

460 to my own country, hastily,
know the condition of my father
and his behavior toward my mother.
I will show him my golden ring
and certain tokens I will bring;
465 that he'll disown me, I've no fear;
but he will love me, hold me dear."

When he spoke thus, Milun, for sure
could not sit still and listen more;
quickly he leaped up, seized the skirt
470 of the youth's hauberk, his mailed shirt;
"My God", he said, "healed is Milun!
by my faith, friend, you are my son!
I've searched for thee, I've sought for thee;
this year, my country left for thee."

475 The youth heard; from his horse leaped down
and tenderly he kissed Milun.
Such joyous mein had son and father,
such happy speech made to each other
that other folk who watched nearby
480 wept both for pity and for joy.

The tournament broke up. Milun
left, all impatience; with his son
he greatly longed to speak at leisure,
impart to him his plans and pleasure.
485 They at a hostel spent the night,
in joyousness and in delight,
a goodly crowd of knights was there.
Milun could tell his son, and share
how he had come to love his mother,
490 how she was given, by her father,
to a lord of that region; he,
Milun, still loved her, faithfully,
and she him, most devotedly.
And how the swan then came to be
495 bearer of letters, go-between;
they dared not trust a human being.

The son said, "By my faith, dear father,
I shall bring you and her together!
This lord of hers I will dispatch,
500 and see you married! Made a match!"

They spoke no more of this affair.
Next day their task was to prepare
to leave; bid their friends farewell; and then
to their own land at last return.
505 Hastily they passed over seas,
fair winds they had, auspicious breeze.
They met, as they went on their way,
riding toward them, a servant boy.
He was sent by Milun's *amie*,
510 and meant to go to Brittany;

she sent this lad, and a report—
but now his journey was cut short!
A letter, sealed, he gave Milun;
in speech, he urged the man to come
515 quickly to her, he must not tarry!
Her lord was dead! Milun must hurry!
When he had heard this news, Milun
thought it seemed marvelous to him,
and he explained all to his son.
520 Delay or hindrance there was none;
they traveled on until they'd come
to the dame's castle, to her home.
In her son she took much delight—
a worthy, valiant, noble knight!
525 No word they sought from relative;
no counsel took, of none asked leave,
but the son brought the two together
and gave his mother to his father.
In happiness and sweetest joy
530 they lived from then on, night and day.

Of their good fortune and their love
the ancients made the *lai* above,
and I, who wrote the story down,
delighted much to tell this one.

Lanval

The story of another *lai*,
just as it happened, I will say.
It's of a young, most noble man;
he was called Lanval in Breton.

5 At Carlisle there was sojourning
Arthur, the valiant, courtly King;
Scottish and Pictish peoples laid
waste all that land, in war and raid.
Down into Logres¹ they would come
10 and often they did cruel harm.
The King was there at Pentecost,
lodging there for that summer feast,
Gifts to his barons and his counts
he gave, in great munificence.
15 And to those of the Table Round
—no greater band on earth!—good land,
and wives to wed, he gave them all,
save for one man, who'd served him well,
Lanval. The King forgot this man;
20 none put in a good word for him.

1. An ancient name for England.

For his great valor, his largesse,
 his manly beauty, his prowess,
 he was much envied by most men;
 they made a show of loving him.
 25 But if he'd met with some mischance,
 No day would that be for laments!
 A king's son, of high lineage,
 he was far from his heritage!
 Though of King Arthur's house, he had
 30 spent all his money and his good,
 for Arthur gave him not a thing,
 and he asked nothing of the King.
 Lanval was much disturbed by now,
 pensive, he was, and sorrowful.
 35 Be not dismayed, lords, at the thought
 that such a man would be distraught,
 foreigner in a foreign place—
 where to find help, protection, grace?
 This chevalier of whom I tell,
 40 who'd served King Arthur long and well,
 mounted one day his destrier²
 for pleasure, and relief from care.
 He mounted, and rode out of town,
 came to a meadow all alone,
 45 by a swift stream got down, to see
 his horse was trembling terribly.
 Unsaddling it, he let it go
 roll in the field, as horses do.
 Folding his cloak beneath his head
 50 he lay down, made the field his bed
 still pensive, deep in his malaise.
 Nothing, it seemed, could bring him ease.
 He lay there thus, heartsick, heartsore,
 and down along the river's shore
 55 he saw two girls approaching; never
 had he seen fairer women, ever!
 Splendidly, richly, they were dressed,
 in garments closely, tightly laced,
*bliants*³ of dark silk with the laces,
 60 and oh, how beautiful their faces!
 Two golden bowls the elder bore,
 of splendid workmanship, and pure;
 it's true; pure gold each lovely bowl;
 the younger woman bore a towel.
 65 They were advancing straightaway
 just up to where the young knight lay.
 Now courteous Lanval rose to greet

2. A charger, or warhorse. It was a powerful and very expensive mount, ordinarily used for combat rather than pleasure riding.
 3. Long, close-fitting tunics, with long, full sleeves. Under the *bliant*, in Marie's period, were ordinarily worn two other garments. The *chemise* was worn

next to the skin; it had a long, full, pleated skirt. Over the *chemise* was worn a *chausse*, a garment made of linen or hemp with long tight sleeves and a skirt so long it might trail on the ground. The *chausse* might show just a bit above the *bliant* at the neck and below the hem.

the women, got up to his feet.
 First they saluted the young man;
 70 and then their message gave to him.
 "Sir Lanval, our own demoiselle,⁴
 so worthy, wise and beautiful,
 has sent us here to find you thus;
 she bids you come to her with us.
 75 We shall conduct you safely there,
 for the pavilion is quite near."
 With the girls went the chevalier;⁵
 but of his horse he took no care,
 he left it grazing while he went.
 80 The damsels led him to a tent,
 splendidly set, magnificent.
 Not Semiramis,⁶ opulent
 and at the zenith of her power,
 her wealth, her wisdom in full flower,
 85 nor that Octavian, great Rome's lord,⁷
 could that door—its right flap!—afford.
 On top, a golden eagle sat.
 I do not know the worth of it,
 nor of the tent ropes or the poles
 90 that gave support to all the walls.
 No king exists beneath the sky
 who could afford all, possibly.
 In the tent lay the demoiselle;
 the lily, the new rose as well,
 95 that in the summertime appear—
 Oh, she was so much lovelier!
 She lay upon a gorgeous bed;
 —worth a great castle was the spread—
 and her chemise⁸ was all she wore.
 100 Her body so well formed, so fair!
 A costly cloak, of ermine fur,
 and Alexandrine silk, she wore;
 from the heat it protected her.
 Her side, though, was revealed and bare.⁹
 105 Face, neck and breast bare too, and white
 as hawthorn bloom, as delicate.
 Into the tent then, Lanval came;

4. A young lady, an unmarried woman of gentle birth (English "damsel").

5. Horseman, knight (French).

6. A mythical Assyrian queen, wife of Ninus, founder of Nineveh, whom she succeeded as ruler. Famed for her beauty, wisdom, and voluptuousness, she was said to have built Babylon and its hanging gardens, founded certain other ancient cities, conquered Egypt, and unsuccessfully attacked India.

7. Caesar Augustus (63 B.C.E.—C.E. 14), the first Roman emperor.

8. See note to line 59. An undergarment with a long, full, pleated skirt, it was ordinarily worn under a *chausse*, a long dress with very tight sleeves. Over that was worn the tunic or *bliant*,

with long, full sleeves.

9. Some readers have seen a contradiction or at least a confusion in this description in which the *pucelle* lies only in her chemise (line 99) but a few lines down is described having an ermine fur cloak pulled over her to shield her from the heat (lines 101–3). As Marie says, . . . *En sa chemise senblement. / Mut ot le cors bien fait a gent / Un chier mantel de blanc hermine, / Couvert de purre alexandrine, / Ot pur le chaut sur li geté; / Tus ot descovert le costé, / Le vis, le col, e la peitrine . . .* The fur cloak protects her, presumably covers her, but perhaps not completely? Or one can see her bare side and her bare face, neck and breast, presumably from the side or perhaps through her supernatural abilities.

the lovely girl called out to him.
 He sat down, just beside the bed.
 110 "Lanval, fair friend," the damsel said,
 "I've come for you. I've come from far,
 I've left my land, to seek you here.
 If you are courtly, wise and brave,
 joy beyond measure you shall have,
 115 greater than emperors or kings—
 for I love you above all things."
 He saw her beauty; felt within
 the spark ignite, the glow begin
 to set his heart alight, to spread,
 120 and with due courtesy, he said:
 "Fair one: if you should wish to give
 to me such joy, to give your love,
 I know of nothing you might ask
 I would not honor as my task
 125 if it lay in my power at all—
 though good, or evil, might befall.
 I will do all that you require;
 forsake all those I might desire,
 and never seek to part from you—
 130 this, above all, I wish to do!"
 When the girl heard him thus declare
 so forcefully his love for her,
 her love, her body, she gave, both.
 Lanval was now on the right path!
 135 After, she had a boon to give:
 anything he might wish to have
 was his to hold and to possess;
 should he bestow great gifts, largesse,
 she would find a sufficiency.
 140 This was a pleasant place to be;
 the more he lavished, more he gave,
 more gold and silver would he have!
 "Friend," she said, "I admonish you—
 command! beseech! In all you do,
 145 tell our sweet secret to no one.
 Here is my warning, all and sum.
 Betray us, and you lose your lover;
 I shall be lost to you for ever.
 Lost to your sight; lost, our amours;
 150 my body never pleasure yours."
 He would obey her, Lanval said,
 her command he well understood.
 He lay beside her on the bed;
 here was a lodging sweet and good!
 155 He lay by her all afternoon,
 nearly till evening came on,
 and would have lingered if he could
 and if she had more stay allowed.
 She said, "You must get up, sweet friend.

160 Even this time must have an end.
 Go away, now! Here I shall stay,
 but listen: I have this to say:
 when you may wish for us to speak,
 there's no place you may know or seek
 165 where one may meet with one's *amie*¹
 without reproach or calumny
 that I shall not seek out as well,
 to be with you, to do your will.
 We shall be seen there by no other,
 170 none hear the words we speak together."
 Full of deep joy at what she said,
 he kissed her, then got out of bed.
 Those who had led him to the tent
 now gave him clothes most elegant.
 175 Thus dressed anew, beneath the sky
 No man was handsomer than he!
 Lanval was neither boor nor fool;
 they brought him water and a towel;
 he washed and dried his hands. That done,
 180 they brought a supper to the man.
 His love and he took this repast—
 who could refuse so fine a feast!
 Served it was with great courtesy,
 which he accepted happily.
 185 Many and fine the dishes were,
 all pleasing to the chevalier,
 for often his *amie* he kissed,
 and he embraced and held her fast.
 When they had finished every course,
 190 the damsels led him to his horse,
 saddled up expeditiously:
 there too, he found great courtesy!
 He took his leave, got on his mount;
 off to the city then he went.
 195 Often he looked back; for our knight
 Lanval felt great dismay and fright.
 Shaken by all these strange events,
 disturbed, depressed in heart and sense,
 amazed, he could not trust his thought.
 200 Had it all truly been, or not?

 Home again, at his hostelry,
 he saw his men—dressed splendidly!
 That night he was a lavish host:
 where his wealth came from, no one guessed.
 205 If in that town a chevalier
 needed a lodging, he came there;
 Lanval would see to it; he'd come,
 and splendidly be waited on.

1. Friend, lover (French).

210 Lanval gave gifts to chevaliers;
and Lanval ransomed prisoners;
jongleurs² he dressed in fineries;
and many were his honorees!
Foreigner, intimate, they all
had gifts from generous Lanval.
215 Great was his joy and his delight;
at times by day, at times by night,
often she came, his sweet *amie*,
to do his will most happily.

220 That year, I understand, quite soon
after the feast of good Saint John,³
a group, perhaps, of thirty knights,
met for amusement and delights
within a garden, very near
a tower where stayed Queen Guinevere.
225 Among these chevaliers, Gawain,⁴
his cousin, handsome Sir Yvain.⁵
Gawain, that noble, valiant man,
who was so loved by everyone,
spoke out: "God, *seigneurs*!⁶ We do wrong
230 to Lanval, our companion,
so courtly and so generous;
his sire is rich, illustrious,
a king! We should have brought Lanval!"
At that the knights turned, and they all
235 went off to Lanval's lodging; there
begged and convinced the chevalier.
At a carved window chanced to lean,
looking about and down, the queen;
three ladies were attending her.
240 She noticed the King's household there;
She knew and recognized Lanval.
She made occasion then to call
one of her ladies to go find
the fairest damsels, most refined,
245 they'd join her in the garden there,
and frolic where the knights all were.
More than thirty she brought with her
descending with her down the stair.
The knights, delighted with the meeting,
250 gave all the women joyful greeting,
taking them by the hands; their speech
lacked no refinement, each to each.
Lanval, though, stood alone, apart,
impatient, tumult in his heart,

2. Jugglers, jesters (French).

3. The Feast of St. John is Midsummer Day, June 24.

4. Gawain, the son of King Lot, is Arthur's nephew. In many Arthurian tales he is the finest of Arthur's knights and a model of perfect chivalry and *courtloisie*.

5. There are three Arthurian knights known as Yvain (there is some evidence that they may actually be the same person), but this man is undoubtedly Yvain the Valiant (*li preuz*).

6. Lords (French).

255 he longed for his *amie* so much—
to kiss her, hold her, know her, know her touch—
how poor, how small, all other joy
with his own pleasure not nearby!
But the queen saw the lone young lover,
260 and lost no time, but hurried over
sat down beside him, spoke his name,
unburdened all her heart to him.
"Dear Lanval," said Queen Guinevere,⁷
you are much honored and held dear—
you may possess my love entire!
265 Speak to me! Tell me your desire!
Freely I give you *druerie*;⁸
you must rejoice in taking me!"
"Lady," said Lanval, "let me be!"
270 I care not for your *druerie*.
I've served my king well, kept my faith—
I'll never compromise my oath!
No to your love, dame, no's the word—
I will not wrong my sovereign lord!"
275 At that the queen was furious,
and she spoke slander, spoke it thus:
"Lanval," she said, "I know, I sense
you do not care for dalliance;
but it is often rumored, sire,
280 for women you have no desire!
But youths and squires, well-trained young men
You seek out; you disport with them.
Oh, coward! Boor! Unnatural,
your service to my lord, Lanval
285 He has lost God—I fear it—since
he's known your vicious influence!"⁹
Lanval heard—and with grief intense—
but was not slow in his defense.
In fury, though, he spoke such words
290 he much repented afterwards.
"This calling that you claim I have,
Lady, I have no knowledge of;
but I love, and possess the love
of one who should be prized above
295 all other women whom I've seen;
I say this truth to you, my queen,
and you had better understand—
some servant girl she has at hand,
the poorest in her retinue,
300 is, Lady Queen, worth more than you

7. Guinevere is not named in Marie's original text; she is always referred to as *la reine* (i.e., "the queen"). . . . Since this queen is undoubtedly the figure known in Arthurian literature (e.g., the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, who was probably Marie's near contemporary) as

Guinevere, I have taken the liberty of supplying her name.

8. Love, or courtly love; or a love affair. In other medieval works, it can mean a love token.

9. In other words, Arthur has lost his salvation, is damned, through Lanval's supposed influence.

in beauty—body and in face—

in breeding, virtue, goodness, grace!"

At that the queen abandoned him,
and she went weeping to her room.

305 Great was her grief, rage, wounded pride,
she was so shamed and vilified.

Wretched at heart, she went to bed,
never would she get up, she said,

310 until the king had got redress
for that which caused her such distress.

The king came riding from the wood,
joyful; the sport that day was good!

He went straight to the queen's abode.

She saw him and complained aloud;

315 "Mercy!" she cried; at his feet fell;

she'd been dishonored by Lanvall

Love he'd demanded, *druerie*,

She had refused him, loyally;

he had humiliated her,

320 boasting of an *amie* so fair,

noble, refined and elegant,

even her poorest maidservant,

the lowliest one serving her,

was finer than Queen Guinevere.

325 Terrible was King Arthur's wrath;

in his great rage he swore an oath,

if in the court this was proved truth,

Lanval must hang, or burn to death.

The king stormed out. He left the room,

330 he called on barons, three of them,

to summon Lanval; sent them off.

Lanval was sorrowful enough;

back to his lodging he had gone.

He knew full well what he had done;

335 utterly lost was his *amie*—

he had revealed their *druerie*!

Alone now in his room, Lanval

was pensive, deeply miserable.

His love he summoned, over and over—

340 there was no answer from his lover.

He sighed, lamented, made complaint;

at times he fell down in a faint;

a hundred times he tried to call,

Mercy! Speak to your love Lanvall

345 He cursed his heart, he cursed his mouth,

a wonder, did not seek his death.

Neither his wailings, shouts and cries,

self-lacerations, agonies,

could make his love have mercy, hear,

350 and to the wretched man appear.

Alas, poor Lanval! What to do?

The men of Arthur's retinue

arrived now, with their grave import:

without delay, he must to court.

355 The summons of the king they bore;

he was accused by Guinevere.

He went with them, in misery,

wishing they would just make him die.

Before the king Lanval has come:

360 he stands there pensive, mute, struck dumb;

his bearing shows his great distress.

The king speaks, his rage manifest.

"Vassal, you've done great wrong to me!"

Disgusting act! Your villainy

365 traduces, shames me! Vile, obscene,

you slander and abuse the queen!

You boast, then, madly, recklessly,

that you've so noble an *amie*

her serving maid is lovelier

370 and finer than Queen Guinevere!"

Lanval denied he'd said one thing

shaming, dishonoring his king.

Word for word he denied the scene—

he'd made not trial of the queen.

375 But then that claim he'd spoken of,

he said, was true; he had a love

of whom he'd made, in fact, that boast,

and so she'd gone; his love was lost.

Desolate, he said he'd submit

380 to the decision of the court.

The king was in a tearing rage;

he called all knights in his *ménage*²

to counsel him on protocol;

he wished no adverse thoughts at all!

385 They came at his commandment, whether

they wanted to or not; together

they were assembled. There they weighed

judicially, decreed and said

that Lanval needs must have his day

390 in court, but must pledge faithfully

that he'd attend; give solemn word;

present himself before his lord.

The court would be its full size then;

now it was just the household men.

395 These barons went back to the king,

there to announce their reasoning;

the pledges he required, at that.

Lanval stood, lone and desolate.

1. The word *vassal* had several meanings. It could commonly be a form of address appropriate to a young man of noble rank, either a comrade or someone to whom one must extend the courtesies of rank. It could also refer to any noble, worthy young man or to a noble or knight

who had sworn fealty to a lord. Here, Arthur uses it in the latter sense, especially to emphasize his belief that Lanval has betrayed and traduced the bond between the two of them.

2. Household (French).

Lanval was alone and forlorn,
he had no relative, no friend.
400 Gawain went and pledged himself for him,
and all his companions followed.
The king addressed them: "I release him to you
on forfeit of whatever you hold from me,
lands and fiefs, each one for himself."
405 When Lanval was pledged, there was nothing else to do.
He returned to his lodging.
The knights accompanied him,
they reproached and admonished him
that he give up his great sorrow;
410 they cursed his foolish love.
Each day they went to see him,
because they wanted to know
whether he was drinking and eating;
they were afraid that he'd kill himself.
415 On the day that they had named,
the barons assembled.
The king and the queen were there
and the pledges brought Lanval back.
They were all very sad for him:
420 I think there were a hundred
who would have done all they could
to set him free without a trial
where he would be wrongly accused.
The king demanded a verdict
425 according to the charge and rebuttal.
Now it all fell to the barons.
They went to the judgment,
worried and distressed
for the noble man from another land
430 who'd gotten into such trouble in their midst.
Many wanted to condemn him
in order to satisfy their lord.
The Duke of Cornwall said:
"No one can blame us;
435 whether it makes you weep or sing
justice must be carried out.
The king spoke against his vassal
whom I have heard named Lanval;
he accused him of felony,
440 charged him with a misdeed—
a love that he had boasted of,
which made the queen angry.
No one but the king accused him:
by the faith I owe you,
445 if one were to speak the truth,
there should have been no need for defense,

except that a man owes his lord honor
in every circumstance.
He will be bound by his oath,
450 and the king will forgive us our pledges
if he can produce proof;
if his love would come forward,
if what he said,
what upset the queen, is true,
455 then he will be acquitted,
because he did not say it out of malice.
But if he cannot get his proof,
we must make it clear to him
that he will forfeit his service to the king;
460 he must take his leave."
They sent to the knight,
told and announced to him
that he should have his love come
to defend and stand surety for him.
465 He told them that he could not do it:
he would never receive help from her.
They went back to the judges,
not expecting any help from Lanval.
The king pressed them hard
470 because of the queen who was waiting.
When they were ready to give their verdict,
they saw two girls approaching,
riding handsome palfreys.
They were very attractive,
475 dressed in purple taffeta,
over their bare skin.
The men looked at them with pleasure.
Gawain, taking three knights with him,
went to Lanval and told him;
480 he pointed out the two girls.
Gawain was extremely happy, and begged him
to tell if his love were one of them.
Lanval said he didn't know who they were,
where they came from or where they were going.
485 The girls proceeded
still on horseback;
they dismounted before the high table
at which Arthur, the king, sat.
They were of great beauty,
490 and spoke in a courtly manner:
"King, clear your chambers,
have them hung with silk
where my lady may dismount;
she wishes to take shelter with you."
495 He promised it willingly

500 for judgment, finding, in the trial.
 He was incensed, he said to them,
 so dilatory they had been.
 "Sire," they said, "we debate. We're keen.
 Thanks to the ladies you have seen
 505 we have not reached a verdict yet.
 Now let us all get on with it."
 Pensive and anxious, they all met,
 noisy and brawling and upset.

While their fear hung on them this way
 510 two girls in beautiful array—
 Phrygian silk stuff was what they wore,³
 and Spanish mules these damsels bore—
 were observed riding by the way.
 This gave the vassals all great joy!
 515 Each to each said that these would save
 Lanval, the worthy and the brave.
 Up to him now there came Yvain
 leading companions after him.
 "Sire," he said, "now you must rejoice!
 520 For God's love, speak! Give us your voice!
 Two demoiselles are coming here,
 splendidly dressed and passing fair,
 one of them surely your *amiel*!"
 But Lanval replied hastily
 525 neither he knew; all Yvain got:
 "I know them not; I love them not."
 They arrived now, these demoiselles;
 before the king, got off their mules.
 Many admired them in that place
 530 for form, complexion, and for face
 and said, more worthy than the queen
 they were, more than she'd ever been.

The elder, with great courtesy,
 spoke wisely, with propriety.
 535 "King, sire, have a chamber ready
 that can accommodate my lady.
 She's on her way to speak to you."
 He gave commands to lead the two
 where the two others were led before.
 540 But of the mules they took no care.
 The damsels once provided for
 the king gave his commands once more.
 The judgment! Now, without delay!
 Too much was squandered of the day,
 545 and the queen's fury had increased;
 she had not broken yet her fast.

They were about to answer, when
 they could see coming from the town,
 upon her horse, a girl. On earth
 550 none had such beauty, none such worth!
 A pure white palfrey was her mount;
 gentle it was and elegant.
 Form—neck and head—so beautiful
 on earth was no such animal.
 555 Splendid adornments bore this mount;
 under sweet heaven no king nor count
 could ever buy them, have and hold
 unless his lands were pledged or sold.
 Dressed was this damsel in this wise:
 560 In a white *chainse* and a chemise⁴
 in two parts laced together, so
 all down her sides the flesh could show.
 Her form was fine, her hips were low,
 her neck white as a branch in snow,
 565 brilliant her eyes, her face was white,
 lovely her mouth, nose set just right,
 brown her eyebrows, her forehead fair,
 her head of curly, quite blonde hair;
 gold thread could not give off such light
 570 as did her hair in sunbeams bright.
 A mantle of dark silk she wore
 with the skirts gathered close to her,
 sparrowhawk on her fist she bore,
 following her, a levrier.⁵
 575 In the town no one, small or great,
 in childhood or in aged state
 there was, who did not rush to be
 where she rode, where they too could see.
 Her beauty caused no gab, no jokes,
 580 but slowly she approached these folks.
 The judges who observed her thus,
 thought her a wonder, marvelous;
 not one of them who looked her way
 but felt a kindling warmth of joy.

585 Barons who loved the knight Lanval
 went to him speedily to tell
 how there was come a demoiselle
 who, if God pleased, could save him still.
 "Sire—dear companion—here rides one
 590 who's neither tawny, nor dull brown.⁶
 In all the world, she's loveliest
 of all the women who exist!"

That Lanval heard, and raised his head;
 He knew her well from what they said,

3. Phrygia was an ancient state located in what is now central Turkey.

4. See n. 3, p. 172; n. 8, p. 173.
 5. A greyhound.

6. Dark complexions were considered unattractive
 in the Middle Ages.

595 he gasped, and blood rose to his face.
He answered them, and with some haste.
"Faith!" he said, "that is my *amiel*
I do not care who slaughters me
if she shows me no mercy, for
600 all my cure is in seeing her."

Into the palace rode the lady;
none there had ever seen such beauty.
Before the king she stepped down, then
she was well seen by everyone.
605 Dismounted, she let fall her cloak
for better view by all the folk.
The king, so courtly and well bred,
rose up to greet her where she stood;
the others honored her as well,
610 and wished to serve the demoiselle.
When they'd seen all there was to see
and praised her beauty fittingly,
she spoke to Arthur in this way,
for she was not inclined to stay.
615 "King, I have loved thy vassal. See,
there he stands; Lanval, it is he!
Here in thy court he stands accused;
Lanval must not be here abused
for what he spoke; thou, King, must know
620 the queen was wrong; it was not so,
he never sought her love at all!
As for the boast made by Lanval,
if his acquittal come through me,
let thy good barons set him free!"
625 King Arthur granted that it must
be as the Court found right and just;
of all the judges, one and all
determined to acquit Lanval,
and by their finding he was free.

630 The lady left, for such as she
not even Arthur could retain,
with his fine servants; she was gone.
Before the hall there had been set
a block of stone, dark marble. That
635 the heavier men could use to mount
when to King Arthur's court they went.
Lanval jumped up upon this stone;
when his love out the door had come,
riding her palfrey, up behind
640 leaped Lanval, in a single bound!
With her he went to Avalon?

—or so they say, those called Breton—
to an isle, a most lovely one,
she carried off this fine young man!
645 More of Lanval no one has heard;
I cannot tell another word.

Chevrefoil¹

Much pleased am I to tell the tale,
the *lai* that folk call *Chevrefoil*.
I shall recount the truth, the sum,
why it was made, and how: for whom.

5 Folk have told me it, several,
and I've found written tales as well,
of Tristram and the Queen's affairs,
what an exalted love was theirs,
from which much sorrow came their way:
10 how they both perished in one day.
King Mark was raging, furious,
his nephew, Tristram, gave him cause.
Tristram was banished, for he'd been
the secret lover of the Queen.
15 To his own country he had gone,
to Southern Wales, where he was born.
For a full year was his sojourn,
in exile; he could not return,
But then he chose, most recklessly,
20 to risk death and calamity.
That choice should not astonish you,
for loyal lovers, steadfast, true,
are troubled, full of doleful thought,
when their great longings are not met.
25 So Tristram, pensive, doleful, found
he must go, leave his home and land.
Straightway he sought Cornwall again,
for it was there he'd find the Queen.
In the forest he hid, alone,
30 for he wished notice by no one.
Only in evening he stole out,
needing a lodging for the night.
He met some poor folk, peasantry;
glad of their hospitality
35 he asked, what news? The King, what quest
did he pursue, what business?
The King had summoned, so they heard,

7. A mystical island that figures in a number of Arthurian legends; King Arthur's sword, Excalibur, was said to have been forged there.

1. In English, "honeysuckle." Literally it means "Goat-leaf." See note to line 115. In Anglo-Norman of this period the vowel sound in "foil" would be

ay, and the rhyme with English "tale" would be closer than in modern French.