.
Desplaisir avoir n'an devez
Ce celle chose ne savez,
Car contre vous an rien ne peiche
Ne contre autrui que ge saiche.'
Quant ses paroles furent dites
Ne fu pas a la dame quites
Qui formant a plorer se prist f. 189 col. a
Conme ses moz de lui aprist.
'Sire', dist elle, 'or vaut pis:
Or me tenez vous trop pour vis,
Por sote et por bourderesse,
Pour haÿneusse et tanceresse,
Mauvesse, faillant, plainne d'ire,
Quant vos secrez ne m'osez dire.
[Or] nous tenons pour decevrez:
Lit et ostel par vous avrez
Et par vous vous gouverneroiz,
Et an autrui fiance avroiz.
[Puis] que ge [n]e sui dou savoir
Digne, autrui vous estet avoir.
Decehue seur toutes fammes
Suis, et a honte et a difames,
Quant j'ai perdu et ame et cors;
Or me demeure trop la mors.'
Quant Biclarel vit ceste vie,
Et voit que il ne durra mie,

Since you do not want to accord with me in love.'
Then the lady began to weep
And thereupon to beg him urgently for death,
Saying: 'I am very ill-fated.
It would have profited me more to have my heart removed
Than to have taken a husband who hates me,
And who knows no reason for it.'
Biclarel was greatly astonished
When he heard his wife speak in this way.
'Lady', he said, 'never think
That I have any beloved except you;
I would rather be cut to pieces
Than ever be defiled thus.
But I have a secret of my own
That no one knows or guesses –
I would not speak of it except to God –
For I should nevermore have honour,
Nor should I be esteemed in any court
If everyone ever knew of it.
You should not take offence about it
If you do not know about this matter,
Because I am not wronging you in anything
Nor against anyone else, as far as I know.'
When his words had been spoken,
He had not been forgiven by the lady
Who began to cry intently
As she took in his speech.
'My lord', she said, 'now things are worse:
Now you take me for a person of little worth,
An idiot and a gossip,
A wicked and quarrelsome woman,
Evil, weak, full of anger,
When you dare not tell me your secrets.
Now we must each consider ourselves to be living alone:
You will take your bed and lodgings by yourself
And will run your own affairs,
And put your trust in someone else.
Since I am not worthy
To know, you must have someone else.
I am deceived above all women,
And am both shamed and dishonoured
When I have lost both soul and body;
Now death is very slow in coming to me.'
When Biclarel saw what was happening,
And realized that he could not hold out,

‘Dame’, dist il, ‘vous le sarez,
Mes par tel couvenant l’arez,
Et dou cuer le m’afiërez,
Qu’a personne ne le direz.’
‘Sire’, dist elle, ‘or n’i failliez:
Se jou di, le col me tailliez.
Conmant pancez que gie le die?
Vous estes mes cuers et ma vie,
M’esperance et m’atandue;
La foi de Dieu [av]roie perdue
Et d’anfer portiere ceroie,
Se vostre secré reveloie.
An vostre secré gist m’anneur:
Ce sevent tuit, grant et meneur.
Vostre cecrez, c’est ma chevance,
C’est ce qui m’onneure et avance;
Vostres secrez an vie me tient;
C’est ce qui toute me soutient;
Mout [ge] cherroie an mal degré,
Ce reveloie vostre secré.
Mout [ge] seroie or fame a droit,
Mes ge non suis pas ci androit:
An cest cas fame ne suis mie, f. 189 col. b
Miaux ameroie perdre la vie
Que vos secrez vous descouvrisse
Ne que ja vostre honte ouvrisse.
Ancor n’avez gaires vehu
Que mes vesines oient sahu
Ne vostre courrouz, ne vostre ire,
Pour ce que ne lor ai que dire,
Et certes mout a loër fais
De ce c’onques ne fu me tais,
Car maintes aferment et jurent
Les choses que onques ne seurent;
Ge ne suis pas de tel nature,
Car de controuver ge n’ai cure.
Mal avez vostre vie usee,
Quant chose a tere m’est celee.’
Lors Biclarel li a ouvert
Ce qu’il avoit adès couvert:
‘Dame’, dit il, ‘j’ai tel eür,
Sanz mal avoir et sanz peeur,
Car chascun mois beste devien;
Ou bois an la forest me tien,
An un secret me vois tapir

‘Lady’, he said, ‘you shall know it,
But you will have it on this condition,
And you will swear it to me from your heart,
That you will speak of it to no one.’
‘My lord’, she said, ‘you will not lose by it:
May you cleave my neck if I speak of it.
How can you think I will speak about it?
You are my heart and my life,
My hope and my expectation;
I should have lost God’s faith
And be hell’s gatekeeper
If I were to reveal your confidences.
My honour lies in your confidences:
Everyone, great and lesser, knows this.
Your secret is my livelihood,
It is the thing that honours and nurtures me;
Your secret is the basis of my life;
It is the thing that entirely sustains me;
I should fall into a very bad state
If I were to reveal your secret.
I should now rightly be a wife,
But at present I am not:
In this case I am not a wife at all;
I should prefer to lose my life
Than to reveal your secret
Or ever cause you shame.
You have never yet seen
That my neighbours knew
Anything of your wrath nor your anger,
Because I only have to tell them,
And surely I deserve praise
For remaining silent about that which never occurred,
Because many women confirm and swear
Things that they never knew.
I am not of such a character
Because I do not care to fabricate.
You have led a wicked life
When something is being hidden from me.’
Then Biclarel revealed to her
What he had always hidden.
‘Lady’, he said, ‘I have such a destiny,
Without suffering or fear,
For each month I become a beast.
I remain in the woods and the forest;
I go and hide in a secluded place

Et toute robe desvestir.
Et lors sui ge deus jors ou .IIJ.
Beste sauvaige par le bois;
Et tant con g'i suis, ge manjue
Conme autre beste [la] char crue;
Con j'ai la esté, ge me veuz
Et d'icelui cecret leu euz.
Mez qui ma robe m'osteroit
Trop grant durté il me feroit,
Car a toujours beste ceroie
Jusqu'atant que ge la ravroie
Ou jusque ge devroie morir,
Que nulz ne m'an pourroit garir.
Et pour ce me met ge an repost
Que nulz hon ma robe ne m'ost.
Or vous ai ge dit mun secré;
Or le veilliez si panre an gré
Que nulz ne connoisse ma taiche
Ne mun couvine ja ne saiche.'
Quant la dame le escouta, f. 189 col. c
Moins l'an cremut et moins douta,
Et pansa: 'Or ai ge asuvi
Ce que ge ai lons tans suÿ!'
Et dist: 'Ge me tien a paiee;
Mes amis soiez, ge vostre amie.
Ge croi tout se que vous me dites,
De touz maus voloirs soiez quites.
Tant ai le cuer dous, debonnere
Que ge ne sai fors que paiz fere.'
Atant se taist, et plus n'a dist.
An son cuer se qu'elle oï mist.
Li tans vint que aler s'an dut,
[B]iclarel ou bois se resmut.
Sa fame mout po antanti,
Mes conme [d']aler l'an santi,
Tout bellemant l'a pourcehu
Jusque[s] ou secret l'a vehu.
Bien vit ou il sa robe a misse,
Bien vit sa maniere et sa guisse.
Sa robe prant et si l'an portee,
Mout se deduit, mout se deporte.
Dist: 'De mari suis desevree
Pour estre a mun ami livree!'
Lors a son ami fist savoir
Que or pouoit sa joie avoir

And I take off all my clothes,
And then, for two or three days, I am
A wild beast in the woods;
And as long as I am there, I eat
Raw flesh, like other beasts.
When I have been there, I come back
And come out from that same secret spot.
But anyone who took my clothes away from me
Would cause me very great hardship,
For I should remain a beast
Until I regained them
Or until I had to die,
Since no one would be able to save me.
And for that reason I set out secretly,
So that no-one steals my clothes from me.
Now I have told you my secret;
Now may you willingly accept
That no-one should learn of my trait,
Nor ever know about my condition.'
When the lady heard this,
She feared and suspected him the less because of it,
And she thought: 'Now I have achieved
What I have sought for a long time.'
And she said: 'I've got what I want.
May you be my beloved and I yours:
I believe everything you tell me.
May you be free from all ill wishes.
My heart is so kind and bountiful
That I know nothing other than how to make peace.'
With that she fell silent and said no more;
She kept what she heard in her heart.
When the time came that he had to go,
Biclarel left for the woods.
His wife paid very little heed,
But as she noticed him leave,
She followed him carefully
Until she saw him at his secret place.
She saw clearly where he put his clothes;
She saw clearly his method and his manner.
She took his clothes and carried them away with her
And was very happy and cheerful.
She said: 'I am rid of my husband,
In order to be with my beloved.'
Then she let her beloved know
That he could now take his pleasure

Et que ses mariz mors estoit,
Et que mes lui rien ne doutoit.
Li chevaliers cui fu amie
Sur se que oï ne tarda mie;
S'amie que il tant losa
De son bon gré il l'espousa
Et longuemant il la maintint.
Biclarel a sa robe vint;
Quant n'a treuvé, c'est esmeüs,
Des or voit qu'il est deceüs
Par sa fame qui l'a traï.
Et lors ou bois se retraï
Et conme beste se maintint
Au miaux que il pot se contint.
De lui vous lesserai ester,
Sa avant m'an orroiz conter.
Dou roi Artus te veil retraire, f. 189 col. d
Qu'a touz bons jors siaut feste faire,
Panthecoste, Toz Sains, Noé,
Dont il estoit par tout loé;
Touz les barons y assambloit,
Dont an son cuer il se mambroit.
Dames, escuier y venoient,
Et tuit cil qui de lui tenoient,
Ansinques s'ordonnance fu.
A une Panthecouste feu
Que li rois vost aler chacier
Por sa grant feste solacier.
Devant cel jor, .IIJ. jors ou .IIIJ.
Tant pour chacier con pour esbatre,
Et pour panre la venison
Por fere sa grant garnison,
De chacier formant se pena,
Et des chiens assez i mena.
Ou bois se fierent sanz arest.
Biclarel fu an la forest
Conme beste orible et sauvage.
Li chien qui furent ou boquaige
Qui mout menerent grant tampeste
Ont acuillie celle beste;
Molt la suient a grant effors.
Biclarel, qui fu fiers et fors,
Les chiens de neant n'atandi,
Mes a bien fuïr s'antandi;
De son san n'estoit desnuez,

And that her husband was dead,
And he need never fear him.
The knight whose beloved she was
Made no delay as soon as he heard;
His beloved whom he loved so much
He married very willingly,
And he lived with her for a long time.
Biclarel returned to his clothing;
When he did not find it, he was dismayed.
At once he saw that he had been deceived
By his wife who had betrayed him;
And then he withdrew into the woods,
And lived like a beast
As best he could.
I shall cease telling you of him,
And you will hear more about him later.
I wish to tell you again about King Arthur,
Who was accustomed to hold a feast on all holy days,
Pentecost, All Saints, Christmas,
For which he was praised by everyone;
He would gather together all the barons
Whom he remembered in his heart.
Ladies and squires would come there
And all those who held lands from him,
Such was his commandment.
One Pentecost it happened
That the king wished to go hunting
To amuse himself on his great feast day.
Three or four days before that day,
As much for the hunting as for his enjoyment,
And to catch venison
To make up his ample provisions,
He made a great effort to hunt
And took plenty of hounds there.
They rushed into the woods without hesitation.
Biclarel was in the forest
In the form of a terrifying wild beast.
The dogs that were in the thicket
And making a great commotion
Pursued this beast;
They followed it strenuously.
Biclarel, who was fierce and strong,
Definitely did not wait for the hounds,
But did his utmost to escape.
He was not stripped of his wits,

Combien qu'an beste fust muez.
Vers le roi est venus fuiant,
Et li chien après lui suiant.
Droit a l'estrier Artus an [vi]nt,
Et ileques touz coiz se tint.
Chiere li fist d'umilité.
Au roi an print mout grant pité
Quant il vit la beste aparant
Qui a lui venoit a garant;
Et dist: 'Beste, a garant me tiens,
Et ge te garderai des chiens.'
Lors les chiens de lui devia,
Et adès cilz s'umilia.
Au roi Artus pitié an print; f. 190 col. a
Ses chevaliers apeler print.
La beste a genouillons estoit,
Qu'an umilité se metoit.
Chascuns mout s'an mereveilla;
Plussors foiz chascuns se seigna,
Et dirent tuit an audiance
Que se est grant senefiance:
'Ceste beste a raison an li;
Rois, or aiez pitié de li.
Ne souffrez qu'elle soit occisse
Par veneeurs ne par chiens mal mise.'
Et li rois leur a otroie.
Atant li rois c'est avoie;
An sa cité arriere vint.
La beste adès lez lui se tint;
Delez son estrier se metoit;
Umilians adès estoit
An toz chemins, an toz santiers.
Li rois la vëoit voulantiers,
Et point il ne la despisoit;
A l'uis de sa chambre gisoit.
Li jors vint, li chevalier vindrent
Qui mout noblemant se contindrent;
Dames y ot et chevaliers
Plus de deus cenz et deus milliers.
La fame Biclarel i feu
Qui de nouvel marié feu,
Qui fu [et] noble et honoree
De sandez, de paille doree;
Mout noblemant se contenoit,
An grant estat qu'elle menoit.

Even though he had changed into a beast.
He came running towards the king,
The dogs following after him.
He went straight to Arthur's stirrup
And there he remained completely still.
He put on a humble mien towards him.
He aroused very great pity in the king
When he saw the beast appearing
That came to him for safety,
And said: 'Beast, rely on me
And I shall protect you from the dogs.'
Then he drove the dogs from him,
And immediately Biclarel prostrated himself.
Pity took hold of King Arthur;
He began to call his knights.
The beast was on its knees,
For it was submitting itself humbly.
Everyone marvelled greatly at it;
Each made the sign of the cross many times,
And all said openly
That this was of great significance:
'This beast has intelligence.
King, take pity on it now;
Do not let it be killed
By the hunters nor overcome by the dogs.'
And the king granted them this:
Thereupon, it was under the king's protection;
He went back to his city.
The beast stayed beside him all the time:
It placed itself at his stirrup.
All the time it displayed humility,
Down every track, down every path.
The king looked at it gladly
And did not despise it at all.
It lay at the door of his bedchamber.
The feast-day arrived, the knights arrived
And conducted themselves very nobly.
There were ladies and knights,
More than two thousand two hundred.
Biclarel's wife was there,
Who was newly married;
She was both noble and honoured
In silk and gilded brocade.
She conducted herself very nobly,
As befits the high estate she held.

Mout y ot gent de toutes guises.
Es sales furent tables mises;
Chascuns chevaliers se sëoit
Et sa fame lez lui avoit.
La beste adès le roi suï
Et mout formant le conjoï.
Lors la beste antra ou palais,
A col tandu, a grant eslais;
Sa fame a la table v[e]oit,
Qui antre plussors se cëoit,
Bien ascesmee et bien assise.
Par les treces l'a aus dans prisse, f. 190 col. b
Grant col li fiert an mi la face,
Par po le vis ne li efface.
A la terre l'a estandue;
Ja li eüst mort randue,
Quant li chevalier li coururent
Qui tuit mereveillié an furent;
Ja li ussent fait grant desroy,
Ce ne fust por l'amour dou roy.
Quant li roys se fait a sahu,
Grant mereveille an a ehu
Et dist: 'Sanz causse n'est ce mie
Que la beste l'a anvaÿe.
Or lessons vëoir que cera
Et que la beste ancor fera,
Qui vers touz se porte humblemant
Fors vers celi tant seullemant!'
Cel soir tuit au souper revindrent,
Aus tables et aus dois se tindrent;
Mes celle dame pas n'i feu
Pour ce que trop pooureuse feu,
Car de la beste bien savoit
Qui elle iere et quel cuer avoit.
Forfaite anvers li se santi;
Pour ce au venir ne s'asanti.
Li rois conmande que la beste
Alast autour par mi la feste
Pour savoir s'a nul greveroit,
Ne s'a nelui annui feroit.
Ansinc fu con li rois le dist;
La beste nul samblant ne fist:
Touz les ancline et humelie,
Car fors a touz bien ne vost mie.
Mes quant sa fame n'a trouvé,

There were many people of all kinds.
Tables were set out in the hall;
Each knight seated himself
And had his wife next to him.
The beast followed the king constantly
And pleased him very much.
Then the beast entered the palace
With outstretched neck, at a single bound;
It saw at the table its wife,
Who sat amongst many other people,
Well adorned and seated highly.
It grasped her in its teeth by the hair,
And gave her a great blow in the middle of her face:
And nearly mutilated her face.
And pushed her right down to the ground;
It would soon have killed her
When the knights ran to her,
Who were absolutely astounded by this.
They would have used great violence against it,
If it had not been for the king's love.
When the king learned of this deed,
He was extremely surprised
And said: 'Never without reason
Would the beast have attacked her.
Now let us see what will happen
And what the beast will do next,
That behaves so humbly towards everyone
Except towards this woman alone.'
That evening everyone came back to sup;
They took their places at the tables and on the dais;
But the lady was not there
Because she was too afraid,
For she knew about the beast,
Who it was and what was in its heart.
She realized her crime against it;
For this reason she would not agree to come.
The king commanded that the beast
Should roam around amidst the feast,
To find out if it distressed anyone
Or if it would do harm to anyone.
It was done as the king said;
The beast gave no sign to anyone:
It lay down and humbled itself before everyone,
As it never wished anything but good to all.
But when it did not find its wife,

Qui d'onnor l'a tout decevré,
Si conmance grant deul a faire;
Lors hors dou palais se va traire
Et si avale les degrez;
En la ville s'an est antrez.
La dame, qui blecie estoit,
Savoit mout bien de coi c'estoit,
Pour ce a congié rouvé et quis, f. 190 col. c
Pour paeur qu'elle n'eüst pis.
La beste avale le degré
Qui n'a mie ancor fet son gré.
Tant quist qu'il a celle trouvé
Qui sus un cheval fu montée,
Pour ce que aler s'an vouloit.
Si tost con la beste la voit,
Au piz li lance, aus dans la serre;
Dou cheval l'abat jus a terre,
[Et] sus li lance a grant alee.
Ja l'eüst morte et devouree,
Quant la gent li ont rescuÿe,
Et elle qui cria: 'Haÿe!'
La beste arrier[e] s'an repaire,
Qui conmance grant deul a faire,
Et crie, et brait a grant eslais,
Si que il n'ot nul ou palais
Qui ne s'an soit mereveilliez.
Meime li rois s'an est seigniez
Et jure que il viaut savoir
De celle avanture le voir.
Tantost la dame prandre fist
Et an tres maus [li]ans la mist,
Et jure qu'il la destruira,
Ou ele verité dira.
Quant celle le roy antandi,
[Pour] sauve[r] sa vie se randi,
Toute la verité jaÿ,
Et conmant son seigneur traÿ
Par sa mansonge et par sa lobe;
Et ancor [ou] li garde sa robe.
Trestuit mout de se s'esbaïrent
Quant il ses paroles oïrent.
Biclarel ont la amené
Qui par sa fame est si pené.
Li rois fist que la robe vint;
Dedans se boute et hom devint.

Who had stripped it of all honour,
It began to make loud lamentation;
Then it began to leave the palace
And went down the steps;
It went into the town.
The lady, who was wounded,
Knew perfectly well why it was,
So she had sought and asked leave to depart
For fear that she might fare worse.
Down the steps went the beast
That had not yet achieved its goal.
It searched until it found her;
She had mounted a horse
Because she wished to leave.
As soon as the beast saw her,
It threw itself at her chest, grasping her with its teeth;
It knocked her from the horse down to the ground
And very quickly leapt on her.
It would soon have killed and devoured her,
When the people rescued her,
And she cried: ‘Ah!’
The beast backed away
And began to make great lamentation,
And cried and howled loudly,
So that there was no one from the palace
Who did not marvel at it.
Even the king crossed himself
And swore that he must know
The truth of the situation.
At once he ordered the lady to be seized
And had her put in cruel fetters,
And he swore that he would put her to death
Or she would tell him the truth.
When she heard the king,
She complied in order to save her life.
She confessed the whole truth,
Both how she had betrayed her lord,
Through her lies and through her trickery,
And even where she hid his clothing.
Everyone was most astounded
When they heard her words.
They brought Biclarel there,
Who was so afflicted by his wife.
The king had the clothes brought:
Biclarel scrambled into them and became a man.

Lors a tout son meschief conté,
[Conma]nt sa fame l'a donté;
Si requiert qu'elle soit occisse,
Et lors fu elle antre murs mise
Dont onques puis el n'issi hors. f. 190 col. d
Ceste avanture avint [a]lors.
Dont voiz tu que folemant ouvre
Qui a sa fame se descouvre
Dou secré qui fait a celer,
S'a touz ne le viaut reveller.

Then he recounted all his misfortune,
How his wife had overcome him.
He petitioned that she be killed,
And consequently she was placed between walls
From which she could never come out.
This adventure happened at that time.
Thus you see how stupidly he behaves
Who reveals to his wife
Secrets that should be hidden,
If he does not wish them revealed to everyone.

NOTES

The photostat displays patchy damage to the manuscript, perhaps from water or sun, resulting in varying degrees of fading and some illegible words, for whose restoration I have relied on the readings by Tarbé and by Raynaud and Lemaitre.

11. ‘Biclarel’: MS ‘Biclaret’. This is the only use of this form in the text.

41. ‘onjoit’: MS ‘onjoint’.

188. An illegible marking appears between *estes* and *mes*. This may be an expunged *et*, which fits the sense, if not the metre, of the line. Raynaud and Lemaitre make no comment.

231-2. ‘veuz’, ‘euz’. MS ‘velz’, ‘elz’. Raynaud and Lemaitre transcribe ‘velz’ and ‘elz’ in their edition; Tarbé omits these two lines altogether.

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