# Table of Contents

**Acknowledgements**..................................................................................................................6

**Introduction**..................................................................................................................................7

**Chapter 1: A Great Sea to Cross: Methodological Approaches towards the Gorlagon**........9

1.1 Methodological Approaches towards Medieval Literature ......................................................11
1.2 Status Quaestionis .......................................................................................................................19
   1.2.1 Earliest research: Kittredge ...............................................................................................19
   1.2.2 The Gorlagon after Kittredge: followers .........................................................................32
   1.2.3 The Gorlagon beyond Kittredge: New Readings .............................................................41

**Chapter 2: On Courtly Beasts and Violent Men: Violence in the High Middle Ages and Arthurian Legend**.................................................................................................................49

2.1 The Dating of the Gorlagon .......................................................................................................50
2.2 General Overview of the High Middle Ages in England ..........................................................53
2.3 Knighthood, Chivalry, and Courtliness .....................................................................................55
2.4 Religious Tempering of Violence in the Middle Ages ..............................................................62
2.5 Identity, Metamorphosis and the Sympathetic Werewolf ......................................................69

**Chapter 3: Violence in Other Contemporary Narratives** ..........................................................73

3.1 Topographia Hibernica .............................................................................................................74
3.2 Bisclavret ....................................................................................................................................81
3.3 Melion ........................................................................................................................................82
3.4 Guillaume de Palerne ...............................................................................................................85
3.5 Gawain and the Dwarf .............................................................................................................88

**Chapter 4: Sis lupus, sis lupus, habeasque sensum hominis: Violence, Intention and Conscience in a Close Reading of the Gorlagon**.......................................................................................91

4.1 The Setting of the Gorlagon .....................................................................................................92
4.2 Gorlagon’s Tale .......................................................................................................................97
4.3 The Ending and the Answer to Arthur’s Quest ........................................................................108

**Conclusion**..................................................................................................................................111

**Bibliography**...............................................................................................................................115

Primary Sources ..............................................................................................................................115
Secondary sources ............................................................................................................................116
Online sources ..................................................................................................................................119

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Introduction

*De Arthuro rege Britanniae et rege Gorlagon lycanthropo* has a most gruesome conclusion. In this medieval Latin romance, King Arthur sets out on a quest to find out how women think. Instead, he finds the story of the cuckolded king Gorlagon, who used to be a werewolf. At the end of the story, the adulteress is being tormented and punished in an unusually cruel manner. Every time king Gorlagon kisses his new wife, his cheating ex-wife must kiss the severed head of her lover, which is literally being served to her on a platter. To a modern reader this might be a disproportionate punishment for her crime, but how should this ending actually be interpreted? If not from the moral perspective of a twenty-first century Western reader, then how would a medieval reader have reacted to this outcome? How the violence in the *Gorlagon* should be interpreted will be the central research question of this dissertation.

To answer this question the dissertation will examine different aspects of the *Gorlagon*, which will be divided over the various chapters. A range of analytical levels will be applied, depending on the topic of each chapter.

First of all, this dissertation will examine the point of view of the modern reader. In what ways has the *Gorlagon* been read and what would be an alternative? What is the modern reception of the violence in it? Chapter 1 will formulate an answer to these questions. It will first give an introduction to the methodology used in this dissertation and then move on to a *status quaestionis* of the current research.

Afterwards, this thesis will move on in chapter 2 to the contextual level of the *Gorlagon*. To do this it is necessary to first examine the dating of both the manuscript and the *Gorlagon* itself. After having established its time period, it will discuss how the *Gorlagon* functions within a historical medieval setting, focusing specifically on the themes of chivalry and religion. This will be followed by the key concepts of metamorphosis and identity which have been described by Caroline Bynum.¹ The thesis will then continue using a synchronous methodology for its specific timeframe. After having started from a broad historical analysis, the focus will shift to a more cultural approach, before moving on into comparison between the *Gorlagon* and other texts with similar themes in chapter 3.

The third chapter will analyse the intertextual level of the *Gorlagon*, partially limiting itself to the themes of violence, change and identity. These texts will include narratives with and without werewolves. The main texts that will be used as comparison are the *Topographia Hibernica* of Gerald of Wales, the Breton *lai Bisclavret* by Marie de France, the anonymous *Melion*, the anonymous *Guillaume de Palerne* and *Gawain and the Dwarf*.

The fourth chapter will move on to the intratextual level of the *Gorlagon*, by using close reading of the text to focus on recurring themes and motifs, and how these reflect what has earlier been established on broader analytical levels. The result of this close reading will be summarised in the final conclusion, where a possible answer to the interpretation of the violence shall be presented.
Chapter 1: A Great Sea to Cross: Methodological Approaches towards the Gorlagon

Lupus uero quo uellet, omnibus eum sequentibus, ire sinitur. Qui statim mare peciit, et quasi uellet transire se undis marinis impetuose ingessit. Ipsius uero patria illi regioni e latere mari interfluente coniungebatur, licet alias terrestri sed longiori itinere inde adiri posset. Rex autem eum uidens uelle transire, classem continue eo deduci miliciamque imperat conuenire.²

So the wolf was allowed to go where he would, and they all followed after him. And he at once made for the sea, and impetuously dashed into the waves as though he wished to cross. Now his own country adjoined that region, being, however, separated from it on one side by the sea, though in another direction it was accessible by land, but by a longer route. The King, seeing that he wished to cross over, at once gave orders that the fleet should be launched and that the army should assemble.³

A common problem that scholars have when analysing historical texts is the enormous leap in time between the writing of the narratives and their modern analysis. Very much like the wolf who is wanting to cross the sea in the quote above, we eagerly want to gap the distance between the present day and the long gone world in which these stories originated. However, to return to the past is not an easy feat, even if it is only a mental undertaking. Just as the waves threaten to overtake the wolf in his enthusiasm, so loom the dangers of modern bias and anachronism to a cultural reading of De Arthuro rege Brittaniae et rege Gorlagon lycanthropo.⁴ Therefore this quotation stands as a caveat, both to myself and to all readers of either the Gorlagon or this paper, to remain critical at all times.

³ Most translations of the Gorlagon are taken from: Milne F.A. and Nutt A. Arthur and Gorlagon, Folklore 15, no. 1 (March 25, 1904) London: Folklore Enterprises, 1904: 40–67. These translations will be marked with “Milne (1904)” If the translations of any Latin texts have no notes, then they have been translated by myself. Milne (1904)
⁴ From here on shortened to “the Gorlagon” when talking about the text, and Gorlagon or King Gorlagon when talking about the character.
1.1 Methodological Approaches towards Medieval Literature

Before any analysis on the main question of violence in the Gorlagon can begin, it is necessary to define the methodology which will be used. This is particularly relevant to the Gorlagon, since most readings of this text vary wildly, depending on the approach. As previously stated in the introduction, the methodology will be synchronous of nature and primarily focus on the text of the Gorlagon and its contemporary narratives, by using the qualitative method of close reading. Both the comparison with others narratives and the close reading of the Gorlagon are reserved for the second half of this thesis, but since the first chapter will deal with modern readership and the methodologies they use, it is essential to define the methodological framework at the beginning.

The philological tradition that will be followed mostly in this thesis is the New Philology that originated as a response to Bernard Cerquiglini in Speculum: A Journal of Medieval study. In this tradition, the text itself is central to the analysis, while using ideas of postmodern thinkers such as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man. This “New” Philology originated as a reaction against the Old Philology because of the problems that occurred when applying the Old Philology to Medieval texts. These problems were the treating of medieval texts as if they were fixed printed texts. The failure to acknowledge the character of manuscripts as opposed to printed texts has led to an overlooking of the rich variety of versions that a single story may have.

On a first glance, this appears less relevant for the Gorlagon, since it is only known to us through a single manuscript which is the Bodleian Rawlinson B 149. This manuscript will be discussed later in this paper. However, modern criticism has also neglected manuscript culture in other ways regarding the Gorlagon. One of the main concerns is the difference between open and fixed text. Not only were texts rarely fixed to a single authoritative version, the Medieval

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8 See chapter 2.1
manuscript culture also did not have copyright. This means that scribes would copy freely from each other without obliged referencing. Sometimes as outright plagiarism, sometimes as credited homage, often by using other narratives as inspiration rather than exact transcription. This was also the case when copying texts to prevent them from getting lost, or when someone wished to have a personal copy. Holy texts and authoritative texts were copied fairly accurate, but scribes did not hesitate to correct what they saw as corruptions. However, the less authority a text had, the less scribes would feel inclined to preserve the original, and the more they would edit. These edits are the origin of the variation between different copies of a same narrative, which can range from a single word to an entire plotline. Cerquiglini used the term *variance* to describe this phenomena, inspired by the term *mouvance* which Zumthor used to describe the variation in Medieval literature that originated from oral traditions.

The variation in medieval literature leads to two visions of the manuscript which are radically different, and which separates the Old from the New Philology. Old Philology would see these variations as errors which needed to be corrected by means of *reconstructio*. This is an attempt to return to the original text, as it was intended by the author. Manuscripts become a means to an end. In this view, they are hindrances towards recovering the lost original version. To achieve this there are different options of which three will be shortly summarised here.

The first and most famous is Lachmann’s method where each manuscript is assigned with a different upper case letter. In the first stage called *recensio* these manuscripts are then compared by the errors they share or lack. This comparison is then used to reconstruct a *stemma*, which is a tree structure that shows how different manuscripts are related towards each other, and how they descend from hypothetical non-preserved versions which are marked by lower case letters. Once these relations have been established, the second stage or *emendatio* begins. Younger versions of manuscripts, which have been proven to be descendants of older preserved manuscripts, are removed from the list of good candidates. Eventually, the oldest versions of the branches of the *stemma* remain, which are then compared and synthesised to a new text which would be the best reconstructable version of the original. This method has gained a lot of criticism over the years. For example, two copyists can independently of each other make the same error, or an early version with a lot of edits can gain authority and have a larger offspring of younger manuscripts than versions closer to the original text do. Lachmann’s

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method has nonetheless been successful for Classical texts, although the same cannot be said for Medieval literature.

A second method is choosing the oldest manuscript that has been preserved and using this as a basis, while only using other textual witnesses to fill in the gaps when there is an obvious corruption. Needless to say, there is no telling how much of the original text remains in this oldest manuscript, and how much has been altered. An older manuscript does not have to be the best copy of the authors autograph. The possibility always exists that the older manuscript has multiple predecessors of which it has been copied, while the younger manuscript was copied directly of the original.

A third method is that of Bédier, which can be summarised by his phrase *un bon manuscrit*. He would choose “a good manuscript” which would be most similar to the original. Good means here that the manuscript should be old and written in a clear and neat font, preferably by a single hand, or scribe, and without damaged or corrupted fragments. In this method, only a single manuscript is used for analysis. Technically this is not *reconstructio* but it is still considered a method of the Old Philology because it does not take *variance* in account.

As discussed above, there are multiple problems with the methods of *reconstructio*. However, this thesis does not primarily aim at criticising these methods itself, but it shows that it is a problematic tool to apply to medieval texts, especially that of the Gorlagon. Returning to the main topic of this thesis, it is clear that the Gorlagon is a problematic case for *reconstructio*, since only one version of the text survived in the Rawlinson manuscript. This is most likely a copy since it is written by two different hands, without an apparent change in the style of the narrative. If it had different styles as well, the possibility would exist that the Gorlagon would have two authors, like the famous Medieval French Roman de la Rose. However, this is not the case, which means that the single fourteenth century manuscript is most likely a copy. Central to any analysis of the Gorlagon is the dating of text. Sadly, there is little factual evidence to prove how much older the Gorlagon really is, which means that modern readers are heavily dependent on conjecture to establish the timeframe of the Gorlagon. This dissertation sets out to remain critical and reasonable, and not to get carried away by conjectures concerning chronology, despite the shared frustrations towards the lack of clear answers. In the overview

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11 Guillaume de Lorris, and Jean de Meun. *Le Roman De La Rose.*

of the status quaeestionis\textsuperscript{13}, it will be shown how modern readers have used the dating of the Gorlagon to support their own readings of the narrative. In the dating of the Gorlagon\textsuperscript{14} there will be given an overview of the arguments which determine its timeframe, with a critical approach to eventually come to a plausible dating of the story.

Contrary to the Old Philology’s visions towards the manuscript are those of New Philology. Old Philology searches for a defined text, as intended by the author, while New Philology questions the concept of authorship in the Middle Ages itself. They divide medieval manuscript culture into two major periods. The first period is the monastic period which dominates the early Middle Ages starting with the conversion of the new Germanic settlers and the foundation of monasteries across Western Europe.\textsuperscript{15} The second period follows the rise of the cities and universities, when secular scribes rise in importance, which leads to a noticeable increase in non-religious texts. The transition to the secular period is usually dated at the end of the 12th or the beginning of the 13th century. However, this is not a clear cut with the monastic tradition, since these monasteries continued to exist and function as writing and copying centres. Their relative importance nonetheless decreased, until the printing press and the reformation brought an end to most monastic literary activity in the late 15th and 16th century.

New Philology also has a different approach to authorship in the definition of authorship itself. Old Philology projects modern authorship on medieval literature. However, modern notions of the author have begun in the renaissance and they have evolved a lot since. The author cannot be viewed independently from his publishing context. In Medieval times, the publishing context is so radically different that the term itself does not feel satisfactory. Books were not ready made for the market, due to the fact that there was no large scale market to buy and sell books. The high production costs of books in terms of man hours and material made books only available for the wealthy, either private owners or institutions. This meant that the demand was too low to justify a constant supply in terms of risk on investment, judging from a modern economic perspective. However, private ownership of books only comprised of a minor share in the Medieval reading culture. This would evolve throughout the Middle Ages, with a

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{13} See chapter 1.2.
\textsuperscript{14} See chapter 2.1.
\end{flushleft}
growing private ownership of books for *magistri* and students starting in the 12th century and for merchants and citizens in the 13th century. This is opposed to the production of books for the daily use in institutions such as monasteries, churches, schools and the administration in general. They were dependent of books for their activities, but they were not dependent of market prices, because they supplied themselves through primarily autarchic production and because books were shared possessions of the community.

This means that opposed to modern notions of corporate publishing, there was a system of either public or private patronage. This patronage would be different depending on the tradition of the writing as well. The religious tradition will be discussed first. The monasteries were the primary patrons of the religious tradition. The private or public nature of the monasteries is debatable. Monastic patronage was arguably public, because of the networks of monastic orders and travelling monks before the rule of *stabilitas loci*, or ‘stability of place’, became dominant through the catholic world.16 Because of their secluded nature, the monasteries arguably fall in the category of private patronage. However, this is very different from individual private patronage, which would rise in importance in the late 13th century. Other patrons of the religious tradition were the churches and church schools, as discussed above. These were more clearly public in nature, because they aimed at a broad target audience and because the institutions were seen as public property.

Patronage in the secular tradition was different, and it evolved as well. At first, it consisted mostly of government administration. Individual private patronage was a marginal phenomenon before the late 13th century. Before that time, a high ranking noble would employ his personal scribes, just as the governments of the cities would outsource their contract services to secular scribes in the city. These scribes would mostly work on demand. Starting from the late 13th century, potential private buyers would give the order to make a personal copy. Note that the process of making a book was not vertically integrated yet at this time. Making ink, making paper, buying and selling these goods, copying, illustrating and bookbinding were different professions which were rarely all done by a single book trader or *librarius*. A customer had to arrange the different production steps of the book himself, or he could hire the professional

experience of the *librarius* to do this for him, since they would know the different independent craftsmen that were required for the various tasks.

This system of patronage is clearly different to the mass publishing of the modern age. The printing press only made its introduction in the British Isles at the end of the 15th century by William Caxton.\(^\text{17}\) This invention greatly reduced the time it took to copy books. However, it was not the introduction of mass produced cheap books that has been associated with it. A printing press was a large up-front investment and the prices of parchment or paper were still very high because of the limited means of producing them. This only changed in the late 18\(^{\text{th}}\) and 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century when wood pulp paper was invented and the process of papermaking was industrialised, which made books accessible to more people than just the upper classes. Of course, the accessibility alone does not guarantee an increased readership. Higher levels of literacy and a flourishing reading culture were required as well, which can be linked to the rise of both the middle classes and the public libraries.\(^\text{18}\)

After having established that the publishing context of the modern day is not the same as that of the Middle Ages, it is time to examine the concept of authorship. New Philology treats authorship as how it is viewed by Medieval readers. To grasp the medieval concept of authorship they go back to definition of the author by Bonaventura, as seen below.

\[...quod quadruplex est modus faciendi librum. Aliquis enim scribit alienam materiam nihil addendo, vel mutando; et iste mere dicitur scriptor. Aliquis scribit aliena addendo, sed non de suo: et iste compilator dicitur. Aliquis scribit et aliena, et sua ; sed aliena tanquam principalia, et sua tanquam annexa ad evidentiam; et iste dicitur commentator. Aliques scribit et sua, et aliena; sed sua tanquam principalia, aliena tanquam annexa ad confirmationem: et talis debet dici auctor. Talis fuit Magister, quoniam sententias suas ponit, et Patrum sententias confirmat.\(^\text{19}\)]


\(^{19}\) Bonaventura. *Commentaria in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum*, proemium, I. 4
Shortly paraphrased, this excerpt of Bonaventura says that there are four ways of making a book, which he views as hierarchical tiers. The fourth and lowest tier is that of *scriptor* or copyist, who only copies and does not add any new elements. The third tier is that of *compilator*, who adds to what he copies, “but not his own”, meaning that he compiles what others have written before him instead of using a single source. The second tier is that of *commentator*. He does the same as the *compilator* but adds both his own words as those of others, using his own words to confirm what is written by others. The first and highest tier is that of *auctor*, who uses other words to confirm his own. Bonaventura then states that this *auctor* is a *Magister*, or university teacher, when he uses the Church Fathers to confirm his statements. Note that there is no category in this list that only writes *sua materia*. Every one of these tiers consists of writers who are primarily occupied with material other than their own.

The medieval view on authorship is thus radically different from modern notions of the same concept. The author is in Medieval terms the *auctor*, but he is not the same as the creative genius behind a corpus. Instead, he is the sum of a process of copying and rewriting older sources. Originality suddenly is far less important as a value to the text than authority is. This *auctoritas* was derived from older prestigious texts, primarily the Bible, secondary the teachings of the Patriarchs and other theology, and thirdly the Classics. Authority was derived from God as the supreme ruler who had authority above all else. After him, the age of the source was seen as an important factor to the status of text. The question remains to what extent Bonaventura’s views represent Medieval literature. Bonaventura speaks in this excerpt about *litterati*, which is used to define Latin writers, specifically the *magistri* of the schools. However, Latin is not the only language of Medieval literature, and literature was not limited to the universities either. It does not seem like Bonaventura regards writing in other genres or languages as true literature.

Nonetheless, the concept of *auctoritas* was not only reserved for the religious tradition, but for the secular tradition as well. Texts on non-religious topics use the same pattern of deriving authority from earlier texts. In the *Gorlagon* this does not happen explicitly. However, in the *Historia Regum Britanniae* from Geoffrey of Monmouth it does. This work is one of the central sources of the Arthurian legend, which is the setting of the *Gorlagon*. The Arthurian dimension will be studied more closely in chapter 4.1.

The combination of this copying culture and the absence of a fixed text means that the variation in manuscripts is an inherent trait rather than a series of mistakes. That is why New Philology sees each manuscript as an independent and equally valuable artefact, rather than a stepping stone towards the text as it was intended by the author. This will be crucial for analysing the *Gorlagon* in the *status quaestionis* in the second part of this chapter.
To conclude, New Philology attempts to look at Medieval literature within its historical timeframe, for as much as the sources allow to do that. Both Old and New Philology have a historicist approach in common, but New Philology does not believe that any modern analysis allows to present the one and single truth about the past. There are no illusions about reproducing the past wie es eigentlich gewesen ist as Leopold Von Ranke thought in the 19th century.\(^\text{20}\) Old Philology is for the most part still positivist in its convictions. Even though there is something noble about these attempts to recover the absolute truths, they are mostly doomed to fail because of the lack of sources, and the problem to overcome modern bias.

As a reaction to this, modern research has often refused to look at the past from a historicist point of view, claiming that the modern bias is impossible to overcome. Instead, they take a presentist stance towards historical literature by analysing these texts from a pure modern point of view. However, this threatens to reduce the value of historical literature to its relevance for a present day public. If literature is only read in function of present day relevance, then it no longer functions as a looking glass on past cultures, but only as a mirror for ourselves. Even though this looking glass warps the image of the object it looks at, it can still show hints of the original shape. That is why this thesis will not follow a presentist methodology. It is my conviction that a nuanced and critical presentation of the source material can still show some of the original mind-set and culture out of which the narrative originates. I leave it up to the readers of this paper to decide what is probable, and what is not.

After having established a methodological framework for the analysis, it is time to take a step closer to the text of the Gorlagon itself. This will not be a giant rash leap to the Middle Ages itself, but instead it will be a summary of what has been written by modern research about the Gorlagon itself. This status quaestionis will analyse validity of previous research and address the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments.

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1.2 Status Quaestionis

Most research on the Gorlagon does not question its violence. However, the sheer brutality of it has often been noticed by scholars such as Sconduto and Kittredge. The violence in the Gorlagon is nonetheless mostly used as an argument to prove other hypotheses. The question of why it is so prevalent in the first place is yet to be answered. For that reason, this status quaestionis will start off with the research on the Gorlagon in general and then it will examine how the scholars have addressed the violence interpreted it.

1.2.1 Earliest research: Kittredge

The first work that should be mentioned is “Arthur and Gorlagon” by George Lyman Kittredge.\(^\text{21}\) This work was the first complete text edition of the Gorlagon as it has been preserved in the Rawlinson B149, as well as the first in depth analysis of its narrative. The introduction, text edition and analysis has set the tone of all following research on the Gorlagon, which is why it is the best starting point of this status quaestionis.

In his work, Kittredge first introduces an overview of the whole manuscript before rendering a transcription of the Gorlagon. Afterwards, he moves on to the interpretation of the narrative. The introduction he provides is given below:

\begin{quote}
The following text, which is here edited for the first time and seems to have eluded all investigators of Arthurian tradition, is contained in Rawlinson MS. B. 149 (parchment) in the Bodleian Library. The manuscript is of the end of the fourteenth century, and its contents, as catalogued by Macray, are as follows:

1. Historia trium Magorum.


3. De "Tirio Appolonio" narratio.
\end{quote}


5. "Liber Alexandri Philippi Macedonum qui primus regnavit in Grecia et de preliis ejusdem."

6. Tractatus, Aristotelis dictus, de regimine sanitatis, libris decern.

Arthur and Gorlagon occupies pp. 55-64, and has no title. It is written in two hands, the second hand beginning with seminecem in the last line of p. 60. I have expanded the numerous contractions of the manuscript, have regulated punctuation, capitals, and the separation of words, have divided the tale into paragraphs, and have numbered the sections. All other changes are indicated in the notes or by brackets in the text.

There is no clue to the authorship of Arthur and Gorlagon; but it was not written by the author of the Vita Meriadoci and the De Ortu Waluuanii. The style is enough to make that point certain, and the whole character of the tale differs widely from those long-winded romances. The Rawlinson copy is pretty accurate; but it shows a number of errors and at least one omission. These blunders are enough to prove that it is not the author's autograph, even if this were not immediately clear from the fact that it is the work of two different scribes.

Kittredge seemingly remains objective both in this introduction and in the text edition that follows it. Central in this excerpt is the dating of the manuscript. Kittredge takes over the dating of the text from the analysis of Paul Meyer, who claims in 1886 that the manuscript was either from the late 14th or early 15th century, which Kittredge acknowledges in a note. Leslie A. Sconduto states that the text itself is probably from the 13th or 14th century, but she does not provide where she receives this information from other than Kittredge, who himself only gives the late 14th century. Kittredge mentions that Bruce dates the Gorlagon, the Meriadocus and
De Ortu Waluuani to the second quarter of the 13th century by assuming that they were written by a single author, but he does not agree with Bruce’s assumption.  

A close reading of the Gorlagon itself will be provided in chapter 4. Whereas in this chapter, the interpretation that Kittredge has made of the Gorlagon will be discussed. This will show why his interpretation is incompatible with the methodology of this thesis, and it will also show how Kittredge has interpreted the violence of the narrative.

The main goal that Kittredge tries to achieve is to find hidden patterns within the Gorlagon which were part of an older lost story. This focus has influenced most research concerning the Gorlagon, which concentrates primarily on the roots of the Gorlagon. These roots can be the theme of werewolves, the Arthurian legend that it adopts, or other patterns, motifs and themes.

The answer that Kittredge provides to this origin question is that the Gorlagon is a corrupted hybrid of different traditions, because of the mistakes of copyists. Kittredge sees four versions of a single lost story called The Werewolf Story which he attempts to reconstruct. These four versions are the Gorlagon, Bisclavret by Marie de France, the anonymous Melion, and Morraha. This last one is a West Irish folk-tale or märchen, of which eight different versions exist in print. Kittredge then assigns capital letters to each of these stories and examines their common ancestry by comparing shared narrative patterns, very much like Lachmann’s method would do for manuscripts. Kittredge even assigns lower case letters to groups of stories that share a hypothetical ancestor. Just as Lachmann’s method is viable for criticism, so is Kittredge extrapolation of this method to literary analysis. His attempt at reconstructing hypothetical narratives is problematic since it presumes the existence of non-preserved sources which were not mentioned by other authors. It becomes even worse when he uses these hypothetical texts to explain phenomena in narratives such as the Gorlagon. Of course it is also impossible to prove that these sources do not exist, but whether one follows Old or New Philology, it should be clear that inventing sources to make theories work is not scientific. This has already been recognised by William Ockham in the 13th century, who

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23 Kittredge does not take the Mirabilia Britanniae into account, even though this features a great hunt by Arthur and his dog Cabal or Cawall, similar to the hunt in the Gorlagon by Gargol on his werewolf brother. See Hamel, A.G. Aspects of Celtic Mythology, Proceedings of the British Academy, vol XX, London: Humphrey Milford Amen House, 1934: 16
famously invented *Ockham’s Razor*, also called the *lex parsimoniae*, which states that the theory that uses the smallest number of assumptions is the most likely solution to a problem. Kittredge assumes the existence of more narratives than are preserved, while in the method of New Philology these shared textual ancestors do not necessarily have to exist, since scribes could freely copy and work on an intertextual level because of the open manuscript culture.

Another problematic assumption of Kittredge is the connections he sees between Medieval Western European literature and literature from another time and space. He does not explicitly mention the methodology he uses to justify this approach, but Kittredge uses a traditional 19th century folkloristic approach to fairy tales. Orenstein states that there are two theories of origins to explain the common elements in fairy tales found spread over different continents. One is that a single point of origin generated any given tale, which then spread over the centuries. The other is that such fairy tales stem from common human experience and therefore can appear separately in many different origins. Kittredge follows the first theory. He places the single point of origin in the Indian subcontinent, perhaps out of orientalist romanticism.

He does not hesitate to use Irish folk tradition such as the *Morraha* as a reliable medieval source, while some of these stories were only written down in the 19th century. He also looks for common ground between the hypothetical story which he calls the *Werewolf’s Tale*, and numerous exotic tales such as *the Arabian Nights*, *the Forty Viziers* and the Indian *Kathasaritsagara*:

The original Werewolf’s Tale has been influenced by a different type of story that in which an enchanter transforms a man into bestial shape by means of external magic. The role of the magician is played by the faithless wife, as in many tales of the type just mentioned.

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Kittredge assumes the existence of a hypothetical story which he references by the letter r. In his notes he further elaborates on examples of this type of tale, by giving a short summary of the story of Sidi Numan from the Arabian nights:

Sidi Numan discovers his Ufife with a ghoul, devouring a corpse. He speaks of the occurrence to her. She sprinkles him with water and transforms him into a dog. She attempts to kill him, but he escapes. A baker takes him into his house and makes a pet of him. He astonishes everybody by his intelligence as a detector of false coin. A woman hears of his fame and thinks he must be a man in beast shape. She takes him home. Her daughter, who is an enchantress, sprinkles him with water, saying: "If you were born a dog, remain a dog; but if you were born a man, resume the form of a man by the virtue of this water."27

It is true that there are parallels to the Gorlagon in this story. However, the transformation is here of man into dog, instead of into wolf. The attempted murder and escape also happen in the Gorlagon when the wife unleashes the hounds on Gorlagon, but Sidi Numan is not being chased by dogs, nor does he flee towards a forest. Neither is cannibalism ever made explicit in the Gorlagon. The motif of eating is crucial to the narrative of the Gorlagon, but it is not made explicit that the wolf eats humans after he kills them. The only instance where the wolf is seen eating, is when he eats bread from the King’s table and drinks from his cup:

*Cotidie ad prandium prioribus erectis brachiis ante regem ad mensam stabat, de pane eius comedens, et de eodem calice bibens.*28

Every day at dinner he stood with stretched forearms in front of the king at the table, eating of his bread and drinking from the same cup.29

The surprising amount of intelligence of Sidi Numan as a dog is parallel to the intelligence of Gorlagon as a wolf, but it is here discovered by a woman rather than a king. Though water is

28 Day (2005) paragraph 14
29 Milne (1904)
an important motif in werewolf stories, the sprinkling of water does not occur in the *Gorlagon*.\(^{30}\)

Neither is there another enchantress needed to restore Gorlagon to his original form. In both narratives there is a formula needed for the restoration, but this formula is different from the two formulas in the *Gorlagon*: *Sis lupus, sis lupus habeasque sensum lupi*, or “Be a wolf, Be a wolf and have the understanding of a wolf.” and *Sis homo hominisque sensum habeas*, or “Be a man and have the understanding of a man”

As many as there are parallels between these stories, so do they have differences, which implies common ancestry is too farfetched in this case. *The Arabian Nights* was first translated into English and French in the early 18th century. One might argue that *The Arabian Nights*, also known as *One Thousand and One Night*, could have come into contact with the English world without being translated. Islamic thinkers such as Avicenna and Averroes were known in the late 12th and 13th century in Western Europe, so an influence is not impossible.

Kittredge states that the story of Sidi Numan is the same of one from the *Kathasaritsagara*. An Indian story finding his way into the Arabian Nights is more probable than the former having an influence on the *Gorlagon*, since there were intense trading contacts across the Indian Ocean with the Islamic world. However, another link to the *Gorlagon* is hard to find. These Indian stories were only translated in English in the 19th century. To speak of connections between these tales is a very bold statement because of the enormous distance between the cultures wherein these narratives were written. Kittredge assumes the existence of an Oriental story which he calls *the Dog and the Lady*, which is the origin of all the narratives that have adulterous wives and faithful dogs or wolves in them.

Water as a motif has also been noted by Kittredge. He discusses the sea crossing scene\(^{31}\) as follows:

The swimming is an easy inference from L, in which the wolf returns from the island in this way (though it is not said how he got there in the first place), and from G. In G the wolf journeys to the foreign country by land, but when he is about to return, he plunges into the sea "as if to swim." The author explains that the shortest route was by water. The king fits out a fleet and sails to the wolf’s country, taking the wolf with him. Obviously

\(^{30}\) The importance of water in the restoration of the wolf to man will also be further elaborated in chapter 3.4 in the comparison between the Gorlagon and *Guillaume de Palerne*.

\(^{31}\) See the opening of chapter 1 of this dissertation.
the story has been rationalized. In M, the wolf, abandoned by his wife, gets passage to Ireland as a stow-away. Clearly the swimming (in x) was too much for the authors of M and G to credit. They would have found a good deal of difficulty with the swimming match between Beowulf and Breca.\(^{32}\)

The capital G stands for Gorlagon, M stands for the Melion, x stands for a lost ancestor of G and M, and L stands for the 19th century edition of Irish folk tradition by Larminie.\(^{33}\) According to Kittredge the swimming is an intrusion from Irish tradition. Oddly enough, he does not mention the Picard narrative of *Guillaume de Palerne* here, which has multiple crossings of Messina’s strait by the werewolf.\(^{34}\)

*Guillaume de Palerne* has been preserved in one 13th century manuscript, which is earlier than the only preserved manuscript of the *Gorlagon*. Sconduto dates the original of *Guillaume de Palerne* between 1194 and 1197.\(^{35}\) Since the same cannot be done with the *Gorlagon*, it is not certain which one is older, although the available hints suggest that it is *Guillaume de Palerne*. In his analysis, Kittredge does mention *Guillaume de Palerne*, which shows that he is aware of its existence, but rather than interpreting it as a story that had an influence on the *Gorlagon*, he sees *Guillaume de Palerne* as a variation or even a corruption of the hypothetical *Werewolf’s Tale*, and not a related narrative to the *Gorlagon*.

Kittredge discusses the origins of the *Gorlagon* in the following excerpt:

G, however, is not a translation from Irish, but apparently from the Welsh, as appears from the names Gorlagon, Gorgol, and Gorleil, given in G to the Werewolf and his two brothers. We must suppose, therefore, that the Irish y passed into the sister island, where it was rendered into Welsh. The Welsh version is lost, like a great many other Welsh tales, but it was translated into Latin, and this Latin text is preserved to us, by a happy accident,


in a single manuscript of the late fourteenth century. Either the Welsh author, or the translator to whom we owe the Latin adaptation (G), attached the story to the Arthurian cycle by making Arthur the quester who is forced to learn the Werewolf’s tale. The attachment is very loose, and has nothing whatever to do with the Arthurian colouring of M. Its precise character and its relation to the frame of y may best be studied later, in connection with I. 36

After having established the characteristics of the Irish version by comparing various versions of the *Morraha*, Kittredge uses this to explain the *Gorlagon*, by an intermediate Welsh connection. The occurrence of Welsh names is enough for him to assume that the *Gorlagon* must have been translated from Welsh, rather than that it has been composed as an independent story. Kittredge explicitly claims the *Gorlagon* to be “certainly rendered from a prose text, either Welsh or Breton, which was similar in style and general character to the ‘Four Branches’ of the Welsh *Mabinogi*. No such texts are preserved in Armoricano.”37

These *Mabinogi* are a series of Welsh tales which have been preserved in the *Red Book of Hergest*. The *Red Book of Hergest* is also from the end of the 14th century, which is why Kittredge sees the two as being closely related. For neither the *Red Book* nor the *Gorlagon* it is possible to determine how old these stories precisely are in origin. Kittredge presents medieval Latin literature as a later translation of earlier works in other languages. However, the *Red Book of Hergest* itself contains a Welsh translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*.38 The existence of this translation shows that influence between the Welsh and Latin traditions works the other way around as well, so the *Gorlagon* might as well have predated the *Mabinogion*. In “Arthurian Narrative in the Latin Tradition”, Sian Echard proves how it is not viable to view Latin and vernacular literature as separate in this time period, but as two closely interwoven traditions.39 She reads the *Gorlagon* as narrative produced either as a translation from Welsh, or as an original Latin composition by someone who was well familiar with Welsh narrative structures. Echard reads the violence in the *Gorlagon* to function in two ways. The

38 Jesus College (University of Oxford), and Bodleian Library. *The Red Book of Hergest*. 1375, MS. 111: 8
cruel final scene is seen by her as means of adding marvel to a story. According to her, the other episodes of violence are deliberately breaking the expectation pattern, in order to parody the genre of *chansons de geste*. This genre will be examined more closely in chapter 2.3.

Arthur as questing protagonist is seen by Kittredge as a loose attachment, since he cannot explain it in relation to the *Melion*. However, this “loose attachment” is central to the narrative of the *Gorlagon*, since the Arthurian frame story reflects the theme of adultery and not being able to understand what women think, which is also present in Gorlagon’s inner story. *Melion*’s Arthur functions more as a supporting character to tell the story of the cursed knight. Even if the Arthurian motif is unrelated, it still has a clear independent function within the *Gorlagon*, and it is not a loose attachment to an older existing tale. Arthur is not a supporting character chosen as an excuse to tell Gorlagon’s tale, but Gorlagon’s tale is used in relation to Guinevere’s seduction in the Arthurian legend. Another interesting excerpt in this regard is the following:

> An older version could be exported later than a younger one. Chance alone would govern; for a younger version need not immediately (or ever, for that matter) crowd an older out of existence. These facts are commonplace, but they are too often ignored by investigators, who sometimes forget that a story, unlike a human traveller, maybe in two places at the same time.\(^{40}\)

In this excerpt Kittredge accepts the fact that different stories can be written independent of each other, yet he does not consider the *Gorlagon* to be anything but a translation. On top of that, he views the *Gorlagon* as being of inferior quality towards his hypothetical narrative:

> This confusion indicates that the author of G as we have it (probably the Latinizer) did not understand the identity of the three mysterious "brothers."\(^{41}\)

The confusion he speaks of is the spelling of the name of the three brothers. Gorlagon is also spelled as Gorlogan. His youngest brother is either named Gargol or Gorgol, and his second brother is either Torleil or Gorleil. Both forms of their names occur throughout the text and

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both copyists use different versions in their respective parts of the manuscript. The confusion is probably a copying mistake for the vowels for Gorlagon and Gargol, and Kittredge states that because of the font, there is a similarity in the shape of capital G and T for Gorleil.42

According to Kittredge, the identity of the three mysterious brothers is one and the same person.43 This presumes the existence of an older correct version to explain spelling flaws in the current version. This would also mean that the person who saves Gorlagon from being a werewolf is himself. If that is the case, then he acts as two characters at the same time, one being human and the other being wolf in the tale he tells Arthur. This would not be entirely impossible if the lycanthropy of the Gorlagon is metaphorical, and Gorlagon does appear to speak as an unreliable narrator towards Arthur, but it still is quite the stretch. If the restoration from being a werewolf is a metaphor for reacceptance in society, then it would mean that he would forgive himself from the violence he has committed, which would make it a peculiar moral lesson for the story.

That aside, Kittredge bases his idea of them being the same person on two arguments, the first being the similarity of their names. This does not have to be the case. A counter example is the duo Bors and Ban in the Arthurian legends, whose similarity in name only shows their relation as brothers. This shows that it happens more often that brothers get similar names, but Kittredge also gives a second argument for a single werewolf King. He poses that the variations of the name are all Welsh and that they mean werewolf in origin.44 Because after Kittredge no academic scholars have supported this etymological claim, this dissertation shall not elaborate on it further.

The previous excerpts show how Kittredge applies the Old Philology approach towards the Gorlagon. Kittredge uses the same methodology for the final scene, which he sees as an intrusion from different stories. The first of these stories is the Forty Viziers. This is a Turkish tale written down in the 15th century45 in which a Persian rich man tells how his wife had planned with her lover, who is his slave, to murder him. The plan fails because the dog pulls the slave off the Persian, which allows the Persian to kill the slave instead. The Persian then

orders the lover to be beheaded. Next, his skull is made into a bowl for the wife, out of which she is forced to eat. The next excerpt shows how he interprets this punishment by comparing it to the *Forty Viziers*:

The lady's penance in G does not consist in eating from her lover's skull, but in sitting at table with his embalmed head before her on a platter. This may be a modification introduced by the author of G to soften the barbarity of the punishment.46

Upon confrontation with counterevidence to his claim of a connected narrative with Irish origins, Kittredge does not adjust his theory, but he sees it as a later modification by the anonymous author of the *Gorlagon*. In his words to “soften the barbarity of the punishment”. It is rather strange to make this distinction in grades of barbarity between the two forms of punishment. Which one is really the cruellest punishment? It is possible to argue that a skull has a less personal connection to the punished than the recognisable embalmed lover’s face.

Kittredge presents the barbaric violence in the *Gorlagon* to be an intrusion rather than being inherent to the story, but what is barbarous and what is not? The violence in the *Gorlagon* is not only present in the final scene, but equally in his rampage as a werewolf. He does not target just his wife and her lover, but he strays from personal vengeance to a spiral of blind violence. First against his wife’s children, then her brothers, and afterwards innocent civilians of his own and neighbouring countries. From the perspective of a 21st century reader, the violence in the *Gorlagon* is just as barbarous as that of the other narratives which are being compared to the *Gorlagon*.

The second narrative that is used for comparison by Kittredge is an episode in the *Gesta Romanorum*, given here in Wright’s Translation:

As he thus thought, the meat was placed before him; but what was his consternation to observe that it was deposited in the skull of a human being, and served from thence to the Prince and his guests on silver dishes. Horror-struck at what he saw, the merchant felt as if his own head must presently make part of the same diabolical service, and frequently did he internally ejaculate, "I am a dead man! I am a dead man!" In the meantime, the

lady of the mansion comforted him as much as she could. The night passed on, and he was shown into a bedchamber hung round with cauldrons; and in one corner of the room several lights were burning. As soon as he had entered, the door was fastened without; and the unlucky merchant was left a solitary prey to his own increasing terror. Casting his eyes around him in despair, he distinguished two dead men hanging by the arms from the ceiling. This shocking circumstance so agonized him, that the cold sweat dropped from his brow, and of rest he was morally incapable. In the morning, he got up, but with augmented apprehensions. "Alas!" cried he, "they will assuredly hang me by the side of these murdered wretches. What will become of me?" When the Prince had risen, he commanded the merchant to be brought into his presence. "Friend," said he, "what portion of my family establishment best pleases you?" The man answered, “I am well pleased with everything, my lord, except that my food was served to me out of a human head, a sight so sickening that I could touch nothing. And when I would have slept, my repose was destroyed by the terrific objects which were exhibited to me. And, therefore, for the love of God, suffer me to depart." "Friend," replied the Prince, "the head out of which you were served, and which stood exactly opposite to my wife - my beautiful, but wicked wife! - is the head of a certain duke. I will tell you why it was there. He whom I have punished in so exemplary a manner, I perceived in the act of dishonouring my bed. Instantly prompted by an uncontrollable desire of vengeance, I separated his head from his body. To remind the woman of her shame, each day, I command this memento to be placed before her, in the hope that her repentance and punishment may equal her crime. But the misfortunes of my family end not here; a son of the deceased duke slew two of my kindred, whose bodies you observed hanging in the chamber which had been appropriated to you. Every day, I punctually visit their corpses, to keep alive the fury which ought to animate me to revenge their deaths. And recalling the adultery of my wife, and the miserable slaughter of my kindred, I feel that there is no joy reserved for me in this world. Now then go in peace; and forget not the useful lesson which I have wished to impart.

The similarities between this narrative and the Gorlagon are greater than in the Forty Viziers. The Gesta Romanorum were also compiled in various places in Europe between the 12th and

15th century, which is closer both in time and space to the surviving manuscript of the Gorlagon than the Forty Viziers. There is no explicit mentioning of cannibalism, yet eating is an important motif. Neither dog nor werewolf is present and the dish on which it is served is in *scutellis argenteis* in the Latin version of the *Gesta Romanorum*\(^{48}\), but simply *in disco* in the Gorlagon.\(^{49}\) The beheading in the *Gesta Romanorum* is immediately after the discovery of adultery by the prince, while in the Gorlagon it is at the end of the tale. The Prince tells about the two slain family members who are hanging by their arms, while king Gorlagon tells of three pairs of family members that are slain, of which only the wolf cubs are hanged as execution, while this is not the cause of their death in the *Gesta Romanorum*.

Kittredge also sees an Icelandic parallel in the Ála Flekks Saga, a werewolf tale where the hero named Ali is turned into a werewolf by a wizard. He manages to escape the wizard and he ravages the countryside so badly that the king is forced to organise a great hunt to capture him. They do not manage to capture him, but by intervention of Ali’s foster parents he is able to return to being a human. His foster mother then tells the story to the king and the wizard is hanged. This saga has as much in common with the Gorlagon as some Oriental tales do, but Kittredge does not see a clear relation between the two. Instead he sees the Icelandic saga as a possible later offshoot of the Irish tradition.\(^{50}\) Chapter 3.1 of this dissertation will provide arguments how the Nordic tradition is reflected in the Gorlagon, possibly without a direct Irish predecessor.

Kittredge also mentions the *Topographia Hibernica* by Giraldus Cambrensis, or Gerald of Wales. In this travelogue, Gerald meets a priest who has encountered werewolves from Ossory on the border of Meath. This encounter is accurately dated by Gerald as being three years before the arrival of Prince John in 1185. This concrete setting shows that lycanthropy was not seen as a strictly fictional phenomenon.

To recapitulate Kittredge’s reading: he claims that the Gorlagon is a translation of a lost Welsh story which in its turn is an adaptation from the Irish *Werewolf’s Tale*. This tale has been mixed with Oriental influences, which he calls the *Dog and the Lady*. The variations in later versions are described as “mistakes” or inventions, rather than original ideas. The violence itself


\(^{49}\) Day (2005) paragraph 23

is seen as a later barbaric intrusion as well. This reading of the Gorlagon has long continued in modern criticism.

The next sections of this status quaestionis will discuss the academic writing about the Gorlagon after and beyond the ideas of Kittredge. Chronologically, there has first been agreement with his ideas before the focus shifted away from Oriental origins to new themes and motifs in the Gorlagon.

1.2.2 The Gorlagon after Kittredge: followers

The first one of these scholars is Kemp Malone. In Rose and Cypress from 1928\(^5\) he follows Kittredge with only minor criticism and goes a step further by claiming that the Oriental influences of the Gorlagon are bigger than Kittredge has assumed, and that they are more likely to be directly related to the Gorlagon. The main Oriental narrative he uses as basis for comparison is the Urdu story of Gül and Sanaubar. This story is about a cruel princess who will only marry the one who can discover what Gül did to Sanaubar. The hero, who is in some versions named Almas, in others Hatem Tai, sets out on this dangerous quest. This plot serves as a frame tale to tell the story of Gül and Sanaubar once the hero has reached king Sanaubar. Gül is being punished after committing adultery, in some versions with demons, in others with Africans. Sanaubar manages to kill these demons or men, depending on the version, with the help of his dog who faithfully defends his master at a critical moment. All the elements of the Dog and the Lady are again present in this story, which is why Malone sees this Oriental origin for the Gorlagon. An interesting part of Malone’s analysis is the focus on the adulterer, as seen in the excerpts below:

In G he is a youthful son of a heathen king; in M he is a follower of the hero.\(^6\)

And further:

The darkness of the rival reminds us of the negro in Rose and Cypress. The rival as wild

\(^5\) Malone, K. Rose and Cypress. PMLA. 43, no. 2. 1928, 397-446.

\(^6\) Malone, K. Rose and Cypress. PMLA. 43, no. 2. 1928, 417
man, i.e., as savage or uncivilized person, is also reminiscent of the distinctly savage rival in the oriental tale. Savagery, or, at least, lack of civilization, is further implied in the heathenness of the youthful rival in G.\(^{53}\)

And on the next page:

The barbarous origin and the youth of the rival in G stamp him as inferior to the hero, son of a king though he be, and make the woman's love for him a monstrous and unnatural thing. What could be more monstrous, indeed, to the medieval mind, than the conduct of a lady who prefers a heathen lover to a Christian husband? And what could be more shocking than the conduct of a mature married woman who falls in love with a callow youth?\(^{54}\)

Malone uses the same capitals as Kittredge for narratives. The stressing of the heathenness of the rival in the Gorlagon is interesting, as it has not been noticed by Kittredge himself. Malone suggests that the follower of Melion is a rival lover as well, however, in Melion it only states that Melion’s wife is being accompanied out of the forest and to Ireland by the follower. She does not explicitly commit adultery.\(^{55}\) The darkness of the rival that Malone writes about is not present in either the Gorlagon or Melion, but comes from some versions of the collection of Irish tales that Kittredge uses. Nowhere in the Gorlagon is the race of any character made explicit. However, the rival is described as filium cuiusdam regis pagani, or “son of a certain pagan king” which is a marked statement since no other characters are being described as either paganus or christianus. The religious aspect of the violence in the Gorlagon will be return in this dissertation in chapter 2.4. The opposition in age that Malone makes is less outspoken then he would suggest. The text of the Gorlagon consistently uses virgo to refer to Gorlagon’s wife as long as he is telling his tale, which does not mean that she is a virgin, but it is used to explain their relationship as husband and wife. It is not possible for her to be a virgin at the start, since Gorlagon keeps referring to her as virgo even when she has already committed adultery with the rival, and even when she has had children. The marital age for women in the Middle Ages

\(^{53}\) Malone, K. Rose and Cypress. PMLA. 43, no. 2. 1928, 417
\(^{54}\) Malone, K. Rose and Cypress. PMLA. 43, no. 2. 1928, 418
was also lower than it is today, especially for the diplomatic marriages of the aristocracy. Malone supposes Gorlagon’s wife to be of the same age as Gorlagon, while her age is never made explicit. They might be the same age, but she might be 15 years younger as well. Once Arthur asks about the woman sitting with the embalmed head in front of him, both Arthur and Gorlagon switch to *femina* to refer to her, which is a more neutral term. This shows that there is a greater distance in the relationship between Gorlagon and his former wife.

Malone has some interesting points on the punishment of Gorlagon’s wife at the end. The version of *Gül and Sanaubar* which he uses, has Sanaubar attacking seven Africans to avenge his honour. Aided by his dog, he manages to capture one of them. Then, he ties him to his horse and later decapitates him at home and embalms his head, which is placed for the chained queen Gül to see during dinner to remind her of her mistake. As much as there are similarities between this punishment and that of the *Gorlagon*, there are also differences. Gorlagon’s former wife does not eat, while Gül is served the scraps of the dog that assisted in subduing the Africans. Sanaubar does not remarry and kiss his new wife, like Gorlagon does. Gül is forced to look at the embalmed head on a platter every day, but she is not forced to kiss it. In *Gül and Sanaubar* the African’s body is fed to the dog, while there is no dog present in the *Gorlagon* at this point.56

The shared presence of the embalmed head of the rival is such a unique similarity that it seems evident to assume relation, but the first edition of *Gül and Sanaubar* is from 1845.57 The embalming of the head probably does not originate from a shared textual ancestor, but simply from the fact that both narratives need this head to remain intact for a long period of time. Embalming explains why it is not a skull when Arthur first sees it, when a considerable time has passed between the restoration of Gorlagon and the visit of Arthur. Embalming is also explained in the *Gül and Sanaubar* by the fact that Gül is forced to watch it daily.

Malone uses the framework of the genealogy of tales as it has been provided by Kittredge to overcome these differences between the *Gorlagon* and *Gül and Sanaubar*. He does not question the extreme brutality of the *Gorlagon*, since a similar level of brutality is present in *Gül and Sanaubar*. However, he shifts the origins from the *Gorlagon* further towards the Orient, while Kittredge keeps them mainly in Ireland.

56 Malone, K. *Rose and Cypress*. PMLA. 43, no. 2. 1928, 423-430
57 Malone, K. *Rose and Cypress*. PMLA. 43, no. 2. 1928, 387
A. Haggerty Krappe is the second of the academics after Kittredge that will be mentioned. In “Arthur and Gorlagon” from 1933\(^5\) he does the same as Malone by following Oriental narratives to explain the origin of the *Gorlagon*. However, Krappe goes further in his boldness by broadly defining what Oriental is. He uses Sudanese and Slavic narratives, which share characteristics of *the Dog and the Lady* as has been described by Kittredge. Krappe does not make a distinction in their age, since he assumes that those that are younger than the *Gorlagon* are later descendants from *the Dog and the Lady*, which is a shared ancestor. They have metamorphoses, but none of them has werewolves. Krappe’s shared methodology means that he is vulnerable for the same critiques as Kittredge and Malone, which is the disregard for the independent value of the *Gorlagon*, the disregard for historical time and space when discussing origins, and the assumption that shared characteristics cannot have originated through coincidence. Therefore, his Oriental approach will not be discussed in detail in this dissertation.\(^6\) However, he does have some interesting points when examining the *Gorlagon* itself.

The first of these points is the role of Queen Guinevere in the *Gorlagon*. Krappe wonders how she functions, since she is well known for being seduced, so she has nothing to gain if Arthur would become able to understand how women think, which would make him able to expose her infidelity. Nonetheless, Krappe assumes that she orders Arthur to go out on his quest and that she is aware of Gorlagon’s tale. Krappe explains this conundrum as such:

The conclusion is evident, I think. Arthur's queen, in a more complete lost version of the Cymro-Latin romance, likewise knew the story, and she sent Arthur out in the fond hope that he would never come back. There is only one logical flaw yet left: The cruel princess naturally had heard the tale from the surviving demon, her own paramour; but we are nowhere told that Arthur's queen had such a demon-lover, and it is offhand most improbable that she ever had one. It is then virtually certain that even in the lost version we did not learn how she had come to the knowledge of the ghastly tale.\(^7\)

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\(^6\) Krappe, A. H. *Arthur and Gorlagon*. Speculum. 8, no. 2. 1933, 209-222.
\(^7\) Guinevere’s betrayal is either with Mordred by an unlawful marriage, as in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*, or with Lancelot, as in Chrétien de Troyes’ *Lancelot ou le Chevalier de la Charrette*.
\(^7\) Krappe, A. H. *Arthur and Gorlagon*. Speculum. 8, no. 2. 1933, 216
Krappe uses a hypothetical lost version to explain a problem, just as Kittredge does. He applies this to the Gorlagon and states that there must have been a lost version where Guinevere tries to get rid of Arthur as well. However, his entire argument is unnecessary, since Arthur sets the quest upon himself. Guinevere is the cause of Arthur’s quest, but she does not assign him to do so. Unlike the princess in the Dog and the Lady, Guinevere is not presented in the Gorlagon as cruel or evil. Krappe does not explain this difference.

The analysis by Krappe also shows that he values the Gorlagon to be of lower quality than earlier lost versions of the Werewolf’s Tale, or of the Dog and the Lady, as we can see in:

The extant romance text represents this lost version but poorly: I am inclined to think that it was written down from memory, after an oral story heard by the author some time previously and only half understood. The view here set forth also explains what has never been explained before, namely why King Arthur is made to take the place and to play the role of the anonymous quester of the märchen and why his queen sends him on the perilous errand: his domestic misfortunes were commonly known in Mediaeval Wales, and thus the substitution and the choice was quite easy, at least for a storyteller well versed in the lore of the Round Table.62

As much as the disdain for his sources is questionable, Krappe does raise an interesting point here about Guinevere. The reason why an Arthurian framework is chosen for Gorlagon’s tale is that of his domestic misfortunes. This mirroring of adultery in the Gorlagon is undeniable. It is the only clear connection that binds the tale within a tale to Arthur’s quest to understand what women think. Strangely, Krappe states that:

In the matter of the punishment of the disloyal wife there are wide discrepancies. In Gül and Sanaubar as well as in Arthur and Gorlagon she is punished by having to share her food with her husband's dog (The Dog and the Lady).63

62 Krappe, A. H. Arthur and Gorlagon. Speculum. 8, no. 2. 1933, 216
63 Krappe, A. H. Arthur and Gorlagon. Speculum. 8, no. 2. 1933, 219
However, nowhere in the Gorlagon does it say that the wife is being punished by having to eat with Gorlagon’s dog. It does in the Dog and the Lady, but this is left out in the Gorlagon itself. He leaves the question of the three brothers being a single person open, simply saying that it might be so. When giving the three names, Krappe uses Gorbeil for Gorleil. Strangely enough, Gorbeil does not occur in the Latin text of the Gorlagon, but only in Kittredge’s commentary, as a conjecture by Kittredge himself, since the second syllable means wolf. This statement supports his thesis on the three brothers being a single werewolf. Earlier has been established that he also assumes that Guinevere sends Arthur on his quest, without this being in the text. It raises the question if Krappe has actually read the survived version of the Gorlagon, or if he bases himself entirely on commentary.

In his conclusion, Krappe briefly defends his idea of story migration by using travelling bards in the Crusades to account for the transfer of the story from the Orient to Ireland. Sadly, he does not support this thesis with any further evidence. Nor does it account for the tale to have found his way to Sudan, the Caucasians, Turkestan, India and some other regions where he finds material. He shows the same orientalist romantic spirit as Kittredge does. Despite the shortcomings, Krappe deserves some merit for being first in addressing the theme of adultery as a functional Arthurian element of the Gorlagon. Krappe does not provide any thoughts on the violence in the Gorlagon.

Another follower of Kittredge, and third to be discussed here, is R.E. Bennet, who writes Arthur and Gorlagon, the Dutch Lancelot, and St. Kentigern five years after Krappe’s Arthur and Gorlagon. Bennett follows Kittredge in the origins of the Gorlagon. Afterwards, he moves on to other texts that are parallels to the Gorlagon as inspiration, as we can see in the following excerpt:

The closest analogue to this narrative is the Latin romance, Arthur and Gorlagon, which is generally held to be a translation from the Welsh. The Welsh romance was in turn based upon a story which, though at least partly Oriental in origin, had passed through Ireland.

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64 Krappe, A. H. Arthur and Gorlagon. Speculum. 8, no. 2. 1933, 219
65 Krappe, A. H. Arthur and Gorlagon. Speculum. 8, no. 2. 1933, 222
66 Another possible origin for these Oriental roots in the Gorlagon might be the genre of the courtly lyric, which has some roots in the Arabic culture of Spain of the 10th and 11th century according to Blockmans and Hoppenbrouwers “Introduction to Medieval Europe” p. 147. This connection for the Gorlagon has not been researched yet, but since it strays to far from the topic of violence, it will not be discussed in this dissertation.
67 Bennett, R. E. Arthur and Gorlagon, the Dutch Lancelot, and St. Kentigern. Speculum. 13, no. 1. 1938, 68-75
The narrative that he claims to be closely related to the *Gorlagon* is an episode in the *Dutch Lancelot* about Gawain and the Dwarf. Briefly summarized, Gawain sets out on a quest to discover what women think. First he asks Guinevere, who says that no-one knows it. Later he meets a dwarf in the forest who reveals himself to be a king. They hunt together and the dwarf invites Gawain to eat in his castle. Gawain tells him about his quest on the way to the castle. The dwarf repeats Guinevere’s remark that is it is not known to anyone. During dinner, it is revealed that another person is being fed in separate room. The dwarf explains to Gawain that this person is his former wife, who is punished this way for her infidelity.

Just as Kittredge uses names as *the Dog and the Lady*, or *the Werewolf’s Tale*, to distinguish lost versions, so does Bennett examine the pattern of *the Fish and the Ring*, about a lost ring being recovered from a fish. *The Fish and the Ring* does not occur in the *Gorlagon*, but both Gawain and Arthur set out on a quest to discover what women think, and both function as a frame tale, while the inner tale is about adultery, with eating as one of the main motifs. Bennett explains their relation as follows:

We find *The Fish and the Ring* in Jocelin's Latin Life of St Kentigern, which was based on an Irish life, while the Latin Arthur and Gorlagon has been shown by Professor Kittredge' to have been translated from the Welsh. Parts of both stories appear in the Dutch Gawain and the Dwarf. Bennett does not exactly date the *Gorlagon*, but his assumption that it must have

The shared Arthurian background, as well as the central theme of adultery and the motif of eating make it highly probable that *Gawain and the Dwarf* and the *Gorlagon* have had some relation. Which one influenced the other is hard to say. The *Dutch Lancelot* was compiled in the first quarter of the thirteenth century according to Jonckbloet, which makes the chronology plausible. Bennett does not exactly date the *Gorlagon*, but his assumption that it must have

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69 The story of *Gawain and the Dwarf* and its relation to the *Gorlagon* will be analyzed in detail in chapter 3.5 of this dissertation.

70 Bennett, R. E. *Arthur and Gorlagon, the Dutch Lancelot, and St. Kentigern*. Speculum. 13, no. 1. 1938, 75

influenced *Gawain and the Dwarf* shows that he supposes an earlier date than the late 14th century, which is the estimated date of the manuscript of the Gorlagon. This dissertation will discuss the reasons why the *Gorlagon* is more closely related to the 13th century in chapter 2.1. Bennett partially recognises the shortcomings of Kittredge analysis:

It will be noted, however, that whereas the Irish origin of Arthur and Gorlagon has been demonstrated by an appeal to lost versions, documents of uncertain date, and modern folk-tales, the argument for the Irish origin of The Fish and the Ring rests upon concrete and unambiguous evidence. For an Irish version of The Fish and the Ring we do not have to utilize folk-tales; we have the Old Irish Táin Bó Fraich, written perhaps as early as the eighth century, and actually transcribed in the Book of Leinster at sometime within the last half of the twelfth century - that is, the manuscript belongs to the period during which European fiction was most indebted to Celtic stories. And, while the Latin Arthur and Gorlagon cannot be dated precisely, and while we do not know its author, Jocelin wrote his Life of St Kentigern in Glasgow, an ideal locality for the absorption and dissemination of Irish stories, about 1185. And finally, whereas Professor Kittredge has proved by unimpeachable internal evidence that Arthur and Gorlagon was translated from the Welsh, we have Jocelin's explicit statement that he was employing an Irish life of St Kentigern. {72}

How unimpeachable Kittredge’s’s internal evidence is for the *Gorlagon* to be a Welsh translation is up to debate, but Bennett’s defence that he does not appeal to lost versions, documents of uncertain date and modern folktales is amendable, even though he is forced to use estimates himself for the origin of the Táin Bó Fraich. He elaborates further in this excerpt what his motivations for this defence are:

No one could ask for better evidence of the influence of Irish literature during the last half of the twelfth century than that which Jocelin furnishes us. In short, although the case for the Irish origin of Arthur and Gorlagon was already established according to the best principles of the science of folk-lore, it rested upon evidence which could be challenged by those who still insist that the genealogy of a mediaeval story must not be based upon

{72} Bennett, R. E. *Arthur and Gorlagon, the Dutch Lancelot, and St. Kentigern*. Speculum. 13, no. 1. 1938, 75
reconstructed versions and modern folk-tales. But the case for the Irish origin of The Fish and the Ring, although essentially parallel to that for Arthur and Gorlagon, is not open to this kind of objection because it rests on extant and early documents. The Fish and the Ring is of especial evidential value because it was used with Arthur and Gorlagon by the author of Gawain and the Dwarf, probably before the Latin Arthur and Gorlagon was written. The occurrence of part of the plot of Arthur and Gorlagon together with The Fish and the Ring in Gawain and the Dwarf does much to strengthen the already strong argument for the Irish origin of Arthur and Gorlagon. That either of these stories was necessarily Irish in its ultimate origin, no one will contend.  

This dissertation will exactly be one of those that Bennett describes as being critical to establishing genealogies of medieval stories by using reconstructed versions and modern folk-tales. Bennett does also not engage in the discussion of the violence in the Gorlagon.

The fourth to be discussed is Roger Sherman Loomis. He was the editor of the Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History" from 1959, which is seen by academics to be the best starting point into the world of Arthurian Literature, and it is often shortened to ALMA for referencing. In this work, Loomis also contributed by writing on the Latin Romances, where he discusses the Gorlagon. Loomis does not break with the Oriental origins of the Gorlagon, but he suggests a local Breton origin as a definite intermediate source, considering the Bisclavret is Breton and the Melion, which is seen as being later than the Bisclavret, is written in Picard. Loomis bases his argument on Breton conteurs who joined the First and Second crusade, and who not only brought back this story, but also contributed to its spreading across Western Europe. Loomis’ work can be seen as the tipping point in the analyses of the Gorlagon, when the need for stronger evidence based research began to rise.

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73 Bennett, R. E. Arthur and Gorlagon, the Dutch Lancelot, and St. Kentigern. Speculum. 13, no. 1. 1938: 75
1.2.3 The Gorlagon beyond Kittredge: New Readings

Caroline Bynum is the fifth literary critic which should be mentioned. In *Metamorphosis and Identity* from 2001, she discusses these two concepts for the Middle Ages by using Augustine as a source. Augustine discusses multiple metamorphoses, including lycanthropy, in *De Civitate Dei* or The City of God. He sees these changes as illusions by demons, who are only able to change the form but not the mind of humans into that of beasts, because only God can perform radical change. These ideas have been reworked and expanded upon by Giraldus Cambrensis in *Topographia Hibernica*. Bynum applies this theoretical framework to other werewolf stories from the 12th century, such as *Melion, Bisclavret, Guillaume de Palerne* and the *Gorlagon*. She considers the *Gorlagon* to be a Welsh translation from the 13th century or earlier, which is why it still belongs to the 12th century hype of werewolf stories. Bynum finds evidence for this statement in the shared motif of “sympathetic” werewolves, as described by many modern academics such as Smith, Tibbals, Dunn, Summers, Otten and Milin. This motif is new for the 12th century compared to earlier werewolves, as they have been described in ancient texts, such as Pliny, Ovid and Petronius. The ancient werewolves are always shown as terrible monsters, or as Bynum puts it “an emblem of the periodic eruption of the bestial from within the human.” The 12th century werewolves are the opposite of this, because they show their kind human nature. These sympathetic werewolves are sometimes seen as “fake” by previously mentioned scholars, because they retain the intelligence and memory of rational human beings. They do not have a hybrid identity, and they do not have the constitutionally double identity of both man and beast as the earlier and later versions do. Bynum underlines

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76 Augustine, De Civitate Dei, XVIII. 17
77 See chapter 2.5 for discussion of this framework
78 See chapter 3 for in depth discussing of these other narratives.
how Gorlagon is also a sympathetic hybrid because of the formula *sis lupus, habeasque sensum hominis*. By doing this, she reads the violence in the *Gorlagon* as being acceptable as a punishment. This raises the question of how Gorlagon could remain sympathetic if he acts as the monster seen in antiquity. It is true that the werewolves in *Melion*, *Bisclavret* and *Guillaume de Palerne* are presented as sympathetic to the reader, but for the *Gorlagon* this is problematic.

Not all modern readings of the *Gorlagon* focus on the sympathetic werewolves. John Carey follows both Kittredge and Krappe in *Werewolves in Medieval Ireland*, written in 2002. He believes that the origins of the *Gorlagon* are Oriental, but he does not focus on these roots. Instead, he discusses the Irish tradition of the werewolves and how this is connected to Norse literature.

In 2005, Mildred Leake Day published a new edition of the *Gorlagon* with commentary, as part of *Latin Arthurian Literature*, which also includes *De Ortu Waluuani* and *Historia Meriadoci Regis Cambrie* from the same manuscript. Day states that the *Gorlagon* is anonymous and undated, but that it has origins in Welsh and Breton and that werewolf tales were popular in the late 12th century. He acknowledges the Middle Eastern analogues, but he does not present them as predecessors to the *Gorlagon*. The analysis that he provides for the *Gorlagon* is mostly recapitulation from Loomis.

The most recent research of the *Gorlagon* was done by Leslie A. Sconduto in *Metamorphoses of the Werewolf* from 2008. She has disregarded the origin question all together to focus on the text itself, by means of close reading. From the very start of her chapter on the *Gorlagon* she notices the violence, but she follows Bynum’s arguments that Gorlagon is still a sympathetic character:

> Arthur and Gorlagon, an anonymous Latin text of the thirteenth or fourteenth century, offers still another portrait of the noble werewolf, one that is even more violent than that seen in Bisclavret or Melion. Nevertheless, as we shall see, the author emphasizes the residual humanity of the werewolf from the very beginning and thus conforms to Augustine’s theory of metamorphosis.

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83 Carey, J. *Werewolves in Medieval Ireland*. Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies. no. 44, 2002: 41-43
84 This Norse connection will return in chapter 3.1
As her introduction has stated, her research defends the idea of Gorlagon being noble, which means that the violence has to be internally justified in the narrative. This is a circular method of reasoning. The violence in the Gorlagon consequently has to be acceptable because Gorlagon is a sympathetic werewolf, and Gorlagon is this sympathetic werewolf because the violence is acceptable. It forces the concept of the sympathetic werewolf, which is clearly present in stories as Bisclavret and Guillaume de Palerne, upon a similar narrative that doesn’t necessarily share this characteristic. This dissertation will refute the idea of Gorlagon being entirely noble hearted.

Sconduto recycles the argument of Malone that the domestic affairs of Arthur would be known to a medieval audience. She argues that when Guinevere speaks the words Arture, falleris sine dubio; quippe agnoscas te nunquam uel ingenium mentemue femine comperisse, it would be clear towards a medieval audience that his failure to understand her wit and mind is a reference to Arthur not being able to see her love for another man. Sconduto assumes that this failure at the beginning negates the entire quest that Arthur takes. It shows to her that Arthur will not become able to understand what women think. Sconduto strengthens this argument by referring to the repetition of Gorlagon’s statement that when he has finished his tale Arthur will not have become any wiser.

Proof of Gorlagon’s noble spirit is seen by Sconduto in the description that Gorlagon gives of the king who turns into a werewolf: Quidam rex mihi bene cognitus exitit, nobilis lepidus opulentus, iusticia et veritate famosissimus. However, Gorlagon is speaking about himself in this excerpt, which colours this statement. It might still be the author who is considering Gorlagon to actually be noble, enchanting and famous for his justice and truthfulness, but it might as well be Gorlagon being vain. Sconduto recognises the fact that Gorlagon tells this about himself. She shows how his extremely violent actions are problematic in combination with the “understanding of a man” that Gorlagon is supposed to have. According to Douglas, the violence is so outspoken because the author could not understand the essential goodness of Gorlagon because he mates with a real female wolf, which is a unique feature of the story. Sconduto disagrees and writes that the justification for the violence is entirely in the

betrayal of the wife. She presents the mating of Gorlagon with the she-wolf to be the mirror image of the sinfulness life that his wife has with the son of the pagan king.\textsuperscript{88}

Proof for this is the immediate following of the birth of the wolf cubs with a reminder of Gorlagon’s human nature:

\textit{Lupus uero interiores siluas ad quas fugerat per biennium frequentans se lupe agresti coniunxit, duosque ex ilia catulos progenuit. Qui, non immemor nequicie sibi a sua coniuge illate, ut ille cui humanus inerat animus, anxie cogitabat si aliquo modo se de ea ulcisci valeat.}\textsuperscript{89}

But the wolf, after roaming for a space of two years in the recesses of the woods to which he had fled, allied himself with a wild she-wolf, and begot two cubs by her. And remembering the wrong done him by his wife (as he was still possessed of his human understanding), he anxiously considered if he could in any way take his revenge upon her.\textsuperscript{90}

After this excerpt, Gorlagon starts his rampage by attacking the two children of his former wife and her lover. This does not satisfy his need for vengeance, so he returns and kills her brothers. This does not happen unpunished, as his own wolf cubs are captured and hanged. This loss of his wolf cubs is the reason for the escalation of the violence according to Sconduto.\textsuperscript{91}

She also emphasises the human nature of Gorlagon when he hears about the King organising a great hunt to capture him. The werewolf has set out to kill again, but by chance hears about this and he decides not to kill anymore, but instead he returns to the forest, which is described as:

\textit{Quod ubi lupus percepit, ad siluarum latibula rediit tremebundus, deliberans apud se quid sibi factu foret utilius.}\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{88} Sconduto, L.\textit{ Metamorphoses of the Werewolf: A Literary Study from Antiquity through the Renaissance}. Jefferson: McFarland, 2008: 79. See also chapter 2.5.

\textsuperscript{89} Day (2005) paragraph 10

\textsuperscript{90} Milne (1904)

\textsuperscript{91} Sconduto, L.\textit{ Metamorphoses of the Werewolf: A Literary Study from Antiquity through the Renaissance}. Jefferson: McFarland, 2008: 80

\textsuperscript{92} Day (2005) paragraph 11
When the wolf heard this, he returned trembling to the recesses of the woods, deliberating what would be the best course for him to pursue.\textsuperscript{93}

Sconduto interprets this trembling as a human reaction, and that he finally understands the sins which he has committed. The change of plans from killing to returning to the forest shows his human reason. She states: “This is not the reaction of a bloodthirsty, depraved monster that has totally lost touch with humanity, but rather the reaction of a human being who sees that perhaps there is hope for him after all.”\textsuperscript{94} However, the second part shows not how he repents, but it shows how he thinks what the best course of action would be. It can also be read as a bloodthirsty, depraved yet intelligent monster who recognises that he has been cornered and that he needs a new plan if he wishes to save his hide. His calculating attitude certainly shows an intelligence on par with a human, but not a human sense of morality.

Later in the \textit{Gorlagon}, the werewolf must prove his innocence towards the false accusation of having killed and eaten the King’s son and having attacked the steward. At this point in the narrative, he shows his gentle nature according to Sconduto. First in this fragment:

\textit{...lupus iugiter assistens ei, pedem suo pede leuiter tetigit, horam ipsius clamidis ore acceptit, et ut se sequeretur nutu capitis innuit. Rex autem, illius nutus solitos non ignorans, surrexit atque per diuersos thalamos eum ad ypogeam qua puer latebat secutus est. Cuius hostium obseratum offendens, lupus terque quaterque pede percussit ut sibi aperiretur insinuando.}\textsuperscript{95}

...the wolf sitting close by him touched his foot gently with his paw, and took the border of his cloak into his mouth, and by a movement of the head invited him to follow him. The King, who understood the wolf’s customary signals, got up and followed him through the different bedchambers to the underground room where the boy was hidden away. And finding the door bolted the wolf knocked three or four times with his paw, as much as to ask that it might be opened to him.\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{93} Milne (1904)
\textsuperscript{94} Sconduto, L. \textit{Metamorphoses of the Werewolf: A Literary Study from Antiquity through the Renaissance.} Jefferson: McFarland, 2008: 78-82
\textsuperscript{95} Day (2005) paragraph 16
\textsuperscript{96} Milne (1904)
In Milne’s translation we can see that the gentleness that Sconduto speaks of first occurs as the adverb gently. However, in the Latin text the actual adverb is *leuiter*, which means lightly. To touch something gently sounds better in English than to touch something lightly, but in the Latin text this has different connotations. *Pede leuiter tetigit* stands opposed to *pede percussit* in the same excerpt, which is adequately translated as to knock with his paw. The prefix per-shows intensity of action, opposed to the lack thereof in *leuiter*. The gentleness of the werewolf is also shown a second time in Milne’s translation:

...precurrensque infantem e cunabulo inter hispida brachia accepit, atque ori regis osculandum suauiter applicuit.

Then running forward he took the infant from its cradle in his shaggy arms, and gently held it up to the King’s face for a kiss.

Notice how in the Latin text the adverb *suauiter* can be read in two ways. Either it modifies the gerund it follows, or it modifies the conjugated verb it precedes. The English translation only shows the second option. If we translate it according to the first option, then it becomes: “Then running forward he took the infant from its cradle in his shaggy arms, and held it up to the King’s face, to kiss it gently.” It should be noted that this would be the only gerund in the text to be post-modified by an adverb. Conjugated verbs and infinitives are usually pre-modified in the Gorlagon, which undermines this argument as well.

Regardless, these two small details colour the situation differently. The werewolf is still presented as the hero who helps the king in discovering the adultery, but his behaviour is less motivated from his gentle heart. Another argument that Sconduto uses is the restoration of Gorlagon’s form, where he is described with positive traits:

*Fit homo ut ante fuerati licet longe pulcrior atque decencior, tanta iam venustate preditus ut etiam ab inicio vir magne nobilitatis deprehenderetur.*

The wolf became a man as he had been before, though far more beautiful and decent, being now possessed of such grace that one could at once detect that he was a man of great nobility.

97 Day (2005) paragraph 22
The same criticism as earlier can be applied here, that it is Gorlagon who speaks highly of himself, without yet having disclosed his former identity.

The key point in Sconduto’s analysis is the punishment of the adulterers. After the restoration of Gorlagon, he tells Arthur first that:

Ille autem paganum regem capitalis sentencia damnauit; reginam a suo coniugio tantum amouit, sed uitan quam non meruerat pro sua ingenita clemencia ei indulsit.

And he condemned the pagan king to death. The Queen he only divorced, but of his inborn clemency spared her life, though she well deserved to lose it.\textsuperscript{98}

Milne’s translation does not feature the detail of capital punishment. However, the important part of this excerpt is not the foreshadowing of Gorlagon’s identity, since the woman kissing the head on the platter is not yet introduced in the text at this point. What is important, is the clemency that Gorlagon grants his wife. At this point, the reader does not know yet that it is Gorlagon who is the werewolf, but again it is shown how the king is praised highly. This contrasts heavily with the punishment introduced soon after. Sconduto describes it as such:

This shocking and gruesome spectacle, which had been in front of Arthur the entire time that he was listening to Gorlagon’s tale, has been concealed from the reader the entire time and is now revealed at the last moment. The surprise and abruptness of this revelation only heightens the horror we feel and it isn’t lessened when Gorlagon at last completes his tale.\textsuperscript{99}

Sconduto rightfully questions what remains of Gorlagon’s clemency at this point in the narrative. The fact that Gorlagon does not kill her, only to punish her continuously, might even be a worse fate than a swift execution. Sconduto shows surprise at the cold calculation of Gorlagon’s final violent deed, but she does not alter her previous statement of Gorlagon being a noble and sympathetic werewolf like Bisclavret and Melion. When Arthur returns to his court, it is not explicitly stated if he has actually learned anything about what women think, only that

\textsuperscript{98} Milne (1904)
he wonders about the story that he has heard. According to Sconduto, this means that Arthur does not get the message that his queen Guinevere is an adulteress like the wives of Gorlagon and his brother. In the Arthurian setting this is a logical outcome. There is a plenty of foreshadowing in the Gorlagon of Guinevere’s adultery, but if Arthur would actually understand these hints himself, then it would cause the narrative of the Gorlagon to be inconsistent with other Arthurian stories.

Sconduto speculates that Arthur might repeat the story he has heard to Guinevere, and that the eventual moral message of the Gorlagon is a cautionary tale to dissuade Guinevere and women in general from committing adultery. However, this does not solve the question of the excessive violence entirely. The escalation of violence when Gorlagon attacks random civilians of his own and neighbouring kingdoms can hardly be seen as a just punishment for his wife’s sins. Showing a false sense of clemency at the end also does not work with the idea of a cautionary tale. The brutality of the punishment in itself does work as a deterrent, but it is hard not to sympathise with the former wife, and any sympathy would undermine the cautionary aspect. Perhaps a medieval reader saw this differently. Sconduto also distinguishes between a modern and medieval reader, saying that it is difficult to separate ourselves from our modern mentality. While this is certainly true, implicitly she states here that the violence is indeed not understandable from a modern perspective, and that a medieval reader would not have a problem with it. Yet, is it true that the Middle Ages were as violent as is assumed? More specifically, what would a medieval reader have thought about the violence in the Gorlagon? To answer these questions it is necessary to provide some historical context on the Gorlagon, which will be done in the next chapter.

\[\text{Sconduto, L.}\ \text{Metamorphoses of the Werewolf: A Literary Study from Antiquity through the Renaissance.}\ \text{Jefferson:}\ \text{McFarland, 2008, 78-82}\]
Chapter 2: On Courtly Beasts and Violent Men: Violence in the High Middle Ages and Arthurian Legend

Before it is possible to determine the historical context of the Gorlagon, it is required to first determine how old the Gorlagon actually is, which is a shared frustration in all research on the Gorlagon due to the lack of precise sources. As it has been established in the previous chapter, this thesis will not concern itself with genealogies and lost versions of the narratives that are related or similar to the Gorlagon. Instead, it will use internal evidence from the Gorlagon to defend why it is logical to analyse it in the context of the High Middle Ages, as opposed to the Late Middle Ages, as the title of this chapter already gives away. First, this chapter will recapitulate what has been previously established about the age of Gorlagon in chapter 1. It will compare the given arguments, to find the most likely dates or period, while respecting the absence of precise sources.

Secondly, this chapter will establish a historical context for the time period of the Gorlagon, starting from a general, longue durée overview and narrowing down to some more specific aspects that are relevant to the question of violence.

Thirdly, we will venture into chivalry and religion in the High Middle Ages, and how this is relevant for any reading of Medieval narratives, as well as how it can applied to the violence in the Gorlagon. Afterwards, the Medieval reader himself will be further examined, by using the concepts of identity and metamorphosis, as described by Bynum101. Finally, these concepts will be applied to the text of the Gorlagon to establish if his character actually is sympathetic.

2.1 The Dating of the *Gorlagon*

As has been mentioned in the first chapter, the dating of the *Gorlagon* itself has been discussed since the 19th century, when Paul Meyer first established that the *Gorlagon* in the Rawlinson B149 was either from the late 14th or early 15th century, by examining the script of the text, which is a Bastard Secretary. This means that the script is a mixture of the earlier British formal script called Textura, and the later introduced French Secretary script. This introduction took place between the late 14\(^{th}\) and early 15\(^{th}\) century during the reign of Richard II\(^{102}\), which is why the manuscript has been given that date. In the research the dating of the manuscript has been reduced to the late 14th century, which Kittredge assumes himself to be most probable. A recent analysis by Mildred Leake Day in 2005 has confirmed this.\(^{103}\) The website of the Bodleian collection also confirms this.\(^{104}\) Kittredge also mentions Bruce, who has dated the *Gorlagon*, *the Meriadocus* and *De Ortu Waluuanii* to the second quarter of the 13th century by assuming that they were written by a single author. Singular authorship of these texts has been proven to be unlikely because of stylistic differences between the texts, both by Kittredge and Morriss.\(^{105}\) The fact that the text of the *Gorlagon* is a copy has already been established in chapter 1.2.1.

Bennett does not explicitly date the *Gorlagon*, but he sees an influence from the *Gorlagon* unto the *Dutch Lancelot*, which he dates to the first quarter of the 14th century.

Sconduto assumes that the *Gorlagon* is probably from the 13th or 14th century, but she does not provide why she also gives the 13th century. Her mentioning of the 14th century is information coming from Kittredge. However, Sconduto uses Bynum’s theories multiple times in Metamorphoses of the Werewolf. She has probably followed Bynum’s reasoning for the *Gorlagon* to be 13th century. This reasoning is the shared motif of the sympathetic werewolf, which both Bynum and Sconduto recognise in the *Gorlagon*, and which is also present in the *Bisclavret* and *Guillaume de Palerne*, which were both written at the end of the 12th century.


This sympathetic werewolf is present as well in Melion, which was written either at the end of the 12th or at the beginning of the 13th century. Both Bynum and Sconduto show how Augustinian theory on metamorphosis by Giraldus Cambrensis has influenced the Gorlagon. A discussion of metamorphosis and identity will follow further in this chapter, but if we assume this to be true, then the Gorlagon cannot have been written before the publication of the Topographia Hibernica, which was in 1188. As a precise date, this is still a limited tool since it only shows an absolute starting point, which is as frustrating as the fairly precise dating of the manuscript, but not when the original was written. Other important works that help to determine the time period are Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia regum Britanniae, which was written between 1135 and 1139, and Chrétien de Troyes’ Lancelot, ou le Chevalier de la charrette, which was written between 1177 and 1181. The Gorlagon references both these works, which means it cannot have predated them.

Mildred Leake Day states that the Gorlagon is anonymous and undated, but that it has its origins in Welsh and Breton stories and that werewolf tales were popular in the late 12th century. A possible method for dating the Gorlagon to be older than the 14th century, is to look at the other texts within the Rawlinson B149. These texts are the Historia trium Magorum, De Tirio Appolonio narratio, Historia Meriadoci Regis Cambriae, Liber Alexandri Philippi Macedonum qui primus regnavit in Grecia et de preliis ejusdem and Tractatus, Aristotelis dictus, de regimine sanitatis, libris decern.

All of these works predate the late 14th century. This may be coincidence, and by itself it is not a strong argument to suppose the Gorlagon to be older, which is why Day recognises the limitations of this argument. He also gives a summary of other research on the dating of the Gorlagon. He specifies the Dutch Lancelot accurately in time, and he strengthens Bennetts argument by stating that the Dutch Lancelot shows influences from the Gorlagon both in

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110 See chapter 2.4 and 4.1 of this dissertation.
plotlines and in exact formulations in the dialogue.\textsuperscript{111} The oldest fragments of the \textit{Dutch Lancelot} date back to the beginning of the 13th century, while the largest part is of the first quarter of the 13th century.\textsuperscript{112}

Day also provides the following manuscript details on the Rawlinson B149, compared to the Cotton Faustina B VI, because both manuscripts feature the \textit{Historia Meriadoci Regis Cambrie}:

The Rawlinson B149, on the other hand, is a much simpler production. The codex is smaller, a vellum octavo of 135 folios. It is bound in a single sheet of vellum, lettered in ink, possibly original with the contents. The cover is laced onto the folios with a thong. The scribal hand, a Bastard Secretary, is variously dated from the later fourteenth century in W. D. Macray’s catalogue of the Rawlinson collection (Pt. 5, fasc. 1, cols. 500f), to the early fifteenth century by Falconer Madan, The Bodleian Library at Oxford.\textsuperscript{113}

After combining all this information, it can be concluded that the \textit{Gorlagon} should be dated with certainty between 1188 and the last quarter of the 14th century. Asides from that, it is most likely to be before the first quarter of the 13th century, because of the influence it has had on the \textit{Dutch Lancelot}. Finally, it is more probable to be late 12th or 13th century than 14th century because of the shared motifs with \textit{Bisclavret}, \textit{Melion} and \textit{Guillaume de Palerme}.

Two more arguments for a late 12\textsuperscript{th} or early 13\textsuperscript{th} century dating will be addressed in this dissertation. The first argument is that of the influences of Nordic narratives in the \textit{Gorlagon}, which will be discussed in this chapter and in the fourth. The second argument is the changing concepts of chivalry and courtliness, which will be discussed in this chapter and in the third.

2.2 General Overview of the High Middle Ages in England

After having established that the 13th century is the most likely candidate for the Gorlagon, the focus will turn to the historical context of this period. However, as the title of the chapter indicates, it will not be solely the 13th century that will be discussed, but the High Middle Ages. These are also sometimes called the Central Middle Ages. They are usually dated from 1000-1300, although the influential work of Cotts has promoted the idea of a long twelfth century, dating from 1095 until 1229. The concept of the long twelfth century has its benefits because it does not use arbitrary demarcations of time, but important historical evolutions which better show the continuity and breaks with earlier periods. For an analysis of the Gorlagon this is fitting, because the narrative itself shows surviving Irish and Norse cultural influences (see chapter 3.1).

A good starting point for a historical context is demographics and politics. England had a period of demographic growth between 1086 and 1300. William the Conqueror defeated Harold II Godwinson, who was the last Anglo-Saxon king, at Hastings in 1066. After several campaigns against revolting English nobles, William managed to subdue all of England and stabilise the realm. In 1086 he ordered the creation of the Domesday Book, which is the most important source for Medieval English demographics. Production of food increased because more of nature was being claimed and turned into farmland and because of new inventions in farming technology such as the three-course system and horse traction for ploughing. This shows a relative peaceful life in England.

The same cannot be said before the Norman Conquest. In 1013 Svein Forkbeard invaded and conquered England, and his son Cnut the Great ruled over Denmark, Norway and England. Svein Forkbeard had removed the House of Alfred from the throne, but it was only temporarily. During the reign of Cnut’s son the House of Alfred regained power with Edward the Confessor taking the English throne in 1042. Edward’s mother was the daughter of the duke of Normandy,

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114 Cotts, J. D. Europe's Long Twelfth Century: Order, Anxiety, and Adaptation, 1095-1229. 2013.
which caused Norman nobles to gain power in England. Opposition rose against these foreigners by the Anglo-Saxon earls who united under Harold Godwinson, earl of Essex. After Edward the Confessor died, the throne went to Harold, who had to defend it against his own brother who was supported by the king of Norway, Harald Sigurdsson. Harold managed to overcome this Nordic invasion in 1066 at York, but in the same month the troops of William the Conqueror had already landed. William would famously defeat Harold at the battle of Hastings. The Norman roots of Edward the Confessor are the reason why William the Conqueror had a claim to the throne of England\textsuperscript{118}, but how does this all relate to the \textit{Gorlagon}?

The answer is simple. It does not relate to the \textit{Gorlagon} directly. Nonetheless, it shows how England was one of the last countries where it is possible to speak of invading Norsemen. Viking raiding parties continued to operate on a smaller scale until the 12th century, but their numbers dropped dramatically after the introduction of Christianity in the Nordic countries in the middle of the 11th century, since Christians were not allowed to keep other Christians as slaves. The intense contacts between these Norsemen and Englishmen has had an influence on the \textit{Gorlagon} as well, as will be shown in chapter 3.1.

This historical overview also shows how England evolved from a politically instable and volatile kingdom with immigrants of various origins, to a stabilised and peaceful realm that managed to unify its distinct inhabitants into a new Norman-French and eventually English identity. This \textit{longue durée} evolution to a more peaceful country is present in the \textit{Gorlagon} in the changing notions of chivalry.

2.3 Knighthood, Chivalry, and Courtliness

Before the concept of chivalry can be discussed, it is paramount to first examine knighthood itself. This style of warrior aristocracy was formed because of three major factors: the growing military importance of heavily armed cavalry, the formation of mounted militias by local lords, and the conscious policy of the clergy to represent the aristocracy as fighters in the service of God, the faith, and the existing social order, with its three classes of bellatores, laboratores and oratores.

As military technology increased, so did the costs to survive on the battlefield. New inventions such as the chainmail hauberk, and plated steel armour made their expensive introduction. Horses and training were costly as well. This meant that there was an evolution towards a more exclusive class of horsemen, who were rich enough to adopt the new developments. Because of the great importance of heavily armed cavalry in the 11th century, and the high costs to be part of it, there was a great prestige in becoming a mounted soldier. For the earlier mounted militias who were not of noble birth, this meant a chance at upward social mobility as well. The high aristocratic, minor noble and non-noble horsemen fused into an elite military corps and adopted their own code of honour and conduct. To be allowed into this new culture required a ritual, which was the engirdling of the cingulum militae, the belt of the militia, and the granting of a sword. At that point they are no longer horsemen, but knights. Knighthood refers to the social order of knights, being the ordo militaris, while chivalry refers to the cultural and moral encasement of knighthood. 119

From the middle of the 11th century onwards, the Church involved itself in knighthood as well. The name milites Christi was given to those knights who exceeded in the values of bravery and fidelity, as well as devoutness and the defence of the helpless, especially in the fight against non-Christians, both in Spain and the Holy land. The 11th and 12th century also saw the rise of the religious orders of knighthood, such as the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, the Knights Templar, and the Teutonic Order. In Liber ad milites Templi de laude novae militae, Bernard of Clairvaux 120 distinguishes between two types of knights. Those belonging to religious orders he called milites Christi, and those who did not, the milites saeculi. The Church

nonetheless had an important influence on this second group as well. The ritual of inauguration became a deeply religious ceremony, which usually took place in a church or chapel. This gave the Church the chance to make sure that new knights were properly versed in Christian values before they were recognised as true knights. Candidates had to swear to protect the Church and the clergy as well.\textsuperscript{121}

These Christian morals were reflected in the two central moral guidelines for knighthood, which are chivalry and courtliness. Chivalry in its original meaning is the proper conduct for Christian knights towards each other. This means that it encompasses all the rules regarding correct behaviour, both on and off the battlefield. Key to this is personal honour. For example, it was considered cowardly to strike at an unarmed opponent, or to kill an opponent after he had surrendered.\textsuperscript{122} Important is the distinction they made in ranks. Striking at an unarmed Christian peasant would not have been considered as good, but it definitely was not as bad as striking at an unarmed Christian nobleman. Violence against non-Christians and heretics was more easily justified, if not propagated. Applied to the \textit{Gorlagon}, this means that the son of the pagan king\textsuperscript{123}, although he was noble, would have been righteously executed. It also explains why the author of the \textit{Gorlagon} might have felt the need to explicitly determine the adulterer to be non-Christian, as the only character in the \textit{Gorlagon}.

The second of the two moral guidelines for knighthood is courtliness. Courtliness primarily aimed at regulating tensions and avoiding open aggressions and feuds, which was not self-evident in a culture of young men whose entire upbringing was focused on martial prowess. Secondly, it regulated competition at court for power by granting a high importance to the acquisition of honour. Typical values were loyalty, purity, moderation, valour, generosity, psychical strength, self-control, defending the weak, a certain knowledge of the world, and even table etiquette. However, the most important value was to have a sense of honour.\textsuperscript{124} Honour was not only a personal value, it also has external implications in the hierarchy at court. Loyalty to the king was first, but competing in honour among peers was a close second. Honour could either be gained from a knight’s ancestral heritage, or by performing honourable deeds. This


\textsuperscript{123} Day (2005) paragraph 7.

first started as a knight’s skill and actions on the battlefield, but it later developed into a more sublime goal. Honourable deeds only counted when they were done in service of another, which could be the king, the faith, or an admired lady.

There are some examples of this in the *Gorlagon*. A clear example of courtliness is the table etiquette which forces Gargol, Gorleil and Gorlagon to not continue their feast until Arthur has joined them. All three of them are kings, so they are inclined to act as equals towards each other, even though Arthur’s status seems diminished by his failures to keep up his vow of fasting. A less clear example is the actions of Gorlagon as werewolf. Should he still be seen as a king, or knight, after his transformation? The violent episode of his vengeance does not follow notions of chivalry. The murder of his former wife’s children, her brothers and the attacks on cattle and civilians of different kingdoms cannot be read as examples of chivalrous behaviour. Even though Gorlagon has explicitly retained his human intelligence, his actions are not those of a knight, but those of a beast. This changes when Gorlagon hears of the king’s courtly behaviour by deciding to defend his civilians from Gorlagon’s assaults. He personally organises and leads a great hunt for the beast. After Gorlagon hears about this, he changes his approach. As has been established in chapter 1.2.3, it is not entirely clear if this is an honest change, or if it is a calculated move.

The violence of Gorlagon, which appears aimless, might be read as a move to force the king to take action. The personal involvement of the king means that Gorlagon has a chance to surrender himself to someone of the same social standing, which agrees with feudal code. However, in the 11th paragraph in Gorlagon’s tale, he tells how the werewolf accidently hears about the king and how he plans to hunt him down. This serves as a plot device to inform Gorlagon of the existence and plans of the king, but this is after the werewolf has done many raids against both cattle and civilians. At this point in the narrative, it is not revealed that Gorlagon is the werewolf, and that the king is his brother Gargol. The human Gorlagon obviously knows his own brother, but the werewolf in his tale does not. This leads to the question: to what extent does the werewolf have his human senses? Is he too much of a wolf to recognise his human brother, or is this a case of Gorlagon being an unreliable narrator, hiding the fact that he is the werewolf? It would make sense for Gorlagon to seek help from his relatives after being cursed, but if he does not recognise his brothers, he is not able to do so. In the 11th paragraph Gorlagon describes the werewolf as being *pre doloris magnitudine in rabiem*

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125 Later revealed to be Gorlagon’s brother Gargol.
conversus, or “because of the greatness of the pain turned to madness”. This madness turns him even more violent. After being chased from his own kingdom, he arrives at the second kingdom, where he begins to do his usual slaughtering, before being chased away by peasants. During his visit to the second kingdom, he does not meet his brother Gorleil, and he also does not try to do so. Even more, when in service of Gargol, the werewolf never attempts to reveal the fact that he is the king’s brother. Because of these arguments it does not seem plausible to read the violence as a motivated action to lure out the king.

The werewolf loses his monstrous behaviour after hearing about the hunt of the king, and he acts courtly in the following events. First he requests clemency of the king by using the correct rituals required for doing so, such as kissing the king’s right foot. The king recognises this courtly behaviour, and grants it him clemency. Next, Gorlagon defends the king’s bed and honour by attacking the steward, and by not harming the queen, but instead proving his unspoken accusations towards her by retrieving the king’s son. The werewolf thus shows his sense of loyalty towards his liege and his understanding of honour. The king not only recognises the debt he owes for these actions, but he also uses these actions as proof of the human nature of the werewolf. However, these have only been examples of honourable deeds among kings and for kings. The admired lady is noticeably missing. Perhaps the Gorlagon does not feature this concept because it would interfere too much with the theme of adultery. However, this is an argumentum ex silentio, which makes it hard to either prove or refute.

To summarise knighthood in the Gorlagon, the narrative uses the concept of courtliness and its rituals to determine the identity of the werewolf as being either man or beast, depending on his behaviour.

Chivalry and courtliness also found a cultural expression in new genres in the 12th and 13th century. These new genres were the courtly lyric, the courtly epic and the chansons de geste. These last mentioned chansons are songs about the chivalrous and courtly exploits of knights. It shows how the feudal nobility, particularly of northern France, liked to see themselves: as being strong warriors on the battlefield, and engaged in typical feudal conflicts such as disputed claims over titles. According to Taylor, there is no Middle English literary tradition of chivalry in the 14th century or earlier, with the exception of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, since the cultural languages in England in that time were Norman-French and
Latin. However, the Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer include the Wife of Bath’s Tale, which is also an example of chivalrous literature in the 14th century.

The chivalrous aspect is key to the French chansons de geste, where knights show their martial prowess. Courtliness is much less prevalent. Examples of these chansons are Raoul de Cambrai and Chanson de Roland. In both of these songs, the protagonists of the titles die a heroic death in battle. Raoul gets slain in single combat, Roland’s head bursts open from the force of blowing his horn, calling for reinforcements in a losing battle versus the Spanish Muslims. A common denominator in these chansons is the extreme violence and brutal representation of it. For example, the traitor Ganelon from Chanson de Roland is executed for his betrayal by binding his body to horses, who are then forced to run, ripping apart the body of the traitor into pieces. The same method is described for the execution of Gargol’s wife in the Gorlagon.

However, the Gorlagon is not a chanson de geste. It is a prose story, not a song. It shows the same level of violence, by the same type of actor as those of the chansons de geste, except the victim does not always justify this level of violence within a chivalrous context. The Gorlagon is not the only Latin text to share these brutal representations of violence with the chansons de geste. The excerpt of the Gesta Romanorum called De Memento Mori, which has been examined in the first chapter of this dissertation, share this characteristic as well, but it does not have a wild rampage in it as the Gorlagon does. The murders in the Gesta Romanorum can be viewed perfectly within the framework of chivalrous honour. The prince kills the duke who has defiled his wife, while the duke’s son avenges his father by slaying the two sons of the prince. Vengeance remains limited to either the perpetrator, or his immediate male family.

The close relation between the chansons and the Gorlagon has also been noted by Echard. She interprets the Gorlagon’s violence as being so sudden that it breaks the pattern of expectation of the Gorlagon. She sees the chansons de geste as praise of heroic figures, while the Gorlagon plays with this idea and turns these heroes upside down. However, antiheroes and

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127 See chapter 3.
129 Day (2005) paragraph 17
failing knights are plentiful in chivalrous texts. Gorlagon’s violence as a werewolf isn’t all that sudden either, as it builds up and escalates.

Nonetheless, there are elements in the text that support this reasoning. Echard points at the humorous replies of Arthur at the ending to Gorlagon, when the werewolf king keeps breaking of his story to invite Arthur to dismount and eat. Another argument she points out is the failures of Arthur with the previous kings, as a foreshadowing element for the unavoidable failure of the absurd quest to find out what women think. Echard does not find a plausible reason why the story ends with Arthur returning home after nine days. The kissing of the head on a platter is interpreted by her as a means of adding marvel to the story, similar to Welsh stories where suddenly a new scene might appear, which only aims at triggering the audiences imagination.131 Jeff Massey has taken over this parody idea in “The Werewolf at the Head Table”, in which he claims that the Gorlagon originally was a comical play to be performed at dinner.132 This is not unlikely, because of the direct speech of the characters and because of the scenic setting of the story. The different feasts could be easily represented by a limited number of theatrical props, especially when performed at dinner. The number of characters is fairly limited and the head on the platter could even be present on scene from the moment Arthur arrives at Gorlagon’s court, leaving the audience wondering why it is there, just like Arthur does. It would imply a rather dark sense of humour, considering all the violence that is displayed.

Mildred Leake Day also states that the Gorlagon was written for the entertainment of a court as a dinner play, more specifically to an audience that was fluent in Latin, even though they all might have come from very different foreign backgrounds. Knowledge of Latin was even necessary to be considered literate in the Middle Ages.133 However, this cultural language would only have been available to a limited amount of groups in society, the largest two being the aristocracy and the clergy, with the university scholars as a small but steadily growing minority. The notions of knighthood in the Gorlagon support the aristocracy as an audience, although the elements of parody might indicate the opposite.

133 See chapter 1.1
The presence of knighthood in the *Gorlagon* is thus not to be underestimated. Religion played a central role in the evolution of chivalry, but is it by itself as present as a theme in the *Gorlagon*? The following discussion will proceed to answer that question.
2.4 Religious Tempering of Violence in the Middle Ages

The overall importance of religion in any aspect of Medieval life cannot be underestimated. Local churches and parishes gave structure to life in a way that has become hard to imagine for present day academics living in a mostly secularised country. An example of this can be found in the opening of the Gorlagon, because the time of the story is defined by its position on the religious calendar: it begins at the feast of Pentecost, which is one of the traditional dates for the king to hold court.¹³⁴

At the end of the 10th up until the 13th century, Christianity in Europe has tried to temper the violence of both the Viking invasions and of warring nobles amongst themselves. As a reaction to this violence, there rose a popular religious movement demanding peace in Christian society, as mandated by God. ¹³⁵ The God’s Truce and God’s Peace Movements consisted of bishops and abbots who convened synods to establish rules to limit violence. It first aimed at protecting the helpless against violence. Later on, it became an explicit ban to fight on certain days of the Christian calendar, such as Sunday and important religious holidays. This codification of the use of violence is analogue to the previously discussed notions of chivalry. In the 11th century the attempt to limit violence changed. Instead, it was now being redirected against other groups. First against heretics and Jews within Christian lands, and in the finals years of the 11th century against infidels outside the Christian society in the First Crusade.¹³⁶

Linking religion to the Gorlagon is not evident, because the only explicit reference to it is the negation of Christianity in the filius pagani regis. However, in all versions of the Arthurian legends, Arthur is presented as a Christian ruler. There is no reason why any characters other than the son of the pagan king would be considered not to be Christian, but what about the sinful wife? Her faith is never explicitly mentioned, but if we continue on the idea of undefined characters to be Christians, then it is not clear if this is justified violence. “Torture and Brutality in Medieval Literature: Negotiations of National Identity” by Larissa

¹³⁴ The date of Pentecost also imbeds the Gorlagon into the pseudo-historical chronology of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniae. See chapter 4.1
¹³⁵ Fenton, K. A. Gender, Nation and Conquest in the Works of William of Malmesbury. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2008: 26
Tracy deals both with the violence directed at the adulterer and at the adulteress. She states that the torture of the wife to extract information is necessary for the restoration of Gorlagon, which proves that it is presented as justified. The punishment of kissing the severed head is seen by Tracy and Mildred Day to be a joke because of the absurdity of Arthur’s delayed reaction, while the horror itself is to them mostly a shock effect within acceptable Medieval standards. The punishment of kissing the severed head is seen by Tracy and Mildred Day to be a joke because of the absurdity of Arthur’s delayed reaction, while the horror itself is to them mostly a shock effect within acceptable Medieval standards. The delayed reaction is a necessity for the plot, and it reads more as a dramatic effect in revealing the true nature of Gorlagon. It also follows the returning motif of eating. In the narrative there is a constant refusal to eat by various characters, as well as the invitation to eat by Gorlagon towards Arthur. In the Arthurian tradition there is also the returning motif of King Arthur who refuses to begin the feast until a knight has returned from a quest. The head on the platter explains at the end why none of the characters in the story seems to have much of an appetite, which would be funny if the scene itself wasn’t so horrible. The pitying of Gorlagon’s former wife prevents the reading of it as a joke. It also does not explain the earlier violence of Gorlagon towards innocent cattle and people. However, the biggest problem with Tracy’s interpretation is the fact that she reads the Gorlagon as a strictly late 14th century narrative. This choice for the Late Middle Ages as opposed to the High Middle Ages gives an entire different reading. Tracy views the violence in the Gorlagon as a reflection of the English atrocities in the Hundred Years War, and as a reflection of political instability in England during the late Middle Ages. She also sees the intended audience as middle class, who distrust noble rule and therefore colour both Arthur and Gorlagon as incompetent rulers. In 2.1 of this dissertation, it has been shown how the Gorlagon is older than the late 14th century. Tracy’s arguments should be rejected for that reason.

The absence of explicit Christian themes in the Gorlagon is an argument in favour of an aristocratic audience, as opposed to a clerical readership, although there is an implicit Christian motif of decapitation, which can be found in the New Testament, when Herodias schemes to force King Herod Antipas to decapitate John the Baptist. In Mark 6:17-28 it is said:

17 For Herod himself had sent and apprehended John, and bound him prison for the sake of Herodias the wife of Philip his brother, because he had married her.

18 For John said to Herod: It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife. Now Herodias laid snares for him: and was desirous to put him to death and could not.

19 For Herod feared John, knowing him to be a just and holy man: and kept him, and when he heard him, did many things: and he heard him willingly.

21 And when a convenient day was come, Herod made a supper for his birthday, for the princes, and tribunes, and chief men of Galilee.

22 And when the daughter of the same Herodias had come in, and had danced, and pleased Herod, and them that were at table with him, the king said to the damsel: Ask of me what thou wilt, and I will give it thee.
23 And he swore to her: Whatsoever thou shalt ask I will give thee, though it be the half of my kingdom.
24 Who when she was gone out, said to her mother, What shall I ask? But her mother said: The head of John the Baptist.
25 And the king was struck sad. Yet because of his oath, and because of them that were with him at table, he would not displease her:
26 But sending an executioner, he commanded that his head should be brought in a dish. And he beheaded him in the prison,
27 and brought his head in a dish: and gave to the damsel, and the damsel gave it her mother.
28 Which his disciples hearing came, and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.\footnote{Challoner, R. The Holy Bible, Douay Version: Translated from the Latin Vulgate (Douay, A.D. 1609, Rheims, A.D. 1582). London: Catholic Truth Society, 1956.}

Noticeably, the element of the platter is present in both the Bible scene and in the Gorlagon, and in both the expression caput... in disco is used. The decapitation of John the Baptist was a well-known scene in the Middle Ages. For example, it is present in the twelfth century beast-epic of the Ysengrimus. Nivardus, the author of the Ysengrimus, makes jokes about the worship of saints in his hometown of Ghent. One of his victims is the saint Pharaildis, or in Dutch Sint Veerle. This saint was known for her chastity. According to the legend, she had made a vow of chastity, pledging her virginity to God, but she was forced to marry anyway. After widowing her abusive husband she had remained a virgin. In Ysengrimus she is said to actually be Herodias, whose story is given in the excerpt above. The version in the Ysengrimus\footnote{Nivardus, Jill Mann. Ysengrimus. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013 Book 2 verses 73-95} does show some differences with the one given in the Vulgate. Ysengrimus’ Herodias does not scheme to decapitate John the Baptist because he had criticised her marriage with Herodias, but she does this because he does not reciprocate her love for him. Upon being presented the head, she kisses it with teary kisses. The crying is present in the Gorlagon as well when Arthur says...
that the punished wife, who sits in front of the head on the platter, cries every time Gorlagon smiles. The same expression in disco is used to describe the platter in all three texts.

Kittredge unknowingly shows that there is a second connection between the Gorlagon and the decapitation of John the Baptist, when he mentions the occurrence of Gorlagon or a similarly named character in the prose Perceval, also known as the Didot Perceval (estimated to have been written around 1190-1215).142:

Let us turn to Gorlagon. This word occurs also in the prose Perceval, in the forms Gorgalan, Gurgalain, etc., as the name of a heathen king of "Albania". Its etymology is not beyond conjecture. Gurgalanz (Potvin, p. 65), Gurgalain (p. 72), Gorgalan (pp. 73, 74), Gorgaranz (p. 74). The episode is curious. Gorgalan has the sword with which John the Baptist was beheaded. Many have sought to win it of him, but nobody has ever returned. Gawain essays the quest at a favourable moment, when Gorgalan's son has been carried off by a giant. Gawain recovers the son's body, which is then cooked by the king and eaten by his men. The grateful heathen gives Gawain the sword and receives baptism.143

The name Gorlagon itself is seen by Kittredge as being a heathen King of Albania. The form Gorlagon is not found, but similar version such as Gurgalain, Gurgalanz, Gorgalan, Gorgaranz do occur.

Interesting is Gorgalan’s possession of the sword that beheaded John the Baptist in the Perceval. This links back to the Bible excerpt given above. If it is true that Gorlagon is the Gorgalan from the Perceval, then Gorlagon has a past as a violent and cannibalistic heathen. The beheading of the son of the pagan king, possibly with the same sword, shows an inversion of John the Baptist’s decapitation. The death of the usurping son of the pagan king can hardly be seen as unjust within the logic of the narrative, so to see him as a parallel to John the Baptist is not fitting. More so, he is never named, and he also never assumes an active role as a

character. This causes the narrative to evoke the image of John the Baptist without mirroring him to another character.

Returning to the Bible excerpt, it is told that Herodias had a grudge against John the Baptist because he called the wedding of Herodias with Herod unlawful, because she was wedded first to his brother Philip. Unlawful marriage is not only unlawful in this excerpt, but it is also the case with Gorlagon’s wife and the son of the pagan king. The idea of coveting one’s sister-in-law is not explicitly present in the Gorlagon. However, if the prose Perceval is followed, meaning that Gorlagon was a pagan king at some point, then it is not impossible that the son of the pagan king is his own son, or a fourth brother to Gorlagon, Gorleil and Gargol. Of course these ideas are extremely hypothetical, but one cannot help wondering who the victim of the decapitation really is. Gorlagon’s unreliability as a narrator does not help either. The son of the pagan king is vaguely described as *quendam iuuenem, filium cuiusdam regis pagani*, which means ‘some young man, the son of a certain pagan king’. Gorlagon is particularly vague in this description, and nowhere else in the narrative are any other details given. It reminds of the opening of his tale, where he uses *Quidam rex*, or ‘a certain king’, which turns out to refer to himself.

The marriage between Guinevere and Mordred in the *Historia Regum Britanniae* is another example of unlawful marriage, because of her previous marriage to Arthur. Unlike the Gorlagon, it also has the same approximately incestuous tone of marrying one’s sister in law, because Mordred is Arthur’s nephew, according to the end of book ten:

*Adveniente vero aestate, dum Romam petere affectaret et montes transcendere incepisset, nuntiatum est ei, Moddredum, nepotem suum, cuius tutelae Britanniam permissaret, eiusdem diademate per tyrannidem et prodictionem insignitum esse et reginam Gwenhwyraram, violato iure priorum nuptiarum, eidem nefanda venere copulatam fuisse.*

But at the arrival of summer, while he (Arthur) was on his way to go to Rome, and he was beginning to traverse the mountains, it was reported to him, that Mordred, his nephew, to whose care he had entrusted Britain, had by tyrannical and traitorous practices distinguished himself with the crown, and that queen Guinevere, in violation of the first marriage, had impiously united with him in love.

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Violato iure literally shows that Guinevere’s marriage to Mordred is unlawful. Chapter 4 will show how her adultery is key to reading the Gorlagon, because of the intertextual play of the Gorlagon with both Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniae, and Chrétien de Troyes’ Lancelot ou le Chevalier de la Charrette. The evocation of John the Baptist is used to strengthen this theme of unlawful marriage.
2.5 Identity, Metamorphosis and the Sympathetic Werewolf

After having established a broad historical context for the Gorlagon, the focus will now narrow to the two concepts of Bynum and how these work within the werewolf narratives, starting from Gerald of Wales.

The first concept is that of identity, the second that of metamorphosis, or change. Bynum starts her discussion of this concept by naming the different types of mutatio that Gerald of Wales differentiates in his work Topographia Hibernica. These are inner and outer mutatio, nature or substance and appearance, illusion and transformation, metamorphosis and hybrid. This shows how metamorphosis, or true change, is just one of many types of mutatio. Bynum argues that both the metamorphosis and the hybrid will become more important around 1200.145 In the beginning of that century they still believed that nature was in constant change, but God and the soul were immortal. This means that on a core level the identity of an individual cannot change, even though his outward appearance might change, and that according to Boethius, “every change occurs because of something in common.”146 By the end of the 12th century there was a rising interest in radical change, which replaced one form entirely with another. Bynum sees this rising interest in the hype of metamorphosis stories, including the werewolves. However, metamorphosis in the stories of Bisclavret, Melion and Guillaume de Palerne is problematic, since in none of these there is a radical change metamorphosis. It is not men who become wolf in all senses, but men who become wolf in appearance only, and retain their human identity.

If we apply this to the Gorlagon, then it can be said that the transformation of Gorlagon into the werewolf is not a radical change either, since he retains his human intellect. However, Gorlagon is also not a pure case of metamorphosis because he is a hybrid being. Hybrids have mixed identities or simultaneous double identities, opposed to pure metamorphoses, which have two singular identities following each other. The evolution of the character of Gorlagon himself illustrates how he functions as a hybrid. His human identity is not immediately and fully changed to a beastlike identity, even though his appearance immediately changes. Instead, he transitions slowly into the double identity of a hybrid. In this state, it is not entirely clear which

actions are driven by a human motivation or a monstrous motivation. Gorlagon is halfway between beast and man. His actions reflect this as well. After fleeing from his wife, he remains in the woods for two years, showing no aggression towards neither man nor beast. Then, he remembers his human sense of vengeance, but after he starts attacking people, he loses himself again to primal drifts of aggression, giving his animal side the upper hand. The targets he chooses range from people related to his wife, to victims more fitting for a wolf to target. Regular wolves have been feared for attacking livestock and small children, because wolves target the weak and the young. Normal wolves usually do not attack fully grown humans, unless they are going through desperate times and feel a numerical advantage. However, Gorlagon himself is not a real wolf. He does not hesitate to attack human settlements, but he shows his double identity in the way these raids happen. He brutally murders the two small children of his wife and her lover, before killing her brothers as well. These acts are in line with his human identity. Then, he kills livestock and random isolated villagers until he is chased away by either hounds or hunting parties, which are the actions and reactions of a wolf. After meeting the king, his behaviour shows how he finds his human identity again, by adhering to courtly etiquette and by proving loyalty towards his liege. After the restoration at the end, Gorlagon regains his human form, and both his identity and form are seemingly restored to a singular human one. This is visible in the way he describes the fate of the adulteress in the tale he tells to Arthur.

Reginam a suo coniugio tantum amouit, sed uitam quam non meruerat pro sua ingenita clemencia ei indulsit.\textsuperscript{147}

The Queen he only divorced, but of his inborn clemency spared her life, though she well deserved to lose it.\textsuperscript{148}

Gorlagon, who still not reveals that he is the werewolf of the tale, shows the Christian value of clemency to his wife who has wronged him. However, when the wife is shown kissing the severed head, Gorlagon then explains the punishment this way:

Sciui quippe quod nulla sibi grauior foret punicio quam in conspectu omnium tanti sceleris iugis representacio.\textsuperscript{149}

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{147} Day (2005) paragraph 22
\item\textsuperscript{148} Milne (1904)
\item\textsuperscript{149} Day (2005) paragraph 23
\end{footnotes}
For I knew that no punishment could be more grievous to her than a perpetual exhibition of her great wickedness in the sight of all the world.\textsuperscript{150}

This shows the opposite of his earlier clemency. Gorlagon presents himself first as if he has spared her life out of goodwill, but then it is shown that he has only spared her life to punish her in a way that is more painful and lasting for her. Gorlagon is at first hesitant to explain who the punished woman is, but he continues anyway since the other guests already know it. His hesitation shows shame about his past as werewolf. The public nature of the punishment serves as a double-edged sword. It is a constant reminder for his wife, but for himself as well.

Gorlagon still shows the same viciousness and aggressiveness after his restoration as he does in his maddened raids. Gorlagon is a true hybrid, not only because of his double identity after his wife changes him, but because his singular mind consists both of a reasonable and an aggressive side.

In the unjustified attacks on the innocents, the narrative shows how Gorlagon has a cruel nature, despite having retained his human sense. In the final punishment, it shows how Gorlagon is the same cruel person that he was as a werewolf, even after losing the form. The excessiveness of the punishment itself is also shown by the uncourteously actions he commits towards his former wife. He falsely grants her clemency, and shows his other cheek as a good Christian would, but he does not mean it and eventually denies her the relief of a swift death.

These actions are not how a sympathetic protagonist is supposed to act. For that reason the Gorlagon does not share the motif of the sympathetic werewolf with the Bisclavret, Melion and Guillaume de Palerne. Bisclavret is a unique natural werewolf who has a kind nature despite his outward appearance. In Bisclavret he truly keeps his benign human identity. He is not an example of total change, but rather proof of the immortality of the human soul. In Guillaume de Palerne Alphonse has been cursed with the appearance of the werewolf, but his noble behaviour constantly shows his unchanged human identity. Neither of these werewolves are actual hybrids, they are just humans in a wolf’s skin. The case of Melion is different. The title character changes voluntarily into the werewolf form using a magic ring, before his wife steals the ring and causes the transformation to be permanent. Melion appears as a sympathetic werewolf before being cursed, the same type of human in a werewolf form, with some animalistic traits such as a predisposition towards hunting. After the curse, he is presented as

\textsuperscript{150} Milne (1904)
an aggressive beast. He still has some human intellect left, but his identity is predominately that of a beast. Like Gorlagon, Melion attacks cattle and people out of revenge, but his rampage is limited to the kingdom of his wife, unlike Gorlagon who goes on to attack the realms of his brothers. Melion does not show the same punishing behaviour of Gorlagon after regaining his human form either.

The fact that Gorlagon is not presented in the same sympathetic way as these other werewolf stories undermines the reader’s expectation over the narrative, especially in the final scene. How the Gorlagon further positions itself towards Bisclavret, Melion and Guillaume de Palerne, as well as other contemporary narratives will be further discussed in the next chapter, where we move on from the historical and contextual level to the intertextual level.
Chapter 3: Violence in Other Contemporary Narratives

After having established in the previous chapter how Gorlagon is not a sympathetic werewolf, this chapter will further explore other synchronic narratives and their relation to the *Gorlagon* in terms of violence, change and identity. Further evidence will be provided why Gorlagon does not belong in the category of sympathetic werewolf.

The first work that will be discussed is the itinerary *Topographia Hibernica* of Gerald of Wales, added with relevant fragments out of Irish and Norse narratives such as the Ála Flekks Saga. Then, this dissertation will move on to the Breton *lai Bisclavret* by Marie de France, the romances of *Melion* and *Guillaume de Palerne*, and finally *Gawain and the Dwarf*.

When focusing on intertextuality within the *Gorlagon*, it is necessary to not make the same mistakes as earlier research has done, which is trying to prove features of the *Gorlagon* by presuming them as consequences of lost traditions. The idea of common ancestry should also be avoided. However, the open manuscript culture as it has been described in the first chapter hands a framework to explain the shared motifs of these narratives. Scribes picked out ideas that they found interesting from different texts and recombined them to fit their own needs, without feeling the need to stay true to the original, unless it had authorial status. This explains why intertextuality is such a big part of these werewolf narratives, and of Medieval literature in general.

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151 Two other interesting texts for comparison are Chaucer’s *Wife of Bath’s Tale* and the anonymous *Gawain and the Green Knight*. I have not included these because they are both from the end of the 14th century and thus too young to have influenced the *Gorlagon*, although the opposite is certainly possible, and in the case of the *Wife of Bath’s Tale* most likely.
3.1 Topographia Hibernica

The first text is the *Topographia Hibernica* by Gerald of Wales, or Giraldus Cambrensis. It tells the story of Gerald’s own travels in Ireland as part of an expeditionary force of the English crown. During these travels he encounters a priest, who tells him the story about a werewolf couple from Ossory whom the priest had personally spoken. This couple of werewolves were cursed by saint Natalis to change for seven years into werewolves and to survive outside of human society. After these seven years, they are allowed to return home where they will regain their human form. At that point, another couple will substitute them as werewolves. The man from the werewolf couple has searched for the priest because his female companion is dying, and she requests the final rites to be given to her. The priest then wants to do his duties, but he is doubtful of the righteousness of his actions because they do not have the form of humans. The werewolf man then convinces the priest to do so by rolling up the werewolf skin of the woman, and showing her human form underneath it. God is said in the text to specifically intervene at this point, by allowing the furry skin to be temporarily removed.

The proof of the couple’s human identity solves the problem and the priest performs the final rites. It is said about these wolf skins that they cannot be removed, except by divine intervention. God’s willingness to intervene in favour of people who have previously wronged him turns this story into a moral of forgiveness.

If we analyse this in term of change, then it is clear that these are the same sympathetic werewolves as *Bisclavret* and *Guillaume de Palerne*. However, this couple is literally human under a wolf’s skin, while the others cannot show their human identity with physical means, and they are forced to use behaviour to prove their nature.

The *Topographia Hibernica* is not the only Irish narrative to feature werewolves. Others include the *Cóir Anmann* (or Fitness of Names, dated between 1050 and 1200), which contains this excerpt:

Laignech Faelad, that is, he was the man that used to shift into faelad, i.e. wolf-shapes. He and his offspring after him used to go, whenever they pleased, into the shapes of the

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wolves, and, after the custom of wolves, kill the herds. Wherefore he was called Laignech Faelad, for he was the first of them to go into a wolf-shape.¹⁵⁴

According to Kittredge, the word faelad is also used for the ravages of robbers in the Togail Bruidne Da Derga (or Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel, dated between 600 and 900¹⁵⁵), in the passage:

When they were were-wolfing in the province of Connaught.¹⁵⁶

The association between werewolves and robbers is typical for the Norse tradition, which usually features wolf skins, very much like those described by Gerald of Wales for the old couple from Ossory.

An example of unremovable wolf skins is found in the Norse Volsung saga. A father and son find these wolf shirts or skins, and after putting them on they change into wolves for ten days. However, they do not behave as humans would, but instead they gain the rapaciousness and blood thirst of actual wolves. When the shirts can be removed after ten days, they burn them and regain their human intellect.¹⁵⁷

In “Werewolves in Medieval Ireland”, Carey also speaks of a later Norse account of the story in which the saint who curses them is changed to the Irish saint Patrick and the reason for this curse is civilians of Ossory mocking saint Patrick when he attempts to spread the word of God.¹⁵⁸

This mutual influence stresses the importance of the Nordic tradition of werewolves. This has further been elaborated by Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir¹⁵⁹. She has given an overview of the tradition of werewolves in Iceland. She distinguishes two separate traditions. The older tradition dates back to the 9th century and is Nordic in origin. The newer tradition starts from

the 13th century onwards and it is seen as an influence of the earlier mentioned popular 12th century werewolf narratives such as Melion, Bisclavret and Guillaume de Palerne.\textsuperscript{160} An example of this newer tradition is the Ála Flekks Saga, where the hero Ali is also cursed into becoming a werewolf, and just as Gorlagon he goes on a rampage, but by intervention of his foster mother he is recognised and restored to his human form. During his restoration he sheds a wolf skin, which the foster mother burns to break the spell.

Guðmundsdóttir remarks how it is strange that the theme of shapeshifting into wolves is so popular in Iceland, because there are no natural wolves in Iceland. The theme occurs in fourteen indigenous sources, among which the Völsunga Saga and Ála Flekks Saga. Asides from these indigenous sources, there are also two Norse texts remaining which were read in Iceland. Of these two, one is a Norse translation of the lai of Bisclavret. Guðmundsdóttir then moves on to discuss the two variants:

Einar Ol. Sveinsson considered it likely that the motif, as it exists in Icelandic sagas, can be divided into two categories/variants. He believed that the older variant is characterized by the innate ability to shape-shift, which is usually associated with war and warlike activities. He points out that traces of this ancient belief are still found in stories about berserks that were most likely brought to Iceland with the original settlers.\textsuperscript{161}

Berserks are warriors who lose themselves in an animal like fury on the battlefield, much like Gorlagon does when he turns into the werewolf. Guðmundsdóttir then discusses the shapeshifting of the older tradition. Usually a hamr is mentioned. The term hamr refers either to the literal skin, or to the figurative form of the animal. For wolves these are called mostly vargshamr, after the Icelandic word vargar, which means wolves. Occasionally ulfshamr is used instead, using the other term for wolves, ulfr. The vargshamr is used in the previously mentioned sagas. It also seems to be the same as what is used by the cursed people of Ossory. Other important terms are ulfheðnar and berserkir. The first one means wolfskinbearer, the second bearskinwearer. These two form the root of the Berserks as previously mentioned. About them she writes the following:

\textsuperscript{160} Guðmundsdóttir, A. The Werewolf in Medieval Icelandic Literature. The Journal of English and Germanic Philology. 106, no. 3. 2007: 279

\textsuperscript{161} Guðmundsdóttir, A. The Werewolf in Medieval Icelandic Literature. The Journal of English and Germanic Philology. 106, no. 3. 2007: 279
The berserk frenzy is actually closely related to shape-shifting, for in both cases men acquire the attributes of animals. The main difference resides, perhaps, in the fact that with shape-shifting it is assumed that either the soul is transported to another body, that is, into an animal's body (and thus people are described as eigi einhamir, "not restricted to one form"), or that the body undergoes a transformation, whereas in the berserk frenzy men acquire the attributes of wild animals; one could thus say that the berserk is a wild animal in the shape of a man.\footnote{Guðmundsdóttir, A. The Werewolf in Medieval Icelandic Literature. The Journal of English and Germanic Philology. 106, no. 3. 2007: 281-281}

Immediately, this recalls the hybrid image of Gorlagon. Wild frenzy is an accurate phrase to describe the escalation of the violence he uses after he has been changed. Remarkably, Guðmundsdóttir is still talking about the indigenous Icelandic tradition here, although the concept of berserks is present in all Nordic countries. However, at this point it is too early to claim direct relation between the Gorlagon and the Icelandic tradition. As charming as the idea is, there are no \textit{hamr} used in the \textit{Gorlagon} which would prove it. Werewolves were also present in other literature going back even to antiquity, with Lycaon in Ovid’s \textit{Metamorphoses} being represented as not only a man who changes into a wolf, but the father of all later wolves.\footnote{Ovid, Metamorphoses I, 209-239} Other notable werewolf stories from Antiquity are found in Virgil’s \textit{Bucolica}\footnote{Virgil, Bucolica, eclogue VIII, 95-99}, in \textit{Satyricon} by Petronius\footnote{Petronius, Satyricon IX, 46} and in Pliny the Elder’s \textit{Historia Naturalis}\footnote{Pliny the Elder, Historia Naturalis, XXXIV, VIII, 80-83}. For the Middle Ages Gervase of Tilbury should also be mentioned, who explores the idea of lycanthropy in \textit{Otia Imperialis}\footnote{Gervase of Tilbury, Otia Imperialis, I, 15}.

Nevertheless, there is more evidence to be found in her article which would fit with Gorlagon being based on a Norse shape-shifter, as can be seen in the following excerpts:

Wolves were beasts of battle, with strongly negative associations. In fact, the Germanic peoples used the term vargr for outlaws, those who had forfeited their rights to participate in human society.
Is this not exactly the role Gorlagon has when he turns into a werewolf? He has been expelled from society by his wife, and he is forced to live in the woods, out of which he preys on both the guilty and innocent. More information about this metaphorical use of wolves for outlaws is given here:

Such men are also called "sköggangsmenn", which refers to their expulsion from society, since they were driven to the forest as if they were wolves. Vargr is used in this way for outlaws in other Icelandic sources, both in the sagas and the Eddic poems. In older Icelandic, the connection between vargr and criminal (outlaw) can also be seen in the words mordvargr (murderer), vargrtré (wolftree, that is, gallows), vargraekr (expelled like a wolf), and vargrdropi/vargdragi (wolf cub, that is, son of an outlaw, a legal term).

At this point, it becomes unlikely that only coincidence has caused these similarities. Gorlagon has two wolf cubs, who are subsequently hanged when they get captured. Using the method of hanging for wolves certainly is a peculiar method of execution, although not unseen. A 17th century trial in Ansbach convicted a werewolf in wolf form to death. The wolf was killed by cutting of its snout. Subsequently it was given a mask resembling the deceased man it incarnated. The dead wolf was then hanged. Shakespeare’s character Gratiano also mentions the hanging of a werewolf in the Merchant of Venice, act IV scene 1. Giving the cubs of Gorlagon a human punishment can be connected to Gorlagon’s human identity.

Because of the previously mentioned lexical reasons, it is probable to assume an influence of the old Nordic tradition in the Gorlagon. Guðmundsdóttir also discusses the origin of werewolf stories and mentions the previously discussed John Carey (see chapter 1.2.3):

...John Carey, who believes that the werewolf legend in Ireland is native. He claims that direct evidence for werewolves in Scandinavian sources is scarcely earlier than the thirteenth-century Volsunga saga, and therefore that the Irish material probably

influenced the Scandinavian. But the werewolf motif is already found in older Eddic material, and it is possible that Norse Vikings influenced the Celtic tradition, especially since the richest werewolf tradition in Ireland lies around Ossory, whose rulers had close contacts with the Vikings.\textsuperscript{171}

Is the \textit{Gorlagon} influenced directly or indirectly by the Nordic tradition? Either way is possible. Kittredge would assume it to be indirectly through an Irish ancestor. However, none of the Irish tales that he gives features the hanging of wolf cubs, or wolf-like robbers.

A direct influence of this motif is possible as well. Chapter 2.2 has established that there was a Nordic presence in England itself up until 1066, with raids continuing into the next century. Especially in the northern regions of England there has been long term Scandinavian settlement, which is even visible today in names of cities such as Grimsby, Whitby and Skegness. This would allow for a cultural exchange leading to lingering Norse elements in the \textit{Gorlagon}.

However, a counter argument for this can be made as well, as shown by the following excerpt from \textit{De Planctu Naturae}, or ‘The Complaint of Nature’ by Alain de Lille. He personifies Nature in this work, by describing her as a woman. He describes different animals that are depicted on Nature’s dress. Among these is the wolf:

\textit{Illic lupus, latitando, furis usurpans officium. Furcarum itinere exaltari merebatur aerio.}

There is the wolf, in hiding, usurping the employment of the thief. He deserved being praised with an airborne journey on the gallows.\textsuperscript{172}

This excerpt shows that the idea of hanging thieving wolves or wolf-like robbers is not necessarily exclusive to the Norse imagination, because Alain de Lille is French.

The thieving wolf also appears multiple times in the figure of \textit{Ysengrimus} in the eponymous beast-epic, which has been written in Ghent in the Flemish region. Most notably is the episode in which a woman by the name of Aldrada calls him a mean robber and tries to


decapitate him for killing Teta and Gerard multiple times, and stealing their necks. Teta is used here to refer to chickens, and Gerard for ducks. Aldrada says that Ysengrimus his neck will pay twice for those of the Teta that he took. Even though this excerpt does not feature the hanging of wolves, it is still the neck of a wolf that is being targeted out of revenge for his robbing. The presence of these thieving wolves both in Alain’s and Nivardus’ works shows that the motif might have been more widespread across Europe. Vikings have raided Flanders and Northern France as well, but these raids did not continue into the 12th century as in England. It is far too uncertain to assume any Norse influence in *De Planctu Naturae* and the *Ysengrimus*.

It is nonetheless certain that the Gorlagon as a narrative is as much a hybrid as Gorlagon is himself. The violence attributed to Gorlagon has more resemblance to the presentation of Norse werewolves, both literal as beasts and metaphorical as outlaws, than it does to the sympathetic werewolves of *Bisclavret*, *Melion* and *Guillaume de Palerne*. *Bisclavret* will be discussed first of these narratives in the following chapter.

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3.2 Bisclavret

In this Breton lai, written between 1160 and 1178\(^{174}\), the introduction clearly states that the text of the Bisclavret is not about the violent and blood thirsty variation of the werewolf, but instead of the eponymous beast Bisclavret, who is a civilised, courteous and loyal werewolf.\(^{175}\) This stands in sharp contrast to the behaviour of Gorlagon, who acts exactly as the violent and blood thirsty variation in the first stage of his transformation. Bisclavret is introduced as a righteous, handsome nobleman, as well as a good knight. At the start of the narrative he has a good relation with his wife. Only when she becomes suspicious of his absences, does her love for him turn into hatred, as she suspects him to love another.\(^{176}\) This is very different from Gorlagon’s wife who from the very start has an affair with the son of the pagan king.

Bisclavret is described as a werewolf from the beginning of the narrative, but he needs his clothes to be able to transform back into a human after his episodes as a werewolf. This motif of the clothing is shared by Chaucevaire, a werewolf in the *Otia Imperialis* and by the werewolf in *Satyricon*.\(^{177}\) His wife becomes suspicious of these long periods of absence, and she forces him to tell her his secret, parallel to Gorlagon’s wife. When she learns the secret of his lycanthropy, she betrays him by stealing the clothes he need to return to his human form. She does not directly curse her husband, which is the case both in *Melion* and the *Gorlagon*.

Bisclavret is not portrayed as being violent, but only resorts to violence towards animals when he is hungry, and towards the knight and his wife when they meet later in the narrative. Bisclavret surrenders during a hunt to a king, who suspects his human identity because of his non-violent nature, like in the *Gorlagon* and in *Melion*. The atypical violent behaviour of Bisclavret against the knight and his wife is being used as proof of his grudge against the two, and allows the plot to develop. When he bites his wife’s nose off as punishment for her treachery, it is still within reasonable means of justice. The punishment for the wife is a public mark. Her missing nose shows everyone she meets that she has committed a great crime. That


is also the case in the *Gorlagon* with the public display of kissing the severed head, but this punishment is far worse, to a point where it is considered excessive.

### 3.3 Melion

Opposed to these punishments, is the very different ending of Melion. In this Arturian narrative, from between 1190 and 1204\(^{178}\), the protagonist is the young knight Melion, who vows only to love a woman who has never had any feelings for another man but him. This hubris will be punished later on. Melion is presented as an outdoors man with a particular liking for forests and hunting, which is why Arthur grants him a castle surrounded by forests. While roaming these forests, he meets an Irish princess who has searched for him, because he is the only one that she will ever love. She remains unnamed, similar to Bisclavret’s, Gargol’s, Gorlagon’s and the Dwarf’s wives\(^{179}\), who are all punished for betrayal and adultery.

Melion and the Irish princess marry and they enjoy a seemingly happy marriage, and they even have two sons, which is a unique feature for the Melion. After three years of marriage the hubris of his vow is mirrored by a vow his wife makes, when she says that she will never eat again, unless she can eat a piece of meat from a particular elusive stag which comes across Melion and his wife, before it runs away deeper into the forest. Melion does not hesitate and shows his wife his ring which he can use to turn into a werewolf. Melion has full power over his transformation, as does Bisclavret, but as Bisclavret is depended on his clothes to turn back, so is Melion depended on the assistance of another person to use his ring to transform him either from man to wolf or the other way around. He has no reason to doubt the truthfulness of his wife after three years of happy marriage, but she betrays him by fleeing the forest after he is turned into a wolf, and by stealing the ring that can turn him back. There is no explicit mentioning of adultery, only that she leaves the forest with Melion’s squire and that they go to Ireland together. Afterwards, Melion returns with the stag but he doesn’t find his wife. He spends a long period in the forest. Eventually, he finds passage on a boat to Ireland where his wife is.


\(^{179}\) See chapters 3.1, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2
There he assembles a band of wolves, similar to Gorlagon’s wife and cubs, except that the wolves in Melion are not related to him, they are only allies. With these allies, who are presented as if they are knights, Melion declares war on the kingdom of the Irish princess that has betrayed him. He attacks people as well as cattle like Gorlagon does, but no neighbouring provinces. Melion only targets the subjects of his enemies. A grand hunt is organised and the people manage to kill all the wolves except for Melion, who can escape because of his human intelligence. Then Arthur arrives in Ireland as a *deus ex machina*. Melion throws himself for Arthur’s feet as a symbol of feudal submission, which causes Arthur to protect Melion and take him in. Arthur has come to Ireland to negotiate peace with the Irish king. While in the court of the Irish king, Melion recognises his former squire and assaults him, but is stopped by the servants of the Irish king. Arthur then forces the squire to explain himself. The Irish king commands his daughter to return the ring to Melion, and Melion is restored to his former self. He wants to punish his wife for her behaviour, by turning her into a werewolf instead, but Arthur does not allow this and convinces him to leave her in Ireland, for the sake of their children. Melion eventually agrees, although he condemns her verbally at the end.

Melion and Gorlagon show greater similarity than Bisclavret and Gorlagon. They both go on a violent rampage and they both wish to punish their wives, but the framing of the violence is different. Melion and his wolves are presented as knights waging war against an enemy. Because it is a war, all means are allowed. Melion takes these actions as a conscious human being and specifically attacks the subjects of his wife, while Gorlagon lets the anger and bloodlust take over entirely. He attacks the subjects of his brothers after he has been chased away by his enemies in his own kingdom. The punishment of the wife is also different. Where Melion wants justice to be served in a similar way as he has been wronged, Gorlagon first shows clemency, but then treacherously punishes her in an excessively cruel manner. It should be noted that Melion’s wife does not want to kill him, where Gorlagon’s wife specifically unleashes the hounds to kill him, much like Actaeon is being devoured by his own hunting dogs after Artemis turns him into a stag.¹⁸⁰ Unlike Actaeon, Gorlagon manages to escape.

There is also a significant difference in rank between Melion and Gorlagon. Melion is a knight, while Gorlagon is a king. This means that Melion has to answer to his liege, while Gorlagon does not, even though he acts as a vassal of his brother when he asks his brother for

clemency, while he does not show the same clemency towards the ones who have wronged him. In Melion there is a different pattern. Arthur in his role as *deus ex machina* makes sure that clemency is granted to the Irish princess. This can either be from a personal agenda, since he wants to make peace with her father, or from a moral authority. The positive descriptions of Arthur suggest the second option. When reading the *Melion* and the *Gorlagon* side by side as narratives, they show an opposition of Melion’s Arthur as a forgiving king, and Gorlagon as a vengeful king. Arthur in the Gorlagon is presented as neither, because he is unaware of Guinevere’s adultery.

The two sons that Melion has with the Irish princess remind of the two sons of Gorlagon’s wife that he kills, as well as the two cubs that the servants of Gorlagon’s wife kill. Adultery as a motif for the murder of children is not unseen, as in the myth of Iason and Medea, where she kills her two sons after Iason remaries. However, it is not likely that this implies that Gorlagon kills his own sons. Melion’s sons aren’t killed either. They only reappear in the story in the ending when Arthur uses them as a reason for Melion to show clemency. They mostly serve as proof of Melion’s presumed happy marriage of three years with the Irish princess, before she betrays him. The two sons of Gorlagon’s wife are never presented as being fathered by Gorlagon, and the *Gesta Romanorum* features two dead sons as well in a similar narrative, as seen in chapter 1.2.1 of this dissertation. This similarity in number of sons between Melion and the Gorlagon seems to be rather born out of coincidence than it is a deliberate reference.
3.4 Guillaume de Palerne

The narrative of *Guillaume de Palerne* was written most likely between 1194 and 1197.\(^{181}\) Like *Bisclavret* and *Melion*, it is a story revolving around a sympathetic werewolf. However, the werewolf is not the title character, but a second protagonist. This long story has a complex plot with multiple characters, which will be briefly summarised.\(^{182}\)

It begins *ab origine* with the young prince Guillaume, who is the son of King Embron of Apulia. Embron’s brother pays for the assassination of Guillaume, but before the assassins can get to him, he is devoured by a large ferocious looking wolf. Everyone assumes Guillaume to be dead, and Embron and his army chase the wolf of the island of Sardinia, into the strait of Messina. The wolf swims across, and then it is revealed that Guillaume is not dead, but only held in the mouth of the wolf, so that he can escape the assassins. The wolf then turns out to be the Spanish prince Alphonse, who has been turned into a werewolf when he was a child by his evil stepmother Brande, who wants to remove him as a candidate for the throne.

Alphonse the werewolf raises Guillaume in the woods, before Guillaume is found by the Emperor of Rome, who adopts him. The emperor’s daughter Melior\(^{183}\) falls in love with Guillaume. Melior asks her friend Alisaundrine for help, who uses witchcraft to make Guillaume dream of Melior, which makes him fall in love with her. Then Italy is invaded by the Duke of Saxony. The Emperor knights Guillaume and sends him out to defeat the Duke. Guillaume succeeds, but when he returns the King of Greece arranges a marriage between his son Partenedon and the Emperor’s daughter Melior. Guillaume and Melior elope with the help of Alisaundrine, who sews them into bear skins which makes them look like white bears. Meanwhile, the Emperor forces Alisaundrine to confess what she has done.

Guillaume and Melior hide in a den, but almost die of hunger. Then, Alphonse the werewolf finds them again and feeds them. He helps them escape further towards the south to Benevento where they are almost caught by the pursuing Emperor. They change their

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\(^{182}\) For a more detailed overview and analysis of the story, see Sconduto. I have limited the overview of *Guillaume De Palerne* to the parts that are relevant to the Gorlagon, since it is the furthest removed from the Gorlagon in terms of violence.

\(^{183}\) Not to be confused with the werewolf Melion.
appearance to that of two deer, and then they finally cross the strait to Sicily in a boat, while
Alphonse swims across to distract their pursuers. Meanwhile, the king of Spain is sieging
Embron’s castle to force a marriage between his son and Embron’s daughter Florence. Embron
himself has already died, and his wife is in command. She dreams of the two deer and she sees
it as a good omen, so she allows Guillaume and Melior in when they visit. Guillaume leads
Embron’s armies out in a successful sally, and he captures the king of Spain and his son. This
forces the evil stepmother Brande to come to Sicily to return Alphonse back to his human form,
as a trade for the life of her son with the King of Spain. It is then revealed that Alphonse as a
werewolf did not kill Guillaume, who has now found his home again. The story then concludes
with a series of marriages and inheritances. The King of Greece and Partenedon help the
Sicilians against the Spaniards, and they both return home after the victory. The Emperor gives
his approval of the marriage of Guillaume and Melior. After his death, Guillaume is crowned
as his successor. Alphonse weds Guillaume’s sister Florence and he inherits Spain after the
death of his father.

Out of these three werewolf stories, it is the furthest removed from the Gorlagon, both in
terms of plot and violence. The complex plot with his many characters reads more as a
Shakespearian comedy, such as The Winter’s Tale, than as a chivalrous fiction such as
Gorlagon, Bisclavret and Melion. The plot is primarily driven by the relations between the
characters and their aristocratic titles. Alphonse is the most harmless of the werewolves and he
is definitely presented as the sympathetic type. He does not harm anyone in the narrative, but
he only uses his horrifying looks to mislead people. The motivation of his actions is always to
act kind and supportive. He saves Guillaume from the assassination out of pity, even though
they are not related. When Alphonse robs two men for food, it is only because he wishes to save
Guillaume and Melior from starvation, and he leaves the two men unscathed. He shows no
aggression, not even towards the stepmother Brande, who has changed him into the werewolf.
Brande even gets an official pardon for her previous actions.

The theme of adultery is not present in Guillaume de Palerne. Guillaume and Melior elope
together, but they postpone their marriage until they have the Emperor’s permission on Sicily,
and although Melior was betrothed to Partenedon, she had not married him yet. The main
characters of Guillaume de Palerne act according to the ideals of clemency and chivalry, and
even the evil Brande gets forgiven. If the werewolves of these different narratives were put on
a continuum ranging from sympathetic to ambiguous or unsympathetic, then their order should
be: Alphonse – Bisclavret – Melion, with Gorlagon as an unsympathetic outlier. The extreme
kindness of Alphonse and Bisclavret, with their singular human identity in disguise, makes it
impossible to put the hybrid Goragon in the same category. Melion is positioned somewhere in between, being mostly sympathetic despite the flaws in his character, such as his hubris and desire for vengeance. Melion’s identity is singular human as well, although he has some wolfish traits such as a predisposition towards hunting.
3.5 Gawain and the Dwarf

The quest of finding out what women think, is also being undertaken by Gawain in the *Gawain and the Dwarf* episode in the *Dutch Lancelot*¹⁸⁴, which has been preserved in an early 13th century manuscript¹⁸⁵. This episode begins with a knight called Druidein, who challenges Walewein (Gawain) to claim Ydeine, who is Gawain’s love. Gawain agrees to fight and a duel is set at the court of Bandumagowe¹⁸⁶. The knight Kay then starts mocking Gawain because of Ydeine’s excessive popularity. This troubles Gawain, and he sets out to discover what women actually think, and if he can trust Ydeine. Gawain asks Queen Guinevere first what it is that women think. She states that no-one knows it. Gawain then travels to find an answer to his quest. He comes upon a forest, where he hears the sound of a hunt, and he finds an unusually small hound. He picks it up, to give it to the queen, but then a small knight¹⁸⁷ approaches him and reprimands him for stealing his hound. He claims to be the king of the country and proves this by magically transforming Gawain to the size of a dwarf and back to his normal self. They finish the hunt together, and then they both return to the court of the Dwarf. During their return the Dwarf asks why Gawain has come to that country. Gawain responds that he wants to find out what women think. The Dwarf repeats Guinevere’s answer that it no-one knows it, and he adds that it is a difficult thing to find out.

Then they arrive at the halls of the king, where they are served dinner, but dinner is also being served behind a door to someone else. Gawain asks the Dwarf who it is that is being served. He then answers him that it is his former wife who has cheated on him with one of his servants. As punishment she is not allowed to eat or sleep with him. Gawain then asks to see her. The Dwarf grants this request, and he says to Gawain that he now knows what women think, which is unfaithfulness.

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¹⁸⁵ See chapter 2.1
¹⁸⁶ He is later called Bandemagus in the text. He is the same king Bademagu from Chrétien de Troyes’ *Lancelot ou le Chevalier de la Charrette*, where he is the father of Guinevere’s kidnapper. Kay’s mean attitude is also taken from Chrétien de Troyes work. This shows how these Arthurian narratives constantly refer to each other.
¹⁸⁷ The dwarf is in the text first described in Middle Dutch as a *ridderkijn*, which means small knight. Afterwards he is referred to as the *coninc*, or king. In this dissertation he will be named the Dwarf, to avoid confusion with other kings.
However, Gawain does not see this as a fulfilment for his quest. The Dwarf then asks him if he has a loved one, and proposes to test her faithfulness by turning Gawain into a dwarf, who has to seduce her in that form. Gawain agrees and they both go back to Arthur’s court where they are entertained by Guinevere and Ydeine. Gawain proposes a game of chess, and the loser has to give whatever the winner wants. Gawain wins, and he forces Ydeine to sleep with him. In the morning, he asks her for a ring that he had given her earlier when he was still his normal self. She unwillingly gives it to him. Gawain then depart together with the Dwarf from court, and the Dwarf restores Gawain to his proper form. Gawain then returns and asks Ydeine for the ring. She lies, saying that a fish has eaten it after it slipped from her finger and fell into the water. Gawain then confronts her by saying that a dwarf has shown him the ring, and that the dwarf claimed he was given the ring by her after spending the night with Ydeine. At this accusation, Ydeine does not deny it and Gawain departs. Afterwards, he forgives her after she has sent him many friendly gestures.

The similarities with the Gorlagon are plentiful. Both Kay and Gawain are present in the Gorlagon as minor characters, accompanying Arthur on his quest, while Gawain is the protagonist of this other narrative. Kay’s sharp tongue is being used as a plot device, to make Gawain question her faithfulness in the first place. The fact that Gawain asks Guinevere about what women think, reinforces the theme of adultery, while her answer resembles that of the kings who Arthur meets in the Gorlagon. This shows a similarity in plot as well. Gawain first hears twice that no-one knows what women think, and that it is a difficult thing to find out, just as Arthur is refused the answer by two kings. Eventually it is told to Gawain by a shape-shifter, just like Gorlagon. Both Gawain and Arthur show pity for the punished adulteress, and they do not see it as an answer to their quest.

The differences between the Gorlagon and Gawain and the Dwarf are plentiful as well. Arthur’s quest finishes after the confrontation with the punished adulteress, while Gawain’s quest goes on after seeing the Dwarf’s punished wife. He then seduces Ydeine in another form, and blames her for her actions, before forgiving her. The theme of eating is present in Gawain and the Dwarf, but it is not as elaborated as it is in the Gorlagon, with its numerous feasts and vows of fasting. There are no werewolves in Gawain and the Dwarf, and the hounds do not play any similar role. The Dwarf is a supposed shape-shifter, and he tells the story about the

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188 Bennett, R. E. Arthur and Gorlagon, the Dutch Lancelot, and St. Kentigern. Speculum. 13, no. 1. 1938: 69. For the summary of the plot of Gawain and the Dwarf I have mostly based myself on Bennett’s paraphrasing, while using Jonckbloet’s version of the Middle-Dutch text for adjustments when necessary.
adulteress wife, similar to Gorlagon. However, the Dwarf never shows himself in his fully grown form. Neither the Dwarf nor Gawain as a dwarf are full hybrids like Gorlagon. They change in appearance only, while their identity remains the same, which makes them an example of metamorphosis such as Bynum has described\textsuperscript{189}.

Upon confrontation with the punished adulteress both Arthur and Gawain react in a pitiful way, but the punishment itself is much lighter in \textit{Gawain and the Dwarf}. The Dwarf’s former wife is forced to eat alone, and denied to sleep with him, while Gorlagon’s former wife must kiss the severed head of her lover. Both of these punishments are very public in nature. Even though the Dwarf’s former wife must eat alone, she is still given dinner in a way that is visible for the Dwarf’s guests and court.

This is one of the indications that violence in \textit{Gawain and the Dwarf} is entirely absent. Violence is present in the \textit{Dutch Lancelot} with its many duels for honour. Despite the fact that \textit{Gawain and the Dwarf} is part of the \textit{Dutch Lancelot}, the episode is remarkably non-violent, especially compared to the \textit{Gorlagon}. The Dwarf is presented as a trickster, but never as aggressive as Gorlagon is, either as man or wolf. The Dwarf shows some hatred towards his former wife and her lover, but not like Gorlagon who chooses a method specifically because he knows it to be worse than death for his former wife. Gawain shows anger towards Ydeine, but he does not harm her, and he even accepts her apology over time. Another noticeable difference is the mentioning of God on multiple occasions by the characters in \textit{Gawain and the Dwarf}, while God is absent in the Gorlagon.

These similarities and differences suggest that the \textit{Gawain and the Dwarf} episode is a later narrative than the Gorlagon, and that it uses elements of the Gorlagon to tell a story about adultery as well, but with a more forgiving message. Violence is noticeably absent in Gawain and the Dwarf, unlike the Gorlagon.

The next chapter will give a close reading of the \textit{Gorlagon}, first by situating it within the Arthurian tradition of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Chrétien de Troyes, before moving on deeper into the text itself.

\textsuperscript{189} See chapter 2.5.
Chapter 4: *Sis lupus, sis lupus, habeasque sensum hominis*: Violence, Intention and Conscience in a Close Reading of the *Gorlagon*

As has been previously established throughout this dissertation, adultery is a central theme of the *Gorlagon*. This is already clear in the first paragraph of the Arthurian frame tale. Arthur is introduced at a feast, together with his queen. The name Guinevere is not being used, although it could be no other than her. The anonymity of her title is reflected in Gorlagon’s wife and Gargol’s wife, who also have not been given names. Arthur passionately kisses Guinevere in front of the feast. She asks why he had kissed her at such an unusual place and hour, because the public nature of his affection goes against expected courtly behaviour. Arthur then says that he considers her to be more pleasing and sweeter than any of his other possessions. This introduces a sense of hubris comparable to that of *Melion*. He is too rash in his statements on love.

She confirms this prideful tone of Arthur by stating that he does not understand her mind, nor her heart. Arthur then replies that her affection is known to him, which reminds the readers again of the unavoidable unfaithfulness of his queen. His pride is shown once more in his sudden conviction to go on a quest. He vows that he will not eat until he has found out what women think. This reiterates the motif of eating, because the setting is earlier described as a feast.
4.1 The Setting of the *Gorlagon*

The setting is crucial for a reading of the Gorlagon. This is shown in the opening lines:

*Apud Urbem Legionum celebre festum diei Pentecostes rex*  
*Arturus agebat, ad quod totius sue dicionis magnates et nobiles*  
inuitabat, *peractisque de more solemnii, ad instructum cum omnibus perti-  
nentibus conuiiium.*\(^1\)

At the City of the Legions, King Arthur held the renowned festival of Pentecost, to which he invited the great men and nobles from all of his kingdom, and after the solemn rites had been performed he lead them to a banquet, with all necessary things.

The incident between Arthur and his wife happens in the *Urbem Legionum*, at the feast of Pentecost. This references two others texts from the Arthurian tradition, specifically Chrétien de Troyes’ *Le Chevalier de la Charette*, and Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*. The City of Legions is mentioned several times in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*. Two of those are particularly relevant passages for the *Gorlagon*.

First is Arthur’s coronation on Pentecost in the City of Legions, after which he holds a great feast for all his vassals, showing the courtly beauty of Arthur’s life.\(^2\) The narrative links itself to the *historia* of Arthur, transcending the fictitiousness of the *fabula* genre.\(^3\) *Historia* does not immediately refer to the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth in this context, but to the claim of historical truth in his work, which is also obviously present in the title of *Historia Regum Britanniae*. The other mentioning of the City of Legions, is at the first chapter of book 11.\(^4\) In that chapter, Guinevere hears about Arthur’s successful routing of Mordred’s army, and she flees out of despair to the City of Legions, where she enters the religious order of Julius

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\(^1\) Day (2005) paragraph 1

\(^2\) Where this “City of Legions” actually is, is up to debate. The three possible candidates are Caerleon, Chester and York according to Field P.J.C., *Gildas and the City of Legions*, The Heroic Age, Issue 1, Spring/Summer 1999. However, this has no important consequences for a reading of the *Gorlagon*.


the Martyr, to live a chaste life as a nun. The opening lines of the Gorlagon thus immediately evoke the image of Guinevere’s atonement, and implicitly her unfaithfulness.

The other Arthurian text which is referenced by the opening lines of the Gorlagon, is *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* by Chrétien de Troyes, who starts to fill in the gaps of Geoffrey’s account of King Arthur by giving life to the adventures of the Knights of the Round Table, during the twelve years of peace described in *Historia Regum Britanniae*. In the Gorlagon, it is an adventure of King Arthur set in these years. The use of Arthur as a protagonist, in contrast to the normal knights of Chrétien de Troyes, shows how the Gorlagon fills in the gaps of the fictitious history as well. It thus connects the Gorlagon to the works of Chrétien de Troyes, by showing what Arthur was doing in this period.

There is also a second connection between the Gorlagon and Le Chevalier de la Charrette. In this work, Guinevere is kidnapped to another kingdom. The knight Kay tries to win her back, but fails miserably. Two other knights are sent out to get her, one being Gawain, the other one is unnamed and addressed as *le chevalier* or *le chevalier de la charrette*, ‘the knight of the cart’, because he has to humble himself by riding on a donkey cart in order to enter the kingdom where Guinevere is held. It is later revealed by Queen Guinevere that he is Lancelot of the Lake. Lancelot manages to enter the kingdom and the palace where Guinevere is being held as an honoured prisoner. In this palace, Lancelot spends one night with Guinevere, which is the night before the day before Pentecost.

This means that the setting of the Gorlagon from the very beginning of the narrative evokes the theme of adultery. Is Arthur’s Queen blushing because of his uncourtly public display of affection at Pentecost, or is she blushing out of shame for her own unfaithfulness with Lancelot, just two days earlier? Their dialogue shows that the second option is more likely.

*Regina. Si quam asseris me adeo diligas, mentem et voluntatem meam te*

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197 The two knights that accompany Arthur on his quest in the Gorlagon are Gawain and Kay as well, showing further relation between the two narratives.
scire patenter existimas.

Arturus. Tuam mentem erga me beneuolam habere non dubito, tuamque voluptatem mihi prorsus patere certus existo.

Regina. Arture, falleris sine dubio; quippe agnoscas te nunquam uel ingenium mentemque femine comperisse. 199

The Queen. If, as you say, you love me so much, you clearly assume to know my heart and desire.

Arthur. I do not doubt that your heart is well disposed towards me, and I certainly think that your desire is absolutely clear to me.

The Queen. You are without doubt mistaken, Arthur, you obviously acknowledge that you have never understood either the temperament or the heart of a woman. 200

Noticeably, Guinevere reverses Arthur’s words. Arthur’s *tuam mentem erga me beneuolam habere non dubito*, or ‘I do not doubt that your heart is well disposed towards me’ becomes *falleris sine dubio*, or ‘you are without doubt mistaken’. *Falleris* is used here ambiguously. The basic meaning of the verb *fallere* is ‘to trip’, or ‘to cause to fall’. Metaphorically, ‘to trip’ is expended to cover the meanings of ‘to fail’, ‘to make a mistake’. Likewise, ‘to cause to fall’ leads to derived meanings such as ‘to cheat’, ‘to deceive’, ‘to betray’. *Falleris sine dubio* can just as well be read as ‘you are without doubt being deceived’, or even ‘you are without doubt being betrayed’. Both of these readings work in the narrative of the Gorlagon. The fact that Arthur is ‘without doubt being betrayed’ would clearly be a reference to Guinevere’s betrayal 201, either with Mordred or Lancelot, although Lancelot is more plausible in light of Chrétien de Troyes echoes in the Gorlagon.

Arthur being deceived is also present as a theme in the Gorlagon. Both of Gorlagon’s brothers trick him into breaking his vow, and they both deceive him by saying that they do not know what the answer is to his quest, when they actually do. It is impossible for them to be unaware of Gorlagon’s tale because they are his brothers, and Gargol takes part in Gorlagon’s restoration. Gorlagon himself also deceives Arthur. First by telling his tale as if someone else

199 Day (2005) paragraph 1
200 Milne (1904)
was the werewolf, and again by displaying the head on the platter during his tale without any explanation.

As seen in the excerpt above, Arthur also deceives himself by thinking that he knows Guinevere’s heart, and by seeing his quest as a feasible goal. Arthur’s idea of going on a quest to discover what women think is strange, since he could have just asked her himself, instead of leaving court and going to the trouble of visiting wise male kings who should be able to provide him with an answer. At the same time, he recognises his own failing at knowing her heart by proposing the quest. At the end Arthur will not return with any answers either. Gorlagon pauses his tale multiple times to point this out to him, saying that he will not return any wiser than before.

Another key theme of the Gorlagon aside from adultery is eating. The setting at Pentecost is a feast. Arthur vows not to eat or drink until he has completed his quest. He fails to keep his vows with the first two kings he encounters, who both manage to persuade him to join them in feasting. Arthur regains his backbone in front of Gorlagon, who in his tale speaks of the werewolf’s wife refusing to eat before he would explain his strange behaviour. This strange behaviour consists of spending a lot of time in his hidden garden. His wife refuses to eat until Gorlagon has revealed why he spends so much time there, and how the sapling can turn him into a werewolf.

Later in the story, when Gorlagon is under the protection of his brother and after he has attacked the steward, king Gargol also refuses to eat until the matter is settled. Meanwhile Gorlagon keeps breaking of his story to invite Arthur to eat, who refuses as well to eat anything, or even dismount his horse, before the truth of Gorlagon’s story is revealed.

When Arthur leaves on his quest, there is a focus on the fasting and the lack of sleep he is putting himself and his companions Kay and Gawain through. This early hardship of their travel contrasts with the pleasantries of Gargol’s court and the other courts they visit afterwards. Arthur cuts to the chase and asks what he needs to know to fulfil his quest, but Gargol insists that he dismounts and eats. Arthur hesitates, but his companions persuade Arthur to join the feast. The formulaic nature of this request is repeated throughout the Gorlagon. It functions as a chorus, which is why Massey has viewed it as a comical play at dinner. When Arthur concedes without opposing much, he is given a seat opposing king Gargol. This might be a

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reflection of Medieval hierarchy at the table. The further away from the King at the head of table, the lower in ranking someone was. The opposite position suggests that Arthur sits at the very end of the table, a position unfitting for his rank as King, but fitting for his arrival as beggars at Gargol’s feast. Normally he should have been seated next to Gargol.

They feast all night, but when at dawn Arthur remembers his vow and asks for the advice, Gargol does not answer him. Breaking his vow means that is not yet worthy to complete the quest, and so Gargol denies him an answer saying that he has none. Of course Gargol would have known of the story that Gorlagon tells Arthur, since Gargol himself plays a major role, but his rejection can be honest as well. He might not link the story as a werewolf to the idea of what women think, even though he has been betrayed by his own wife as well. The misogynistic remark that no one ever had a conception of what the thoughts of women are, is then also more understandable.

After the refusal, Gargol advices Arthur to travel to his brother Gorleil who is wiser than him. The same pattern then repeats itself. Arthur is being persuaded to break his vow, even though it takes both the companions of Gorleil, and Gorleil himself to do so. Again he is seated opposite to the king. Gorleil does not answer Arthur upon asking in the morning, and sends him to a wiser brother as well, who is by no doubt knowledgeable in these matters.

The pattern then repeats itself, but this time Arthur does not let himself get persuaded. Gorlagon eventually concedes to Arthur. He will tell a tale, but Gorlagon immediately denies that there is any use in telling it, since Arthur will not be any wiser when he is finished. This confirms that the quest that Arthur undertakes was doomed to fail from the beginning. He then tries to trick Arthur multiple times in eating anyway, but he does not succeed in doing so, while Gorlagon tells the story.
4.2 Gorlagon’s Tale

The opening words are *guidam rex*, which is an evasion of his identity since Gorlagon talks about himself. Then the introduction of lycanthropy follows, which shows how the sapling in his private garden was decreed by fate to turn him into a werewolf. This raises the question if the violent behaviour was fated for Gorlagon all along.

The curiosity of his wife makes her question why he spends so much time in the hidden garden. Ironically, she assumes it to be an affair, even though she is already in love with the son of the pagan king. She refuses to eat for three days until Gorlagon tells her his secret. Gorlagon first tries to persuade her to eat, just as he tries to persuade Arthur, but eventually he gives in to her wishes, which gives her the tool to get rid of him. Interesting is the formulation of the spell which she uses together with the sapling to curse him:

"Sis lupus, sis lupus' vociferans; 'habeasque sensum lupi' volens adicere, 'sensum hominis' adiunxit."\(^{203}\)

'Be a wolf, Be a wolf' she shouted; ‘and have the understanding of a wolf’ she wanted to add, (but) she uttered ‘understanding of a man’.\(^{204}\)

If we relate this to the concept of metamorphosis and identity, then it shows that the original intension of the wife was to turn Gorlagon into an entire wolf. His identity would be erased and only his new identity as a wolf would remain. Instead of this true metamorphosis, she fails to correctly recite the spell which causes Gorlagon to be a hybrid instead. Thinking of Gorlagon’s future aggressive nature, this shows that the violence in the *Gorlagon* is at least partially inherent to his own character, since he retains his *sensum hominis*.

The act of cursing him is portrayed as a very personal betrayal. She hides the sapling under her sleeve, as if it is a knife. Up until the moment that she changes him into the werewolf, she gives him the impression that she loves him, by pretending to kiss him to get in range to use the sapling. This act reminds of Arthur’s public kissing of Guinevere in the opening scene, although he does not intend to metaphorically stab her. Where Arthur’s public kissing is spontaneous, Gorlagon’s wife only fakes it.

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\(^{203}\) Day (2005) paragraph 6

\(^{204}\) Milne (1904)
There is also a parallel between Guinevere and Gorlagon, because they are both publicly reminded of secret flaws in their character. She is reminded of her adultery with Lancelot by Arthur’s affections, while Gorlagon is turned into his werewolf alter ego, which he had deliberately kept hidden in the garden. He is then very publicly casted out of his court and out of society, by letting his own dogs chase him out.

Gorlagon shortly afterwards takes a break and he states that Arthur has now learned in part the heart, the nature, and the ways of woman. Gorlagon tells Arthur here explicitly that they cannot be trusted and implicitly that Guinevere will betray him, but Arthur is more interested in hearing the rest of the story then actually heading the advice that Gorlagon gives. Gorlagon reprises his story as follows:

*Regina igitur, uiro legitimo fugato, iuuenem predictum absque mora accerciuit, regni gubernacula ei tradidit, uxorque eius effecta est.*

So the Queen, after her lawful husband had fled, summoned the earlier mentioned young man without delay, and having handed him the government of the kingdom, became his wife.

This echoes of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, at the ending of book ten, when Arthur leaves Britain to fight the Romans. He leaves Britain in the care of his cousin Mordred, who abuses Arthur’s absence to seize both Arthur’s throne and his wife for himself. Here it is inverted. Gorlagon is forced to leave, instead of leaving out of his own accord. The agency is also changed to the Queen instead of the male actor. The young man serves as a parallel to Mordred, but he does not get an active role in the betrayal. Instead, it is entirely the doing of Gorlagon’s Queen. She has the same non-descriptive title as Arthur’s Queen in the opening of the *Gorlagon*.

Meanwhile in Gorlagon’s story, it is said that he resides for two years in the forest. This is similar to the two other werewolves, Melion and Bisclavret, who first spend time in the forest before the plot is allowed to continue. For the sympathetic werewolves this is a relative peaceful period. The forest itself is typically seen as the edges of Medieval society, a space outside of

205 Day (2005) paragraph 10
206 Milne (1904)
civilisation, where those who do not belong in that civilisation find refuge, such as robbers and magical creatures. A typical example is Robin Hood, who holds himself up in Sherwood Forest, where he builds a society that rejects the domination of the clergy and aristocracy in the city. Melion and Bisclavret spend their time outside of civilisation as well, but they live a peaceful existence in that place, only interrupted by their hunting for animal prey, in order to sustain themselves.

For Gorlagon this is not the case. During his two years in the forest, he has two wolf cubs with a she-wolf, which is problematic because of the hybrid identity that he has as a werewolf. If he would be the humanlike creature as Melion or Bisclavret, then this act would evoke an image of bestiality, which is a serious sin. If the metamorphosis was radical in nature by destroying his human identity, then there wouldn’t be a problem at all, but Gorlagon is a hybrid form. The problem of bestiality remains ambiguous, but either way it does not evoke much sympathy for his character. His human nature is stressed in the next sentences, saying that he remembers the wrongs done to him by his wife, and that he looks for ways of revenge. This means that the vengeful part of Gorlagon’s character as a werewolf is his human side.

In the next part, it is this human side which causes him to take revenge by ripping apart the bodies of the two small children that his wife had with her lover. The violence of the act is also presented in an extreme manner, he does not simply kill them, but he tears them from limb to limb. There is a similarity between the two cubs he has with the she-wolf, and the two children that are being torn apart. If Gorlagon is an unreliable narrator, then it might be possible that he is actually killing his own children with his wife. It would also explain why two two year old royal children are allowed to play outside unattended. An actual wolf would have no way of reaching these royal children, not even in Medieval times. Then again, Gorlagon is not an actual wolf, since he has the intelligence of a human. The queen is presented pitiful here as well, when she learns about the loss of her children. If the author of the *Gorlagon* truly wanted to present her as being completely evil, then it is unlikely that he would show this aspect.

Afterwards he kills the queen’s brothers, but his own wolf cubs are caught and hanged. Then he spirals out of control even more and starts to attack people at random. At this point, his human sense of revenge can no longer be used as a defence for his behaviour. Gorlagon’s wolf identity takes over, as his targets now include cattle as well.

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Gorlagon continues his wild rampage until he is chased away by organised hunting parties with dogs. He tries to raid a second country as well, but he is quickly chased away. Then Gorlagon arrives at the lands of another king, who is at the end revealed to be Gargol. While he is busy looking for prey in a village, he accidently eavesdrops on two residents, who talk about how the king is going to hunt the werewolf personally out of a sense of righteousness and kindness towards his people. The kind nature of this king is being stressed. After hearing this, Gorlagon returns trembling to the woods, to decide what he will do. These actions show once again that he is not a sympathetic werewolf such as Bisclavret or Melion. It is fear that motivates him to surrender to the king, rather than regret about what he has done. Sconduto claims that this is the reaction of a human being who sees that there is some hope for him after all, instead of a bloodthirsty depraved monster.²⁰⁹ I agree that his actions show more reason than expected of a monster, and his human identity does gain the upper hand in the following scenes. However, he is forced by external forces to put an end to his rampage, not by intrinsic values. His surrender seems to be more motivated by cold calculation than any feelings of either hope or regret.

At first, Gorlagon’s submission to the King seems the same as Bisclavret’s surrender. They both go through the same feudal act of asking for clemency and showing submission. Both Gorlagon and Bisclavret lower their heads and lick the feet of the king. In the Gorlagon, it is said that he specifically asks for pardon, but only groaning sounds come out of his mouth. Afterwards, both Gorlagon and Bisclavret prove their worth to the king by hunting a stag and returning it to him.

However, after the initial surrender, the two stories have a contrasting continuation. Bisclavret did not attack people before his surrender. His kind nature continues to show when he serves his king at court, and it is only interrupted by his attacks on his wife and her lover, as revenge for permanently turning him into a werewolf. Bisclavret’s sudden violence is used as proof of his human identity underneath his wolfish appearance. For Gorlagon, it is the other way around. He has to prove his human identity by refraining from violence. At first, he succeeds in doing this, by following his master around and doing his bidding, and even by eating and drinking from the same cup, as if he was human. Then the situation changes, as the king is being called away to confer with another king. King Gargol’s absence is said to be a

journey of no less than ten days. This ten day period is a crucial detail for the narrative. The king leaves Gorlagon behind at court under the care of his wife, and he commands her to take good care of him. At that point the queen protests, as seen in the following excerpt:

Ilia autem iam lupum iabens odio propter magnam sagacitatem, quam in eo deprehenderat, quia multociens mulier odit quem maritus diliget, "Domine," ait, "timeo ne te absente, si solito loco iaceat, me nocte inuadat, cruentamque me relinquat." Cui rex: "De hoc tibi metus ne sit aliquis, in quo tanto tempore nil simile deprehendi. Verumtamen, si inde dubitas, cathenam faciam fieri, et eum ad mei strati suppedanum ligari." Aureamque cathenam rex parari imperat, qua lupo ad scansile ligato, ad destinatum negotium properat.210

But she (the Queen) already hated the wolf because of the great sagacity which she had detected in him, because it so often happens that the wife hates whom the husband loves, and she said, "Lord, I am afraid that when you are gone he will attack me in the night if he lies in his accustomed place and will leave me mangled." At which the King said, "Have no fear of that, for I have detected nothing alike in him in such a long time. However, if you have any doubt of it, I will have a chain made and will have him fastened up to my bed-ladder." And the King ordered that a chain of gold should be made, and after the wolf had been fastened up by it to the steps, he hastened away to the intended business.

Gargol’s Queen questions Gorlagon’s human identity in this excerpt, thinking he is the same beast as he was before his surrender to Gargol. Gargol does not believe her, but he takes away her concerns anyway by ordering the werewolf to be chained to the bed-ladder at night.

Gargol’s Queen mistreats him by keeping him locked on the chain all day, instead of only at night. By doing this, she shows that she only recognises his wolf identity and not his hybrid state. The theme of adultery returns once more, as it turns out that Gargol’s Queen is unfaithful as well, which proves that her judgement of Gorlagon’s character is not to be trusted. She has an illicito amore, or unlawful love, for Gargol’s sewer. Every time Gargol leaves court, she exploits his absence to make love to this sewer in their marital bed. This time, it is on the eighth

210 Day (2005) paragraph 14
On the eighth day after the King had left, they met in the bedchamber at midday and mounted the bed together, little heeding the presence of the wolf. And when the wolf saw them rushing into each other's impious embraces he blazed forth with fury, his eyes reddening, and the hair on his neck standing up, and he began to make as though he would attack them, but was held back by the chain by which he was fastened. And when he saw they had no intention of stopping the wickedness that they had begun, he gnashed his teeth, and dug up the ground with his paws, and venting his rage over all his body, with awful howls he stretched the chain with such violence that it broke in two. Released, he rushed with fury upon the sewer and threw him from the bed, and tore him so savagely that he left him half-dead.\textsuperscript{212}

Gorlagon shows his strong disposition for violence here once more, but this time it is justified within the narrative. Not only does he act in defence of his master, but he has been mistreated by Gargol’s wife as well. More so, the act of adultery must remind him of the wrongs that have been done to him by his own wife. Like the great wolf Fenrir who breaks free from his invisible chains in Norse mythology, so does the smaller Gorlagon manage to break the golden chain to unleash his wrath. However, the comparison between the two stops there. After attacking the sewer, Gorlagon does not continue to attack Gargol’s wife, but he only looks at her menacingly.

\textsuperscript{211} Day (2005) paragraph 15
\textsuperscript{212} Milne (1904)
If he was still the same wild beast as he was during the rampages, then he would not have resisted to kill her as well. By refraining from harming her he shows that he has found at least some of his humanity again.

His human identity also wins in the following scenes. Gargol’s wife pretends that Gorlagon has become violent again, and she tells the servants who rush in that Gorlagon has eaten her child and attacked her too, which he would have succeeded in if the sewer had not rescued her. She locks up the child with a single nurse to make it look like the child has actually been eaten. Then, Gargol returns surprisingly earlier than expected, on the ninth day. His wife pretends to be injured by splashing blood on her clothes and scratching her own face. Then, she rides out to him before he reaches his court, repeating her lies and telling him the werewolf has eaten their child. Shortly after, the werewolf hears his master returning and goes out of the court to meet him as well, displaying extraordinary joy for his return, which makes the king question why he would act joyfully if he had committed such a great crime. By doing this, Gargol recognises Gorlagon’s hybrid identity instead of the singular wolfish identity that his wife claims Gorlagon to have.

Gorlagon then helps the king to find his hidden son. The king confronts the sewer, who tells the same story as the queen, claiming that the child had been eaten. This proves to the king that they were both lying and he forces the sewer to confess. Meanwhile Gorlagon shows himself eager to attack the sewer again, confirming the sewer’s guilt. After a trial, the sewer is flayed alive and hanged. Gargol’s wife is quartered by horses and thrown into the fire. Both of these punishments are very severe, but for neither of these characters is any sympathy evoked, contrary to Gorlagon’s wife who is being punished at the ending. Gorlagon narrates the execution of the sewer and Gargol’s wife as if it is a normal punishment for these types of crimes, without giving much detail.

Gorlagon’s helpful behaviour during this part of the story makes Gargol question the werewolf’s nature. Gorlagon has proven to have an original human identity, which Gargol then hopes to restore. Gargol decides to let the werewolf lead him and his army to find out how to restore him. The werewolf immediately goes to the sea, wishing to cross it. This crossing of water did not occur earlier, and it is explained by the text that there is a route over land as well, but that this is longer. It reminds of Guillaume de Palerne where the werewolf Alphonse has to cross the strait of Messina twice. The first time that he does this, it is to protect the young Guillaume from assassins by kidnapping him. The second time it is to lure away the pursuers who want bring Guillaume and his lover back to the Emperor for judgement, but the second time it serves another function as well. The crossing of the strait is the final journey before
Alphonse can be restored. It is a prelude to Alphonse his restoration, which includes a bathing scene. The narrative of Guillaume de Palerne uses a metaphorical baptism to bring Alphonse back to his human form, and to his position in Medieval society. In the Gorlagon, it is not as prevalent. The crossing of Gorlagon with Gargol and his army resembles more to the crossing of the Irish Sea by King Arthur at the end of Melion. Melion himself is not present during this crossing on the ship, but he surrenders to Arthur as soon as the king sets foot on Ireland. Just as king Arthur serves as a deus ex machina to restore peace to Ireland and to restore Melion to his proper form, so does Gargol arrive in Gorlagon’s former kingdom to find out what has happened, to restore Gorlagon’s human form, and to reinstall him as king.

Gorlagon constantly breaks of his tale to invite Arthur to dismount and eat with him. Arthur replies in various ways to these invitations, often by jokingly commentating on the tale, or on the theme of eating itself. One of these jokes follows Gorlagon’s account of Gargol getting ready to cross the strait. Arthur then says:

\[
\text{Arturus. Lupus transfretare cuniens astat in litore.},
\]
\[
\text{Timeo ne si solus relinquatur desiderio transeundi undis mergatur.}^{213}
\]

Arthur. The wolf being desirous of crossing the sea, is standing on the beach. I am afraid that if he is left alone he will be drowned in his desire to get over.\(^{214}\)

This joke seems to be directed to Guillaume de Palerne, as if the author of the Gorlagon did not find it plausible for a werewolf to swim across a strait.\(^{215}\) In Melion this problem is solved by letting Melion cross in a boat to Ireland, while he is cloaked with a hood so the boatman does not recognise him as a wolf.

Returning to Gorlagon’s tale, he tells that after three days of sailing the army arrives at the werewolf’s former country. The werewolf then confirms to Gargol that they are in the right place. Gargol then sends out scouts to the city to find out what has happened, and he quickly learns from the subjects of the country that they are suffering because of the tyrannical rule of the son of the pagan king, and how the previous good king was usurped because his wife turned him into a wolf. Gargol now knows who the werewolf is. In the end, when it is revealed that

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\(^{213}\) Day (2005) paragraph 19

\(^{214}\) Milne (1904)

\(^{215}\) This was also noted by Kittredge: see chapter 1.2.1.
the king of Gorlagon’s tale is Gargol, and that Gorlagon is the werewolf, it becomes clear that after Gargol’s arrival in the country, he should have been aware that the werewolf is his brother.

This shows a plot hole in the story. If Gorlagon and Gargol are brothers, then Gargol should become suspicious of Gorlagon’s sudden absence, even if he lives three days away from his own kingdom. When Gargol arrives with the werewolf, it is known to all the inhabitants of the country what happened to Gorlagon. It seems odd that in Gorlagon’s absence of at least two years, Gargol never bothered to send a messenger to Gorlagon to inquire where he is or what he is doing. Gargol goes out of his own castle to another kingdom to discuss matters of state when his wife is sleeping with the sewer. This shows that Gargol should at least have minimal knowledge about the events that are happening in the kingdoms surrounding his own. Either the author of the Gorlagon did not think about the consequences of making these characters related or it is proof of Gorlagon’s unreliability as a narrator. One would also think that an adulterous affair resulting in a coup d’état and the magical transformation of the king would spark enough rumours to reach the neighbouring kingdoms. Especially because Gorlagon’s banishment is known to the public.

Perhaps it is wrong to judge a story about fictional werewolves for its internal logic, but by inscribing itself into a historical setting it requires at least some level of consistency, despite the willing suspension of disbelief that is needed to read a story that features metamorphosis. Whatever the case may be, Gargol’s army quickly conquers the city by using the element of surprise, and they manage to capture both the werewolf’s former wife and the son of the pagan king, who is now the tyrannical ruler. Gargol then threatens the adulteress with torture, hunger and thirst, if she does not reveal the location of the sapling. This shows that Gargol is now aware of the existence of the sapling as well, which he would have heard from the citizens, despite the fact that Gorlagon at the beginning of the story strongly stressed its secrecy. Gorlagon’s wife then denies him the location, swearing that she has broken and burned the sapling. Gargol decides to torture her anyway, but this turns out to be the correct solution, as she manages to produce the sapling.

Gargol then restores Gorlagon, using the correct incantation: *sēs homo hominisque sensum habeas*, while striking the head of the werewolf with the sapling. The werewolf instantly

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restores to his human form, which is presented as being more beautiful, graceful and noble than before he was transformed into a wolf. This shows that Gorlagon’s human identity has entirely returned, and the monstrous wolf is now both gone in Gorlagon’s appearance and attitude, or at least that is how Gorlagon presents himself in his tale.

At this sight, Gargol hugs Gorlagon, out of empathy for the hardships that he has suffered, and because of the great joy for the restoration. They both shed tears at that point. Obviously, Gargol is also happy to see his brother again, but this is still not revealed at this point in the story. At the sight of the two men hugging and crying, the watching crowd gets emotional as well and they all start crying. It is then said that out of those two men crying, one was grateful for the kindness that was shown to him, while the other pitied the lack of consideration he has shown. The first one is Gorlagon, who is grateful for the restoration of both himself and his kingdom, while Gargol feels guilty for thinking badly of the werewolf when his wife tried to trick him.

Gorlagon then officially regains his throne by the swearing of fealty of his former vassals, who are happy to see him returned. It is a scene of great relief and happiness, recalling Bisclavret’s welcome return to humanity, who is said to have been severely missed by the king who restores him, as well as by his own subjects. The happy ending of Gorlagon’s tale continues, as the focus is shifted to the adulteress and the pagan king:

Ille autem paganum regem capitalis sentencia damnuit; reginam a suo coniugio tantum amouit, sed uitam quam non meruerat pro sua ingenita clemencia ei indulsit. Alius uero rex magnis ut decebat ditatus et honoratus munribus ad propria reuersus est.218

And he (Gorlagon) condemned the pagan king to capital punishment. The Queen he only divorced, but of his inborn clemency spared her life, though she well deserved to lose it. The other King (Gargol), having been honoured and enriched with costly presents, as was befitting, returned to his own kingdom.219

The punishment that Gorlagon here describes, is quick and swift judgement for the pagan king, described in a single sentence without any unnecessary details. Not only is he pagan and an adulterer, but a tyrant as well. There is no sympathy evoked for him, which makes the beheading

218 Day (2005) paragraph 22
219 Milne (1904)
logical and just within the narrative. *Capitali sentencia* specifies that it is a beheading, although the English expression of ‘capital punishment’ has gained the broader meaning of deadly punishment. Because of the relative painlessness of beheading, it was the typical punishment for English aristocracy. With a skilled executioner it meant an instant and quick death, contrary to hanging or other methods described in the Gorlagon, such as flaying and quartering. This shows that Gorlagon behaves relatively mild towards the pagan king compared to his brother Gargol. The clemency towards the Queen also serves as proof of Gorlagon’s returned humanity and kind nature.

It reminds of the werewolf’s refusal to attack Gargol’s adulterous wife, after injuring the sewer. It shows the distinction in gender that chivalry dictates for violence. Knights were supposed to protect the weak and not hurt women and children. In *Gawain and the Dwarf* this is visible as well, in the forgiving of Ydeine by Gawain at the ending. Gorlagon has more reasons to feel vengeful towards the Queen than he does towards the pagan king. It was her plan to turn him into a werewolf and install the pagan king in his place. The ritual of turning him into a werewolf was done by her as well, and in a very personal way. She even unleashed his own hounds on him, chasing him out of the society that he belonged in. Gorlagon nonetheless shows that he is the better Christian man by turning his other cheek, and he shows his courtly human identity as well by sparing her.

At that point, Gorlagon finishes his tale, leaving the reader satisfied with the happy ending, which mostly follows the expectation pattern of the sympathetic werewolf. However, it has not yet been revealed who the werewolf of his story is.

Just as Gorlagon leaves this cliffhanger in his story, the ending will be discussed in the following chapter.
4.3 The Ending and the Answer to Arthur’s Quest

Gorlagon concludes his tale as such:

\[ Ecce, Arture, mentem et ingenium femine didicisti. Caue tibi si inde sapiencior haberis. Descende nunc et comede, quia ego narrando et tu audiendo cibum bene meruimus. \]

Now, Arthur, you have learned the heart and temperament of women. Look at yourself if you are any the wiser for it. Dismount now and eat, because we have well-deserved the meal, I for narrating, and you for listening.

Gorlagon solves Arthur’s quest with these words. The answer to what women think, is that they have thoughts of adultery and that they plan to betray their husbands. *Caue tibi* has a broader meaning than only “look at yourself”. It is a warning to look out for himself as well. Gorlagon points out to Arthur that Guinevere will betray him, just as Gargol and Gorlagon’s wives have. Arthur fails to notice this message, as he replies to the invitation to dismount and eat with a surprising question instead:

\[ Arturus. Nequaquam descendara donec quod interrogauero mihi indicaueris. \]

Gorlogan. Quid?

\[ Arturus. Quenam est ilia femina contra te opposita facie tristis, humanumque caput sanguine conspersura ante se in disco continens, que etiam tociens fleuit quociens risisti, tociens cruentum caput osculata est quociens tu tue coniugi, dum predicta referres, oscula impressisti? \]

Arthur. I will by no means dismount until you have answered the question I am about to ask you.

Gorlagon. What is that?

Arthur. Who is that woman sitting opposite you with a sad expression, and holding before her in a dish a human head bespattered with blood, who has wept whenever you have

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220 Day (2005) paragraph 22
221 Day (2005) paragraph 23
smiled, and who has kissed the bloody head whenever you have kissed your wife during the telling of your tale?²²²

This comes as a surprise. After the happy ending of Gorlagon’s tale, not all questions are answered, but Arthur does not ask about the story itself. Instead, he shifts attention to this gruesome scene, which will have been visible the entire time Gorlagon is telling his story. Arthur’s delayed response is surprising, because he has replied many times to Gorlagon’s interruptions of his own story, which gives him a chance to ask Gorlagon about it.

Gorlagon then first reveals that she is the wife of the werewolf in the story, before revealing that he himself is the protagonist of his tale. Gorlagon then goes on to explain the other characters. The second kingdom he tried to raid was that of his brother Gorleil, and the third kingdom belongs to his brother and saviour Gargol.

Afterwards, Gorlagon explains the punishment in detail. The head that the wife is kissing is that of the son of the pagan king, whose beheading he earlier mentioned. This scene strongly recalls the beheading of John the Baptist²²³. Gorlagon says that he ordered the head to be embalmed, to prevent it from rotting so he can extend the suffering of his former wife. The embalming of the body is typical for the bodies of saints and martyrs. The head of John the Baptist is assumed to have been embalmed as well, and buried separately.²²⁴

Gorlagon focuses on the public nature of her punishment, saying that the display of her guilt is more punishing to her than death would be. This reminds of the beginning of the Gorlagon, where Arthur kisses Guinevere in public, which she disapproves of, because it is not courtly behaviour.

However, in chapter 4.1 it has been shown how this kiss reminds of her adultery with Lancelot. Because of that, she is being confronted very publicly with her own wicked behaviour, just as Gorlagon’s wife is constantly reminded of her acts by the visibility of her punishment. The excessive cruelty of the punishment prevents the reading of Gorlagon as a sympathetic werewolf, but the expression of violence is secondary to the function of the punishment itself, as an intertextual link to Guinevere’s betrayal.

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²²² Milne (1904)
²²³ See chapter 2.4
²²⁴ This dissertation will not discuss the complex history of the head as a relic, because there are multiple heads that have been found and claimed to be the head of John the Baptist.
The final scene is Arthur dismounting and eating. The next day he leaves, and he returns home after a journey of nine days, wondering about the things he has heard. This shows that Arthur has in fact remained clueless about the meaning of Gorlagon’s tale, and Guinevere’s upcoming betrayal. Interestingly, it is made explicit that Arthur’s journey back takes nine days, plus the day he spends feasting with Gorlagon. This echoes Gargol’s absence again. Gargol is said to be away for no less than ten days. However, Gargol returns earlier on the ninth day. Because of this, Gargol’s Queen does not have the chance to cover up her betrayal properly. It is no coincidence that the journey of Arthur totals ten days, since it is only slightly longer than Gargol’s travels. This evokes an equation of the two characters, and shows that Arthur's Queen was cheating on him as well in his absence. Arthur has given Guinevere the opportunity to cheat on him, by initiating the quest to find out what women think, and contrary to Gargol, Arthur will not find out about her betrayal until it is too late.
Conclusion

The starting point of this dissertation was the question of the excessive violence in the *De Arthuro rege Brittaniae et rege Gorlagon lycanthropo*, and most specifically in the punishment of Gorlagon’s former wife. The most relevant research on the Gorlagon has been examined first, to discover what modern criticism has said about this violence. This research has shown that the question of the excessive violence has been observed by previous literary studies, but that the original research by Kittredge and his followers primarily focused on the origins of the *Gorlagon*. These origins were traced back to either India or Ireland, out of romanticist Orientalism or Celticism. One of the consequences of this approach was the disregard for the independent value of the Gorlagon as a unique and complex narrative, with its own specific features such as the brutal punishment. This dissertation did not focus on hypothetical origins, but it has provided a timeframe for both the manuscript and the story. The dating of the manuscript of the Gorlagon has been confirmed to be the late 14th century, while the story itself can be with certainty dated between 1188 and the late 14th century. According to intertextual referencing, the dating of the story can also be narrowed down to a range between 1188 and the first quarter of the 13th century.

Later research has partially turned away of the views of Kittredge and similar scholars, which has made room for different themes in the analysis of the *Gorlagon*. These were mostly dominated by the view that Gorlagon is a sympathetic werewolf like those in contemporary narratives, and that the violence is not excessive, but either a reflection of the sinfulness of his wife, or inherent to the wolf side of his hybrid identity. This dissertation has refuted the idea of Gorlagon as a sympathetic werewolf, by showing that his presentation as a character is ambiguous at least.

Various pieces of evidence for this ambiguity have been provided. First, Gorlagon is presented as a hybrid, opposed to the sympathetic werewolves, who have two forms but a singular human identity. Secondly, when in human form, Gorlagon’s uncourtly behaviour towards his wife and his false clemency undermine sympathy with his character. Thirdly, when in wolf form, he has a violent rampage during the banishment in the forest, which is a peaceful episode in the narratives of *Melion* and *Bisclavret*. During this rampage, he does not differentiate between targets. He attacks people related to his wife as well as random villagers.
and cattle. Finally, Gorlagon’s eventual surrender to Gargol is also motivated by fear, and not remorse, as has been shown in chapter 4.2.

After establishing that Gorlagon is not a sympathetic werewolf, this dissertation has followed different clues to explain the violence in the narrative. This has led to two important realisations. First is the close resemblance between the portrayal of Gorlagon as a werewolf, and the portrayal of these creatures found in the older Norse and Irish tradition. In this tradition, the werewolf is not a noble and kind creature, but a violent being that is detached from society, often compared to outlaws and murderers.

Second is the evocation of the biblical scene of the beheading of John the Baptist, because of Gorlagon’s name and the cruel punishment of his former wife. This is used in relation to the Arthurian setting of the Gorlagon, to establish a biblical link between Gorlagon’s tale of adultery, and Guinevere’s impending adultery. This link can be made because the beheading of John the Baptist was a consequence of his words against sinful union. This means that the violence of this final scene is not primarily used as an indicator of Gorlagon’s character, but that it is needed to give a crucial clue about Guinevere’s betrayal of Arthur.

This ultimately leads to the presentation of king Arthur as a clueless questing knight who gives his Queen the chance to cheat on him by going on an adventure to find out what women think. Just like Arthur, the modern reader becomes trapped in the textual play of the narrative, which uses both intertextual and intratextual references to tell a complex and intriguing story. This dissertation has aimed to provide some of the required medieval insight for interpreting the violence of the Gorlagon. As modern readers, our quest to find out how medieval readers thought might be just as hopeless as Arthur’s quest is, but we can only hope to see what others have missed.
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