

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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Melion and Biclarel

Two Old French Werwolf Lays

Liverpool Online Series
Critical Editions of French Texts

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Timothy Unwin
Glyn S. Burgess

Series Editors

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Chi comenche Melion

At the time when King Arthur reigned –
 He who conquered lands
 And who gave magnificent gifts
 4 To knights and to nobles –
 He had with him a young knight;
 I have heard him called Melion.
 He was very courtly and noble,
 8 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;
 12 It was praised by everyone
 For its courtesy and prowess
 And its excellence and generosity.
 One day they were making their vows
 16 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,
 20 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:
 24 Those who had heard the vow
 Repeated it in many places
 And recounted it to the maidens;
 And when the maidens heard it
 28 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,
 32 Held a meeting about it:
 They said they would never love him
 Nor speak to him;
 No lady wished to look at him,
 36 Nor any maiden to speak to him.
 When Melion heard this,
 He was completely downcast;
 He no longer wished to seek adventure
 40 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;
 44 He had Melion sent for and spoke to him.
 ‘Melion’, said King Arthur,

'What has become of your great sense,
 Your prestige and your knightly valour?
 48 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
 52 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;
 56 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;
 60 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,
 64 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,
 68 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,
 72 He and his foresters.
 With him were his huntsmen,
 Who loved him truly
 Because he was their liege lord;
 76 All honour was reflected in him.
 Soon they found a huge stag;
 Quickly they took and unleashed the hounds.
 Melion stopped in a heath
 80 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,
 84 Melion saw a maiden
 Approaching on a handsome palfrey;
 The trappings were most splendid.
 She was dressed in scarlet silk
 88 Which was sewn well with laces;
 Around her shoulders was an ermine cloak,
 No queen ever wore better.

A pleasing figure, elegant shoulders
 92 And blonde hair.
 A nicely shaped little mouth,
 The colour of a rose;
 She had bright eyes, clear and sparkling:
 96 She was very beautiful in her whole appearance.
 She came alone without retinue,
 And was most elegant and charming.
 Melion went to meet her;
 100 He greeted her very politely.
 'Fair lady', he said, 'I greet you
 From the glorious one, King Jesus.
 Tell me where you were born
 104 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
 108 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
 112 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
 116 Shall I have love for anyone else.'
 When Melion realized
 That his vows were fulfilled,
 He put his arms around her waist
 120 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;
 124 There was none so beautiful in the kingdom.
 Melion took her to his castle;
 They acted with great rejoicing.
 He married her very splendidly
 128 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
 132 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

136 And it fled, its neck lowered.
 He had a squire with him
 Who was carrying his quiver.
 They went on to a heath.
 140 Melion looked into a bush:
 He saw a huge stag standing there.
 Laughing, Melion looked at his wife.
 ‘Lady’, he said, ‘if I wished,
 144 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
 148 I shall never eat again.’
 She fell from her palfrey, fainting,
 And Melion picked her up.
 When he could not comfort her,
 152 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;
 156 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.
 160 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,
 164 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
 168 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;
 172 I should never again be a man.’
 He called his squire,
 And ordered him to remove his boots.
 He came forward, removed the boots
 176 And Melion went into the woods.
 He removed his clothes, remained naked,
 And wrapped himself in his cloak.
 She touched him with the ring
 180 When she saw him naked and undressed.

Then he became a huge and strong wolf:
 He had got himself into deep trouble.
 The wolf set out, running quickly
 184 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
 188 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,
 192 And took the squire with her.
 Straight towards Ireland, her own country,
 The lady went back.
 She went to the harbour, found a ship
 196 And soon spoke to the crew
 Who transported her to Dublin,
 A maritime city,
 Which belonged to her father, the King of Ireland;
 200 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,
 204 And tell further about Melion.
 Melion, who was chasing the stag,
 Harried it intently.
 He pursued it on to a heath,
 208 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
 212 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
 216 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.
 220 He saw a ship being loaded
 Which was to sail that night
 And go straight to Ireland.
 He made his way there
 224 And waited until night fell.
 He took a risk and boarded it,

For he cared nothing for his life.
He concealed himself beneath a hurdle,
228 Crouched down and was hidden.
The mariners made haste
For they had a fair wind.
Then they turned towards Ireland;
232 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
236 They saw the country of Ireland.
And when they had come into harbour,
Melion waited no longer;
He came out from his bench
240 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
244 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
248 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,
252 The sea crossing had exhausted him.
He went into a forest,
And found cows and oxen there.
He killed and strangled many of them;
256 There he began his war.
He killed more than a hundred of them
At this early stage.
The people who lived in the woodland
260 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,
264 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,
268 Through the mountains and the wasteland,
That he was joined by ten wolves;
He coaxed and persuaded them so much

That he took them with him
272 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:
276 They laid waste all the country,
Killed men and women
And ravaged all the land.
They knew how to protect themselves very well;
280 The king could not trick them.
One night they had roamed widely
And were exhausted and wearied.
There was a wood near Dublin,
284 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.
288 They will be betrayed and tricked:
A peasant saw them,
And at once ran to the king.
'Sire', he said, 'in the round wood
292 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.
296 '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
300 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
304 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,
308 For there were a great many people
Who carried axes and cudgels,
And some had naked swords.
Now there were a thousand excited hounds,
312 Which quickly found the wolves.
Melion saw that he was betrayed:
He understood that he was in trouble.
The dogs went for them viciously

316 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
320 By leaping over the nets.
He went into a great wood;
He had escaped by his ingenuity.
The hunters went back to the city;
324 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:
328 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,
332 He climbed a mountain;
He was very unhappy and troubled
About his wolves, which he had lost.
For a long time he had suffered,
336 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
340 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,
344 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
348 And there was a good navigator;
It was very well equipped
And supplied with men and arms.
Their shields were hung over the side.
352 Melion recognized them.
First he recognized Gauvain's shield,
And then he noticed Yvain's,
And then King Yder's shield;
356 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,
360 For he believed he would find mercy again.

They came sailing towards the land,
 But the wind veered in front of them.
 They could not reach the harbour;
 364 Now Melion had great despair.
 They turned towards another port,
 Two leagues from the city.
 Once there was a great castle there,
 368 But now it was completely ruined,
 And when they arrived
 It was night, it had become dark.
 The king reached the port.
 372 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
 376 Where I can sleep tonight.’
 The seneschal went back to the ship
 And called the chamberlains.
 ‘Come on land with me’, he said,
 380 ‘And prepare lodging for the king.’
 They disembarked
 And came to the lodging.
 They had two torches carried there
 384 And quickly had them lit.
 They carried quilts and floor-coverings
 And quickly prepared everything well.
 Then the king left the ship
 388 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:
 392 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,
 396 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,
 400 And risk his life.
 He came to the king’s door;
 He knew all the barons.
 He did not stop for a moment,
 404 But went straight up to the king,
 Although it might mean his death.

He let himself fall at the king's feet
 And would not rise again;
 408 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.
 412 Woe betide anyone who touches or approaches him.'
 When the meal was ready,
 The barons washed,
 And the king washed and sat down;
 416 The dishes were placed before them.
 The king called to Yder
 And sat him at his side.
 Melion lay at the king's feet
 420 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.
 424 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
 428 And he ate it gladly.
 Then Gawain said: 'My lords, look;
 This wolf is completely unnatural.'
 All the barons said amongst themselves
 432 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;
 436 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
 440 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
 444 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,
 448 And the wolf went with him;
 No-one could make him leave him;
 He went to lie at the king's feet.

The King of Ireland received a message
 452 That Arthur had come to him;
 He was very glad and rejoiced greatly.
 He rose very early at dawn
 And went to the harbour,
 456 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
 460 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.
 464 The horses were ready;
 They tarried no longer, but mounted,
 Then rode them towards the city.
 The king mounted his palfrey
 468 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,
 472 The retinue was large and magnificent.
 They came to Dublin
 And dismounted at the great palace.
 When the king went up into the keep,
 476 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;
 480 He called him near to the table.
 The two kings sat together;
 The retinue was splendid,
 The barons waited on them very well:
 484 In all parts of the dwelling
 They were served lavishly.
 But Melion looked around;
 He noticed in the middle of the hall
 488 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:
 492 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,

496 Who saw the great commotion;
 From all parts of the palace
 They carried sticks and cudgels.
 They would certainly have killed the wolf
 500 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:
 504 ‘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,
 508 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;
 512 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
 516 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,
 520 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.
 524 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;
 528 He went into his chamber,
 Taking King Yder with him.
 He cajoled and persuaded his daughter so much
 That she gave him the ring;
 532 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
 536 And kissed both his feet.
 King Arthur wanted to touch him,
 But Gawain would not permit it.
 ‘Good uncle’, he said, ‘don’t!
 540 Take him to a chamber

In absolute privacy
 So that he is not shamed in front of people.’
 The king called Gawain,
 544 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;
 548 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;
 552 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
 556 And weeping asked him
 How this had happened to him;
 Through misfortune they had lost him.
 He had his chamberlain sent for,
 560 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
 564 When they saw Melion coming.
 The king brought his daughter.
 He presented her to King Arthur,
 To do with as he wished,
 568 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!
 572 For the sake of your beautiful children, let her be’.
 All the barons begged it of him;
 Melion granted their wish.
 Arthur remained there
 576 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.
 580 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,
 584 As you have heard in the tale.
 He never wished to take her back,

He would like to have let her burn or be dismembered.
Melion said: 'It will never fail to happen
588 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,
592 As all the nobles say.

This is the end of *Melion*.

Here ends *Melion*.

Biclarel

He is very foolish who marries
 A fickle wench:
 It is just not worth it for him to suffer
 4 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
 8 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,
 12 Who will tell you the truth of it very well.
 Biclarel was a knight –
 Strong and brave and fierce,
 Full of nobility and virtue –
 16 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.
 20 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
 24 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
 28 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
 32 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,
 36 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
 40 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,
 44 With a sturdy hide and bony limbs;
 He did not lose his wits because of this,

Nor his memory or his intelligence.
 I am telling you the truth, complete
 48 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
 52 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
 56 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.
 60 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
 64 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.
 68 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:
 72 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.
 76 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
 80 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,
 84 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,
 88 They cannot hold the true path,
 Nor can they come to a good end;
 And, like two companions, each one

Wishes to keep his own moneybox;
 92 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
 96 Good companionship dissolves,
 Nor will it leave until such time
 As one of them takes to deception
 Out of contempt or malice.
 100 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;
 104 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;
 108 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
 112 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!
 116 You have some hideaway or other
 And some hidden and secret path,
 Where no one sees you
 Except those whom you wish,
 120 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:
 124 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.
 128 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,
 132 When you side against me
 And take your hidden paths
 Which should be open to me.
 Truly, henceforth I wish to live no longer

136 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.
 140 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
 144 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
 148 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 –
 152 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
 156 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,
 160 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:
 164 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,
 168 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,
 172 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,
 176 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,
 180 And realized that he could not hold out,

'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,
 184 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?
 188 You are my heart and my life,
 My hope and my expectation;
 I should have lost God's faith
 And be hell's gatekeeper
 192 If I were to reveal your confidences.
 My honour lies in your confidences:
 Everyone, great and lesser, knows this.
 Your secret is my livelihood,
 196 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
 200 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;
 204 I should prefer to lose my life
 Than to reveal your secret
 Or ever cause you shame.
 You have never yet seen
 208 That my neighbours knew
 Anything of your wrath nor your anger,
 Because I only have to tell them,
 And surely I deserve praise
 212 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
 216 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
 220 What he had always hidden.
 'Lady', he said, 'I have such a destiny,
 Without suffering or fear,
 For each month I become a beast.
 224 I remain in the woods and the forest;
 I go and hide in a secluded place

And I take off all my clothes,
 And then, for two or three days, I am
 228 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
 232 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
 236 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,
 240 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,
 244 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
 248 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.
 252 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;
 256 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,
 260 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;
 264 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,
 268 In order to be with my beloved.’
 Then she let her beloved know
 That he could now take his pleasure

And that her husband was dead,
 272 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
 276 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.
 280 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
 284 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,
 288 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
 292 Whom he remembered in his heart.
 Ladies and squires would come there
 And all those who held lands from him,
 Such was his commandment.
 296 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,
 300 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
 304 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.
 308 The dogs that were in the thicket
 And making a great commotion
 Pursued this beast;
 They followed it strenuously.
 312 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,

316 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
 320 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
 324 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,
 328 And immediately Biclarel prostrated himself.
 Pity took hold of King Arthur;
 He began to call his knights.
 The beast was on its knees,
 332 For it was submitting itself humbly.
 Everyone marvelled greatly at it;
 Each made the sign of the cross many times,
 And all said openly
 336 That this was of great significance:
 'This beast has intelligence.
 King, take pity on it now;
 Do not let it be killed
 340 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.
 344 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.
 348 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
 352 And conducted themselves very nobly.
 There were ladies and knights,
 More than two thousand two hundred.
 Biclarel's wife was there,
 356 Who was newly married;
 She was both noble and honoured
 In silk and gilded brocade.
 She conducted herself very nobly,
 360 As befits the high estate she held.

There were many people of all kinds.
 Tables were set out in the hall;
 Each knight seated himself
 364 And had his wife next to him.
 The beast followed the king constantly
 And pleased him very much.
 Then the beast entered the palace
 368 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.
 372 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;
 376 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,
 380 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
 384 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
 388 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
 392 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;
 396 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
 400 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,
 404 As it never wished anything but good to all.
 But when it did not find its wife,

Who had stripped it of all honour,
 It began to make loud lamentation;
 408 Then it began to leave the palace
 And went down the steps;
 It went into the town.
 The lady, who was wounded,
 412 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
 416 That had not yet achieved its goal.
 It searched until it found her;
 She had mounted a horse
 Because she wished to leave.
 420 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.
 424 It would soon have killed and devoured her,
 When the people rescued her,
 And she cried: 'Ah!'
 The beast backed away
 428 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.
 432 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
 436 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,
 440 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,
 444 And even where she hid his clothing.
 Everyone was most astounded
 When they heard her words.
 They brought Biclarel there,
 448 Who was so afflicted by his wife.
 The king had the clothes brought:
 Biclarel scrambled into them and became a man.

Then he recounted all his misfortune,
452 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.
456 This adventure happened at that time.
Thus you see how stupidly he behaves
Who reveals to his wife
Secrets that should be hidden,
460 If he does not wish them revealed to everyone.