Moralised Translation in *Strengleikar*

Andrew Hamer, University of Liverpool

Eleven of the *lais* generally attributed to Marie de France[1] were among several works of French literature that were translated into Norwegian during the reign of King Hákon Hákonarson (1217-63). Apart from some fragments, the translations of these lais are contained in the manuscript De La Gardie 4-7, now in Uppsala University Library.[2] This Norwegian work, which includes translations of other French versions of Breton lais, besides those usually attributed to Marie, is generally referred to as *Strengleikar*.

Of the extant French texts of Marie's lais, the wording of *Strengleikar* agrees most closely with that of the British Museum manuscript Harley 978, a mid-thirteenth century Anglo-Norman manuscript. In addition, among the *Strengleikar* collection is a translation of a short lai, *Naboret*, not by Marie, which is found in a French version in only one manuscript, also Anglo-Norman. Given these facts, and considering the strong cultural links that existed between England and Norway at this period, it seems quite possible that the Norwegian translator was working from an Anglo-Norman original, or originals, now lost.

Following the work of Rudolf Meissner, who showed that the Norse versions of these lais differed in terms of how closely they followed the originals;[3] and of Tveitane, whose own study of the language of these stories suggested that the scribes of the *Strengleikar* manuscript used both East and West Norwegian exemplars,[4] Cook and Tveitane (pp. 23 ff.; 28) have called into question the view that the *Strengleikar* collection was the work of one translator:

> it seems at least safe to say that the traditional idea of one single, "pious and learned" translator, working within a West Norwegian monastery, can scarcely be correct. More likely the Old Norse stories were originally written down (translated?) by several different persons, individually or in smaller groups of perhaps three or four pieces each.

The "traditional idea" of a single, pious translator has been restated by Henry Goddard Leach, whose view of the quality of the translation was not entirely complimentary.[5] Leach suggests (p. 212) that the Norwegian's knowledge of French was inadequate: "the translator, though painstaking in his desire to convey the entire meaning of the original, makes several mistakes in interpreting a language which is not his own." Earlier in the same paper (p. 207), and commenting on the translation of *Bisclavret*, he writes: "The translator condenses this story and even forgets to say that the wolf bit off the wife's nose, though he mentions her noseless descendants." (In fact, rather than attacking her face, the Norse Bisclaret rips off his wife's clothes).

Leach's last point has recently been answered by Clia Goodwin, in a fine study of translation technique in *Strengleikar*.[6] Noting (p. 90) that "nakedness was a sign of wildness and bestiality - of the animal nature thought to characterize those

who lived beyond the limits of the Christian world", she points out the appropriateness of the punishment Bisclaret inflicts upon his wife: "the translator has amplified the idea implicit in Marie's *lai* that the wife is the true monster despite her fair appearance."

In this paper we shall hope to add to the differing views put forward by Cook and Tveitane, and later by Goodwin, concerning the composition of *Strengleikar*. We shall suggest that the particular punishment inflicted on the wife in the Norse version is part of a wider pattern of moralising which can be seen in *Bisclaret*, and that moralising is found in a number of the *Strengleikar* texts, whether apparently derived from East or West Norwegian exemplars.

The Harley collection of lais opens with a prologue in two parts, in which Marie attempts to define her work as being essentially a process of interpretation of older material, carried out for the benefit of her contemporaries. She prefaces her translation with a famous, and problematic, reference to Priscian:

> Custume fu as ancïens,
> Ceo testimoine Precïens,
> Es livres ke jadis feseient
> Assez oscurement diseient
> Pur ceus ki a venir esteient
> E ki aprendre les deveient,
> K'i peüssent gloser la lettre
> E de lur sen le surplus mettre. (9-16)

It is now generally agreed that Marie is here referring to the preface to Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae*, where the author mentions the obscurity of the ancient grammarians.[7]

The main problem for modern scholars has been to try to discover the sense in which Marie looked upon herself as a modern interpreter. She says that she had originally intended to translate from Latin into Romance:

> Mais ne me fust guaires de pris:
> Itant s'en sunt altre entremis.
> Des lais pensai k'oï aveie; (31-33)

What Priscian says in the preface to the *Institutiones* is that *veteres nostri*, the older Latin grammarians, failed to imitate the better, more recent, 2nd century A.D. Greek grammarians: they failed, in other words, to observe the principle *quanto iuniores, tanto perspicaciores*.[8] It is recognised that both Priscian and Marie de France are really concerned to defend their writing by the claim that they are following recent, and hence superior, sources.

Of the principle *quanto iuniores, tanto perspicaciores*, William of Conches, in his well known glosses on Priscian, comments:

> He [Priscian] speaks well, because the moderns are more far-seeing than the ancients, though they are not more wise. For the ancients had only those writings which they themselves composed. We however have all their writings, and in addition, all those which from the beginning right up to our own time have been composed. ... We see more than the ancients, because our little writings are added over and above their great works, and not out of our own ingenuity and labours, but rather indeed from theirs.[9]

A similar view is put forward by Ralph of Longchamp in his commentary on the *Anticlaudianus* of Alain de Lille:

> And thus the moderns, who have the writings of the ancient philosophers to hand, because of this, see more keenly and clearly than the ancients.[10]

It was the view of scholars working within the twelfth-century humanist tradition, that the constant study and revision of the ancients assured the essential continuity of cultural progress.

The second part of Marie's prologue is an address to a certain "noble king", usually thought to be Henry II of England, in which she dedicates her work to him. The translation of this prologue in the *Strengleikar* manuscript is preceded by another, original prologue, inserted by a Norwegian translator. In form, this prologue parallels Marie's: a statement outlining the philosophy behind the translation leads to a second section which links Hákon Hákonarson with the creation of the work. However, the formal parallelism covers a thematic opposition. Marie undertakes her translation independently, telling us the work had cost her many sleepless nights, and only produces the finished work for her "noble king" to accept; the role of the Norwegian king is quite opposite to this: we are told that he has been involved from the start, as instigator of the project:

> En bok þessor er hinn virðulege hacon konongr let norrœna or volsko male ma hæita lioða bok. (4,19)

This opposition follows another, major one, in the first section of the prologue, an opposition moreover which leaves the recent editors of *Strengleikar* uneasy:

> "The ideas here do not entirely harmonize ... where the Norwegian spoke of the disappearance of noble deeds with the passing of time, the French prologue remarks that - at least intellectually - man has improved with time."(p.2)

The Norwegian prologue begins by listing the virtues "of those who lived in olden days" (*þæirra er i fyrnskunni varo*). These people were:

> listugir i velom sinom glœgsynir i skynsemdom. hygnir i raðagærðom vaskir i vapnom hœverskir i hirðsiðum millder i giofum ok at allzskonar drængscap. hinir frægiazto. (4,2)

The word *drængscap* is picked up in the last sentence of this first section of the prologue:

> þui at daðer ok *drængskaper* ok allzkonar goðlæikr er skryddi ok pryddi lif þæirra er guði likaðo. ok þæirra er i þæssa hæims atgærðom frægðost ok vinsælldozt i fyrnskonne huerfr þess giorsamlegre sem hæims þessa dagar mæirr fram liða. (4,15)

The first part of the Norwegian prologue, then, contains a statement that good deeds, that are pleasing to God, together with strength and courage, were commonplace in the distant past; nowadays, however, as time wears on, these things are disappearing. It is as if a progressive deterioration from a state of moral and physical perfection, recognised among so many individuals that it is seen as a general trend, is to be linked with the ageing of the world.

This is a familiar topos concerning the relationship between man and the world, between microcosm and macrocosm. The two mirror each other: as a man ages, so his strength fails, he becomes prone to sickness, and he grows quarrelsome; as the world grows older, it becomes less fruitful, and disease and strife take the place of peace and plenty. The condition of the individual is paralleled by that of whole societies, so that the race of men nowadays, born when the world is old, is smaller than was the former race. This topos is found in Philo, then adopted into the Christian tradition by, for example, Augustine and Gregory, and becomes a commonplace of Old English eschatological literature.[11]

The Norwegian prologue is also firmly aimed at eschatological concerns. The translator says that he has performed his task:

> at æigi lœynizsk þat at hinum siðarstom dogum er gærðozk i andværðom. Sua ok at huerr ihugi með allre kunnasto ok koste með ollu afle freme ok fullgere með ollum fongum at bua ok bœta sialvan sec til rikis guðs með somasamlegum siðum ok goðom athævom ok hælgom lifsænda. (4,10)

And here the microcosm is causally linked with the macrocosm:

> *þui at* daðer ok drængskaper ... huerfr þess giorsamlegre sem hæims þæssa dagar mæirr fram liða. (4,15)

We shall return to this prologue later, but for the moment we may note one further opposition which the Norse translator sets up between his work and the French original. While the Norwegian translations, properly read, should act "as an everlasting reminder, as an entertainment" (*til ævenlægrar aminningar til skæmtanar*) to encourage the reader to prepare for eternity (*at bua oc bœta sialvan sec til rikis guðs*), we are told of the French poets in Brittany, that they "composed lais, which

are performed on ... stringed instruments of all kinds which men make to amuse themselves and others in *this* world (*til skemtanar þæssa lifs* 5,1). What seems clear, therefore, is that the Norwegian prologue is written from an overtly Christian, moralising viewpoint, a fact which raises the question of whether the same kind of moralising can be found in the translations of the lais themselves. In this paper, we will briefly look at three.

Guiamar, *Equitan*, and *Bisclaret* are love-triangle stories: in the first, the wife is married to an old and hate-filled tyrant, and may be excused for loving the hero; in the second, base motives prompt the wife and her lover to deceive the innocent husband; the situation in *Bisclaret* may be said to occupy an intermediate moral position: it could be argued that a wife who finds herself married to a werewolf has some excuse for forsaking her husband.

Of these three tales, *Equitan* in particular provides an interesting testing-ground for the view that the *Strengleikar* are moralised versions of the French, since the Norwegian text has a post-script, concerning which Cook and Tveitane comment: "This pious conclusion must have been added by the Norwegian translator/ editor in order to make this rather vulgar, fabliau-like story into an edifying exemplum". In other words, they view the moral epilogue as contrasting with the vulgar tale. The present paper will hope to suggest that the moralising process can be seen in the tale as well as in the epilogue, and that both are linked to the Norwegian prologue to the whole collection. (Cook and Tveitane, p.xxiv, see "East Norwegian influence" in *Equitan* "and very likely in the first part of the *Forrœða*").

At the moment where the Equitan of the French version is shown as first exhibiting the symptoms of love, he says:

> Pur ceste dame qu'ai veüe
> M'est un' anguisse al quor ferue,
> Que tut le cors me fet trembler:
> Jeo quit que mei l'estuet amer. (67-70)

We are later to learn that Equitan's cynical love is directed only towards sexual satisfaction; the effect of such love upon the lover is detailed by the Norwegian translator in his rendering of the above verses:

> at harmr oc angr sem sua hava bundit mec sarom sorgum at fru þessarre er ec hefi her sét. oc losteð hug minn oc hiarta sua unytri ahyggio oc allan mec fra tekit sialfum mer með sua kynlegom hætti at skynsemð min ter mer ækki. oc valld mitt. oc sua mikit riki er mer mæirr harmr en huggan. ec skialfr allr ok þo usiukr mec ventir at ec værði ælsca hana. (68,20)

This kind of love attacks the integrity of the lover's character, preventing him from performing his proper function in society. The point is underscored in the Norwegian version by the Latin tag which ends the tale. Whereas a king should be an example of virtue to others,

Equitanus rex fuit. sed silenda est dignitas
ubi nulla bonitas sed finis iniquitas. (82,7)

The Norwegian Equitan complains in the passage quoted above that, as a result of the love he feels, his reason is useless to him. The translator here spells out the importance of the exercise of reason when making moral decisions, an ethical stance which is in accordance with his omission, earlier in this tale, of Marie's conventional reference to the wounding arrows of love:

Amurs l'ad mis a sa maisnie:
Une seete ad vers lui traite,
Que mut grant plaie li ad faite:
El quor li ad lancie e mise; (54-7)

We may consider why the Norwegian text should leave out this passage, while noting at the same time a somewhat similar omission in the translation of *Guigemar*:

Amur est plaie dedenz cors
E si ne piert nïent defors;
Ceo est un mal que lunges tient,
Pur ceo que de nature vient. (483-6)

According to Marie, love's "wound", or "sickness", comes direct from Nature. In the first book of *De Amore*, Andreas Capellanus refers to love as an inborn "suffering" (or "sickness"), which is governed by nature:

> Amor est passio quaedam innata ... Nam quidquid natura negat, amor erubescit amplecti.[12]

On these terms, anyone who does not love is in some sense uncompleted. Of Guigemar himself, Marie says:

De tant i out mespris nature
Kẽ unc de nul' amur n'out cure. (57-8)

Just as the Norse Equitan's falling in love is not imaged in terms of his being drafted into the service of, or wounded by the arrows of, a personified Love, so too in *Guigemar* there is no external or personified power of Nature, to demand that the hero fall in love. In the Norwegian, the lover is not passive, acted upon by outside forces; instead, responsibility for an individual's behaviour in love rests with that individual. Marie's comment that Nature had erred, so far as Guigemar was concerned, is rendered:

> En þat var undarlegst i hans natturo at hann hafnaðe vandlega konom at unna. (12,24)

Here, "nature" is internalised. It may well be, therefore, that the Norwegian translator intended that the reader should attribute Equitan's loss of reason to a

surrendering of his responsibility for his own behaviour. Support for this suggestion comes from a further examination of *Guiamar*.

In the French text, Guigemar is at first unsure how to broach the subject of his love to the lady:

> Sil ne l'osot nïent requere;
> Pur ceo qu'il ert d'estrange tere,
> Aveit poür, s'il li mustrast,
> Que el l'en haïst e esloinast. (477-80)

Compare the Norse:

> en hon villdi æigi sægia honom ne syna vilia sinn. þui at hann var hænni ukunnegr ok or oðru lande. hon ottaðezc ef hon birter nokot fyrir honum þat sem hon hafðe hugfast at hann myndi hata hana. ok hafna hænni. (26,14)

By putting the dilemma into the mind of the woman, the married one who after all stands to lose most, emphasis is placed on the importance of making a right decision in matters of love. But what kind of woman can make such a decision? The French version's:

> Une dame de haut parage,
> Franche, curteise, bele e sage (211-2)

becomes:

> þesse fru var hinnar bæztu ættar milld ok kurtæis hyggin ok hœværsk ok hinn mætasta i allom kurtæisra kuenna kuenskum hin friðasta ok fægrsta. (18,6)

Cook and Tveitane sensibly translate *kuenskum* as "qualities", although a literal rendering would be "chastities". The woman's sexual purity is commented upon once more, at the moment just prior to her agreeing to grant Guigemar her love. Whereas the French reads:

> Tut en riant li dit: "Amis,
> Cest cunseil sereit trop hastis,
> De otrïer vus ceste prïere:
> Jeo ne sui mie acustumere." (509-12)

the Norse has:

> ok læiande mællte til hans. Vnnaste sagðe hon þat være of braðskœytilegt. at væita þer sua skiott þessa bœn. æigi em ec lætlætes kona. ne von sliku misværki. (26,22)

We may draw the following conclusions from this preliminary examination of *Equitan* and *Guiamar*. Firstly, they share features of translation-technique, both of

them omitting personificatios in the original. Secondly, and as a result of this, the lovers are prevented from becoming simple stereotypes who act according to the demands of the literary conventions of love and nature; instead, full emphasis is placed on the characters' moral responsibility. Thirdly, making an improper moral decision destroys a character's integrity: the wife in *Guiamar* recognises this, and gives herself to the hero only when she found *at hann sagðe satt* (26,28), whereas the cynical Equitan is prevented from taking his proper social role.

The translator of *Equitan* added a post-script, in which he warns those who hear the story not to covet that which rightfully belongs to others, *huarke fe ne hiuscaps felaga* (78,21). This is an appropriate comment on the motivation of Equitan and the lady: he covets the marriage-partner, while she covets Equitan's property and power.[13] But the translator then goes on to state that it is just as wrong to abuse what God has given one as it is to envy God's gifts to another:

> þui at guð skipar lanom sinom sem hanum synizc. Gæfr þæim er hann vill gævet hava. fra tekr þæim er illa nyta (78,22)

The words *guð skipar lanom sinom* echo the phrase *lan guðs* in the translation of the opening of Marie's prologue, although the phrase there does not, in fact, translate any directly corresponding phrase in the French, which runs:

> Ki Deus ad duné escïence
> E de parler bon' eloquence
> Ne s'en deit taisir ne celer,
> Ainz se deit volunters mustrer.
> Quant uns granz biens est mult oïz,
> Dunc a primes est il fluriz,
> E quant loëz est de plusurs,
> Dunc ad espandues ses flurs. (1-8)

Compare the *Strengleikar* version:

> Ollum þæim er guð hævir let vizsku ok kunnasto ok snilld at birta þa samer æigi at fela ne lœyna lan guðs i ser. hælldr fellr þæim at syna oðrom með goðvilia þat sem guði likaðe þæim at lia. Þa bera þæir sem hinn villdaste viðr lauf ok blóm. ok sem goðlæikr þæirra frægizst i annars umbotum þa fullgærezt allden þæirra ok nœrer aðra. (6,3)

In the French, the bloom-imagery is applied to "a great good", but in the Norwegian, the fruitful tree refers to one who properly uses the gifts God has granted him. This is a commonplace eschatological image, fully articulated in Matthew 7, 17-20:

> Sic omnis arbor bona fructus bonos facit; mala autem arbor malos fructus facit. Non potest arbor bona malos fructus facere, neque arbor mala bonos fructus facere. Omnis arbor quæ non facit fructum bonum excidetur, et in ignem mittetur. Igitur ex fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos.

The covetous Equitan was unable to function properly in society; the translator must fulfil his own function, if he is to benefit others. We have seen from the translator's original preface to the prologue that he sees the necessity of his task in eschatological terms: the weakness and degeneration of man in the world's last age demand that he relate these marvellous tales, so that others might prepare themselves for the kingdom of God. Included in the topos of the equivalence of micro- and macrocosm was the recognition that the distant past was a period of great earthly fruitfulness.[14] Whoever uses his gifts properly, whether he be a king or a translator, pleases God, and recovers the vitality of that Golden Age.

We turn now to *Bisclaret*, in order to test Clia Goodwin's theory that the Norse translator intended the reader to recognise the werewolf's wife as the real monster. Any evidence we can find that the husband is portrayed as *less* monstrous than the (thirteenth-century Scandinavian) reader might expect, would obviously support Clia Goodwin's case. And audience expectations concerning the werewolf's likely behaviour presumably depended on their previous acquaintance, if any, with oral or written werewolf stories, as well as on the translator's definition of a werewolf, given in the first paragraph of the narrative.

It would appear that the translator was concerned to establish Bisclaret within the Norse werewolf tradition, rather than the French or Breton. When the protagonist informs his wife of what happens to him, he says: *fru ... Ec hamskiptumk ok læyp ec um morkena* (88,13), translating

> Dame, jeo devienc bisclavret:
> En cele grant forest me met, (63-4)

phrasing which we shall shortly return to. After the wife has discovered that Bisclaret goes naked, she asks him to tell her where he leaves his clothes. The cause of his reluctance to answer is somewhat expanded in the Norse:

> þa væra ec jafnan i þæim ham ok alldregi fenga ec huilld ne ró. æða aftr kuamo i mannz ham. (88,20)

This translates:

> Bisclavret sereie a tuz jurs;
> Jamés n'avreie mes sucurs
> De si k'il me fussent rendu. (75-7)

In describing Bisclaret's transformation, the Norwegian text uses *hamr* "shape, covering, skin", and *hamskiptask* "to change one's shape". These words convey the native concept that the change from man to wolf involves the putting on of a wolf's shape or skin. A familiar example from Norse literature is found in *Vǫlsunga saga*, ch. 8, where Sigmundr and Sinfjǫtli come across two men sleeping in a cabin in the forest, with two wolf-skins hanging above them. Sigmundr and Sinfjǫtli put on the skins, and are immediately transformed: they begin to howl, and run into the forest. We may note that the two original werewolves, from whom the heroes took the wolf-skins, are discovered in human form, in an exhausted sleep.

Ála flekks saga, interesting from our point of view because, like *Bisclaret*, it is a story about an unwilling werewolf, provides another example of what happens when the werewolf is granted some respite:

> og er hún [Hildur] vaknar, sér hún mann liggja f hvflugólfinu. Þekkir hún þar Ala flekk. En vargshamur sá ... lá þar niðri fyrir hjá honum.[15]

Sigmundr and Sinfjǫtli are allowed temporarily to leave the skins on the tenth day, whereupon they burn them and gain permanent release from the spell; likewise, Hildur burns the wolf-skin she finds beside Áli flekkr, in order to save him. Unless saved from the spell, the Norse werewolf is given only brief periods of respite from almost ceaseless activity. The French Bisclavret explains that, if he were to be denied access to his clothes:

> Bisclavret sereie a tuz jurs;
> Jamés n'avreie mes sucurs
> De si k'il me fussent rendu. (76-8)

Compare the Norse:

> þa væra ec jafnan i þæim ham ok alldregi fenga ec huilld ne ró. æða aftr kuamo i mannz ham. fyrr en klæði min være mer aftr fengin. (88,20)

The restlessness of the Scandinavian werewolf is apparent in its typical activity of running through the forest. So typical is this, in fact, that the Norwegian translator includes it as part of his definition of the werewolf:

> þa *slitr hann i þæirre æde menn ... hann lœypr um skoga ok um mærkr* ok þar byr hann mæðan hann i þæim ham er. (86,9)

Compare the description of Áli flekkr, immediately after he is bewitched (p.139):

> ... þegar f stað; *hljóp Áli á skóg* og verður að einum vargi, og svo grimmum, að hann drepur *bæði menn og fé*.

Bisclaret's explanation of what happens to him contains the first part of what is an apparently formulaic description of the werewolf ("running in the forest"), but omits the second ("ripping / tearing humans"):

> fru ... *Ec hamskiptumk ok lœyp ec um morkena* (88,13)

Indeed, the *Strengleikar* version carefully prevents the reader from assuming that Bisclaret kills humans while in wolf-form. Marie's werewolf confesses ambiguously that he lives on *preie e de ravine* (66), but Bisclaret says: *livi ec við dyra holld þæirra sem ec dræp* (88,14).

Immediately before declaring that Áli flekkr, unlike Bisclaret, destroys men as well as animals, the narrative describes him as becoming a *vargr*, "criminal, wolf" (compare Gothic *gawargjan* "condemn"; Old English *wearg, wearh* "criminal"; German *würgen* "choke", English *worry* (sheep)).[16] The *vargr* is murderous: the hero of *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar* dreams that he is set upon by a pack of wolves shortly before his enemies attack. He explains the dream as follows:

> en vargarnir munu mér sýnzt hafa svá margir, sem menn munu vera með þeim, þvíat þeir munu hafa varga hug á oss,[17]

where *varga hug* can only mean the craving to tear and slaughter men.[18]

The word *vargr* appears five times in *Bisclaret*, as follows: twice at the beginning of the narrative, together with the word *vargulfr*, where werewolves are defined; twice at the end, where the translator appends a little note of his personal experience of a werewolf; and once when the wife tells her lover about her husband's unconventional life-style. This last occurrence is the only one, therefore, that refers to Bisclaret. Moreover, it does not translate any French equivalent. The French reads:

> Puis li cunta cumfaitement
> Ses sire ala e k'il devint (120-1)

Compare:

> þa let hon upp alltt ok sagðe honom giorsamlega þat sem bonde hænnar hafðe sagt henni huerssu hann skifti ham sinum ok huert hann for. ok huar hann var. meðan hann var i vargs ham. (90,14)

A second expansion of the original, *sagðe honom giorsamlega þat sem bonde hænnar hafðe sagt henni*, forms an ironic comment on the exaggerated language of the rest of this passage. The irony is increased in retrospect, when the reader realises that the wife is perfectly capable of an accurate rendering of her husband's speech. She tells the king,

> huersu hann taldi hænni alla atburði sina. huersu hann hamskiptizk ok huert hann for (96,9);

Compare Bisclaret's words,

> fru ... Ec hamskiptumk ok lœyp ec um morkena (88,13).

Neither is there anything added here to the French original:

> E quei devint e u ala (270).

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the wife describes her husband as a *vargr* in order to help her to win the lover's help in betraying him.

Bisclaret, then, may have a wolf's shape, but is neither a *vargr* in his deeds (he kills only animals, not humans) nor in name - except according to his wife, whose words cannot be trusted. This appears to result from a perfectly conscious decision made by the *Strengleikar* translator, to make Bisclaret as unlike a werewolf as possible. The word for werewolf in Marie's version, *bisclavret*, when not used as a proper noun, is applied to the protagonist eight times. In translation, the preceding definite article is dropped in five of these cases, and the word is used as the name Bisclaret, rather than translated into "wolf" or "werewolf". One occurrence is rendered by *hamskiptumk*, one by the more general *dyret*, and one, Marie's *Al bisclavret* (278), by *til hans*.

It may be concluded from this brief study of *Bisclaret* that Clia Goodwin was correct in her suggestion that the Norwegian translator wished to portray the wife as the real monster. A further argument may be added here to hers. After Bisclaret has been betrayed by his wife, and doomed to live permanently as a wolf, he is chased by the king and his hunters. The French reads:

> A lui cururent tutejur
> E li chien e li veneür (141-2).

Compare:

> ok *raku* hann aller allan dag hundar ok væiði menn (90,28).

It is evident from law-texts that the verb *reka* was used of the pursuit of outlaws, as well as *vargar*. So *Grágás*:

> þá skal hann svá víða vargr, raekr ok rekinn, sem menn víðast varga reka, kristnir menn kirkiur soekia.[19]

The verb *reka* is used once more in *Bisclaret*, at the moment when the king banishes the wife. According to Marie, the king:

> La femme ad del païs ostee
> E chacie de la cuntree (305-6);

the *Strengleikar* text reads:

> þa rak konongr brott or þui fylki kono hans ok gærðe hana utlæga um alla hænnar lifdaga. (96,32)

The verb *reka* occurs here in the same context as *utlæga*, which is semantically close to *vargr*. The wording of this sentence from *Bisclaret* is strikingly reminiscent of the following law-text definition of the *vargr*:

> wargus sit, hoc est expulsus de eodem pago[20];

Compare *Bisclaret*:

gærðe hana utlæga rak brott or þui fylki.

Of the texts looked at here, *Equitan* and the first part of the Prologue appear, on linguistic grounds, to derive from an East Norwegian exemplar, while *Gulamar* and *Bisclaret* show evidence of West Norwegian dialect forms.[21] We have suggested that the Norse epilogue to *Equitan* is thematically, as well as linguistically, linked with the Prologue, each of them containing references to the gifts God grants to individuals. Those who use their gifts properly become like fruitful trees, *ok sem goðlæikr þæirra frægizst i annars umbotum þa fullgærezt allden þæirra* (6,6): "their goodness becomes known"; of those who, on the other hand, abuse their gifts, or covet the gifts of others, there is nothing to say:

Equitanus rex fuit. sed silenda est dignitas
ubi nulla bonitas sed finis iniquitas. (82,7)

Those thirteenth-century readers who approached *Bisclaret* expecting a narrative about a *vargr* must have been disappointed, for although he has a wolf's shape, Bisclaret is not a monster. Of the five occurrences in this text of the word *vargr*, four, as mentioned above, are found in the prologue and epilogue. These two paragraphs form a macrocosm-microcosm pair, which mirror each other so closely that prologue and epilogue can be read together as one discourse. In what follows, quotations from the epilogue are placed in brackets to distinguish them:

> J fyrnskonne matte hœyra þat sem optsamlega kunni gerazc. at marger menn hamskiptuzt ok vurðu vargar ok biuggu i morkum ok i skogum. ok þar atto hus ok Rik hibili. (En sa er þessa bok norrœnaðe hann sa i bærnsko sinni æinn Rikan bonda er hamskiftisk stundum var hann maðr stundum i vargs ham.) En vargulfr var æitt kuikuændi mæðan hann byr i vargs ham. þa slitr hann i þæirre œðe menn ef hann nær. ok gærir mikit illt. (ok talde allt þat er vargar at hofðuzt mæðan).

It is the werewolf of the epilogue, and not Bisclaret, who answers the expectations of encountering a *vargr* that are set up in the prologue. Bisclaret is loyal and gentle, and is celebrated in narrative, whereas the wealthy farmer is monstrous, and where there is infamy, the dignified course is to remain silent. Although the farmer tells the translator his story (*talde allt*), it will not be passed on to posterity:

> er fra honom ækki længra sægiande. En brættar gærðu lioð Bisclaret.

1.Richard Baum, *Recherches sur les œvres attribuées à Marie de France*, Heidelberg, 1968, has questioned this attribution, but the outcome of the debate he initiated does not affect the argument of the present paper. Page / line references, in this paper placed in brackets, are to Robert Cook and Mattias Tveitane, eds., *Strengleikar, An Old Norse Translation of Twenty-one Old French Lais*, Norsk Historisk Kjeldeskrift-Institutt, Oslo, 1979; and Alfred Ewert, ed., *Marie de France: Lais*, Oxford, 1963.

2.For a description of the manuscripts, see Cook and Tveitane, pp.ix-xi.

3.*Die Strengleikar. Ein beitrag zur geschichte der altnordischen prosalitteratur*, Halle, 1902.

4.*Om språkform og forelegg i Strengleikar*: Universitetet i Bergen, *Årbok: Humanistisk serie*, 1972:3, Bergen, 1973.

5."The Lais Bretons in Norway", in *Studies in Language and Literature in Honor of Margaret Schlauch*, eds. M. Brahmer *et al.*, Warsaw, 1966, pp. 203-12.

6.Chapters 1-3 of Clia Marie Doty Goodwin, "Old Norse and Middle English versions of the *lais* of Marie de France and the *translatio studii*", Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1988.

7.Priscian was the standard text on Latin grammar. Hreinn Benediktsson, *The First Grammatical Treatise*, Odense, 1972, p. 34, notes that: "the immense popularity of Priscian throughout the Middle Ages ... is eloquently attested by the thousand manuscript copies or extracts of his work that still survive".

8.See Tony Hunt, "Glossing Marie de France", *Romanische Forschungen* 86, 1974, pp.396-418, p.399.

9.Quoted in Hunt, *op. cit.*, p.405 (translation mine).

10.Quoted in Hunt, *op. cit.*, p.407 (translation mine).

11.For an account of the development of this topos, see J.E.Cross, "Aspects of Microcosm and Macrocosm in Old English Literature", in Stanley B. Greenfield, ed., *Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G. Brodeur*, University of Oregon, 1963, pp.1-22.

12.E. Trojel, ed., *De Amore Libri Tres*, Munich, 1964, pp. 3, 7.

13.Equitan tells her not to fear that he will cast her aside and marry someone else. Instead, should her husband die, *þec skyllda ec gera fru ok drotnengo allz mins rikis valldz ok hirðliðs allra minna æigna. ok kastala* (74,36).

14.J.E.Cross, *op. cit.*, pp, 10-11.

15.*Ála flekks saga*, ch.10, in Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, ed.,*Riddarasögur*, vol. ii, 1954, p.142.

16.See further Michael Jacoby, *wargus, vargr "Verbrecher" "Wolf"*, Studia Germanistica Upsaliensia 12, Uppsala, 1974, pp.11-13 (on the etymology of the word) and *passim* (on its semantic development).

17.C. C. Rafn, ed., *Fornaldar sögur Norðrlanda*, vol. ii, Copenhagen, 1829, p.413.

18.Gunnarr has a similar prophetic dream (*Njáls saga*, ch. 62): Þar þóttumsk ek sjá marga varga, ok sóttu þeir allir at mér ... en Hjǫrt þótti mér þeir hafa undir ok *slíta* á honum brjóstit: *ÍF* xii, p.155.

19.Jacoby, *op. cit.*, p.43.

20.*Pactus Legis Salicae*, K Text 55,4, in K. A. Eckhardt, ed., *Leges Nationum Germanicarum*, vol. iv part 1, Hanover, 1962, p. 207.

21.Cook and Tveitane, p.xxiv.