

2019

## Illegitimacy and the Power of the Mother in the Lais of Marie de France

Claudia McCarron  
*Shepherd University, WV*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/tor>

 Part of the [American Literature Commons](#), [Comparative Literature Commons](#), [Literature in English, Anglophone outside British Isles and North America Commons](#), [Literature in English, British Isles Commons](#), and the [Literature in English, North America Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

McCarron, Claudia (2019) "Illegitimacy and the Power of the Mother in the Lais of Marie de France," *The Oswald Review: An International Journal of Undergraduate Research and Criticism in the Discipline of English*: Vol. 21 : Iss. 1 , Article 3.  
Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/tor/vol21/iss1/3>

This Article is brought to you by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Oswald Review: An International Journal of Undergraduate Research and Criticism in the Discipline of English by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact [dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu).

---

# Illegitimacy and the Power of the Mother in the Lais of Marie de France

## **Keywords**

Lais, Lais of Marie de France, Marie de France, mother

## Illegitimacy and the Power of the Mother in the *Lais* of Marie de France

Claudia McCarron

Critical scholarship on the *lais* of Marie de France has tended to focus on Marie's portrayal of romantic and courtly love—an understandable preoccupation, given that each of her twelve poems concerns the trials and tribulations of a heterosexual couple. Glyn S. Burgess encapsulates this view when he writes that “[t]he theme of love is certainly the fundamental preoccupation of the *Lais*” (ix). Less attention, however, has been given to the children born as a result of these affairs, their function within Marie's medieval worldview, and the challenges they present for their parents, even though three of the *lais*, “Milun,” “Yonec,” and “Le Fresne,” prominently feature illegitimate children. Given that illegitimacy and its discriminatory social repercussions occupy a significant space in the modern imagination, from the plays of Shakespeare to HBO's hit television series *Game of Thrones*, it is surprising to learn that the attitudes towards extramarital sex and bastardy expressed in these *lais* and medieval culture in general were much more complex than is often assumed.

Popular belief that the life of bastards in medieval Europe was rife with religious persecution stems from the sense that their parents had committed a sinful act and that the children were thus morally suspect. Since this belief has been prevalent since early modern times, it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that such discrimination grew from “early medieval

Christian doctrine” (McDougall 1). However, a closer look into the complicated dynastic politics of medieval Europe paints a strikingly different picture. Historians have pointed out that “[b]efore the late eleventh century, it must have been very difficult to say whether a man was a bastard or not” since “monogamy was not well established” and “formal marriage was widely considered to be unnecessary” (Given-Wilson and Curteis 42). Since ideas about legitimate marriage were not firmly established, neither were ideas about what marked a child as legitimate or illegitimate. Sarah McDougall builds on these findings in *Royal Bastards*, her study of the development of bastardy in the ninth through thirteenth centuries. McDougall convincingly argues that “lineage,” not a religiously sanctioned marriage, “played the fundamental role” in determining whether a child had the familial and political connections necessary to inherit (5). In a time when many noblemen married and divorced with abandon, the ancestry of the mother was of crucial importance. If she came from a powerful, well-connected family, she would be able to pass on these advantageous ties to her child, ensuring political power not only to the child, but also to whatever vassalage he or she might inherit. Whether the mother had an advantageous lineage was often a crucial factor in whether her child was considered a legitimate heir or not, as “lineage mattered far more than legality” (14). McDougall uses this view, gleaned from a careful study of medieval law and court cases, to re-evaluate the history of bastardy, revealing its deeply political and gendered nature.

It is undeniable that bastardy holds a noteworthy place in Marie’s *lais*, and a close reading of “Milun,” “Yonec,” and “Le Fresne” demonstrates

her artistic use of the contemporary perceptions McDougall describes. The trajectory of the *lais* concerns the reinstating of illegitimate children as true heirs and members of legitimate families—a development that hinges, in all cases, on maternal lineage and involvement. When read together, these three *lais* present a pragmatic politics of bastardy that characterizes Marie’s medieval worldview and provides a method for the maternal legitimation, valuation, and enfranchisement of bastard children. Such a pattern reveals the power available to women within the boundaries of a patriarchal society and how Marie manipulates these boundaries to provide her female characters with agency in love, motherhood, and societal positions.

While the Harley 978 manuscript, on which most modern translations of the *lais* base their arrangement, places “Le Fresne” first, followed by “Yonec” and “Milun,” it is most helpful for my purposes to reverse this order. Such a reversal does not present significant issues, as there is no historical or critical consensus regarding the composition dates of the *lais* (Burgess 2-3), and the Harley manuscript, in all likelihood, does not reflect Marie’s own arrangement. Reading “Milun” as the first of the *lais* concerned with bastardy followed by “Yonec” and “Le Fresne” shows a clearer development of Marie’s use of illegitimacy as a means for maternal empowerment.

“Milun” establishes the figure of the mother in a secondary but crucial role that emphasizes her ability to legitimize her child through her aristocratic connections. Marie begins the poem by claiming that she will present “a variety of beginnings” (“Milun” line 2), an appropriate disclaimer for a narrative preoccupied with the effects of an extramarital birth on both the child and his parents. Milun, the father, is “a good knight” who is famed

for his skill at jousting (11-13). This prowess catches the attention of the unnamed daughter of a baron who takes him as her lover (28). While the fact that the girl is never given a name can be read as a form of objectification, it also emphasizes her position as the daughter of a powerful family, establishing her social superiority in relation to Milun. As the daughter of a nobleman, she comes from a landed family who do not have to depend on knightly competitions or “martial exploits” (124) to win honor and financial stability as her lover must. The girl occupies, by value of her birth, a position above Milun’s, which allows her a measure of control over him.

This control manifests itself once she becomes pregnant. Recognizing that the discovery of her condition will result in the loss “of her honor and her good name” (“Milun” 58), she meets with Milun to discuss the problem. He defers to her authority, saying he will “do / whatever she counsel[s]” (65-66), a choice that at first seems unusual. Milun’s maleness should privilege him over his lover, giving him the responsibility for deciding the future of their child. His deference to his lover reveals that, as powerful as the medieval patriarchy was, it was also flexible enough to allow exceptions where questions of class and status were concerned. Milun’s lover is a striking literary example of this flexibility, as her superior social standing provides her with the power to decide her child’s future. Such power would not be available to her if she were married to a man of the same or greater social standing than herself (later in the *lai*, her freedom will be severely curtailed by marriage to a social equal). While extramarital love and pregnancy do present significant problems for the girl, they also allow her an agency when resolving those problems—agency that would not be available to her

in a lawful marriage. This irony sets the tone for the maternally focused politics of bastardy that continues to be developed throughout the three *lais*.

In deciding her son's future, Milun's lover takes care to preserve his maternal aristocratic lineage. Once he is born, she tasks Milun with transporting him to her sister, "a rich woman, worthy and prudent" ("Milun" 70). Having her son raised within her family ensures that he will have access to the benefits conferred on him by his mother's social status. While the letter that accompanies the infant does disclose the identity of his father (79), Marie allocates more lines to the girl's instructions to her sister: "this child belongs to [your] sister, / ... make sure that he's well nourished" (73-75). These lines lay out the girl's expectation that her son will not simply be given a place to stay; he will also be cared for in a way that acknowledges his maternal lineage. The letter demonstrates how, in medieval literature and society, "lineage mattered" far more than the marital status of the parents (McDougall 165). While Milun and the girl's child is read as illegitimate by modern readers, the *lai* itself makes clear that his mother's position guarantees that the boy is "cherished" ("Milun" 120) by his aunt, who treats him as a legitimate child, ensuring that he is "dubbed a knight" (292) and given all of the privileges that his mother's status bequeaths to him.

While the boy is treated as if he were legitimate son and heir throughout his childhood, in adulthood he serves as the device to legitimize the union of his parents, chiefly through the ancestral benefits passed on to him by his mother. The girl herself becomes a much more passive figure after she is forcibly wedded to "a rich lord of the region" ("Milun" 127), although she and Milun still carry on their affair. Her work to establish her

son's social standing earlier in the *lai*, however, ensures that he possesses the position and resources that will enable him to find his father. Chief of these resources is the ring that Milun gave his lover, which she decides to bequeath to their child (77). The ring, which serves as a physical proof of Milun's fatherhood, complements the girl's gift of ancestry by becoming a representation of Milun's gallantry and knightly prowess. While Milun's recognition of the ring is what eventually unites him and his son (435-37), the young man's childhood as a privileged member of the aristocracy and the uncertainty surrounding his conception—all ensured and engineered by his mother—are what enable him to develop into a more proficient knight than Milun. Discovery of his father's identity, for instance, prompts him to determine to "seek out even greater renown" than his (311). Although this development at first seems to value Milun over the mother, it was she who decided when and how Milun's identity would be revealed to the boy (81-86). Her decisions are what eventually bring the two together when Milun challenges the young man to a joust in order to restore his reputation as an unmatched knight. After he is unhorsed, Milun recognizes the boy's ring and the two have a joyful meeting (477-78). The son determines to unite his parents, even though it means killing his mother's husband (500-501). His plans to clear the path for the legitimation of their marriage prove unnecessary, however, as they learn that the husband has conveniently died (518). Marie is clear that it is still the son who "brought them together, / gave his mother to his father" (529-30). He is able to do this not only because he is a flesh and blood symbol of their love, but also because his maleness and the position his mother gave him as a member of the nobility allow him to

inherit and supersede her authority, enabling him to sanction her marriage to a man of lesser social standing. This move both proves the power of his maternal lineage and legitimizes him.

In “Yonec,” the second of the *lais* dealing with illegitimacy that I will discuss, the role of the mother in legitimizing and liberating her child expands and develops the pattern of power through maternal lineage by focusing on moral rather than social superiority. Despite the *lai*'s title, Yonec's mother is the focus of most of the poem's 554 lines. Like Milun's lover, she comes “from a good family” (“Yonec” 22) and is unwillingly married to a “rich man” (12). Her husband proves to be not only unattractive, but also jealous, and in order to prevent her from taking a younger lover, he keeps her “locked ... inside his tower” (27). The girl may not be her husband's social superior, but she clearly far outstrips him as far as morality is concerned. Bemoaning her isolation and loneliness, she exclaims that “My fate is very harsh. / ... What is this jealous old man afraid of?” (68, 71). She notes that he has prevented her from attending church (75), a notable stricture in medieval Europe's highly Christianized culture. Even more damning, the girl knows that his suspicions are unfounded, and if he were to set her free, she promises that she would be “very gracious to my lord / even if I didn't want to be” (79-80). In her final condemnation of him, the girl claims that her husband was “baptized / ... in the river of hell” (88-89). The man's cruelty and selfishness have marked him as unworthy of his more virtuous and dutiful wife, negating his rights as a husband. This negation is demonstrated by the fact that God Himself sanctions the girl's extramarital affair. Immediately after she prays for a lover (103-104), a hawk flies

in through the tower window and transforms into “a handsome and noble knight” (115). The girl’s moral superiority takes the place of the social superiority of Milun’s lover, enabling her in a similar manner to make decisions regarding her relationships and sexuality.

The girl’s moral purity not only becomes a crucial part of the lineage that she passes on to her son, but it also allows her to conflate and assume the roles of both father and mother. Her morality is further proven by her loyalty to her fairy lover, Muldumarec. Both he and she treat their relationship as a legitimate marriage rather than a shameful affair. In fact, they even undergo a marriage ceremony of sorts. After declaring that she will only “take him as her lover / if he believe[s] in God” (“Yonec” 138-39), she arranges for him to take the Eucharist (187-88). This ceremony involves the couple lying together side by side while a chaplain administers the sacrament. Both the religious ritual and the sexual intimacy foreshadowed by their physical closeness parallel a Christian marriage ceremony. Their relationship after this ceremony likewise suggests a renewing, pure love rather than sinful passion, as they share a mental as well as physical intimacy that proves redemptive for the girl. By finding companionship, her life once again “become[s] precious to her” (215), and she longs for “her love all the time” (219). For his part, Muldumarec is courteous and attentive, promising to visit her “whenever” she “please[s]” (199). By undercutting the authority of the girl’s legal husband, Marie creates a space for her heroine that allows her to determine her own fate. The fact that she chooses a God-fearing, kind-hearted man to share her life with and that she binds herself to him through a Christian ceremony vindicates her to a medieval audience and

further cements her morality, which ensures that her child, when he is born, will be as deserving as any child born to a legally married couple. Her loyalty to Muldumarec also prepares her for the process of taking on his role, and passing on a paternal as well as a maternal legacy to their child.

The girl is forced to take on the paternal role due to the brutal murder of Muldumarec. In a final proof of his reprobation, her husband's jealousy over her newfound happiness prompts him to investigate and discover her affair. Rather than confronting her with the knowledge, he instead devises a brutal trap to kill her lover, mounting "great spikes of iron" ("Yonec" 286) on the outside of the tower window. When the girl innocently calls Muldumarec to her, he is wounded by the spikes. Freeing himself and flying through the window, he "alight[s] on the bed . . . / staining the bedclothes with blood" (315-16). This juxtaposition of imagery related to both birth and death is supported by Muldumarec's announcement that not only is he mortally wounded, but his lover is also "pregnant with his child" (320, 327). In addition, the girl assumes her new role as a paternal figure. When Muldumarec flies back to the fairy kingdom he rules over, she follows him, telling him that she "would rather die" than spend the rest of her life with her husband (411). However, he urges her to return, providing her with a ring that will make her husband treat her kindly, and giving her a sword she is to pass on to their son when he comes of age. He also gives her the responsibility of telling their son "the story of his death, / how he was wrongfully killed" (431-32). This responsibility to remember and tell his history makes the girl responsible for transferring both her and Muldumarec's lineage to Yonec. While the circumstances surrounding this confla-

tion are undeniably tragic, combining the maternal and paternal lineages makes her the ultimate authority regarding the future status of her child.

By passing on her lineage of moral purity to Yonec, the girl makes certain that he will be prepared to take on his father's royal legacy. She takes pains to raise him to be a pure and noble man, as the *lai* relates that "Her son was born and nourished, / protected and cherished" ("Yonec" 456-57). As a result, Yonec grows up to be a young man who is both "brave" and "strong" as well as "generous" and "munificent" (461-62). Her legal husband's part in imparting this legacy is hinted to be minimal. Despite the fact that he is now kind to his wife and no longer imprisons her, this change of heart is a sham, only brought about by the magical intervention of Muldumarec. Thus, the responsibility and credit for proving Yonec's lineage falls to his mother.

When Yonec comes of age, his mother introduces him to his father's legacy and in the process confirms his position as the ruler of the fairy kingdom and Muldumarec's avenger. Soon after Yonec is knighted, he and his mother travel with her husband to Caerlon ("Yonec" 467-68). His new knighthood is significant, as Burgess writes that in medieval culture the knighting ceremony would "have acted as a regenerative process in the boy's life, marking his readiness for a new beginning" (72). Yonec's new beginning takes place when his mother names him Muldumarec's heir, and he must take on the responsibilities inherent to that position. On the way to Caerlon, the group becomes lost and, quite conveniently, stumbles upon Muldumarec's tomb. Upon inquiry, they learn that the people of the land "have waited many days, / . . . for the son" of Muldumarec and his lover

(“Yonec” 522, 524). Yonec’s mother takes the opportunity to tell him about Muldumarec and how he was killed, revealing his true lineage and duties to him. Giving him Muldumarec’s sword, she collapses on her lover’s tomb and dies (539). When Yonec realizes that she is dead, he kills her husband and “with his father’s sword / he avenged his mother’s sorrow” (543-44). He is then proclaimed the “lord” of the land (550), a position his mother prepared him for morally and socially. “Yonec” complicates the customs of illegitimacy and maternal lineage found in “Milun” by conflating moral and social superiority, and by placing all of the power of legitimation under the control of the mother. Although this power does come at great psychological and physical cost, it further empowers the figure of the mother and her illegitimate child, building on the social patterns governing illegitimacy in a way that is quite daring.

Marie’s manipulation of the politics of illegitimacy to empower the women of her *lais* reaches its height in “Le Fresne.” A deeply moving story of the rags-to-riches ascent of an abandoned child, the poem also demonstrates the flexibility of bastardy as a social distinction and its possible effects on a child’s upbringing and prospects. The titular main character is born to legally married parents but, due to the ignorance and carelessness of her mother, is designated as illegitimate and abandoned immediately after birth. Fresne’s mother is married to a “brave and worthy” man (“Le Fresne” 6) whose best friend’s wife becomes pregnant before she does. The other woman gives birth to twin boys, and her delighted husband promises to send one to his friend to foster (17). Presumably jealous of the other woman’s good fortune, Fresne’s mother spitefully proclaims, “Both he and

she are disgraced by this,” announcing that a twin birth is impossible unless the woman has had “two men . . . with her” (36, 42). Her proclamation has devastating consequences. The other woman is imprisoned by her husband, while Fresne’s mother becomes the object of hatred for “[e]very woman” in the region (55). Moreover, when she becomes pregnant shortly afterwards, she herself delivers twin girls (70). Recognizing her mistake, she declares that she “condemned myself / when I slandered all womankind” (79-80). However, she nevertheless decides to hide her shame instead of admitting to her slander by abandoning one of the girls. Fresne’s origin story demonstrates the fluidity of illegitimacy and how, in pre-modern times, a mother was the only one who could vouch for the legitimacy of her child. By abandoning Fresne, her mother marks her as illegitimate, despite her lawful birth.

Robbed of a strong mother figure, Fresne must struggle throughout the *lai* to prove her status as a legitimate daughter on her own. Although this would at first seem quite different from the cases of Milun’s son and Yonec, a closer reading demonstrates how it builds on the same principles of maternal caring and lineage to constitute Marie’s most radical transformation of the politics of illegitimacy. As Michelle Freeman has pointed out, Fresne is protected and raised by “a community of sisters” (16). From the servant girl who leaves her at a convent (“Le Fresne” 171-72), to the peasant woman who nurses her (206), to the abbess who “raise[s] the child herself” (227), Fresne is surrounded by a network of women who look after and cherish her after her biological mother abandons her. She grows into “a beautiful” and “refined” young woman (237-38), who, as later events will

demonstrate, has inherited her foster mothers' legacy of love and sacrifice. The maternal lineage that proved so crucial in the last two *lais* is undeniably present in "Le Fresne" but in a revolutionary new form. Instead of one mother, she has many, and instead of a social position, they endow her with a moral one. While this reliance on moral superiority was developed at length in "Yonec," "Le Fresne" takes it a step further. Yonec's mother was able to pass on her lover's prominent social position to her son along with her morality, and it is this conflation that marked Yonec as a legitimate son and heir. In contrast, Fresne's mothers are only able to offer her their moral attributes, which, when unmoored from an influential social position, have little currency in a feudal society. As Sharon Kinoshita points out, "without an identifiable lineage, she is nothing more than a foundling with no value" (36). By choosing to characterize her heroine in this manner, Marie poses an issue that the rest of the *lai* investigates, asking whether the morality bequeathed to Fresne by her surrogate mothers will be enough to override her lack of social status and to overcome the stigma of her illegitimacy.

Fresne must leave the convent, and the security her abbess foster mother provides, when she is still quite young, forcing her to enact the sacrifice, kindness, and pragmatism that her mother figures would otherwise have provided. A young lord named Gurun falls in love with her beauty and by "plead[ing]" and "promis[ing] so much" ("Le Fresne" 273) convinces her to become his lover. Gurun is then unwilling to allow Fresne to remain in the relative safety of the convent, telling her that the abbess will surely be "upset" if Fresne falls "pregnant right under her roof" (282-83). He convinces her to "come away" with him to his castle (286), promising never

to abandon her. By leaving the convent, Fresne enters into the “startlingly cynical” world of “the sexual politics of the feudal aristocracy” (Kinoshita 34). In the eyes of Gurun’s vassals, her kind heart is of no consequence, and neither is the fact that they “love her for her noble character” (“Le Fresne” 311). She is an impediment to the social order they are accustomed to and draws Gurun’s interest away from “having a child born in wedlock” (324) and bequeathing his property to that child. The political difficulty Fresne’s status poses is illustrated by the brutal metaphor Gurun’s vassals use to describe her. She is an “ash” that “bears no fruit” which Gurun must discard for another tree that “bears nuts and thus gives pleasure” (339-40). Fresne is a bare tree Gurun has no use for, as she has no political ties or powerful lineage to pass on, and any children she bears him will be unfit to inherit his land and position. As a result, his vassals insist that he abandon her for a fruitful, noble wife who will give birth to legitimate heirs. Caught in this hostile environment, Fresne must depend on herself, and must protect her interests in a sacrificial manner that has been characterized in the earlier *lais* as maternal. Despite the fact that she is “hidden away” from Gurun’s new bride, she “continue[s] to serve her lord well” (349, 353) and even shows kindness and care to his fiancée (380). Fresne’s decision to live humbly and uncomplainingly in the house of her former lover and his future wife not only demonstrates her practicality (after all, she has nowhere else to flee to); it also shows the kindness and self-sacrifice that has been coded in the other two *lais* as maternal, so much so that Gurun’s future mother-in-law comes to “love and admire” Fresne (384). In this manner, Fresne assumes the motherly role filled not only by her many foster mothers, but also by

Milun's lover and Yonec's mother.

Painful as Fresne's experiences may be, they prepare her to prove her position and claim her inheritance as a legitimate child. This development allows Fresne to bequeath her maternal moral lineage to herself and prove her own identity as a legitimate child worthy of an inheritance. In a twist of fate, Gurun's bride-to-be is Fresne's own twin sister, and his mother-in-law is the woman whose jealous declaration marked Fresne as a bastard and who abandoned her at birth. The key players are all in place for a triumphant reunion and reconciliation, but in this case it is Fresne who proves her position as a legitimate child, not her mother, and this proof is only made possible through the self-sacrifice inherited from her foster mothers. The night before the wedding, Fresne sets about arranging the couple's bridal chamber and is disappointed with the quality of the cover laid out on the bed. She instead decides to replace it with "her birth garment" ("Le Fresne" 403), the rich "embroidered silk robe" (123) she was found in as an infant. When Gurun's mother-in-law sees the robe, she immediately recognizes it as the robe "she'd given / to her infant daughter when she abandoned her" (415-16). When questioned, Fresne is able to produce the ring that was also left with her, causing the penitent woman to declare "My dear, you are my daughter!" (450). Fresne's sacrifice of her robe reveals her true nature as a legitimate child by prompting her mother's confession and opens the way for her legal marriage to Gurun, which closes the *lai*. The fairy-tale quality of this ending masks the revolutionary claim Marie makes through Fresne. By stripping her of the support and love of a high-born mother that was crucial in the last two *lais*, she forces her protagonist to find the resources

for nurturance and goodness within herself and ends with an implicit declaration that these characteristics are enough to mark her as being nobly born and worthy of an advantageous marriage. Such a reading discounts the social hierarchy that mattered so deeply in “Milun” and “Yonec,” suggesting that the true marker of legitimacy lies in the children themselves, not in their biological circumstances. However, it still locates this power firmly within the mother figure, as Fresne’s maternal lineage and motherly caring for her sister are what cause her to be recognized.

When read together, “Milun,” “Yonec,” and “Le Fresne” reveal Marie’s transformation of medieval ideas about legitimacy and lineage into a network of motherly authority and power, which reaches the height of its development and progression in “Le Fresne.” At first, the overwhelming focus on power through marriage and motherhood may seem somewhat conventional. After all, Marie is locating female power precisely in the maternal roles that are most commonly used to oppress women, and one of her three heroines dies as a result of assuming that authority. However, the fact that Marie portrays female power as existing within, rather than outside of, societally accepted roles, provides a realistic depiction of the autonomy available to highborn medieval women, while still allowing her heroines to manipulate and question the validity of those same roles. This acknowledgment of existing social structures presents a clear picture of the complex dynamics of the medieval patriarchy, while still paving the way for a more recognizable feminist literary tradition that would not emerge until centuries later.

## Works Cited

- Burgess, Glyn S. *The Lais of Marie de France: Text and Context*. U of Georgia P, 1987.
- Freeman, Michelle A. "The Power of Sisterhood: Marie de France's 'Le Fresne.'" *French Forum*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1987, pp. 5-26. *JSTOR*.
- Given-Wilson, Chris, and Alice Curteis. *The Royal Bastards of Medieval England*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.
- Kinoshita, Sharon. "Two for the Price of One: Courtly Love and Serial Polygamy in the 'Lais' of Marie de France." *Arthuriana*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1998, pp. 33-55. *JSTOR*.
- Marie de France. "Le Fresne." *The Lais of Marie de France*. Translated by Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante, Labyrinth, 1982, pp. 73-91.
- . "Milun." *The Lais of Marie de France*. Translated by Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante, Labyrinth, 1982, pp. 162-77.
- . "Yonec." *The Lais of Marie de France*. Translated by Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante, Labyrinth, 1982, pp. 137-54.
- McDougall, Sarah. *Royal Bastards: The Birth of Illegitimacy, 800-1230*. Oxford UP, 2017.