1 To whom God has given knowledge
2 And the ability to speak well,
3 He should not keep quiet about it nor hide it,
4 Rather he should gladly put himself forward.
5 When a great good is much heard,
6 Then does it first flower,
7 And when it is praised by a number,
8 Then has it fully blossomed.
9 The ancients had a custom
10 (So Priscian testifies)
11 In the books which they made back then,
12 They spoke quite obscurely
13 For those who were yet to come
14 And who were to learn them,
15 Who would be able to gloss the letter there
16 And add to the text out of their own intelligence
   (interpretation).
17 The (old) philosophers knew this would happen,
18 And realized themselves,
19 The more time would pass,
20 The keener of wit people would be
21 And would better know how to pay attention
22 To what could be passed over there.
23 He who wishes to protect himself from vice
24 Must work hard and strive
25 To undertake a great work:
26 By this means he can distance himself further
27 And deliver himself from great sorrow.
28 For this reason I began to think
29 Of making some good story
30 And to draw it from Latin into French;
31 But this would hardly be of any worth to me:
32 So many others have undertaken as much.
33 I thought of the lays that I had heard.
34 I did not doubt, I knew well,
35 That for remembrance they made them
36 Of the adventures they had heard,
37 Those who first began them
38 And who sent them on ahead.
Marie de France, *Lais*, General Prologue, 2

39 Plusurs en ai oï conter,  
40 Nes voil laissier ne oblier.  
41 Rimé en ai e fait ditié,  
42 Soventes fiez en ai veillié!

39 I have heard a number related,  
40 I don’t want to leave them or forget them.  
41 I have put them into rhyme and made poems out of them,  
42 I’ve often stayed up late over this task!