

1999

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## Introduction

Marie de France has been praised as 'perhaps the greatest woman author of the Middle Ages and certainly the creator of the finest medieval short fiction before Boccaccio and Chaucer.'<sup>1</sup> That claim might be expanded to read that she is one of the great writers of the Middle Ages and one of the greatest of all women writers. She is not a new discovery, but she was virtually forgotten until the early nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Since then, her reputation has rested primarily on her *Lais*, short stories in verse of love and adventure. But the *Fables*, a longer work, was probably the more popular one in the Middle Ages; twenty-three manuscripts of the *Fables* survive from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, compared to only five manuscripts of the *Lais*. The relative neglect of the *Fables* for the past hundred years may be explained in part by the modern history of the fable itself, which is now seen primarily as a form of children's literature (and an unattractively moralistic one at that), and in part by a misunderstanding of Marie's claim that her work is a translation. In fact it is a lively and charming, wry and witty verse rendering of tales, some in the Aesopic tradition and some of which hers is the first recorded version. These fables are historically important as the earliest extant collection in the vernacular of western Europe. They are identifiably Marie's, marked by wit and sympathy, a biting social commentary, and a point of view that can be seen as distinctly feminine. These are not fables for children.

### AUTHOR AND DATE

Marie, the author of these fables, remains elusive, for little more is known about her than what she herself announces in the Epilogue: 'Marie ai nun, si sui de France' – Marie is my name and I am from (or of) France (14). That

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she needed to designate herself 'de France' suggests that she was living in Norman England, a supposition strengthened by the English provenance of the oldest manuscripts and their Anglo-Norman orthography. It is too bad that we know little more than this about Marie – as she herself would be the first to agree – for she clearly wanted to be known and remembered by her writings. She states this desire directly in the three works generally recognized as hers. In the *Espurgatoire Seint Patriz*, a verse translation of a Latin saint's life, Marie states, 'Jo, Marie, ai mis en memoire / le livre de l'Espurgatoire' – I, Marie, have recorded, in order to be remembered, the book of Purgatory.<sup>3</sup> In the *Lais* of Guigemar, she identifies herself as 'Marie, ki en sun tens pas ne s'oblie' – Marie, who in her time should not be forgotten.<sup>4</sup> And she makes her strongest claim for recognition, after identifying herself by name, in the Epilogue to her *Fables*:

Put cel estre que clerz plusur  
Prendreient sur eus mun labur.  
Ne voil que nul sur li le die!  
E il fet que fol ki sei ublie! (ll 5–8)

And it may hap that many a clerk  
Will claim as his what is my work.  
But such pronouncements I want not!  
It's folly to become forgot!

While Marie reveals no additional specific autobiographical information, she does offer two other names that scholars have used in an unsuccessful attempt to find an historical Marie. The less informative name clue appears in the *Fables*, which are dedicated to a Count William, 'the doughtiest in any realm' (Epilogue, l 10). Naturally, however, there is no shortage of Williams one hundred years after the Norman Conquest, each more valiant than the other. The other name clue is in the *Lais*, dedicated to a 'noble reis.' This king is believed to be Henry II of England, great-grandson of William the Conqueror, who ruled from 1154 to 1189. He was unusually well educated for a king; his most lasting accomplishment was the establishment of the English common law. His queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine, although alienated from him after 1170, was famous in her own right as a patron of learning and the arts. One could easily imagine Marie's fables being read at Henry's court, and perhaps first to the women.

If the *Fables*, the *Lais*, and the *Espurgatoire* are works by the same Marie, then establishing their dates and sequence of composition could tell us

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something about Marie and her career. The only specifically datable reference is in the *Espurgatoire*, which mentions a Saint Malachais, thereby establishing a date for the *Espurgatoire* after 1189, the year of his canonization.<sup>5</sup> A contemporary poet, Denis Pirus, refers to a 'dame Marie' as the author of the *Lais*.<sup>6</sup> If the generally accepted date for Pirus's work, 1170–80, is correct, then the *Lais* would have been composed some time before that. Unfortunately, the dating of Pirus's work is also open to question. Many scholars, basing their conclusions on studies of contemporary poems, notably Wace's *Brut* (c 1155), *Piramus and Tisbé* (1155–60), and the *Eneas* (c 1160), believe that the *Lais* were composed around 1155–60.<sup>7</sup> We have then a plausible, though fairly long, period of creative activity, from about 1155 to some time after 1189. Common sense (but unfortunately no historical evidence) suggests that Marie wrote the *Fables* within that time span, after the *Lais* and before the *Espurgatoire*, roughly between 1160 and 1190. If this sequence is accepted, it may be that Marie, true to 'human nature,' began with youthful questions of love and romance, of fidelity and conflicting loyalties – the *Lais*; then moved in her middle years to skilfully rendered entertainment directed toward contemporary social and political concerns – the *Fables*; and finally turned her attention to sober and religious matters – the *Espurgatoire*.

Beyond these speculative observations, we learn most about Marie from her own works. She was well educated, probably knew English, and certainly knew Latin as well as her native French. She was well versed in classical literature, as the Ovidian influence in the *Lais* and the classical sources of many of her fables indicate, and she was familiar with contemporary French literature as well. She was a woman of courtly connections; her poems are clearly directed to that audience. Yet since no records have been found indicating that she was married or owned property, she probably had taken vows and lived in a convent, as was customary for unmarried women of rank. Marie was an artist proud of her work and jealous of her reputation, making clear her desire to be remembered by name. As a writer and learned person, she felt a keen sense of responsibility to communicate what she knew, as she states in the prologues to the *Lais* and the *Fables*. In the *Lais* we see a writer concerned not so much with the conventions of courtly love as with the psychological motivation of individual characters. Marie shows her concern for human misfortune, unhappy and restricting marriages, trapped heroes and heroines, and seems to have a special sympathy for the females in her stories. Similarly, in the *Fables* Marie reveals her compassion for the less

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fortunate characters, and frequently points to the urgent need for a system of justice that treats everyone fairly. Marie had a particular interest in the political and economic conditions of her day. Many of her fables describe these conditions directly; others convey an attitude of irony, scepticism, even pessimism about the world, particularly in the often condensed and cryptic morals to the fables. Wry and humorous, compassionate and realistic, Marie remains, above all, a versatile and gifted poet.

### MARIE DE FRANCE AND THE FABLE TRADITION

As 'fable' is a broad term, it will be helpful to establish what Marie herself may have meant by it, using her practice as evidence. Some of her fables are the familiar ones of Aesop; about half, however, are not. Contrary to general expectation, hers are not all beast fables (indeed this is true of the Aesopic fables as well); one-third include human characters. In many ways Marie's fables are a varied lot, but they do have several features in common. All are short narratives, clearly fictitious; no historical people or events figure in them. All are directed toward an instructive message, presented in a brief story that generally disguises the moral seriousness with an assumed naïve simplicity. And finally the lesson is underscored by the epimythium, the often ironic or sharp moral that follows each fable.

In her Prologue, Marie establishes her connection with the ancient fabulists, tracing her work back to Aesop, who (she says) translated his Latin version from the Greek original. Along with her contemporaries, she was mistaken, of course, about the Greek Aesop, who remains for us a shadowy figure, but a teller (probably illiterate), not a writer (or translator!) of fables. And the actual progression from Aesop (sixth-century BC) is more complicated than a medieval writer could have known. Marie had good reason to connect herself with the classical fable tradition, however, for these fables were important and popular in medieval Europe, as models for rhetoric as well as lessons for life. Medieval Europe knew the classical fables through the two main branches of the Aesopic tradition, the first-century Latin iambic verses of Phaedrus and the second-century Greek verses of Babrius. Babrius' version was put into Latin elegiac verses by Avianus in the fourth century; this came to be known as the *Avionnet*. From the *Avionnet* were drawn the school texts widely used by young students, studied in the *trivium* as part of the rhetoric; over one hundred of these manuals survive. As for Phaedrus, while his name was apparently not known to medieval Europe, his fables

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were well known, popularized through a fourth-century prose collection called *Romulus*. A great many medieval Latin derivations of *Romulus* survive, both in verse and in prose.<sup>8</sup> One branch of the *Romulus* became the source of popular French verse translations, later than Marie's and not directly connected with hers, known as *Isopets*.<sup>9</sup> Another branch is the one of interest here. It includes three prose manuscripts called the *Romulus Nilantii*.<sup>10</sup> The first forty of Marie's 103 fables correspond closely in sequence and generally in content with the *Romulus Nilantii*. Her first forty fables therefore seem to be based on a direct source, one that is part of the classical fable tradition, although a specific manuscript that Marie may have used has not been identified.

Finding a source or sources for the remaining sixty-three fables has proved more problematic. Karl Warnke, in his important but preliminary study of the sources of Marie's fables, cites as sources or analogues an impressive array of literary traditions; he notes parallels to her fables in *Bidpai*, the *Panchatantra*, Poggius, Abstemius, Odo, *Le Roman de la Rose*, *Le Roman de Renard*, and folk traditions of Germany, Italy, Arabia, the Hebrew, Serbia, Lesbos, Russia – and more.<sup>11</sup> As this list demonstrates, some of Marie's fables are associated with a learned and written tradition, others with a folk and oral tradition. Such, indeed, is the elusive nature of the medieval fable; some are part of the rhetorical curriculum, others seem more closely related to fabliaux, popular narratives intended more for entertainment than edification.<sup>12</sup> In some cases, in fact, Marie seems to have put into fable form oral narratives that were not originally fables; this may account for an occasionally obscure connection between a tale and its moral application. The sense we have of a unified collection, in spite of the apparent diversity of sources, is a tribute to Marie's skill as a fabulist and to her strong poetic personality.

### MARIE'S CONTRIBUTION

Since only the first forty of Marie's fables derive from the *Romulus* collection, and since the remaining sixty-three appear together nowhere before Marie's collection (so far as is known), it is at least worth considering that Marie herself could have gathered and recorded these fables for the first time. Although no one has yet suggested this possibility, one of Marie's contributions may well have been that of compiling the earliest extant collection of fables in the vernacular of western Europe.

Lacking proof, this suggestion can best be argued by negative evidence

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and common sense. First we must address Marie's claim, in the Prologue and Epilogue, that she has translated and put into rhyme the English text of 'li reis Alfrez.' But was there such a manuscript? Could there have been one? There is no surviving manuscript of any Old English fables, nor indeed any reference to one. As to 'King Alfred,' Marie de France, living in England, may have intended only to establish her connection with native English literary tradition through Alfred the Great, famed for his translations and his patronage of literature.<sup>13</sup>

History makes it unlikely that these fables of such diverse origin could have been collected by an English man – or woman – much earlier than Marie's time.<sup>14</sup> The first two crusades, which may account for some of those fables of eastern origin, had few native English participants. Normans, however, not only marched in the crusades but traveled widely in southern Europe and established settlements there. In Sicily, for example, they would have had access to Greek, Spanish, Roman, German, and Arabic cultures, all of which are represented in Marie's collection. And finally, one should remain sceptical about the possibility of an English source for this collection, for none of these fables seems to be of English origin.

Not only is it possible that a Norman compiled these fables, it is certainly worth considering that Marie herself could have done so. The two other works generally attributed to her bear witness to her skill in the two literary activities involved in creating this collection. If some of the fables were drawn from a Latin source, Marie might well have done so, for she translated and put into verse the Latin *Espurgatoire*. If some of the fables were received orally, again Marie might have recorded them herself and put them into verse, as she appears to have done with the Breton *Lais*. At any rate, it is improbable that Marie derived her entire collection from a single text, be it English or Latin.<sup>15</sup>

Marie's claim that she translated these fables has been accepted by modern scholars quite literally, and has been used all too frequently to dismiss them. An example is the recent, excellent study of the *Lais* by Paula Clifford where the *Fables* are identified simply as 'a translation' while the *Espurgatoire* is allowed the more dignified status of 'a moralizing poem ... based on a Latin *Tractatus*.'<sup>16</sup> Emanuel Mickel begins his chapter on the *Fables* in the same vein: 'Sometime in the second half of the twelfth century, Marie de France translated a collection of fables...'<sup>17</sup> However, by the end of the chapter, his tone has changed, as he compares the *Fables* to the *Lais* and comments, 'It is not difficult to see in Marie the author of both texts.'<sup>18</sup> It is interesting that both M. Dominica Legge and U.T.

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Holmes use the elusive phrase 'professed to be translating' in discussing Marie's *Fables*, thus implying their doubts about her translation claim while withholding any positive judgment as to her originality.<sup>19</sup>

The truth is that post-Romantic assumptions about originality are inappropriate when applied to the fabulist, whose work is adapting and transforming existing tales. La Fontaine himself, universally recognized as the father of the modern fable, claims no more than this in his preface, stating that he has translated and put into verse a selection from a fixed store of fables handed down from the ancients. And as we have seen, Marie thought that even Aesop was a translator.

Such a claim, especially by a medieval author, must be understood for what it was. Crediting one's superiors and predecessors as the source of one's work was commonplace in the Middle Ages. Translation itself was a loosely defined concept. Today we have no trouble seeing other medieval claims to translation as conventional gestures of modesty, as tributes to authority, or as a means of disclaiming responsibility for features that some might find objectionable. Chaucer's claim to have translated his *Troilus and Criseyde* from Lollius has not put into question the work's originality, nor has the discovery of an actual source, Boccaccio's *Filostrato*. And of course the fable, by its very nature, pays tribute to its classical origins.

As part of her translation claim, Marie says that she has put her English source into verse. Such a statement seems almost formulaic for the fabulist; indeed Phaedrus and Babrius, the great classical fabulists, claim exactly this, identifying their contributions as essentially versification. Yet most of us would consider such a re-creation in verse as an 'original work,' even if translation were not involved. Marie's verse form, the octosyllabic rhymed couplet of the period, differs radically in feeling and impact, in tone, from a prose version or one in another verse form. The short, snappy lines, the often witty rhymes which come fast one after another, the epigrammatic morals and other pithy remarks, even the fact that many of these cleverly constructed lines are uttered by animals, add to the wit (and the bite) of these fables. Surely these qualities associated with the versification must be acknowledged as Marie's contribution.

Marie did more than put these fables into verse; she made them her own. Most basically, she medievalizes her classical fables; hers are manifestly a product of the twelfth century, providing commentary on contemporary life, particularly on feudal social structure and questions of justice – the obligation of a ruler to be aware of his people's needs and to respond to them, and the people's awareness of what constitutes a

beneficent kingship and their obligations of loyalty to a good ruler.<sup>20</sup> The Normans brought to England a strong concern for judicial reform and equity, and Marie shared this concern. In 'The Dog and the Ewe' (Fable 4) Marie speaks sharply to the rich who use the court system to victimize the poor, and who thereby reap financial reward. In 'The Peasant and His Jackdaw' (Fable 56) Marie warns specifically against the possibility and dangers of legal corruption through bribery.

She seems particularly concerned with the importance of the mutual obligations of the ruler and the ruled, a concern often emphasized in the pointed morals she brings to traditional stories. Marie presents many examples of the dangers of an ignorant populace: the frogs who abuse their log king (Fable 18), the doves who ill-advisedly choose the hawk as king (Fable 19), and the animal community which ignorantly selects the wolf as king (Fable 29). Yet these fables are not only critical but instructive. People should be well informed and able to give their allegiance wisely. The birds who select the eagle to be their king do so only after learning about the cuckoo's dirty nature and rejecting that choice. The birds discover what the qualities of a good king are, and are then able wisely to choose the eagle (Fable 46). This solution seems typical of Marie. She does not suggest, of course, that human rulers should be democratically chosen. Indeed the eagle is the 'right' king, the one decreed by Nature.<sup>21</sup> Yet Marie values every component of society. Not only should the eagle be king, everyone should understand and believe in the justice of this order.

Marie gives immediacy and importance to all her characters, no matter how lowly, and thus individualizes them in spite of the fact that the various animals are given their stock traits. Thus Marie brings a special drama to the concerns of her own time. Her characters spar with one another in spirited, realistic dialogue; the action is strongly visualized and the setting vividly suggested by a few words. Her beasts are all too human yet intensely felt as animals; the lady mouse of Fable 3, full of small domestic pride, sitting on her stoop and combing out her whiskers with her feet, is entirely Marie's contribution. Marie also brings a new sensitivity to these fables and a strong sympathy for the poor and powerless characters. Our lady mouse, for example, does not die, as she (actually he) does in the Latin versions, but is able to peep out a cry that saves her life.

Indeed, Marie sometimes adds a special concern for the female characters in her fables, most notably when these fables present situations of particular concern to women. To 'The Wolf and the Sow' (Fable 21)

Marie adds a direct appeal to all women in childbirth to shun the company of men. Marie's account of 'The Pregnant Hound' (Fable 6) presents details of the birth, weaning of the pups, and then their tearing through the house and wreaking havoc, details not in the traditional Latin versions. Her account of 'The Fox and the Bear' (Fable 70) presents a startling picture of a bear tricked, trapped, and raped by a fox. Marie's concern for the helpless bear is in sharp contrast to analogues of this episode, such as the roughly contemporary Latin *Ysengrimus*, which, while making clear that the wolf is being raped, delights in Reynard's playful antics and then concludes, 'The book tells how she enjoyed these tricks.'<sup>22</sup> Similarly, a parallel version in *Le Roman de Renard* presents the female bear, Hersent, actually inviting the fox Renard's advances, enticing him with 'Acolez moi, si me baissiez!' (Hug me and kiss me!) and then welcoming him between her thighs.<sup>23</sup> Marie's bear is very different; she did not want it and did not like it.

Even to those inherited stories presenting women as the source of man's ruin, woman as the agent of the Devil (Fables 44 and 45), Marie changes the perspective slightly, wryly presenting these women as clever tricksters playing a good joke on their silly husbands.<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps the clearest indication of Marie's interest in females is her treatment of the traditionally male gods. It is striking indeed that all the gods of animals (usually Jove or Jupiter and definitely male in the Latin versions) become female in Marie's fables, called variously *la deuesse* (the Goddess), *la destinee* (Destiny), *la sepande* (Wisdom), and *la criere* (the Creator) – but always distinctly female.<sup>25</sup> However, when the fable includes human beings, Marie conservatively and safely sticks with the masculine *Dieu*. Marie does more than personify these gods as female, she also modifies their nature. In 'The Sun Who Wished to Wed' (Fable 36), for example, the Latin Jupiter (*Romulus Nilantii* 1.8) does nothing; he gives absolutely no response to the crowd's appeal for protection. Marie's goddess, however, responds directly with the specific promise that she will not allow the Sun's power to grow and with an assurance of her protection.<sup>26</sup>

However we assess Marie's contribution as compiler, translator, and versifier, it is clear that she has, above all, made these fables – even the most 'traditional' her own by her poetic artistry and personal voice.

#### EARLIER EDITIONS OF THE FABLES

No manuscript of the *Fables* survives from Marie's time; the twenty-three

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extant manuscripts, all dating from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, are at least one or two transcription generations after Marie's work. The first printed edition of Marie's *Fables* was published in 1820, edited by Jean-Baptiste-Bonaventure de Roquefort.<sup>27</sup> This is a pleasant but unscholarly edition, with no systematic use of the manuscripts or account of editorial procedure. In 1898 Karl Warnke published his important critical edition of the *Fables*.<sup>28</sup> He based his presentation on a detailed study and classification of all the manuscripts; his main conclusions about the interrelation of manuscripts, as Ewert and Johnston note, 'are hardly open to question.'<sup>29</sup> However, Warnke followed nineteenth-century editorial practices in regularizing his Anglo-Norman text, basing conjectural emendations on what he presumed the original manuscript to have been and often adopting from the various manuscripts what he considered the 'best' readings. In 1926 Warnke published a selection of these fables and modified somewhat his editorial procedure, making fewer emendations.<sup>30</sup> During this same period, A. Marshall Elliott of Johns Hopkins University was preparing an edition based on a manuscript at York (ms Y). Unfortunately, he died before the completion of his work.<sup>31</sup> In 1942 a collection of Marie's fables, edited by A. Ewert and R.C. Johnston, was published.<sup>32</sup> Ewert and Johnston used Harley 978 (ms A) as their base text and made few emendations, those being primarily to regularize the meter and to eliminate certain scribal features. They include, however, only a selection: forty-seven of Marie's fables. This present volume then is the first complete edition of Marie's *Fables* based on a single manuscript.<sup>33</sup>

Surprisingly, there is no modern French version of Marie's *Fables*.<sup>34</sup> There are two complete modern prose translations, one in German by Hans Gumbrecht<sup>35</sup> and one in English by Mary Lou Martin,<sup>36</sup> both based on Warnke's 1898 text. Two samplings of verse translation have appeared recently. Norman Shapiro includes eleven of Marie's fables in his *Fables from Old French*; his versions are jolly but loose (he says he 'enjoys a comfortable latitude') and he does not mention what he used for his French text.<sup>37</sup> Jeannette Beer's translation of thirty of the shorter fables into unrhymed free verse, based on Harley 978, appears in a lavishly illustrated book not quite intended for children; she makes major adjustments, particularly in Marie's morals, which she finds 'too wordy, or, even, self-contradictory.'<sup>38</sup> The present edition is the first complete verse translation of Marie's *Fables* into any modern language, and the first complete translation to be based on the single best manuscript.

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### THE TEXT

The twenty-three manuscripts, as identified by Warnke, which contain the fables are as follows:

- A BL Harley 978, ff 40a-67b; mid-thirteenth century
- B BL Vesp. B.xiv, ff 19a-32b; thirteenth century
- C BL Harley 4333, ff 73-96; thirteenth century
- D Bodl. Douce 132, ff 35-61b; thirteenth or fourteenth century
- E Camb. B.e.6.11, ff 39-83; first half of thirteenth century
- F BN fr. 12603, ff 279c-301b; thirteenth or fourteenth century
- G BN fr. 4939, ff 123-44; fifteenth or sixteenth century
- H Arsenal 3142, ff 256-71; end of thirteenth century
- I BN fr. 24310, ff 55-92; fifteenth century
- K BN fr. 25545, ff 29a-45d; fourteenth century
- L BN fr. 25406, ff 31a-49b; thirteenth or fourteenth century
- M BN fr. 1822, ff 198a-217b; thirteenth century
- N BN fr. 1593, ff 74a-98d; thirteenth century
- O BN fr. 1446, ff 88d-108c; thirteenth or beginning of fourteenth century
- P BN fr. 2168, ff 159a-186b; thirteenth century
- Q BN fr. 2173, ff 58a-93b; thirteenth century
- R BN fr. 14971, ff 1-41; fourteenth century
- S BN fr. 19152, ff 15a-24d; thirteenth or fourteenth century
- T BN fr. 24428, ff 89a-114d; thirteenth century
- V BN fr. 25405, ff 55c-81c; fourteenth century
- W Brussels BR 10296, ff 206c-230d; fifteenth century
- Y York Minster xvi, k. 12, Pt I, ff 1-21d; early thirteenth century
- Z Vatican Ottob. 3064, ff 235-42; fourteenth or fifteenth century

A table of concordances to these manuscripts is found on page 279.

In classifying the manuscripts, Warnke established three groups:  $\alpha$  (ADMY),  $\beta$  (BEGINQTZ), and  $\gamma$  (CFHKLOPRSVW). There is general agreement that the first of these, Group  $\alpha$ , seems to be of superior authority.

Although ms Y is the oldest extant, ms A is considered the best and is the one used here. It is complete, is relatively free of scribal errors, and is the only collection of Marie's fables bound in the same codex with her *lais*. Harley 978 is a small, handsome codex, notable also for its inclusion of 'The Cuckoo-Song' (Summer is icumen in). The fables begin with the



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announcement, 'Ci cumence le ysope.' The individual fables are untitled; each begins with a coloured initial, alternating red and blue. A colored paragraph sign, also alternating red and blue, announces the beginning of each moral.

The present edition reproduces as closely as possible the text of ms A. Modern punctuation has been supplied; i and j, u and v have been silently adjusted to conform with conventional usage. Only those scribal errors which obscure the meaning have been corrected; emendations have been made only on the few occasions when the manuscript reading was incoherent. Although Marie's octosyllabic line and couplet rhymes are predominantly regular, no adjustment of meter or rhyme has been made for the occasional irregular line. Corrections within the text are indicated by parentheses for suppressed letters or words and square brackets for added letters or words. When possible, emendations are drawn from other manuscripts, particularly from the closest ones, D, M, and Y, with the source and original reading noted. On the few occasions when, for the sake of a coherent reading, supplemental lines from another manuscript are introduced into the text, the lines are supplied directly from the other, without editorial adjustments, and are enclosed in square brackets. The source and the original reading are cited in the textual notes. All other emendations are cited in the textual notes.

Because ms A does not give titles to the fables, titles have been provided by the editor, either those given in other manuscripts or, for familiar fables, familiar titles. The numbering of the fables differs slightly from other editions. Warnke treats what is here Number 66 as an appendage to Number 65 and numbers it 65b, while this edition treats the latter as a separate fable (see note to fable 66). After Number 65, therefore, the numbering in this edition differs by one from Warnke's edition.

Though this is primarily an edition of the text of ms A, I have included a selection of variant readings in the notes. Variants from other manuscripts of Marie's fables are provided when they either clarify the given text or provide a major difference in meaning. Variants of more than a single word or phrase have been taken directly from manuscript. Other variants are, for the most part, based on Warnke's full edition. For variant readings found in more than one manuscript orthographic differences are not noted; when a variant is cited, all manuscripts with the same word are cited as well, whether or not identically spelled. I have also included in the notes some comparisons with versions other than Marie's when they are helpful either in clarifying Marie's fable or in highlighting her originality. Comparisons are made only with other early texts: primarily

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the *Romulus Nilantii* for the first forty, and for the fables not in the *Romulus Nilantii*, with other Latin versions, particularly a collection later than Marie's but related to hers, found in manuscripts in London, Brussels, and Göttingen, and labeled LBC by Warnke.<sup>39</sup>

### THE TRANSLATION

The translation is intended to be read as a parallel text; it follows the original closely, generally line by line, occasionally couplet by couplet. Because the form of the fable may well be as much a part of the 'meaning' as the literal text, the translation attempts to present Marie's verse in an equivalent English form. Fortunately, such a verse form did not need to be 'created' for this translation, as English verse fables since the seventeenth century have adopted a standard verse form – iambic tetrameter rhymed couplets. Translations, such as Bernard Mandeville's in 1704 of La Fontaine and Christopher Smart's in 1768 of Phaedrus, adopt this form as the appropriate one for English verse. John Gay, England's finest original fable writer, used this form, as did Cotton, Swift, Cowper, Wilkie, Langhorne, and others. The form remains a favourite for current versions of Aesop's fables, though most of them are intended for children. Even today the form is apt, for it conveys the lighthearted yet pithy wit and wisdom of the fable and invites reading aloud. Fortuitously, this is the closest English form to Marie's, as both are in fact rhymed octosyllabic couplets.

Rendering a literally accurate translation in an exacting verse form required some negotiation, notably in rhyme and meter. Rhyme is not easy in English. In French, words of like gender or tense can rhyme, but not in English. Marie's best rhymes are those that underscore a connection or contrast; those that punctuate the fable with a kind of wit. This translation, similarly, attempts to use rhyme for wit and emphasis. Sometimes near rhymes have been necessary; but, sparingly used, it is hoped that they contribute to the improvisational, the oral spirit of these fables.

The English metrical line posed another challenge, for English verse, accentual rather than syllabic, presents an additional metric requirement not applicable to the French. It was hard to keep to the iambic tetrameter line and resist the lure of dactylic or anapestic 'limerick' rhythms. For example, 'A fox will meet his nemesis / However smart he claims he is' (#98, ll 39–40), could well have been 'The fox will thus often be stopped / No matter how clever his talk,' and we are into limerick. Indeed, the



iambic tetrameter rhymed couplet, with its short lines and rhyme words close on the heels of one another, will irresistibly drift toward doggerel. The tetrameter is by nature a difficult line in English. The pentameter, perhaps because of its additional length, perhaps because five is an indivisible number, holding a line together as a unit or calling for variation in the placement of the medial caesura, resists the two-and-two sing-song of the tetrameter. But the apparent simplicity of tetrameter seems more appropriate to the fable and its apparent naïveté, its chirping profundities.

For these reasons, therefore, the translation adheres rather strictly to the four-stress iambic pattern, but not so strictly as to depart from the rhythms of natural speech. The major liberties that have been taken are those conventional in English verse, accepted even by strict eighteenth-century practitioners of the couplet: namely, 1/ an occasional inverted foot, especially at the beginning of a line; 2/ an occasional clipped initial syllable, especially at the beginning of a fable or the beginning of the epimythium, thus underscoring the feeling of the poem by creating a natural break or pause; and 3/ an occasional feminine rhyme adding an extra, unstressed, syllable.

Translation is an act not only of versification but of interpretation. One question that proved particularly challenging and revealing in translating Marie's fables was that of gender. Specifically, if a word is grammatically feminine in French, should it be translated as significantly feminine in English? This issue is not generally a problem in translating from French to English, for usually something either does have biological gender (man, woman) or it does not (table, watermelon). But the fables are about animals, and animals have grammatical gender in French that may or may not indicate biological gender. In the translations, when Marie's text is consistent, the gender is generally considered intentional and has been translated literally.

## NOTES

- 1 *The Lais of Marie de France*, translated and introduced by Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante (New York: E.P. Dutton 1978) 1
- 2 The first modern edition of Marie's *Lais*, edited by Jean-Baptiste-Bonaventure de Roquefort, was published in 1819: *Poésies de Marie de France, poète anglo-normand du XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Didot) 1. The *Fables* and the *Espurgatoire* were first published in the second volume of this work in 1820. For an annotated account of texts and studies of Marie's work, see Glyn S. Burgess, *Marie de*

*France: An Analytical Bibliography* (London: Grant and Cutler 1977). A second volume is forthcoming.

- 3 *L'Espurgatoire Seint Patriz of Marie de France*, edited by Thomas Atkinson Jenkins (Philadelphia: Alfred J. Ferris 1894) ll 2297-8
- 4 Marie de France, *Lais*, edited by Alfred Ewert (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1944) ll 3-4
- 5 Ewert, *Lais* viii
- 6 *La Vie Seint Edmund le Rei, poème anglo-normand du XIIIe siècle de Denis Piramus*, edited by Hilding Kjellman (Göteborg: Elander 1935) ll 35-40
- 7 Ezio Levi, 'Sulla cronologia delle opere di Maria di Francia,' *Nuovi Studi Medievali* 1 (1923) 41-72. Margaret Pelan, *L'Influence du Brut de Wace sur les romanciers français de son temps* (Paris: Droz 1931) 104-24. Ernest Hoepffner, 'Pour la chronologie des *Lais* de Marie de France,' *Romania* 59 (1933) 351-70; 60 (1934) 36-66. Hoepffner, 'Thomas d'Angleterre et Marie de France,' *Studi Medievali* ns 7 (1934) 8-23. R.N. Illingworth, 'La chronologie des *Lais* de Marie de France,' *Romania* 87 (1966) 433-75. Paula Clifford, *Marie de France: Lais* (London: Grant and Cutler 1982) 10-11
- 8 The name comes from its purported author, Romulus, who claims in the prologue to have translated the fables from Greek to Latin for his son Tiberinus (Tiberius). For discussion of the identification and classification of these fables, see Leopold Hervieux, *Les Fabulistes latins, depuis le siècle d'Auguste jusqu'à la fin du moyen âge* 2nd edition (Paris: Firmin-Didot 1893) 1, 293-314. Romulus collections can be found in Hervieux 11, 195-761; Hermann Oesterley, *Romulus: die Paraphrasen des Phaedrus und die Aesopische Fabel im Mittelalter* (Berlin: Weidmann 1870); George Thiele, *Der Lateinische Äsop des Romulus und die Prosa-Fassungen des Phädrus* (Heidelberg: C. Winter 1910).
- 9 Julia Bastin, ed, *Recueil général des Isopets* 2 vols (Paris: Champion 1929-30)
- 10 The name comes from the first editor of one of these mss in 1709. The fables are in Hervieux 11, 653-755.
- 11 Karl Warnke, *Die Quellen des Esope der Marie de France* (Halle: Niemeyer 1900)
- 12 For an excellent, succinct discussion of the close relationship between fable and fabliau, see Omer Jodogne, *Le Fabliau*, in *Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental* fasc 13 (Turnhout: Brepols 1975).
- 13 She may also have intended a discreet compliment to Henry II, who could claim descent (through his grandmother, Matilda of Scotland) from the ancient line of English kings, including Alfred the Great.
- 14 Hélène Chefneux used the animals in the decorative border of the Bayeux Tapestry, attempting to prove the existence of a single source for Marie's fables. These animals are apparently unrelated to the main narrative of the Norman invasion of England ('Les Fables dans la Tapisserie de Bayeux,'

## 18 Introduction

*Romania* 60 [1934] 1–35, 153–94. See also Sir Frank Stenton et al, *The Bayeux Tapestry* [New York: Phaidon 1957] esp. 27–8, 164–74; Léon Herrmann, 'Apologues et anecdotes dans la tapisserie de Bayeux,' *Romania* 65 [1939] 376–82; Hermann, 'Les fables antiques de la broderie de Bayeux' [Brussels: Latomus, *Revue d'études latines* 69, 1964]; David M. Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry* [New York: Knopf 1985]). Chefneux believed that some of these animals were pictorial representations of some of Marie's fables, or more specifically, of Marie's literary source. However, a basic assumption of her argument (and Herrmann's) is not tenable: that those who designed the embroidery must have had a literary source in mind, a single written text. It seems much more likely that these animals, as well as the hundreds of others in this border, terrestrial and mythological, were drawn from a store of traditional designs and folk literature. However speculatively identified, none of the illustrations presents features that are convincingly unique to Marie's version.

- 15 In an effort to substantiate Marie's claim of an English original, Karl Warnke argued for the existence of a Middle English source now lost. As there is no external evidence for this, Warnke based his thesis on meagre linguistic evidence in Marie's text. The argument is complicated, and, based as it is primarily on only four words, the conclusions must be considered highly speculative. Warnke identified three words, *wibet* (wasp), *widecoc* (woodcock), and *welke* (whelk), which he claimed could have come only from a Middle English source and said that, because Marie did not translate them, she did not recognize them or know what they meant. This assumes that Marie could not have made inquiries in her host country or that she would not have substituted other animals rather than produce nonsense. It seems far more plausible that Marie, living in England, could have known these three animals by these words and so used them rather than the equivalent French terms. Might it not be the later Continental scribes who were not familiar with these words? Warnke made a similar argument for the fourth word, *la sepande* (the creator). He claimed that Marie received this word from a Middle English source without understanding that it was grammatically masculine. Yet Marie renders as feminine all her gods of animals; to fail to appreciate this is to misread Marie. Karl Warnke, *Die Fabeln der Marie de France, mit Benutzung des von Ed. Mall hinterlassenen Materials* (Halle: Niemeyer, Bibliotheca Normannica VI, 1898) xlv–xlviii

16 Clifford, *Marie de France: Lais* 10

17 Emanuel J. Mickel, jr, *Marie de France* (New York: Twayne 1974) 34

18 Mickel, *Marie de France* 40

19 M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and Its Background* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1963) 107; U.T. Holmes, *History of Old French Literature* (Chapel Hill, NC: Robert Linker 1937) 210

## 19 Introduction

- 20 For a discussion of Marie's *Fables* as a product of the twelfth century, see E.A. Francis, 'Marie de France et son temps,' *Romania* 72 (1951) 78–99; and Erich Köhler, *Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der Höfischen Epik*, 2nd ed (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer 1970), translated by Eliane Kaufholz as *L'aventure chevaleresque: Idéal et réalité dans le roman courtois* (Paris: Gallimard 1974) 29–32. For a discussion of the medieval quality of the morals, see Arnold Clayton Henderson, 'Medieval Beasts and Modern Cages: The Making of Meaning in Fables and Bestiaries,' *PMLA* 97 (January 1982) 40–9.
- 21 Similarly, Marie adapts Fable 29 to emphasize the rightness of a social order with the lion as 'Nature's' king. The Latin versions present a lion as a wicked king; Marie makes the wicked king a wolf.
- 22 Gausam scriptura refert his lusibus illam. *Ysengrimus* v, 181.17, ed. Ernst Voigt (Halle: Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses 1884). This comment concludes a direct presentation of the rape of the wolf and Reynard's mocking banter. The rape scene is included in the majority of *Ysengrimus* manuscripts, but not in Voigt's ms A, which omits the sexual encounter entirely. See Voigt, xvi and 305–6.
- 23 *Le Roman de Renart*, edited by Mario Roques (Paris: Champion 1955) vii<sup>a</sup>, 5787. 'Hersant a la cuisse haucie / A qui plaissoit mout son ator' vii<sup>a</sup>, 5792–3
- 24 Of course, there are some fables that Marie does not change, even some, such as 'The Peasant and the Snake' (Fable 73), presenting the traditional view of the unreliable and ill-advising woman, albeit far more clever than her husband.
- 25 The only fable with a female god in Marie's version which in its classical version also has a female god is 'The Peacock' (Fable 31); the god is Juno. See Phaedrus III, 18; and *Rom. Nil.* III, 2.
- 26 A manuscript illustration to this fable (BN ms fr. 2173, f 59v) presents not only the deity but also the audience as female.
- 27 *Poésies de Marie de France* II
- 28 Warnke, *Die Fabeln*
- 29 Alfred Ewert and Ronald C. Johnston, *Marie de France: Fables* (Oxford: Blackwell 1942) xiii
- 30 *Aus dem Esope der Marie de France: Eine Auswahl von dreissig Stücken* 1st ed (Halle: Niemeyer, Sammlung romanische Übungstexte IX, 1926); 2nd ed (Tübingen: Niemeyer 1962)
- 31 George C. Keidel, *Old French Fables: The Interrupted Work of the Late Professor Elliott* (Baltimore 1919)
- 32 *Fables* (Oxford: Blackwell 1942)
- 33 An unpublished dissertation, based on a fresh examination of all the manuscripts, presents a critical edition of the Prologue, Epilogue, and ten of

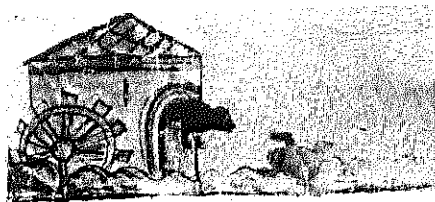
Marie's fables (Karen K. Jambeck, 'Les Fables de Marie de France: Edition critique de fables choisies,' University of Connecticut 1980).

- 34 There are two eighteenth-century French translations of some of Marie's fables. Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Legrand d'Aussy includes forty-three in *Fabliaux ou contes du XIIe et du XIIIe siècles* (Paris 1779) IV, 169–248. The first ten lines of the Prologue and five fables are included in Marc-Antoine-René de Voyer d'Argenson, marquis de Paulmy, *Mélanges tirés d'une grande bibliothèque* (Paris: Moutard 1779–88) IV (1781).
- 35 Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Marie de France, Äsop* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink 1973)
- 36 *The Fables of Marie de France* (Birmingham, AL: Summa 1984)
- 37 Norman R. Shapiro, *Fables from Old French: Aesop's Beasts and Bumpkins* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press 1982) ix
- 38 *Medieval Fables: Marie de France* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co 1983)
- 39 Warnke, *Die Fabeln* xlvi–lx. Hervieux II, 564–649. In his first edition, Hervieux placed these fables anterior to Marie, as a possible source. In his second edition, responding to Gaston Paris, 'Compte rendu: Hervieux, *Les Fabulistes latins*' (*Journal des Savants*, 1884, 670–86; 1885, 37–51), Hervieux revised his assessment.

## THE FABLES

34 Marie de France

- De vus me vient ceo que ai beü.  
 'Quei!' fet li lus, 'maudiz me tu?'  
 Cil li ad dit, 'N'en ai voleir!'  
 20 Li lus respunt, 'Jeo en sai le veir.  
 Cest memes me fist tun pere  
 A ceste surse, u od lui ere –  
 Ore ad sis meis, si cum jeo crei.'  
 24 'Que retez vus ceo,' fet il, 'a mei?  
 Ne fu pas nez dunc, si cum jeo quit.'  
 'E ke pur ceo?' li lus ad dit;  
 'Ja me fez tu ore cuntrere –  
 28 E chose que ne deussez fere.'  
 Dunc prist li lus l'aignel petit,  
 As denz l'estrange, si l'ocit.  
 Issi funt li riche seignur,  
 32 Li vescunte e li jugeür,  
 De ceus qu'il unt en lur justise:  
 Faus acheisuns par coveitise  
 Treovent asez pur eus confondre;  
 36 Suvent les funt a pleit somundre.  
 La char lur tolent e la pel,  
 Si cum li lus fist a l'aignel.



3 De la suriz e de la reine

- Sulum la lettre des escriz,  
 Vus musterei de une suriz  
 Que par purchaz e par engin  
 4 Aveit message a un mulin.  
 Par essample cunter vus voil  
 Que un jur s'asist de sur le suil;  
 Ses gernunez apparailla  
 8 E de ses piez les pluscha.

35 Fables

- My water comes from you, you see.'  
 'What!' snapped the wolf. 'You dare curse me?'  
 'Sir, I had no intention to!'  
 20 The wolf replied, 'I know what's true.  
 Your father treated me just so  
 Here at this spring some time ago –  
 It's now six months since we were here.'  
 24 'So why blame me for that affair?  
 I wasn't even born, I guess.'  
 'So what?' the wolf responded next;  
 'You really are perverse today –  
 28 You're not supposed to act this way.'  
 The wolf then grabbed the lamb so small,  
 Chomped through his neck, extinguished all.  
 And this is what our great lords do,  
 32 The viscounts and the judges too,  
 With all the people whom they rule:  
 False charge they make from greed so cruel.  
 To cause confusion they consort  
 36 And often summon folk to court.  
 They strip them clean of flesh and skin,  
 As the wolf did to the lambkin.

3 The Mouse and the Frog

- Now following the written text,  
 About a mouse I'll tell you next  
 Who by her cleverness and skill  
 4 Had made her household at a mill.  
 I'll show you, through this tale, her way:  
 The mouse sat on her stoop one day;  
 She smoothed her whiskers, made them neat,  
 8 And combed them out with tiny feet.

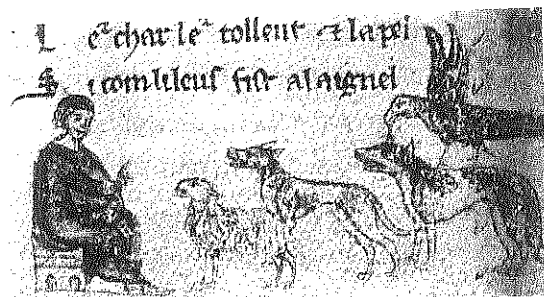
- Devant lui passa une reine –  
 Si cume aventure la meine.  
 Demanda li, en sa reisun,  
 12 Si ele ert dame de la meisun  
 Dunt ele se feseit issi mestre,  
 Si li acuntast de sun estre.  
 La suriz li respunt, 'Amie,  
 16 Pieça k'en oi la seignurie.  
 Bien est en ma subjectiun  
 Quant es pertuz tut environ.  
 Puis herberger e jur e nuit  
 20 Jüer e fere mun deduit.  
 Ore remanez anuit od mei!  
 Jeo vus musteraï, par dreite fei,  
 Sur la mole mut a eise –  
 24 N'i averez rien que vus despleise.  
 Asez averez ferine e greins  
 Del blé que remeint as vileins.'  
 La reine vient par sa priere;  
 28 Amdeus s'asient sur la piere.  
 Mut troverent a manger,  
 Sanz cuntredit e sanz danger.  
 La suriz par amur demande  
 32 A la reine de sa viande:  
 Quei l'en semble, verité l'en die.  
 'N'en mentirai,' fet ele, 'mie.  
 Mut par esteit bien appareillé,  
 36 Si en ewe eüst esté muillé.  
 En mi cel pré en un wascel  
 Fussums ore, que mut est bel –  
 La est la meie mansiun.  
 40 Bele amie, kar i alum!  
 Tant i averez joie e deduit,  
 Jamés n'avriez talent, ceo quit,  
 De repeirer a cest mulin.'  
 44 Tant li premet par sun engin  
 E la blandist par sa parole,  
 Que la creï, si fist ke fole.  
 Ensemble od li s'en est alee.  
 48 Le prez fu plein de rusee;

- And now a frog came up to her –  
 As if by chance she did appear.  
 The frog, in mouse-talk, asked the mouse  
 12 If she were lady of this house  
 Where she'd assumed the mastery,  
 And how she lived from day to day.  
 The mouse then answered her, 'My dear,  
 16 Some time I've been landlady here.  
 And all is under my control  
 When I'm protected by my hole.  
 Here I have shelter day and night  
 20 To play and follow my delight.  
 Why don't you spend the night with me!  
 I'll show you, most assuredly,  
 The mill and its amenities –  
 24 There's nothing here that will not please.  
 Here ample grain and wheat you'll find  
 In what the peasants leave behind.'  
 To this request the frog came round;  
 28 Upon the stone they both sat down.  
 And there they found much nourishment,  
 No peril and no argument.  
 Most lovingly the mouse then asked  
 32 The frog concerning her repast:  
 How was it, in all honesty?  
 'I will not lie to you,' said she,  
 'Though you've prepared a splendid meal,  
 36 Some water now would help, I feel.  
 Oh, how I wish we could go romp  
 Across the field to that fine swamp –  
 It's there that I have made my home.  
 40 Dear friend, let's go there now – do come!  
 There you'll have such delight, such bliss  
 That I believe you'll have no wish  
 Ever to come back to this mill.'  
 44 Such promises and crafty skill  
 And flattery went to her head.  
 She trusted frog – but was misled.  
 So off together went the two.  
 48 The meadow was awash with dew;

- La suriz fu issi muillee,  
 Que ele quida bien estre née[e].  
 Arere voleit retourner,  
 52 Kar ne poeit avant aler.  
 Mes la reine l'ad apelee,  
 Que a force l'en ad amenee;  
 Tant par amur, tant par preere,  
 56 Tant qu'il viennent a une rivere.  
 Dunc ne pot la suriz avant.  
 A la reine dist en plurant:  
 'Ci ne puis jeo pas passer --  
 60 Kar jeo ne soi unkes noër!'  
 'Pren,' fet la reine, 'cest filet,  
 Sil liez ferm a tun garet,  
 E jeo l'atacherai al mien --  
 64 La rivere passum bien.'  
 La suriz s'est del fil liee,  
 A la reine s'est atachee;  
 El gué se mettent, si s'en vunt.  
 68 Quant eles vindrent al parfunt,  
 Si la volt la reine neier,  
 Od li cumence a plunger.  
 La suriz pipe en aut e crie,  
 72 Que quida tut estre perie.  
 Un escufle i vient roant,  
 Vit la suriz, ki veit pipant.  
 Les eles clot, aval descent;  
 76 Li e la reine ensemble prent --  
 Amdui furent al fil pendant.  
 La reine fu corsu e grant;  
 Li escufles par cuveitise  
 80 La suriz lait, la reine ad prise.  
 Mangie l'ad e devoree,  
 E la suriz est deliveree.  
 Si est des veiziez feluns:  
 84 Ja n'averunt si bons compainuns,  
 Tant facent a eus grant honur,  
 Si rien lur deit custer del lur,  
 Que durement ne seient liez,  
 88 Si par eus seient enginniez.

- And thus the mouse got wet all 'round  
 And thought for certain she'd be drowned.  
 She must return now, go back home,  
 52 She knew she could no farther roam.  
 But then once more the frog addressed her;  
 Against the mouse's will, she pressed her.  
 She urged her onward, praised her so,  
 56 Until the mouse had reached the flow.  
 The mouse now saw no point in trying.  
 She tried to speak, though she was crying:  
 'I'm sure I cannot get across --  
 60 For I can't swim! I'm at a loss!'  
 'Now take and tie this little thread  
 Around your knees,' the frog then said,  
 'And I'll attach it thus to mine --  
 64 We'll cross the river then just fine.'  
 So with this plan the mouse complied,  
 With string both frog and mouse were tied;  
 And thus attached they made their start.  
 68 But when they reached the deepest part,  
 The frog intended mouse to drown,  
 And so she started plunging down.  
 The mouse let out a peeping cry,  
 72 She was convinced that she would die.  
 High overhead there soared a kite  
 Who heard her peeps and saw her plight.  
 He closed his wings, flew down to get her,  
 76 And grabbed the frog and mouse together --  
 For to each other they'd been tied.  
 The frog was plump and stout and wide;  
 The kite ignored the mouse, for greed  
 80 Told him the frog was better feed.  
 The kite devoured the frog quite fast,  
 And thus the mouse was free at last.  
 With cunning villains this is clear:  
 84 They never will have friends so dear  
 That they, in honour of their friend,  
 Could bear a single penny spend.  
 Without compunction, they are glad  
 88 If they can trick their good comrade.

Mes il ravient asez sovent  
 Que de memes le turment,  
 Que as autres quident purchacer,  
 92 Avient lur cors a periller.



## 4 Del chien e de la berbiz

Ci cunte de un chien menteür,  
 De male guisches e tricheür,  
 Que une berbiz enpleida.  
 4 Devant justise la mena,  
 Si li ad un pain demandé,  
 Q'il li aveit, ceo dit, (a)presté.  
 La berbiz tut le renea –  
 8 E dit que nul ne li (a)presta!  
 Li juges al chien demanda  
 Si nul testimoine en a.  
 Il li respunt qu'il en ad deus,  
 12 Ceo est li scufles e li lus.  
 Cil furent avant amené.  
 Par serment unt afermé  
 Que ceo fu veirs que li chiens dist.  
 16 Savez pur quei chescun le fist?  
 Qu'il en atendeient partie,  
 Si la berbiz perdist la vie.  
 Li jugere dunc demanda  
 20 A la berbiz qu'il apela.  
 Pur quei il ot le pain neié  
 Que li chiens li aveit baillé,

And yet it happens every day:  
 Those folk who torment in this way  
 And think that others they'll ensnare, will  
 92 Find that they place themselves in peril.

## 4 The Dog and the Ewe

This story's of a dog's deceit,  
 An evil, cunning dog, a cheat.  
 He sued a ewe – he held a grudge –  
 4 And brought the ewe before a judge.  
 He sought from her a loaf of bread  
 Which he had lent her, so he said.  
 The ewe denied it resolutely –  
 8 He'd lent her nothing, absolutely!  
 The judge then asked the dog if he  
 Had witnesses to back his plea.  
 The dog replied that he could cite  
 12 Two witnesses: the wolf and kite.  
 To prove his case, he brought in both.  
 Each swore and stated under oath  
 That all the dog had said was true.  
 16 Why did they act this way, those two?  
 Each one was waiting for his share,  
 If death should be her sentence there.  
 At this the judge then asked the ewe,  
 20 The one he sent his summons to,  
 'Why do you still deny the bread,  
 That which the dog has lent,' he said.



42 Marie de France

- Menti en ot pur poi de pris –  
 24 Ore li rendist, einz qu'il fust pis!  
 La cheitive n'ot dunt rendre:  
 Dunc li covient sa leine vendre.  
 Yvern esteit, de freit fu morte.  
 28 Li chiens i vient, sa leine en porte,  
 E li escufles d'autre part,  
 E puis li lus, trop est li tart  
 Que la chars fust entre eus destreite,  
 32 Kar de viande eurent suffreite.  
 Ne la berbiz plus ne vesqui;  
 Sis sires del tut la perdi.  
 Par ceste essample nus veut mustrer:  
 36 E de meint hume le puis prover,  
 Ki par mentir e par tricher  
 Funt les povres suvent pleider.  
 Faus tesmoins sovent traient,  
 40 De l'aveir as povres les (a)paient.  
 Ne lur chaut que li las devienge,  
 Mes que chescun sa part tienge.

5 Del chien e del furmage

- Par une feiz, ceo nus recunt,  
 Passot un chien desur un punt;  
 Un furmage en sa buche tient.  
 4 Quant enmi le puncel vient,  
 En l'ewe vit l'umbre del furmage.  
 Purpensa sei en sun curage  
 Que avoir les voleit amduis.  
 8 Ileoc fu il trop coveitus!  
 En l'ewe saut, la buche overi,  
 E li furmages li chei!  
 E umbre vit, e umbre fu,  
 12 E sun furmage aveit perdu.  
 Pur ceo se deivent chastier  
 Cil di trop sulent coveiter.  
 Ki plus coveite que sun dreit,  
 16 Par sei memes se recreit;

43 Fables

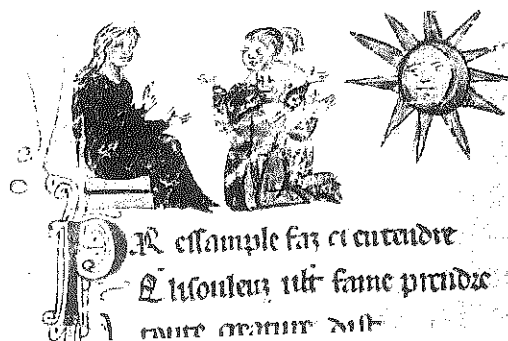
- 'Why lie about such petty stuff –  
 24 Return it, or the going's rough!  
 The poor thing couldn't, she had naught:  
 She had to sell her woollen coat.  
 She froze to death in winter's grip.  
 28 The dog was there, her fleece to strip.  
 The kite came for his share of fleece;  
 The wolf was anxious for his piece.  
 They could not wait her flesh to eat,  
 32 For they'd been hankering after meat.  
 No life was left to that poor ewe;  
 Her lord entirely lost her, too.  
 This example serves to tell  
 36 What's true for many men as well:  
 By lies and trickery, in short,  
 They force the poor to go to court.  
 False witnesses they'll often bring  
 40 And pay them with the poor folks' things.  
 What's left the poor? The rich don't care,  
 As long as they all get their share.

*g. King says  
also shows how  
unlucky poor  
people*

5 The Dog and the Cheese

- It happened long ago, they say:  
 A dog, crossing a bridge one day,  
 Was clasping with his teeth some cheese.  
 4 Half way across the bridge, he sees  
 His cheese's shadow in the stream.  
 Deep in his heart he has this dream:  
 He'd like that second morsel, too.  
 8 Now there's a greedy dog for you!  
 He jumps right in, opens his mouth,  
 And as he does, the cheese falls out!  
 Shadow it is, shadow he sees,  
 12 And that is how he lost his cheese.  
 So therefore people should take heed  
 Who are misguided by their greed.  
 Those who desire more than is just  
 16 Will be undone by their own lust.

Kar ceo qu'il ad pert sovent,  
E de autrui n'a il nent.



## 6 Del soleil ki volt femme prendre

Par essample fet ci entendre  
Que li soleil volt femme prendre.  
A tute creature le dist,  
4 E que chescun se purveist.  
Les creatures s'assemblerent;  
A la Destinee en alerent,  
Si li mustrerent del soleil,  
8 Que de femme prendre quert conseil.  
La Destinee lur cumande  
Que veir li dient de la demande,  
E ceo que avis lur en esteit.  
12 Cele parla ke meuz saveit:  
'Quant le soleil,' fet ele, 'est hauz,  
El tens d'esté, est il si chauz  
Qu'il ne lest rien fructifier;  
16 Tere e herbe fet sechier.  
E s'il ad esforcement –  
E cumpaine a sun talent –  
Nule riens nel purra souffrir,  
20 Desuz li vivre ne garir.'  
La Destinee respondi:  
'Veir avez dit. Lèissum le issi,  
Cum il ad esté, grant tens a,

They'll lose whatever they had before,  
And get from others nothing more.

## 6 The Sun Who Wished to Wed

Apply this story to your life:  
The sun once wished to take a wife.  
He told all creatures his intent:  
4 Each should prepare for the event.  
The animal community  
Then met and went to Destiny.  
The sun, they told her, would be wise  
8 To seek advice in choosing wives.  
Destiny asked them to attest  
The truth concerning sun's request:  
What did they think of this affair?  
12 Thus spoke the wisest of them there:  
'The summer sun's so hot,' she said,  
That when the sun's high overhead,  
No trees can blossom or bear fruit;  
16 The earth is parched, no plants take root.  
If reinforcement he acquires,  
A partner sharing his desires,  
We'll not be able to survive,  
20 For under them no life could thrive.'  
Said Destiny, 'It seems to me  
You speak the truth. We'll let it be  
As it has been since long ago.

46 Marie de France

- 24 Kar ja par mei n'esforcera!  
Issi chastie les plusurs  
Qui sur eus unt les maus seignurs,  
Que pas nes doivent esforcier  
28 N'a plus fort de eus acumpainer  
Par lur sen ne par lur avoir,  
Mes desturber a lur poeir.  
Cum plus est fort, pis lur fet:  
32 Tuz jurs lur est en mal aguet.



7 Del lu e de la grue

- Issi avint que un lus runga  
Un os, que al col li vola;  
E quant el col li fu entrez,  
4 Mut durement en fu grevez.  
Tutes les bestes asembla,  
E les oiseus a sei manda.  
Puis ad fet a tuz demander  
8 Si nul se seit mediciner.  
Entre eus en unt lur conseil pris;  
Chescun en dist le suen avis.  
Fors la grue – ceo dient bien –  
12 N'i ad nul de eus que en sache rien.  
Le col ad lung e le bek gros;  
Ele en purreit bien entreire l'os.  
Li lus li pramist grant loër  
16 Pur ceo ke lui vousist aider.  
La grue lance le bek avant  
Dedenz la gule al malfesant.

47 Fables

- 24 I won't allow his strength to grow!  
Thus everyone should cautioned be  
When under evil sovereignty:  
Their lord must not grow mightier  
28 Nor join with one superior  
To them in intellect or riches.  
They must do all they can to thwart this.  
Stronger the lord, the worse their fate:  
32 His ambush always lies in wait.

7 The Wolf and the Crane

- A wolf once gulped, in times remote,  
A bone which stuck fast in his throat;  
And when he found the bone remained,  
4 He was distressed and sorely pained.  
Assembling every beast and bird,  
He called them to him with a word.  
He asked them all if there was one  
8 Who was well versed in medicine.  
Each in the group then had his say,  
And each replied in the same way:  
None knew a cure for his distress –  
12 Except the crane – who answered yes.  
Her neck was long, her beak was great;  
With these, the bone she'd extricate.  
The wolf promised a grand reward  
16 If he were cured, his health restored.  
The crane, with lance-like beak then sought  
The bone deep in his wicked throat.

- L'autre se prist a dementer  
 E dit que ele ne seit u aler.  
 Yver esteit, pur la freidur  
 20 Murrat la fors a grant dolor.  
 Dunc li requist par charité  
 Que ele l'erberge desque a l'esté.  
 Cele ot de li mut grant pité,  
 24 Si li ad issi otrié.  
 Quant le bel tens vit revenir,  
 Dunc les en ruve fors eissir.  
 L'autre comence a jurer,  
 28 Se jamés l'en oeit parler,  
 Que si chaël le detrareient  
 E ors a l'us la butereient.  
 La force ert lur e la vigur,  
 32 Fors l'en unt mise a deshonor.  
 Ceste essample purrez saveir  
 E par meint produmme veeir  
 Que par bunté de sun curage,  
 36 Est dechacié de heritage.  
 Ki felun humme od li acuilt,  
 Ne s'en part mie quant il le veut.



## 9 De la suriz de vile e de la suriz de bois

Ci dit de une suriz vilaine,  
 Que a une vile proceine  
 Voleit aler pur deporter.

- Said mother dog, with tears of woe,  
 She had no other place to go.  
 And outside, winter's icy breath  
 20 Would freeze them all – a wretched death.  
 She asked her now for charity:  
 Just until summer, let her stay.  
 With tender pity for her guest,  
 24 The other granted her request.  
 But when she saw the days improve,  
 She wished that they'd be on the move.  
 The mother cursed at her, and swore  
 28 That if she talked thus any more,  
 The pups would tear her flesh from bone  
 And hurl her out of house and home.  
 With might and main they ruled the place,  
 32 And forced her out in great disgrace.  
 This model serves to guide us then  
 And shows what comes to worthy men  
 Who for their hearts' benevolence,  
 36 Are chased from their inheritance.  
 Should you a wicked man receive,  
 When once you've had it, he'll not leave.

## 9 The City Mouse and the Country Mouse

A certain city mouse, they say,  
 Went to a nearby town one day  
 Wishing to find what fun she could.

- 4 Par mi un bois l'estut passer.  
Dedenz le bois li anuita.  
Une hulette ileoc trova,  
Que une suriz de bois ot fete,
- 8 Sa viande i ot atrete.  
La suriz de vile demande  
Si ele ot iluec point de viande.  
Cele respunt, 'Jeo en ai asez!
- 12 Venez avant e sil veez!  
Si plus eüssez de cumpainie,  
Si en seriez vus bien servie!  
Quant ele ot piece iluec esté,
- 16 A sa cumpaine ad parlé;  
Dist que od li est sun estre mauveis –  
E que ele ne volt demurer meis.  
Od li vienge, si avera
- 20 Riches sales, ke li durra,  
Beles despenses, beaus celers,  
E bons beivres e bons mangiers.  
Cele la crei; od li s'en va.
- 24 En riches sales la mena.  
Si li ad mustré ses solers,  
Ses despenses, ses celers,  
Plenté de farine e de miel.
- 28 Cele quida bien estre el ciel.  
Mes ore viendrent li buteler,  
Que entrer durent el celer.  
Si tost cum il ovrirent l'us,
- 32 La suriz s'en fuit es pertus.  
La boscage fu esbaïe,  
Que lur estre ne saveit mie.  
Quant cil eissirent del celer,
- 36 Les suriz revindrent manger.  
Cele fu murne e en dolor,  
Ki ot eü de mort poür.  
Sa cumpaine la regarda,
- 40 Par grant duçur li demanda:  
'Quel semblant fet ma duce amie?'  
'Jeo sui,' fet ele, 'maubaillie  
Pur la poür que jeo ai eüe;

- 4 Her journey took her through a wood.  
Deep in the wood, as it grew dark,  
A little hole she chanced to mark,  
One which a country mouse had made
- 8 And there a store of food conveyed.  
The city mouse asked if she could  
Please have from her a bite of food.  
The country mouse said, 'I've a lot!
- 12 Come in and see what food I've got!  
And if you'd brought some friends with you,  
They all would be well-treated, too!  
The city mouse a while had stayed,
- 16 When to her country friend she said  
That life out here was far from good –  
She wished to go and thought she would.  
Now if her friend would choose to come,
- 20 She'd show her many a fancy room,  
And splendid pantries, cellars fine,  
Excellent drinks, and meals divine.  
She trusted her; they went together.
- 24 The city mouse to rich rooms led her.  
And here she showed the country mouse  
The pantries, cellars, all her house –  
Of flour and honey great supplies;
- 28 'Twas heaven to the other's eyes.  
But suddenly the butlers enter,  
They needed something in the cellar.  
The instant that they opened the door,
- 32 Back to the mouse's hole she tore.  
The country mouse was in a daze,  
For she knew nothing of their ways.  
But soon the butlers left, and then
- 36 The mice returned to eat again.  
Saddened, the country mouse despaired.  
She'd almost died, she'd been so scared.  
City mouse, watching her companion,
- 40 Now questioned her with great compassion:  
'My friend, why do you look so sad?'  
She answered, 'My condition's bad.  
For I've just had a dreadful shock;

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- 44 Mut me repent que te ai cr[e]üe!  
 Tu me cuntoues tut tun bien,  
 Mes de tun mal ne deïstes rien.  
 Ore as tu poür de la gent,  
 48 De chaz, de oiseus – tut ensement –  
 E des engins que hum fet pur tei.  
 Meuz amereie al bois par mei,  
 A seürté e sanz destresce,  
 52 Que en tes solers od tristesse.  
 Ceste fable dit pur respit:  
 Chescun aint meuz le suen petit  
 Que il ad en pes e sanz dutance,  
 56 Que autri richesce od mesestance.



10 Del gupil e de l'egle

- De un gupil cunt la manere,  
 Que ert eissuz de sa tesniere;  
 Od ses enfanx devant jua.  
 4 Un egles vient, l'un enporta.  
 Li gupilz vet après criant  
 Qu'il li rendist sun enfant.  
 Mes il nel volt mie escuter,  
 8 Si l'en cuvient a retourner.  
 Un tisun prist de feu ardent,  
 E secche buche vet cuillant;  
 Entur le chesne le meteit,

55 Fables

- 44 I'm sorry I believed your talk!  
 You told me many pleasing tales  
 But left out all the bad details.  
 Yet now I see how much you fear  
 48 Men, cats, birds – all around us here –  
 And traps men set to snap. I own  
 That I prefer my woods, alone,  
 In safety and without distress,  
 52 To grand rooms and unhappiness.  
 This fable teaches us a lesson:  
 Each one prefers his small possession,  
 Which he enjoys in tranquil pleasure,  
 56 To anxious woes of others' treasure.

10 The Fox and the Eagle

- A fox is what this tale's about  
 Who, from his foxhole ventured out  
 To his front yard, with cubs to play.  
 4 An eagle came, swooped one away.  
 The fox, as he pursued them, cried  
 For eagle to return his child.  
 But eagle showed him no concern,  
 8 And fox must to his hole return.  
 Then picking up a burning brand,  
 And with dry kindling close at hand,  
 Around an oak a fire he laid,

- 12 U li aigles sun ni aveit.  
Li egles vit le fu espris;  
Al gupil prie e dit, 'Amis,  
Estein le feu! Pren tun chaël!  
16 Ja serunt ars tut mi oisel!  
Par ceste essample entendum nus  
Que si est del riche orguillus:  
Ja del povre n'avera merci  
20 Pur sa plainte, ne pur sun cri.  
Mes si cil se pust dunc venger,  
Sil verreit l'um tost suppleer.



# 11A Del leün, del bugle, e del lu

- Jadis esteit custume e leis  
Que li leüins deust estre reis  
Sur tutes bestes ki sunt  
4 E ke conversent en cest munt.  
Del bugle ot fet sun senescal,  
Que pruz le tient e leal.  
Al lu bailla sa provosté.  
8 Tut treis sunt en bois alé.  
Un cerf trevent, sil chacerent;  
Quant pris l'eurent, si l'escorcerent.  
Li lus al bugle demanda  
12 Coment le cerf departira.  
'Ceo est,' fet il, 'en mun seignur,  
Que nus devum porter honur.'  
Li leüins ad dit e juré  
16 Que tut ert suen pur verité.  
La primere part avereit  
Pur ceo que reis ert e dreiz esteit.  
[E l'autre part pur le guain.

- 12 The tree where eagle's nest was made.  
The eagle saw the fire was lit;  
He begged the fox, 'Extinguish it! --  
My friend, take back your cub!' he urged.  
16 'The fire will burn my little birds!'  
This story has a lesson which  
Tells of a man haughty and rich:  
He shows the poor no charity  
20 No matter what their cry or plea.  
But if the poor can wreak vengeance,  
The rich will bow in deference.

# 11A The Lion, the Buffalo, and the Wolf

- It once was law and customary  
For lion to be king of every  
Creature that existed, and  
4 Of all that dwelt upon the land.  
Buffalo, seneschal made he  
For worthiness and loyalty.  
The lion made the wolf his provost.  
8 All three went off into the forest.  
They came upon and chased a deer.  
They captured it and flayed it there.  
The wolf then asked the buffalo  
12 How portioning the deer should go.  
'That's up to my seignior,' said he.  
'We owe him honour, certainly.'  
The lion swore, affirming this:  
16 All of the deer was truly his.  
The first of these parts ought to be  
For him who was king rightfully.  
[The next part was his profit due



- 20 Pur ceo quil ert le terz cumpain.]  
 L'autre partie avera, ceo dist,  
 Raisun esteit, kar il l'ocist;  
 E ki la quarte part prendreit,  
 24 Ses enemis morteus serreit.  
 Dunc n'i osa nul atucher;  
 Tut lur estut le cerf lesser.

## 11B Del leün, de la chevre, e de la berbiz

- Un autre fez ot li leüns  
 28 En bois od lui plus cumpainuns:  
 La chevre e la berbiz i fu.  
 Un cerf unt pris e retenu.  
 En quatre part le voleient partir.  
 32 Li leüns dit, 'Jeo le voil saisir.  
 La greinur part deit estre meie,  
 Kar jeo sui reis, la curt l'otreie.  
 [L'autre avrai, kar jeo i curui,  
 36 E la tierce, kar plus fort sui.]  
 Le surplus ai si divisee  
 Que nul ne l'avera sanz mellee.  
 Tuit li cumpainun, quant l'oïrent,  
 40 Tut li laisserent, si fuïrent.  
 Autresi est, ne dutez mie,  
 Si povres hum prent cumpainie  
 A plus fort hume qu'il ne seit,  
 44 Ja del guain n'avera espleit.  
 Li riches volt aver l'onur,  
 U li povres perdra s'amur.  
 E si nul guain deivent partir,  
 48 Li riches vout tut retenir.

- 20 As the third member of their crew.]  
 He said the next part was his share  
 By right because he killed the deer.  
 If any took the fourth, he'd be  
 24 The lion's mortal enemy.  
 None dared to touch; for it was clear  
 They must leave lion all the deer.

## 11B The Lion, the Sheep, and the Goat

- Another time, the lion went  
 28 Into the woods with other friends,  
 Specifically, the sheep and goat.  
 A deer they hunted out and caught.  
 Into four parts they wished it split.  
 32 Said lion, 'I'll take all of it.  
 The biggest part should be for me  
 Because I'm king, by court decree.  
 [The next part's mine: I chased the deer;  
 36 The third as well: I'm strongest here.]  
 The rest I have apportioned right:  
 It goes to none without a fight.'  
 When they heard what the lion said,  
 40 His friends left all the deer and fled.  
 Doubt not that here a truth is penned:  
 Whenever a poor man makes a friend  
 Of one more powerful than he,  
 44 He'll never any profit see.  
 The rich man values glory most,  
 And doesn't care if love is lost.  
 If there is gain to be divided,  
 48 The rich man keeps all, that's decided.



## 15 De l'asne ki volt jüer a sun seignur

- De un riche hūme cunte li escrit,  
 Que aveit un chenet petit.  
 Suventefeiz a lui jua,  
 4 E un sun asnes l'esguarda.  
 En sun curage entendi bien  
 Que tuit l'autre aiment le chien  
 Pur le seignur quil cherisseit  
 8 E ki od lui se deduieit.  
 Suz sun mantel le fist muscier,  
 Sil fist les autres surabaier.  
 Mut s'est li asnes purpensez  
 12 Que meuz del chien vaut asez  
 E de bunté e de grandur.  
 Meuz savereit a sun seignur  
 Jüer que li chenez petitz;  
 16 E meuz sereit oï ses criz.  
 Meuz savereit il sur li saillir.  
 Meuz le savereit des piez ferir.  
 Pur fol se tient que a lui ne veit,  
 20 Ne que od sa voiz ne crie e breit,  
 Cum fet li chiens sur le seignur.  
 Issi avient ke par un jur  
 Se alot li sires deduiant;  
 24 E od le chenet va juant.



## 15 The Ass Who Wanted to Play with His Master

- There was a rich man, as I've read,  
 Who kept a small dog as a pet.  
 He frolicked with him constantly;  
 4 This, the man's donkey chanced to see.  
 The ass knew, deep within his breast,  
 The dog was loved by all the rest  
 Because he was his master's treasure  
 8 And often served to give him pleasure.  
 The man would hide him in his cloak  
 And make the dog outbark the pack.  
 The ass was quite convinced, indeed,  
 12 That his own value did exceed  
 The pup's, his size and virtue, too.  
 Far better than the pup, he knew  
 How with his master he should play;  
 16 'Twas easier to hear his bray.  
 He better knew how to leap up  
 And paw the man than did the pup.  
 And what a fool he thought he was  
 20 Not to bray out and cry hee-haws,  
 As dog to master, the same way.  
 And so it happened that one day  
 The man went out to have some sport;  
 24 The dog came with him to cavort.

- Ne pot li asnes plus souffrir:  
Vers le seignur prist a venir.  
Sur lui cumença a rechaner,  
28 Que tut le fet espoënter.  
Des piez le fiert, sur lui sailli,  
Si que a la tere l'abati.  
Pur un petit ne l'a crevé,  
32 Si li sires nen eüst crié,  
'Haro! Haro! Aidez mei!  
Si humme i saillent a desrei;  
Chescun od mace u od bastun.  
36 L'asne fierent tut envirun -  
(A grant martire e a dolur  
Porent rescure lur seignur.)  
De si que l'asne unt tant batu,  
40 Qu'il le leissent tut estendu.  
A grant peine vient a sa stable.  
Saver poüm par ceste fable  
La manere de ceste gent -  
44 Mut l'en peot veer sovent:  
Que tant se veulent eshaucer  
E en tel liu aparagier -  
Que ne avient pas a lur corsage,  
48 Ensuketut a lur parage.  
A meint en est si avenu  
Cum a l'asne ki fu batu.



## 16 Del leün e de la suriz

De un leün dit ki se dormeit  
En un boscage u il esteit.  
Entur lui se vunt deduiant

- The ass, who could not bear this more,  
Made his approach toward the seignior.  
Now such a bray the ass let out,  
28 He frightened everyone about.  
With feet he struck, and with a bound,  
He knocked the master to the ground.  
The master might well have been killed  
32 If in distress he had not shrilled,  
'Oh help! Oh help! Oh rescue me!  
His men rushed up in disarray.  
Each of them had a club or mace,  
36 And thoroughly they beat the ass -  
(After great torture and much grief,  
They finally gave their lord relief.)  
The donkey was so beaten that  
40 At last they left him stretched out flat.  
He went in anguish to his stable.  
We can learn clearly from this fable  
The way this kind of man will be -  
44 We've all observed them frequently:  
Those who to raise themselves aspire  
And who a higher place desire -  
One that's not fitting to their girth  
48 And most of all, not to their birth.  
The same result will come to pass  
For many, like the beaten ass.

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## 16 The Lion and the Mouse

It's said a lion was asleep  
Where he lived in a forest deep.  
Some little mice 'round where he lay

Dunc prist oisels granz e menurs.  
 N'eüssent pas del mal eü,  
 28 S'il eüssent dunc conseil creü.  
 Ceste semblance est asez veire:  
 Quant fous ne veut le sage creire,  
 Ki bon conseil li seit duner  
 32 E de sun mal le volt oster,  
 Si damage l'en deit venir –  
 Dunc est trop tart del repentir.

## 18 Des reines ki demanderent rei

Jadis avient que en un estanc,  
 Entur les rives e el fanc,  
 Ot de reines granz cumpainies,  
 4 Que de lung tens i sunt nurries.  
 La desdeignerent arester;  
 A la tere vodreient aler.  
 A lur Destinee crïerent –  
 8 Suventefeiz li demanderent –  
 Que rei lur deüst enveier;  
 Kar d'autre rien ne eurent mester.  
 Quant meinteifeiz eurent prié  
 12 La Destinee ad enveié  
 Enmi cel ewe un trunc dur  
 Dunt eles eurent grant poür.  
 Cele que pres del trunc estut  
 16 E vit ke pas ne se remut,  
 Ses cumpaines ad rapelees,  
 Si sunt ensemble al trunc alees.  
 Primes le salüent cume rei,  
 20 E chescune li pramet fei.  
 Tutes le tienent pur seignur,  
 Si li portent grant honur.  
 Mes quant le trunc ne se remut,  
 24 Celes virent que en pes estut,  
 Enmi cel ewe jut en pes.  
 Sur li munterent tut a un fes.  
 Lur vileinie sur li firent,

Birds large and small he captured there.  
 Such ills they would not have received,  
 28 Had they in good advice believed.  
 This picture's truth we recognize:  
 A fool who won't believe the wise  
 Who could advise him what to do  
 32 And rescue him from error, too,  
 Deserves the painful consequence –  
 Now it's too late for penitence.

## 18 The Frogs Who Asked for a King

Once, in a pond, it came to pass,  
 Around the banks and the morass,  
 There lived great frog confederations  
 4 Who had been there for generations.  
 They hated staying in the pond  
 And wished to move to solid ground.  
 So they cried out to Destiny –  
 8 Repeatedly they made their plea –  
 That she might send to them a king;  
 They needed not another thing.  
 When many times the frogs had prayed,  
 12 Then Destiny to them conveyed  
 Right in the pond, a sturdy log  
 Which caused great fear in every frog.  
 The frog close by the log observed,  
 16 Since it had come, it had not stirred.  
 He to his friends a summons croaked;  
 The log together they approached.  
 They greeted it as their king royal,  
 20 And each one promised to be loyal.  
 The frogs all thought of it as lord,  
 Thus was it honoured and adored.  
 But when the log stayed motionless,  
 24 They saw that it was fixed in place,  
 Lying so still there in the water.  
 They climbed upon it all together.  
 Such dirty deeds performed each frog

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- 28 El funz de l'ewe l'abatirent.  
A la Destinee revunt:  
Rei demandent, car nul ne unt;  
Mauveis fu cil qu'el lur duna.
- 32 La Destinee lur enveia  
Une coluvre grande e fort,  
Que tuz les dovore e treit a mort.  
Tutes furent en grant turment.
- 36 Dunc crierent plus egrement  
A la Destinee merci  
Que lur ostast cel enem.
- 40 'Nenil, nenil! Jeo vus suffri  
Tuz voz volentez a feire.  
Seignur eüstes de bon eire.  
Vileinement le hunisistes;
- 44 Tel l'aiez cum le quesistes!  
Issi avient, plusurs le funt  
De bon seignur, quant il l'unt:  
Tuz jurs le veulent defuler;
- 48 Ne li seivent honur garder.  
S'il nes tient aukes en destreit,  
Ne frunt pur lui tort ne dreit.  
A tel se pernent, quis destruit;
- 52 De lur avoir meine sun bruit.  
Lores regretent lur bon seignur,  
A ki il firent la deshonor.

19 Des colums e de l'ostur

- Colums demanderent seignur.  
A rei choisirent un ostur,  
Pur ceo que meins mal lur fesist
- 4 E vers autres les garantist.  
Mes quant il ot la seignurie,  
E tuz furent en sa baillie,  
N'i ot un sul k'il aprismast,
- 8 Qu'il ne ocesist e devorast.  
Pur ceo parla un des colums,

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- 28 That to the depths they sank the log.  
They then to Destiny went back  
And begged a king; they felt the lack:  
The one she'd given them was bad.
- 32 So Destiny then sent that crowd  
An adder powerful and great –  
Death to the frogs he seized and ate.  
Those left were all in great distress.
- 36 They cried out with much bitterness  
For mercy now from Destiny  
To rid them of their enemy.  
Responding, Destiny avowed,
- 40 'Oh no! Oh no! You've been allowed  
All of the things which you desired.  
A lord good-natured you acquired.  
You shamed churlishly that seignior,
- 44 And now you have what you asked for!  
This is what many folks have done  
To a good lord (should they have one):  
They always want to stamp their lord;
- 48 His honour they don't know to guard.  
If they're not kept in stressful plight,  
They'll do him neither wrong nor right.  
To him they cling who them destroys;
- 52 With what they have, he makes his noise.  
Then for their good seignior they long  
To whom they have done shameful wrong.

19 The Doves and the Hawk

- The doves asked for a sovereign.  
They chose a hawk to be their king,  
So that to less harm he'd subject them
- 4 And against others might protect them.  
But when he got the sovereignty,  
And over all had mastery,  
Then not one could approach him whom
- 8 He would not kill and then consume.  
Therefore one dove these thoughts expressed

- 20 Que m'ad nurri desque a cest jur.  
 Malement avereit empleié –  
 Qu'il m'ad nurri e afeité –  
 Si par ma garde avereit perdu
- 24 Ceo dunt il m'ad lung tens peü.  
 E tu memes m'en harreies  
 E pur treïtre me tendreis.  
 Ne voil tun pain issi guainer!
- 28 E dunc comencet abaier.  
 Par essample nus mustri ci:  
 Chescun franc hume face einsì.  
 Si nuls l'en veut doner lüer
- 32 Ne par pramesse losenger  
 Que sun seignur deive traïr,  
 Nel veile mie cunsentir;  
 Atendre en deit cel guerdun,
- 36 Cum le chien fist del larun.



## 21 Del lu e de la troie

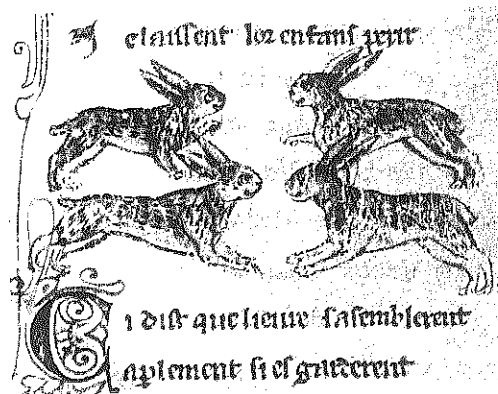
- Jadis avient que un lus erra  
 Par un chemin, si encontra  
 Une troie que preinz esteit.
- 4 Vers li ala a grant espleit,  
 E dist que pes li vot duner,  
 Ore se hastast de purcelier –  
 Car ses purceus voleit avoir.
- 8 Cele respunt par grant saveir:  
 'Sire, cument me hastereie?  
 Tant cum si pres de mei vus veie,

- 20 Who's cared for me until this day.  
 And he'd be used most wickedly –  
 This man who raised and cared for me –  
 If he lost all, while in my keep,
- 24 When he's fed me to guard his sheep.  
 Me, even you yourself would hate, for  
 You would consider me a traitor.  
 I will not earn my bread that way!
- 28 With this, the dog began to bay.  
 In this example, we see here  
 A model of fine character.  
 If one would buy his services
- 32 Or flatter with false promises  
 In hope that he'll his lord betray,  
 He will refuse emphatically.  
 The same reward he would receive
- 36 As dog knew he would get from thief.

## 21 The Wolf and the Sow

- Once long ago a wolf strolled down  
 A path and chanced to come upon  
 A sow who was with piglets big.
- 4 He hastily approached the pig.  
 He'd give her peace, he told the sow,  
 If quickly she'd bear piglets now –  
 Her piglet babes he wished to have.
- 8 With wisdom, this response she gave:  
 'My lord, how can you hurry me?  
 When you, so close to me I see,

- Ne me puis pas deliverer;  
 12 Tel hunte ai de vus esgarder.  
 Ne savez mie que ceo munte?  
 Tutes femeles unt grant hunte,  
 Si mains madles les deit tucher  
 16 A tel busuin ne aprismer!  
 Idunc s'en va li lus mucier,  
 Ki les purcels voleit manger.  
 E la troie s'en est alee  
 20 Que par engin s'est delivree.  
 Ceste essample deivent oïr  
 Tutes femmes e retenir:  
 Que pur sulement mentir  
 24 Ne laissent lur enfanz perir!



## 22 Des lievres e des reines

- Ci dit que lievres s'assemblerent  
 A parlement, si esgarderent  
 Que en autre tere s'en ireient  
 4 Hors de la grave u il esteient;  
 Kar trop furent en dolor:  
 De humes, de chiens eurent poür.  
 Si nel voleient mes souffrir,  
 8 Pur ceo s'en veulent fors eissir.  
 Li sage lievre lur diseient

- I cannot bear my young outright;  
 12 I'm so ashamed when in your sight.  
 Do you not sense the implication?  
 All women suffer degradation  
 If male hands should dare to touch  
 16 At such a time, or even approach!  
 With this the wolf hid in retreat  
 Who'd sought the baby pigs to eat.  
 The mother pig could now proceed  
 20 Who through her cleverness was freed.  
 All women ought to hear this tale  
 And should remember it as well:  
 Merely to avoid a lie,  
 24 They should not let their children die!

## 22 The Hares and the Frogs

- It's said the hares once came together  
 In council to consider whether  
 They should to other regions roam  
 4 Out from the grove that was their home;  
 For life was too distressful here:  
 Of dogs and men they lived in fear.  
 Such woes they could not tolerate,  
 8 And so they wished to emigrate.  
 The wise hares then spoke to the rest:



- Que folie ert ceo que quereient  
 A eissir de lur cunissance –  
 12 U furent nurrie des enfance.  
 Li autre ne l'en vodrent creire;  
 Tuz ensemble tiendrent lur eire.  
 A une mare en sunt venu.  
 16 Gardent el tai, si unt veü  
 U reines erent asemblees.  
 Del poür de eus sunt esfrees;  
 Dedenz l'ewe se vunt plunger,  
 20 Desque veient aprismer.  
 Uns lievres les ad rapelez.  
 'Seignurs,' fet il, 'kar esgardez!  
 Par les reines que nus veüms,  
 24 Que poür unt, nus purpensums  
 Que nus alum querant folie,  
 Que nostre grave avum guerpie  
 Pur estre aillurs asseürez.  
 28 Jamés tere ne troverez,  
 U l'um ne dute aucune rien.  
 Ralum nus en! Si ferum bien!  
 A tant li lievre retournerent;  
 32 En lur cuntree s'en alerent.  
 Pur ceo se deivent purpenser –  
 Cil ki se veulent remüer  
 E lur ancien liu guerpier –  
 36 Que lur en put après venir.  
 Jamés regne ne troverunt  
 Ne en cele tere ne vendrunt  
 Que tut tens seient sanz poür,  
 40 U sanz travail u sanz dolor.

## 23 De la chalve suriz

- De un liun cunte que assembla  
 Tutes les bestes e manda  
 Ki aloënt sur quatre piez;  
 4 E li egles ad purchaciez  
 Tuz les oisels que eles unt

- They would be seeking foolishness  
 To leave behind all that they knew –  
 12 The place where they'd been nurtured, too.  
 Not heeding what they had to say,  
 Soon all the hares were on their way.  
 Their travels took them to a pond.  
 16 Looking in the mud, they found  
 Some frogs who had assembled there.  
 These frogs were overwhelmed with fear;  
 Into the water they would dive  
 20 As soon as they saw hares arrive.  
 One hare then called out to the lot,  
 'Seigniors! Come look at what we've got!  
 We've seen the frightened frogs; likewise  
 24 We should on our part realize  
 That after foolishness we strove  
 When we abandoned our home grove,  
 Thinking that we would safer be.  
 28 For such a land you'll never see  
 Where one has not a thing to fear.  
 Let's go back home! That's best, it's clear!  
 With that, the hares all turned around  
 32 And went back to their native ground.  
 All this, those people ought to weigh –  
 Those folk who wish to move away,  
 Abandoning their ancient home –  
 36 They'd best take heed of what could come.  
 No kingdom will they ever find  
 Anywhere known to humankind  
 Where everyone lives free of fear,  
 40 Where toil and sorrow disappear.

## 23 The Bat

- Once lion did a meeting call  
 Assembling every animal,  
 All that on four feet walked about;  
 4 And eagle sent a summons out  
 To all the birds with wings to fly

- E que volent en l'eir lamunt;  
 Bataille deivent od li tenir.
- 8 Quant ensemble durent venir,  
 La chalve suriz les vit,  
 En sun queor ad pensé e dit  
 Que mut redutout cel afaire –
- 12 Ne sot as quels se dut traire.  
 Od ceus volt estre que veinterunt  
 E ki la greinur force averunt.  
 Sur un haut fust s'en est muntee
- 16 Pur esgarder cele assemblee.  
 Ceo li fu vis sun escient  
 Que li liuns aveit plus gent  
 E qu'il ert de greinur justise:
- 20 Od les autres suriz s'est mise.  
 Li egles fu amunt volez  
 Od les oiseus qu'il ot mandez.  
 Tant en i ot, tant en viendrent,
- 24 Que les bestes pur fous se tiendrent.  
 Quant la chave suriz les veit,  
 Mut li pesa que od eus n'esteit;  
 Des bestes est dunc departie.
- 28 Ses piez musça (si fist folie).  
 Mes quant les eles entreovri,  
 Par devant tuz les descovri:  
 Dunc est sa felunie overte,
- 32 E sa traïsun tut descuverte.  
 De si as bestes la hüerent.  
 A lur Criere se clamerent –  
 De la chalve suriz se pleignent;
- 36 Mut la hunissent e blasteignent  
 E mustrent li sa felunie,  
 E cum ele ad sa fei mentie.  
 Lur Criere lur ad juré
- 40 Que ele en fra lur volenté,  
 E que mut bien les vengera.  
 Puis la maudist e si jura  
 Que jamés en liu ne venist
- 44 Que oisels ne beste la veïst.  
 Tute clarté li ad tolue,

- Who travel high up in the sky;  
 For they would battle one another.
- 8 And as these two groups came together,  
 The scene was witnessed by the bat.  
 The voices in his heart said that  
 He was quite terrified with fear –
- 12 Unsure with which side to adhere.  
 With those who'd win he wished to be,  
 Who'd fight with greater potency.  
 And so he climbed up a tall tree
- 16 To give the crowd full scrutiny.  
 And this is what he figured out:  
 The lion had more troops, he thought,  
 His kingdom greater, he surmised.
- 20 Therefore, bat joined the other mice.  
 The eagle flew high in the air  
 With all the birds he'd summoned there.  
 By now there were so many birds,
- 24 The animals felt quite absurd.  
 The bat saw them and felt remorse  
 That he'd not joined the eagle's force.  
 And so he left the animal pack
- 28 And hid his feet (a foolish act!)  
 For when his wings were opened wide,  
 His feet by everyone were spied:  
 Exposed thus was his treachery;
- 32 Revealed was his disloyalty.  
 The animals then raised a shout.  
 To their Creator they cried out –  
 They all accused the bat, he was
- 36 Contemptible and odious.  
 They told her of his villainy,  
 How he had used his wings to lie.  
 Then their Creator said she'd do
- 40 Exactly what they wished her to.  
 He'd get his retribution now.  
 She cursed the bat and made this vow:  
 No matter where the bat might be,
- 44 He'd never bird nor creature see.  
 His eyesight then she took away:

90 Marie de France

- Ja puis ne seit de jur veüe.  
Aprés la ruva issi hunir:  
48 Sa plume oster, lui descovrir.  
Autresi est del traïtur  
Que meseire ves sun seignur,  
A ki il deit honur porter  
52 E lëauté e fei garder.  
Si sis sires ad de li mestier,  
As autres se veut dunc ajuster,  
A sun busuin li veut faillir  
56 E od autres se veut tenir.  
Si sis sires vient el desus,  
Ne peot lesser sun mauveis us.  
Dunc vodrit a lui retourner;  
60 De tutes pars veut meserrer.  
Si honur en pert e sun avoir,  
E repruver en unt si heir.  
A tuz jurs en est si huniz,  
64 Cum fu dunc la chalve suriz  
Que ne deit mes par jur voler,  
Ne il ne deit en curt parler.



24 Del cerf a une ewe

Issi avient que un cerf beveit  
A une ewe, kar sei aveit.  
Guarda dedenz, ses cornes vit.

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- He'd never know the light of day.  
For shame, this sentence she imposed:  
48 He lose his plumes and be exposed.  
That traitor's case is similar  
Who wrongly acts toward his seignior.  
He should give honour to his lord  
52 And should be loyal, keep his word.  
And when his master is in need,  
He should join others and bring aid.  
Yet he'll not heed emergency:  
56 He'll turn to other company.  
But if his lord comes out on top,  
His bad behaviour will not stop.  
For now he wishes to come back;  
60 Thus he goes wrong with every tack.  
He loses honour and possessions,  
Rebuked are later generations.  
Forever he will suffer shame.  
64 Our story of the bat's the same:  
He cannot ever fly by day  
And can't at court have any say.

24 The Stag at the Spring

To quench his thirst, a stag once took  
A drink of water at a brook.  
He saw his horns mirrored below;



## 46 Des oiseaus e del cuccu

- Des oiseaus dit que s'assemblerent  
 A parlement, si esgarderent  
 Que entr'eus deüssent aver rei  
 4 Quis governast par dreite fei.  
 Chescun de eus numa le sun  
 A fere cele electiun.  
 Tuz esteient dunc esbaï,  
 8 Quant del cuccu oient le cri.  
 Ne surent quels oiseus ceo fu,  
 Mes que tut tens diseit, 'cuccu.'  
 Mut le peot l'um de loinz oïr,  
 12 Kar tut le bois fet retentir.  
 Tuz diseient en lur gargun  
 E afermerent par raisun  
 Que cil oisel, ke si chauntout,  
 16 E si grant noise demenout,  
 Deveit bien estre rei e sire  
 De gouverner un grant empire.  
 S'il fust si pruz e si vaillanz  
 20 En ses ovres cum en ses chanz,  
 A seignur le voleient aver.  
 Mes il voleient primes saver  
 Sun estre e sun cuntenement.  
 24 Pur ceo gardent communement  
 Ki deit aler en lur message:  
 La mesenge, que mut est sage.  
 A parceivre en verité

## 46 The Birds and the Cuckoo

- It's said that birds, a multitude,  
 Did hold a meeting and conclude  
 That they should have a king, one who  
 4 Would govern and be just and true.  
 The birds agreed that sound of voice  
 Should be the basis of their choice.  
 They all were taken by surprise  
 8 When first they heard the cuckoo's cries.  
 What bird this was, nobody knew,  
 But that all day he said, 'cuckoo.'  
 From far he could be heard with ease;  
 12 His call would echo in the trees.  
 Each in his parlance, every bird,  
 Set forth his reasons and averred  
 This bird with song so clamorous,  
 16 So noisy and vociferous,  
 Should well their king and lord become  
 And govern thus a great kingdom.  
 Were he as worthy and as strong  
 20 In actions as he was in song,  
 They wanted him their lord to be.  
 Before that, though, they wished to see  
 His nature and his habitude.  
 24 They met on this and did conclude  
 Which bird they ought to send as page:  
 The titmouse, who was very sage,  
 With facts a shrewd discoverer,

- 28 L'unt d'ici qu'a li enveié.  
 La mesenge vola tut dreit  
 D'ici a l'arbre u il esteit.  
 Mut s'esteit pres de li asise,  
 32 Si l'esgarda par grant quointise.  
 Ne preisa gueres sa manere,  
 Kar il feseit mauveise chere.  
 Uncore vodra plus haut munter,  
 36 Sun curage volt espruver.  
 Sur une branche en haut saili,  
 Desur le dos li esmeulti.  
 Unc li cuccu mot ne dist  
 40 Ne peiur semblant ne l'en fist.  
 Arere s'en vet la mesenge;  
 Le cuccu leidist e blastenge –  
 Ja de lui ne ferunt seignur!  
 44 As autres dist la deshonor  
 E la hunte qu'il li fist grant:  
 'Unc ne mustra peiur semblant!  
 Si uns granz oiseus li mesfeseit,  
 48 Mauveisement s'en vengereit –  
 Quant envers li ne se osa prendre,  
 Ki est de tuz oiseus la mendre.  
 Eslisent tel ki seit vaillant,  
 52 Pruz e sage e enpernant.  
 Reis deit estre mut dreiturers,  
 En justise redz e fiers.'  
 A cel conseil se sunt tenu,  
 56 E si unt esgardé e veü  
 Que de l'egle ferunt rei.  
 E si vus sai bien dire pur quei:  
 Li egles ad bele grandur,  
 60 Si est asez de grant valor;  
 Mut est sobres e atemprez.  
 Si une feiz est bien saülez,  
 Bien repeot juner aprés,  
 64 Qu'il n'est de preir trop engrés.  
 Prince se deit bien reposer,  
 Ne se deit mie trop deliter,  
 Lui ne sun regné aviler,

- 28 Was sent out as their messenger.  
 The titmouse left immediately  
 And flew straight to the cuckoo's tree.  
 She perched in close proximity  
 32 And gave him careful scrutiny.  
 His manner gave her no delight:  
 He was indeed a dreadful sight.  
 Yet higher still she wished to settle  
 36 So she could verify his mettle.  
 She jumped up to a higher limb  
 And defecated over him.  
 The cuckoo did not say a word  
 40 And did not seem the least disturbed.  
 The titmouse to the rest returned;  
 The cuckoo bird she cursed and spurned –  
 Never should he be made seignior!  
 44 She told them of his dishonour  
 And how, by her, he'd been disgraced:  
 'He did not seem to mind the least!  
 Were a large bird to do him wrong,  
 48 This bird's revenge would not be strong –  
 Considering that he has not stirred  
 Against the very smallest bird.  
 We ought to choose one stout of heart,  
 52 Who's noble, valorous, and smart.  
 A king should be one very righteous  
 Who's firm and stern in dealing justice.'  
 With this advice, all did agree,  
 56 For everyone could clearly see  
 That they should make the eagle king.  
 And I'll give you the reasoning:  
 The eagle's grand and glorious,  
 60 And he's especially valorous,  
 And very staid and dignified.  
 And once the eagle's satisfied,  
 He fasts again quite easily  
 64 And does not lust too much for prey.  
 A prince should be well-rested, too;  
 In his delights not overdo;  
 Nor shame himself or his domain,

- 68 Ne la povre gent eissilier.  
 Issi l'unt fet cum jeo vus di.  
 Par cest essample nus mustre ici  
 Que hum ne deit pas fere seignur  
 72 De mauveis humme jangleür,  
 U n'i a si parole nun.  
 Tel se nobleie par tençun  
 E veut manacer e parler,  
 76 Que mut petit fet a duter.

## 47 Del vilein e de sun cheval

- D'un vilein nus cunte ici,  
 Que aveit un cheval nurri.  
 Tant l'ot gardé, qu'il le vot vendre,  
 4 Deners volt aver e prendre.  
 Pur vint souz, ceo dist, le durra.  
 Un sun veisin le bargena,  
 Mes ne vot mie tant doner;  
 8 Al marché les covient aler.  
 Cil a ki le cheval esteit,  
 Otri l'autre qu'il le larreit  
 Al pris que cil humme le metreit  
 12 Que encuntre eus primes vendreit,  
 Desqu'il vendreient al marché  
 De tutes parz l'unt otrié.  
 Quant el marché furent entre,  
 16 Un humme borne unt encuntré.  
 Qui le destre oil aveit perdu.  
 Ensemble od eus l'unt retenu;  
 Si li demandent sun avis  
 20 Que del cheval die le pris.  
 Il lur respunt ke dis souz vaut –  
 S'il est ignels e süef e haut  
 Cil ki le cheval bargena,  
 24 De la sue part l'otria –  
 Mes li autre le cuntredit,  
 Kar trop l'aveit preisé petit.  
 Tant l'en ad dit e chastié,  
 28 Que a la justise l'en ad mené,

- 68 Nor cause the poor folk undue pain.  
 The birds did what I said they'd do.  
 And so this lesson's shown to you:  
 Do not have as your lord someone  
 72 Who's wicked and a charlatan.  
 For all his words, he's but verbose;  
 In argument, he's grandiose.  
 Although he'll talk and threaten harm,  
 76 He cannot stir up much alarm.

## 47 The Peasant and His Horse

- Here's one more story from my source:  
 A peasant once had raised a horse.  
 He'd kept the horse for quite a spell,  
 4 But now he felt he had to sell.  
 'For twenty sous! A gift!' he said.  
 A neighbour tried a lower bid  
 And would not to his price consent;  
 8 So off to market they both went.  
 The horse's owner posed this course:  
 He'd let the other have the horse –  
 And as for price, it would be set  
 12 By the first man that they would meet  
 When they got to the market-place.  
 That, they agreed, would be the case.  
 They reached the market, went inside,  
 16 And met a man who was one-eyed.  
 He'd no right eye, for he had lost it.  
 By our two men he was accosted.  
 They asked him now for his advice:  
 20 What ought to be the horse's price?  
 He answered it was worth ten sous –  
 If it was fast and rode well, too.  
 The man who wished the horse to buy  
 24 Was fully ready to comply –  
 But now the other man said no,  
 Claiming the price was set too low.  
 The buyer then complained so much  
 28 He took the matter to a judge.

- 4 A tant aveit mis sun esme.  
 En un bois trova un mutun  
 Cras e refait, sanz la tuisun.  
 A sei memes demanda,  
 8 'Quei est ceo,' fet il, 'que jeo vei la?  
 Ceo est un mutun, m'est avis!  
 Si pur ceo nun que jeo ai pramis –  
 Que nule char ne mangereie –  
 12 De sun costé me referee!  
 Ore ai,' fet il, 'dit grant folie!  
 Jeol vei tut sul sanz cumpainie.  
 Ceo m'est avis, si jeo nel gart,  
 16 Teus vendra d'aucune part,  
 Que l'en merra ensemble od sei –  
 Si nel larra nient pur mei!  
 Jeol puis bien prendre pur un mutun,  
 20 Sil mangerai pur un saumun;  
 Meuz vaut li saumun a manger,  
 E sil peot l'um vendre plus cher.'  
 Si vet de humme de mauveis quier:  
 24 Il ne peot lesser a nul fu[e]r  
 Sun surfet ne sa glutunerie.  
 Ja encuntre sa lecherie  
 Humme ne femme lecheresse  
 28 Ne gardera vou ne pramesse.

# 51 De la singesse e de sun enfant

- Une singesse ala mustrant  
 A tutes bestes sun enfant.  
 Cil la teneient pur fole  
 4 E par semblant e par parole,  
 Tant que a un liun le ala mustrer.  
 Si li comence a demander  
 S'il fu mut beus, e il li dit  
 8 Une plus leide beste ne vit.  
 Porter li ruve a sa meisun,  
 E si recorde ceste reisun:  
 'Chescun gupil prise sa cue,

- 4 Exactly that was his intent.  
 He found a sheep among the trees,  
 All plump and fat, not too much fleece.  
 The wolf now asked himself, said he,  
 8 'And what is this that here I see?  
 Why, I believe it is a sheep!  
 If I had not my pledge to keep –  
 That from all meat I would abstain –  
 12 I'd look at those fat flanks again!  
 How stupidly I've talked!' said he.  
 'The sheep is all alone, I see.  
 I think that if I don't take care,  
 16 Someone will come and grab a share,  
 Then off with it that one will flee –  
 And there'll be nothing left for me!  
 I'll make that sheep a tasty dish  
 20 And think of it as salmon fish;  
 For salmon tastes superior  
 And also costs a great deal more.'  
 With one of wicked heart, it's so:  
 24 He's never able to let go  
 Of surfeit or of gluttony.  
 Responding to this lechery,  
 A man or woman lecherous  
 28 Will not keep vows or promises.

△

# 51 The Monkey and Her Baby

- Once there was a monkey-lady  
 Who showed all animals her baby.  
 They thought this mother quite absurd  
 4 Both in her manner and her word,  
 But then she did to lion go.  
 She asked him first if it weren't so –  
 That it was beautiful. Said he,  
 8 An uglier beast he'd yet to see.  
 He ordered her to take it home  
 And keep in mind this axiom:  
 'Every fox his tail does prize,

- 12 Si se merueille que ele est sue.  
 Cele s'en va triste e dolente.  
 Un urs encuntre enmi la sente.  
 Li urs estut, si l'esgarda.
- 16 Par quointise l'areisuna.  
 'Vei jeo,' fet il, 'ileoc l'enfant –  
 Dunt les bestes parolent tant –  
 Que tant par est beus e gentilz?'
- 20 'Oil,' fet ele, 'ceo est mes filz.'  
 'Bailez le ça, tant que jo le bes.  
 Kar jeol voil veer plus pres.'  
 Cele le baile, e il le prent,
- 24 Si l'ad mangé hastivement.  
 Pur ceo ne devereit nul mustrer  
 Sa priveté ne sun penser.  
 De tel chose peot humme joïr,
- 28 Que ne peot mit a tuz pleisir.  
 Par descoverance vient grant mals;  
 N'est pas li secles tut leals.

## 52 Del dragun e del vilein

- Ore cunterai d'un dragun,  
 Que un vilein prist a cumpainun;  
 E cil suvent li premetteit
- 4 Que læaument lui servireit.  
 Li dragun le vout esprover,  
 Cum il se poeit en lui fier.  
 Un oef li cumanda a garder,
- 8 Si dist qu'il voleit errer.  
 De l'oef garder mut li preia.  
 E li vileins li demanda,  
 Pur quei li cumandot einzi.
- 12 E li draguns li respundi  
 Que dedenz l'of ot enbatu  
 Trestut sa force e sa vertu;  
 Tost sereit mort, s'il fust brusez.
- 16 Quant li dragun fu esloinez,  
 Si s'est li vileins purpensez:

- 12 And marvels greatly that it's his.'  
 Sad and depressed, she went from there.  
 Along the way she met a bear.  
 Stock still the bear stood and assessed her.
- 16 Then cunningly the bear addressed her,  
 'Do I see here that infant small –  
 The talk of every animal –  
 The beautiful and noble one?'
- 20 'Indeed,' she said, 'this is my son.'  
 'Oh let me hold and kiss the dear.  
 I'd like to see it closer here.'  
 She gave it to the bear, and he
- 24 Took it and ate it hastily.  
 And for this reason you should not  
 Disclose your secret or your thought.  
 Some things can bring delight to one,
- 28 Which to some others prove no fun.  
 Disclosure brings iniquity;  
 This world has no integrity.

## 52 The Dragon and the Peasant

- Now to a dragon's tale attend  
 Who had a peasant for a friend.  
 This peasant promised frequently
- 4 To serve the dragon faithfully.  
 The dragon wanted to make sure  
 The man's allegiance was secure.  
 He asked the man an egg to shield
- 8 And said he wished to go afield.  
 He begged the man to watch it well.  
 The peasant asked him then to tell  
 Why he was making this request.
- 12 The dragon, answering, confessed  
 That in that egg he had closed tight  
 All of his potency and might.  
 Were it to break, he soon would die.
- 16 But when the dragon went away,  
 The peasant thought to this effect:



## 70 Del gupil e de l'urse

- D'un gupil nus recunte e dit,  
 Que une urse trova e vit.  
 Forment li preia e requist  
 4 Que ele suffrist que li fesist.  
 'Teis!' fet ele, 'mauveis gupilz!  
 Mut par iés cheitifs e vilz!  
 'Jeo sui,' fet il, 'tel cum jeo suil –  
 8 Sil te ferai estre tun voil.'  
 'Fui!' fet ele, 'leis me ester!  
 Si jeo t'en oi mes parler,  
 Tenir te purras pur bricun;  
 12 Jeo te baterai od mun bastun!  
 Tant l'a li gupilz enchacié,  
 Que l'urse s'est mut curucié,  
 Après curut pur lui ferir,  
 16 E il fui, pur lui trahir –  
 Tant qu'il meine en un buissun.  
 E les espines tut environ  
 L'unt entaché e encumbré,  
 20 E par le pel l'unt detiré,  
 Si ke ne pot avant aler  
 Pur nule rien ne retourner.  
 Dunc revient li gupil par derere;  
 24 Sur li sailli cume trichere.  
 L'urse cumence dunc a crier,  
 Puis si li prist a demander:  
 'Mauveis gupil! Quei fras tu?'  
 28 Li gupilz li ad tost respundu:  
 'Ceo que t'oi,' fet il, 'preié,  
 Dunt tu m'aveies manacié.'  
 Ceo deit ester e remaner –  
 32 Que li pruz hum dira pur ver:  
 As veziez est bien avis,  
 Que lur parole est en tel pris  
 Cum li engins de meinte gent –  
 36 Que par cunsel venquent suvent.

## 70 The Fox and the Bear

- And now you'll hear what did betide  
 When fox one day a she-bear spied.  
 Urgently fox did beg and pray  
 4 For her to let him have his way.  
 'Shut up! You wicked fox!' she said;  
 You are contemptible and bad!  
 'That's just the way I am,' said he;  
 8 I'll make you want it, too – you'll see.  
 'Get out of here! Now let me be!  
 If I hear more such talk,' said she,  
 'You will be thought a thieving knave,  
 12 And I will beat you with my stave!  
 The fox kept trying to engage her  
 Till finally he did enrage her.  
 She chased the fox so she could strike.  
 16 The fox kept running, as a trick –  
 Into a bush he led the bear.  
 A mass of thorns all 'round her there  
 Stuck to the bear, entangled her,  
 20 And made a frazzle of her fur,  
 So she could not gain any ground  
 Try how she might, nor turn around.  
 The fox approached her from the rear;  
 24 Cheat that he was, he jumped on her.  
 At this, the bear began to cry,  
 And then she questioned him this way:  
 'You wicked fox! What will you do?'  
 28 The fox made this reply thereto:  
 'Just what I'd asked you for,' said he,  
 'When earlier you threatened me.'  
 And it must always be this way –  
 32 As worthy men forsooth will say:  
 Wise people think it's clearly true  
 That their words will be equal to  
 Some other person's stratagems.  
 36 Yet they'll be vanquished by these schemes.

- Meinte femme cunseille a feire  
 Ceo dunt a plusurs nest cuntreire.  
 Sages hum ne deit pas entendre  
 112 Ne a fole femme conseil prendre,  
 Cum fist icist par sa vileine,  
 Dunt il ot puis travail e peine.  
 Mut [e]üst grant avoir guainé,  
 116 Si ele ne l'eüst forscunseillé.

## 74 Del mulez ki quist femme

- Jadis fu [si] enorguilliz  
 Li mulez, que ressemble suri,  
 Qu'il ne voleit en sun parage,  
 4 En sun semblant, en sun lignage,  
 Femme quere, qu'il preisist.  
 Jamés n'avera femme, ceo dist,  
 S'il ne la treve a sun talent –  
 8 Fille al plus haut element  
 Vodra li mulez demander.  
 Al soleil en ala parler;  
 Pur ceo qu'il esteit plus haut  
 12 E en esté puissant e chaut.  
 Lui prie sa fille a muiller;  
 Kar ne sot a plus haut aler.  
 Li soleil dist qu'il voist avant,  
 16 Si trovera un plus puissant –  
 La nue – que l'enumbre e fet obscure;  
 Ne put parer, quant sur lui cure.  
 Li mulez a la nue vient,  
 20 Dit que si puissant le tient,  
 Que sa fille volt demander.  
 Ele li rova avant aler;  
 Par raisun lui vodra mustrer  
 24 Que plus puissant purra trover:  
 Ceo est li venz, ki bien esgart,  
 Que, quant il vente, la depart.  
 Fet li mulez, 'A lui irai;  
 28 Jamés ta fille ne prendrai!

- Many a woman's guiding word  
 Will prove for other folks untoward.  
 A man of wisdom ought not listen  
 112 Or heed advice from foolish women  
 As did this peasant from his wife,  
 Bringing him misery and strife.  
 Great wealth he would have realized  
 116 Had he not been so ill advised.

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## 74 The Vole Who Sought a Wife

- There once was so vainglorious  
 A vole (which is a kind of mouse)  
 That he'd not of his lineage,  
 4 Of his own kind or heritage,  
 Look for or choose a wife to wed.  
 He'd never have a wife, he said,  
 Unless he found one very pleasing –  
 8 The daughter of a most high being  
 Was what the vole thought he should seek.  
 So to the sun he went to speak:  
 The sun, highest of all, he guessed,  
 12 Hottest in summer, mightiest.  
 Vole wished to wed sun's daughter now;  
 He'd gone as high as he knew how.  
 If he looked further, said the sun,  
 16 He'd find an even stronger one –  
 The cloud – who shades and makes a cover –  
 Sun can't come out when cloud takes over.  
 The vole went to the cloud erelong  
 20 And said that since she seemed so strong,  
 Her daughter he would like to wed.  
 He'd better look some more, she said,  
 For she would like to demonstrate  
 24 That he'd find someone stronger yet:  
 It was the wind, she did believe;  
 Whene'er wind blew, he made cloud leave.  
 'T'll go to him,' thus vole did speak,  
 28 'Your daughter's hand I will not seek!'

- Idunc en est alez al vent,  
 Si li ad dit cumfeitement  
 La nue l'i ot enveié.  
 32 Si li ot dit e enseigné  
 Qu'il ert la plus forte creature;  
 En sa force n'aveit mesure.  
 Tutes autres riens departeit,  
 36 Quant il ventot – tut destrueit.  
 Pur ceo voleit sa fille prendre;  
 Ne voleit mes aillurs entendre,  
 Pur ceo qu'il ot [oi] cunter  
 40 Que rien nel pot cunter ester.  
 Li venz respunt, 'Tu as failli –  
 Femme n'averas pas ici.  
 Plus fort i a ke jeo ne sui,  
 44 Que mut sovent me fet ennui.  
 Encuntre mei si fort esteit,  
 Ne li chaut rien de mun forfeit.  
 Ceo est li granz murs de pierre,  
 48 Que tuz jurz est forte e entiere.  
 Unc nel poi depescer  
 Ne par vent afiebler,  
 E me rebut si fort ariere –  
 52 Que n'ai talent ke la requere!  
 Li mulez li respundi tant:  
 'De ta fille n'ai dunc talant;  
 Ne dei plus bas femme choisir –  
 56 Que a mei ne deie apurtenir!  
 Femme prandrai a bon eur!  
 Ore en irai desque al mur.'  
 Alez i est, sa fille quist.  
 60 Le mur l'esgarde, si dist:  
 'Tu as,' fet ele, 'meserré –  
 Si n'as mie bien esgardé.  
 Ki pur ceo ça t'enveia,  
 64 Ceo m'est avis, qu'il te gabba.  
 Plus fort verras uncore hui,  
 A ki jo unc ne cunter estui.'  
 'Ki est ceo dunc?' li mulez respunt,  
 68 'A dunc plus fort en tut le mund!'

- On to the wind the vole went now.  
 Addressing him, the vole told how  
 By cloud he'd been directed there.  
 32 The wind in answer made it clear  
 He was, indeed, the strongest creature,  
 His power was beyond all measure.  
 He'd force all other things to scatter  
 36 Whene'er he blew – destroy all matter.  
 Vole sought his daughter's hand, therefore;  
 He'd had enough, would hear no more,  
 For he had heard what people say:  
 40 That no one dared get in wind's way.  
 The wind replied, 'You are misled –  
 'There's no wife for you here,' he said.  
 'There is an even stronger one  
 44 That I find very bothersome.  
 She put up such a strong defence,  
 My force was of no consequence.  
 I'm talking of the great stone wall  
 48 Who stands so strong and sound through all.  
 The wall no force can devastate,  
 Nor all my wind debilitate.  
 She hurls me back so powerfully –  
 52 Another visit won't please me!  
 The vole replied to him just this:  
 'Your daughter's hand I do not wish.  
 I'll choose no wife of lesser station –  
 56 That would not suit my situation!  
 I'll have a wife of quality!  
 So now the wall I must go see.'  
 He went to wall and sought to wed  
 60 Her daughter; eyeing him, wall said,  
 'You certainly do misconstrue –  
 It seems that nothing's clear to you.  
 Whoever sent you on your way  
 64 Has made a fool of you. I'd say.  
 Today one stronger yet than I  
 You'll see – one whom I can't defy.'  
 The vole responded, 'Who is this?  
 68 The strongest in the world, I guess!'

- 'Ore,' fet ele, 'ceo est la suriz.  
 Dedenz mei [gist e fet] ses niz.  
 Il n'ad en mei si fort mortier  
 72 Que ele ne puisse trespercer.  
 Desuz me fuet, par mi mei vient,  
 Nule chose ne la detient.'  
 Li mulez dit, 'Coment? Ch[a]jëles!  
 76 Ore ai oï dures noveles!  
 Ja est la suriz ma parente!  
 Ore ai perdu tute m'entente!  
 Jeo quidoué si haut munter;  
 80 Ore me covient a retourner  
 E encliner a ma nature.'  
 'Teus est le curs de aventure.  
 Va a meisun, e si te retien  
 84 Que ne voilles pur nule rien  
 Ta nature mes despiser.  
 Teus se quide mut eshaucer  
 Utre sun dreit e relever,  
 88 Que plus estut bas retourner.  
 Mespreiser ne deit nul sun dreit  
 (Si ceo n'est mal) ki k'il seit.  
 Ja ne saveras si luinz aler  
 92 Que tu puisses femme trover,  
 Que meuz seit a tun [ués] eslite  
 Ke la suricette petite.'  
 Issi avient as orguillus –  
 96 As surquidez, as envïus –  
 Que requerent qu'il ne deveireient:  
 La revertent u ne vodreient.

## 75 De l'escarbot

- D'un escarbot nus cunte e dit,  
 E jeo l'ai trové en escrit,  
 Que ot jeü en un femer.  
 4 Quant il fu saül de manger,  
 Hors s'en eissi; a munt garda,  
 E vit l'egle cum il vola.

- 'You're right, and that's the mouse,' said she,  
 'Who makes her nest inside of me.  
 There's no mortar – with which I'm made –  
 72 So strong that she cannot invade.  
 She digs below and runs through me;  
 Nought hinders her activity.'  
 The vole replied, 'What's this? Oh dear!  
 76 Oh this is dreadful news to hear!  
 The mouse and I are family!  
 My mission's ruined utterly!  
 I thought that I would rise so high,  
 80 But now I must turn back, so I  
 Can bow to my own kind,' said he.  
 Said wall, 'That's what your lot must be.  
 Go home, and keep in mind for aye,  
 84 That you should never, come what may,  
 Your nature ever again despise.  
 Whoever thinks that he can rise  
 Beyond his rightful situation  
 88 Must come back to a lower station.  
 Never should one his birthright scorn,  
 Whate'er he knows (unless baseborn).  
 Because so far you cannot go  
 92 To find yourself a wife, you know,  
 Who would be better in your house  
 Than this – the little lady mouse.'  
 With prideful folks it's often thus –  
 96 Those arrogant and envious –  
 Who seek what they should not; for they  
 End back where they don't want to be.

## 75 The Beetle

- A beetle's story I'll relate  
 That I found written down of late.  
 This beetle lay in a dung hill.  
 4 One day, when he had had his fill,  
 He went outside; his dung hill eyeing,  
 He saw, above, an eagle flying.

Mut par l'en tient a orguillus;  
 8 Enz en sun quor fu mut enviüs.  
 As autres escarboz le dist  
 Que lur Sepande lur mesfist;  
 L'egle veit curteis e bel,  
 12 Il n'esteient um ne oisel.  
 Saül, ne poeient voler;  
 Jeün, ne sorent aler.  
 'L'egle ai esguardé tut en jur,  
 16 Que nus tenums a seignur;  
 Si haut vola que nel vi pas,  
 E quant il volt, si revient bas.  
 Mes sa voiz est basse e quoie,  
 20 N'est pas plus haut que la moie.  
 Autresi est mis cors luisanz  
 Cum est li suens, tut seit il granz.  
 Une chose ai en mun pensé:  
 24 Ne en yvern ne en esté  
 Ne voil mes el femer entrer!  
 Od autres oiseus voil voler –  
 Si viverai cum il viverunt  
 28 E irai la u il irunt!  
 Idunc cumence a chanter  
 Mut leidamente e a crier.  
 Derere l'egle prist un saut;  
 32 Car il quida voler plus haut.  
 Ainz que gueres fust luinz alez,  
 Esturdi fu e estunez;  
 Ne poeit mie haut munter  
 36 Ne a sun femer puis asener.  
 Feim aveit, manger voleit.  
 Par grant destresce se pleineit;  
 Ne li chaleit si oiseus le oëit  
 40 Ne si nul de eus l'escharneit.  
 (Nent plus que fet al gupil,  
 Que autres bestes tienent vil.)  
 'Ore ne chaut que hum me tienge  
 44 Verm u oisel – mes que jo vienge  
 Dedenz la fiente del cheval;  
 Kar de feim ai dolur e mal.'

So proud this eagle seemed to be,  
 8 His heart was filled with jealousy.  
 To other beetles he observed,  
 They'd by their Maker been disserved:  
 She'd made the eagle courtly, grand,  
 12 But they were neither bird nor man.  
 When full, the beetles can't take wing;  
 Hungry, they can't be journeying.  
 This whole day long, I fixed my gaze  
 16 On eagle, whom we deem our liege.  
 He flew so high up, out of view,  
 And came down when he wanted to.  
 His voice, of soft and easy tone,  
 20 Is yet no louder than my own.  
 My body glistening is, likewise,  
 As much as his, despite his size.  
 One thing is absolutely clear:  
 24 No matter what the time of year  
 I won't stay in a dung heap more!  
 With other birds I'd rather soar –  
 And I will live just as they do  
 28 And go wherever they go, too!  
 With these words he began to sing  
 And make a dreadful clamouring.  
 After eagle, the beetle hopped;  
 32 To fly the higher was his thought.  
 Before the beetle far had gone,  
 He found himself bewildered, stunned,  
 And neither could fly higher still  
 36 Nor yet go back to his dung hill.  
 And he was famished, wanted food,  
 Sorely complained, loud as he could,  
 And did not care if any heard  
 40 Nor if they mocked him, any bird.  
 (No more than fox did long ago  
 When other beasts thought him so low.)  
 'I don't care whether I am thought  
 44 A worm or bird – or even that  
 I come in horse's excrement.  
 I'm sad and sick from famishment!'

Issi avient des surquidez:

- 48 Par eus memes sunt jugez;  
Ceo enpernent que ne poënt fere,  
Dunc lur covient a retrere.

## 76 Del sengler e de l'asne

D'un sengler cunte que encuntra  
Par un chemin, u il ala,  
Un asne, que ileoc estut.

- 4 Merveilla sei que ne se mut,  
E qu'il li ne leissa la veie,  
E que vers li ne s'asupleie!  
A lui se hurtot malement.

- 8 Dunc l'apela par maltalent:  
'Bien sai,' fet il, 'quei jeo fereie,  
Si mes denz aguïser voleie!'

Par ceste essample nus assume

- 12 Que si est de l'orguillus hume,  
Que quide bien en sun penser  
Ke nul ne li deive cuntre ester.  
Tant par sa fie en sa prüesce  
16 Qu'il memes se hurte e blesce.

## 77 Del teissun e des pors

Issi avient que par un an  
Ot en bois plenté de glan.  
Les pors i (s)unt mis e chaciez.

- 4 Li teissuns s'est acumpainiez  
Ensemble od eus, si recunut  
Que porc esteit e estre dut.  
Quant li porc viendrent a meisun,

- 8 E il vit fere l'occisiun,  
Li teissuns comence a criër,  
A reneer e a jurer

- Que teissuns fu! – ses piez musça,  
12 Quant od les pors al bois ala.

And thus with prideful folk we see

- 48 That their own judges they will be:  
What they can't do, they undertake,  
And then find out they must turn back.

## 76 The Boar and the Ass

There was a boar, as it is told,  
Who met, while walking down the road,  
An ass. Boar thought it curious

- 4 That ass budged not from where he was.  
He would not yield and let boar go.  
No deference would this ass show!  
The boar then jabbed him viciously

- 8 And spoke to him maliciously:  
'I know what I would do, forsooth,  
If I should want to hone my tooth!'

Let this example be our guide.

- 12 When someone is all swelled with pride,  
So sure he is of his position,  
He thinks he'll meet no contradiction.  
He trusts so his own might and sway  
16 That he just hurts himself this way.

## 77 The Badger and the Pigs

Long ago the acorns were  
Abundant in the woods one year.  
To track them down, the pigs were sent;

- 4 Along with them, the badger went.  
A pig he was, badger would say;  
He must, therefore, behave that way.  
But when the pigs came home, the badger  
8 Saw what awaited them – mass slaughter!  
The badger started crying there

- And to renounce his deeds and swear  
He badger was! – His feet he'd hid and  
12 Gone with the pigs into the woodland.

- 40 'Dunc te lo jeo par dreite fei  
 Que tu t'en vois en ta cuntree,  
 Quant de celui n'es deliveree.  
 Greinur mal peot il ailurs fere.'
- 44 La grue se mist al repeire.  
 Cest essample ad pur ceo cunté:  
 Cil que sunt plein de mauveisté  
 E en lur cuntree mesfunt,
- 48 Puis la guerpissent, si s'en vunt.  
 Pur nent lessent lur païs,  
 Aillurs funt il autel u pis!  
 Lur mauveis quor deivent changer –
- 52 Ne mie lur mauveis quor lesser.

## 82 Del prestre e del lu

- Un prestre volst jadis aprendre  
 A un lu lettres fere entendre.  
 'A' dist le prestre; 'A' dist li lus,  
 4 Que mut ert fel e enginnus.  
 'B' dist le prestre, 'di od mei.'  
 'B' dist li lus, 'jo l'otrei.'  
 'C' dist le prestre, 'di avant.'  
 8 'C' dist li lus, 'a i dunc itant?'  
 Respunt le prestre, 'Ore di par tei.'  
 Li lus li dist, 'Jeo ne sai quei!  
 'Di que te semble, si espel.'
- 12 Repunt li lus – il dit, 'Aignel!  
 Le prestre dit que verité tuche:  
 Tel en pensé, tel en la buche.  
 Le plus dit hum sovent:
- 16 Cel dunt il pensent durement  
 E par lur buche est cuneü,  
 Ainceis que seit d'autre sceü.  
 La buche mustre le penser,  
 20 Tut deive ele de el parler.

- 40 'Then I must conscientiously  
 Advise you to go home forthwith  
 Since you've not gotten rid of it.  
 It may yet do worse things elsewhere.'
- 44 And so crane started home from there.  
 Now this example should address  
 Those who are full of wickedness,  
 Who've done wrong in their native home
- 48 And think they'll leave it all and roam.  
 For nothing do they take this course;  
 They'll do elsewhere the same or worse!  
 One must first change his wicked heart –
- 52 One can't forsake it and depart.

## 88 The Preacher and the Wolf

- A preacher long ago was set  
 To teach the wolf the alphabet.  
 'A' said the preacher; 'A' wolf said,  
 4 Who very crafty was, and bad.  
 'B' said the priest, 'say it with me.'  
 'B' said the wolf, 'and I agree.'  
 'C' said the preacher, 'say it o'er.'  
 8 'C' said the wolf, 'are there yet more?'  
 The preacher said, 'You say them now.'  
 The wolf replied, 'I don't know how!'  
 'Say what you think, spell what you can.'
- 12 The wolf replied to this, 'A lamb!  
 The preacher told him that rang true,  
 For as one thinks, his mouth goes, too.  
 And thus, with many men you'll find
- 16 Whatever's topmost in their mind  
 The mouth lets slip, and first they say  
 What might come out some other way.  
 The mouth exposes what one thinks
- 20 Though it would speak of other things.

- 56 Quant il le va aparcevant,  
E il le turne en maltalent,  
Si se venge plus asprement.



## 97 Del lievre e del cerf

- Un lievres vit un cerf ester –  
Ses cornes prist a reguarder.  
– Mut li sembla bele sa teste!  
4 Plus se tint vile que nule beste,  
Quant autresi n'esteit cornuz,  
E qu'il esteit si poi creüz.  
A la Sepande ala parler  
8 Si li cumence a demander:  
Pur quei ne l'ot tel crie  
E de cornes si aürnee  
Cum ot le cerf qu'il ot veü.  
12 La Deuesse ad respundu:  
'Tu mesfez,' fet ele, 'lei mei ester!  
Tu nes purreies gouverner!  
'Si ferai bien!' il li respunt.  
16 Dunc ot cornes al chief amunt,  
Mes nes poeit mie porter,  
Kar ne saveit od tut aler;  
Car plus aveit que ne deüst  
20 Ne que sa grandur n'estut.  
Par ceste essample veut mustrer:  
Le coveitus e le aver  
Veulent tuz jurz tant comencer

- 56 When he sees what they do, the lord  
Will turn on them with bad intent;  
His vengeance is more vehement.

## 97 The Hare and the Deer

- A hare once saw a stock-still deer –  
And at his horns began to peer.  
– This head, thought he, so beautiful!  
4 While *his* seemed lowliest of all  
Because such horns were not his lot;  
Also he was too small, he thought.  
He went to talk to the Creator  
8 And started to interrogate her:  
Why had she not made him that way  
With antlers in such fine array  
Like those of deer whom he'd just seen.  
12 To this the goddess answered then,  
'You're wrong! Now stop it! Let me be!  
You couldn't manage them,' said she.  
'Oh yes, indeed I could!' hare said.  
16 Thus he got horns atop his head  
But could not carry them around  
And could not move with them, he found.  
It was more weight than he could bear  
20 And much too much for likes of hare.  
From this example you should see  
Folks covetous and miserly:  
They always start such projects as



- 24 E si se veulent eshaucer,  
Si enpernent par lur utrage,  
Que lur turne a damage.



## 98 Del lu e del colum

- Un lu esgarda un colum,  
Que cuillloit desuz un buissun  
Ramels, dunt sun ni voleit fere.  
4 Li lus parla (ne se pot tere!) –  
'Mut te vei,' fet il, 'travailler,  
Cuillir merin e purchacer;  
Jeo ne vei meudre ta meisun.'  
8 Dunc respondi li culum,  
'E jeo te vei tuz jurs berbiz cuillir,  
Aignel e mutuns retenir;  
E si n'en es meuz avancez  
12 Ne plus riches ne plus preisez.'  
Issi vet il des robeürs,  
Des laruns e des tricheürs:  
Quant il asemblent autri aveir,  
16 Mut le peot hum sovent veer,  
Qu'il n'en sunt gueres amendé;  
Tuz jurz vivent en poverté.

- 24 They think will raise their social class.  
What they attempt through foolishness  
Turns back on them, injurious.

## 98 The Wolf and the Dove

- A wolf one day a dove did see  
Gathering beneath the shrubbery  
Some little twigs, his nest to build.  
4 Wolf spoke (for he could not be stilled!) –  
'You're labouring so hard, I see,  
Gathering, massing wood,' said he;  
'You can't improve your house this way.'  
8 The dove responded right away,  
'And I see you collecting lambs,  
Gathering sheep, amassing rams;  
That's not made you superior  
12 Or more esteemed or wealthier.'  
With thieving men the same is true,  
With scoundrels and with tricksters, too:  
When they amass another's goods,  
16 It can be clearly understood  
This won't bring them prosperity;  
They'll always live in poverty.



## 99 Del gupil e del chat

- Un gupil e un chaz alerent  
 Par mi un champ, si purparlerent  
 Qu'il sereient cumpainun;  
 4 Dunc s'asemblent suz un buissun.  
 Li chaz al gupil demanda,  
 Par quels se defendera  
 La u il erent entrepris.  
 8 E li gupil li dit, 'Amis,  
 Cent engins sai, u mut me crei,  
 E pleine puche en ai od mei.  
 Mes jo ne voil la puche overir,  
 12 De ci que cil doivent failir.'  
 Li chaz respunt par breve raisun,  
 'Nus n'erums mie cumpainuns,  
 Kar jeo ne sai fors un engin,  
 16 Ceo seivent bien tut mi veisin.'  
 La u il vunt issi parlant,  
 Deus chiens viennent tost curant.  
 Li gupil vers le chat escrie,  
 20 'Ore ai mester de ta aïe!  
 Le chaz respunt, 'Aïe tei! -  
 N'ai que un engin, cel ert od mei!  
 Dunc saut le chaz sur l'espine.  
 24 Le chien saisissent par l'eschine  
 Le gupil, sil vunt detirant,  
 E li chaz li escrie tant:  
 'Cumpain, pur quei esparnies,  
 28 Que ta puche ne deslies?  
 Tu l'esparnies trop lungement -  
 Li chien te hastent durement!

## 99 The Fox and the Cat

- Once long ago a fox and cat  
 Walked in a field and reckoned that  
 They now would good companions be;  
 4 They sat down in the shrubbery.  
 The cat then asked the fox to tell  
 In what way he'd defend himself  
 If he should meet adversity.  
 8 The fox replied, 'My friend,' said he,  
 'A hundred tricks I know, I'm sure,  
 I've got a pouch chock-full, right here.  
 But I don't want to open it  
 12 Until I find it requisite.'  
 The cat replied quite pointedly,  
 'We never can be friends,' said he,  
 'For only one trick can I do,  
 16 And all my neighbours know this, too.'  
 And while they were conversing thus,  
 Two dogs ran toward them in a rush.  
 Then fox to cat did cry and shout,  
 20 'I need you now to help me out!'  
 Said cat, 'You must your own help be -  
 I've but one trick, and it's for me!  
 Into a thornbush jumped the cat.  
 24 The dogs now by his backbone snatched  
 The fox, to tear him into shreds.  
 The cat cried out to him and said,  
 'My friend, why hold back now? Oh why  
 28 Do you not now your pouch untie?  
 Already you've held back too long -  
 The dogs are coming at you strong!

- Pur quei n'as tun sac deslié?  
 32 'Jeo l'ai,' fet il, 'trop esparnié.  
 Jeol te di bien, meuz amerieie  
 Tun sul engin, si jeo l'aveie,  
 Que ces dunt ai ma puche pleine.  
 36 Jeo te vei delivere de peine.'  
 'Bien me deit,' fet il, 'remembrer  
 De ceo que jeo ai oï cunter:  
 Suvent est atteint li gupilz,  
 40 Tut seit il quointes par ses diz!  
 Del menteür avient suvent:  
 Tut parot il raisnablement,  
 Sil put li sages entreprendre,  
 44 S'il veut a sa parole entendre.  
 Del leial humme est meuz creüe,  
 Une parole e entendue,  
 E plus put en un grant pleit,  
 48 Que quanque li mentere feit.



## 100 Del riche humme ki volt aler utre mer

- Uns riches hum voleit aler  
 Utre mer pur converser.  
 A Deu pria qu'il amenast  
 4 A saüveté, qu'il ne dutast.  
 Einz qu'il se fust aparceüz,  
 Dedenz la mer est enbatuz.  
 Lors prie Deus qu'il meint a tere --

- Why haven't you your sack untied?  
 32 'I've saved too long,' the fox replied;  
 'I tell you truly I'd prefer  
 Your single trick, if mine it were,  
 To all I have in my pouch here.  
 36 I see that you are safe and clear.'  
 Said cat, 'I must remember well  
 And keep in mind what I've heard tell:  
 A fox will meet his nemesis  
 40 However smart he claims he is!  
 With lying men the same is found:  
 However logical they sound,  
 A sage can trip them up, if he  
 44 But listens to them carefully.  
 An honest man is held more true,  
 His words more often heeded, too,  
 More suasive in a legal case  
 48 Than anything a liar says.

## 100 The Rich Man Who Wished to Cross the Sea

- A rich man wished to go one day  
 Across the sea, a call to pay.  
 For passage safe, to God he prayed,  
 4 Also that he'd not be afraid.  
 Before he realized it, he  
 Had sailed far out upon the sea.  
 That God would lead him to the shore