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MONOLINGUALISM AND ENDOGAMY: FRENCH EXAMPLES

RAIMON VIDAL DE BESALÚ SUGGESTED THAT “la parladura francesa” was more suited to narrative than to lyric expression, and it should come as no surprise to find French versions of the “Sleeping Beauty” tale of *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser*. The near identical tale of Troylus and Zellandine in *Perceforest* has often been compared to the Occitan-Catalan tale and will be discussed in the second part of this chapter. In the first part I will examine the opening of the thirteenth-century Old French romance *Richars li Biaus*, which begins with an episode that has striking similarities to that of *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser*. In examining an Old French text that predates the Catalan and Franco-Italian texts by more than a century, I am not making any claims for its status as their source. Quite on the contrary, *Richars li Biaus* demonstrates that when a fairly common narrative motif appears in a monolingual romance, as opposed to a text composed in a hybrid language, it appears to allude not to the politics of maintaining and breaching borders, but to the opposite problem, that of incestuous sameness (represented by the threat of endogamy) that has to be wrested by an intruder from another realm or family into fertile exogamy. In this chapter, the sexual-political matrix of *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser*, *Blandin*, and *Belris* remains the same, predicated on the idea that medieval sociopolitical ideologies relied heavily on exogamy (the obligation to marry someone to whom one is not related, by blood, affinity, or spiritual affinity) as a justification of territorial expansion through both marital alliances and warfare.

The Old French *Richars li Biaus* (after c. 1250), by a certain *mestre* Requis, has been identified as a text from the northern Picard or Walloon regions, a linguistic border area between Dutch and French where French was cultivated as a literary language from the mid-twelfth century, but coexisted with Dutch and Latin in administrative documents from the early thirteenth century onward.¹ A significant part of the romance is reproduced or echoed in the mid-fourteenth-century prose epic *Lion de Bourges*, which also implies

some degree of diffusion in the regions bordering the French and Flemish regions (its editors agree that it was composed in the region of Tournai). The vast prose romance *Perceforest* (c. 1337–44) is from the same region and appears to be the work of a Flemish author who worked in French for Count Guillaume I of Hainaut.² Manuscript C of the *Perceforest* (Burgundian, c. 1459–60) gives the fullest and most coherent version of the tale of Troïlus and Zellandine.

Richars li Biaus is most noted for its “grateful dead” narrative, where Richars is assisted by the ghost of a knight whom he has buried. This striking story of gratitude, debt, and reward opens with Richars’ birth as a result of rape, but it has also been identified, most recently by Elizabeth Archibald, as a “near-miss” incest narrative.³ A widowed king believes that his beloved daughter, Clarisse, will be seduced should he ever leave her unattended (lines 183–88). He builds a walled orchard encircled by *entes entées* (grafted trees), fills it with fruit trees, and plants a shady sycamore at its centre. He encloses Clarisse inside it with her governess and advises her that she is safe to eat as much of the orchard’s fruit as she likes before his return (lines 189–240). Clarisse stays in the orchard for a few days. The narrator does not say if she eats the fruit as she is told to do, but she develops a fever that makes her teeth chatter as she shivers with cold (lines 252–62). Her governess makes her drink seven cups of claret laced with “pieument et . . . mouré” (honeyed spices and hydromel) to heat her blood and—strangely—to make her forget her sickness:⁴

Buvez, fille! ch’est bon clarés,
par bon boire plus caut arés;
dont buverez ce bon pieument,
s’engignerez plus soutilment
le mal qui si trembler vous fait,
tout oublierés entresait.

(lines 281–86)

[Drink, daughter! It’s good claret; by drinking it you will feel hotter. By drinking this good spiced wine, you will deceive the sickness more subtly that is making you tremble; you will forget everything.]

Clarisse staggers drunkenly under the shade of the spreading sycamore tree, where she collapses; lies *souwinne* (prone); and falls into a deep sleep, having taken the precaution of covering her face from the sun’s rays with a piece

of silken cloth (lines 296–304). A young knight errant, Loÿs le Preus, makes his way to the king's orchard desiring to catch a glimpse of both the good herbal garden and the princess that it contains (lines 333–41). He climbs up an apple tree; leaps over the wall; and enters the orchard, where he finds Clarisse lying in her drunken stupor, “sans garde” (unguarded) (line 352). He removes the cloth, gazes on her sleeping face, and rapes her. She conceives a son, Richars, who is abandoned and brought up by a count and countess. Richars' adventures are a quest to identify, reunite, and marry his parents.

This opening part of *Richars li Biaus* is most striking for its treatment of the unconscious incestuous desire in the relationship between the king and his daughter, whom he has named after his dead wife (lines 108–28), a desire that is consciously acknowledged when the adult Richars meets Clarisse and nearly falls in love with her. This incestuous subtext determines the romance's treatment of sexual desire. *Richars li Biaus* is also striking for the narrative's near obsession with the hero's violent conception. The rape of the sleeping Clarisse by a trespassing stranger is told five times in all, once by the narrator, three times by Clarisse, and once by Loÿs. The first account underlines Loÿs' determination to trespass in the girl's enclosed orchard and presents some similarities to Frayre's behavior toward Sor. Loÿs notes that she is unprotected (lines 351–52). He crosses himself, then lifts up the cloth protecting Clarisse's face from the sunlight: “s'a descouviert / le vis Clarisse tout a plain” (He uncovered Clarisse's face completely) (lines 362–63). As she does not move when he kisses her three times on the lips, he reaches the same conclusion as that of Frayre de Joy, that her lack of violent response gives him consent to have sex with her, and he acts on his sexual impulse (lines 384–86).

The scene is charged with erotic signs emphasizing exogamy, as the encounter is in a fruit orchard surrounded by *entes entées*, trees that have been grafted to increase their fertility. There is no need to expand here on the commonplace associations that were made between genealogy, degrees of parentage, and the branches of a tree. Suffice it to say that the grafted branch, often added via the female line, introduces new seed to the lineage. Clarisse's beauty in her father's eyes includes her similarity to a fruit tree: “ains arbres ne porta telz branchez; . . . et la mamelle que ot dure . . . reonde aussi con une pomme” (No tree had ever borne such a branch; and her hard breasts . . . were as round as apples) (lines 164, 167–69). A grafted branch also served as a metaphor for illegitimacy, and Richars' conception is both illegitimate and surreptitious. Loÿs enters the

orchard, where her sickness has made Clarisse tremble like a leaf (line 254), by climbing an apple tree. Enclosed fruit trees in related texts are inevitably bound up with fertility, as well as beliefs regarding the effects of fruit on both conception and gestation.⁵ In the anonymous Breton *lai* of *Tydorel*, for example, a barren queen is abducted and impregnated by a *chevalier faé* after she and her ladies eat a great deal of fruit and fall asleep in an orchard (lines 23–68). The line “li plusor ont mangé du fruit” appears again in the lady’s subsequent account to her son, who can never sleep (lines 28, 372), as if eating fruit and sleeping were important contributory factors in his conception.⁶

Clarisse wakes up and only when Loÿs trips over his own spurs on the wet grass that surrounds the tree does she realize that he has impregnated her (lines 359–60, 387–96). Loÿs’ access to Clarisse is ensured by a fruit tree associated with the Fall and with the acquisition of knowledge, but the garden’s wet fertility ensures that he cannot escape unseen. In this marshy Eden, Loÿs flounders to stay upright, and the woman of this garden is purely a passive, even initially faceless, object. Clarisse’s sycamore may shield her from the rays of the sun, as does her silken cloth, but the sun is not her worst enemy in her father’s apparent haven. Worse, it turns out that Clarisse has been abandoned, although she is sick, drunk, and unconscious, because her governess has gone to hear Mass (lines 425–26).

In her distress on awakening, Clarisse tells her governess that she has been killed: “Uns chevaliers fu or cheens, / . . . qui m’a morte” (There was a knight in here, . . . that has killed me) (lines 432–33). She may have lost her name (“tost en avrai perdu mon nom”) because she does not know the lineage of the man who has impregnated her (lines 437–38), but the governess replies that Clarisse has merely had a dream and that dreams are always deceptive (lines 445–48). If the governess attributes Clarisse’s lies and her “dream” to her consumption of the medicinal wine, Clarisse’s interpretation of events of which she has little conscious knowledge draws attention to the ambiguous circumstances of her father’s protective enclosure of her, for her “name” is not her own: it is that of her dead mother. By losing both her life and her name through a deathlike sleep and a sexual assault, she has symbolically reenacted her dead mother’s transference of both life and name to herself in childbirth. It follows that Richars’ conception is placed within a lineage of dead mothers, one dead through childbirth, the other “dead” at the moment of conception. Before his encounter with his own double, the anonymous dead knight, the line between the living and the dead has been narrowed for Richars.

Clarisse's violent illness prior to her rape is not developed after she awakens, as if her sickness contributed to the conception of her son, and was dispelled by it. When Clarisse's tells her own version of his conception to the adult Richars, she says that she was asleep, but she does not say why (lines 2957–67). Like Loÿs, who has never spoken to her and did not know why she had lost consciousness, she omits to mention that she had fallen ill. In Loÿs' boastful account of his youthful adventure (lines 3696, 3711–32), he merely says that he raped the princess while she slept. However, he says that he read the shudders she made on waking up as a sign that he has taken her virginity and made her pregnant:

Ens en entray et vi la bielle
 Endormie en une praielle,
 Et tant li fis je de damage
 Que li toli son puchelage;
 Je m'en revinch mout tost arrier,
 Car grant paour och d'encombrier.
 Dont s'esveilla la damoiselle
 Et tressali si comme chelle
 Qui dist que de moy ert enchainte,
 Ne sai se fu parole fainte,
 Mais grant paour, ains qu'en ississe,
 Oy que la tieste ne pierdisse.

(lines 3721–32)

[I went in and saw the beautiful girl asleep in a meadow, and I harmed her so that I took her virginity. I drew away very quickly because I was afraid I would meet some opposition. Then the girl woke up and shuddered, like someone who was saying that she was pregnant by me. I do not know if her words were false, but I was most afraid that I would lose my head before I got out of the place.]

Loÿs suggests that even her body language may be a lie, “Ne sai se fu parole fainte,” and blames her shuddering rather than his own fear of discovery for his flight from the orchard. Richars is delighted to hear Loÿs' version of events, as it correlates exactly with the description he was given by his mother. Neither he nor the narrator condemns Loÿs' actions or beliefs. However, Loÿs' account does set up a troublesome question, as he was correct in surmising that her shiver signaled pregnancy, but did not know

that she was lying in a drunken stupor after her governess had administered a remedy for this very shivering. He muses that her *parole* may have been *fainte*, in that the shivering itself, as the continuing symptom of her sickness, may not have signaled the moment of conception. The governess presented the medicinal wine to Clarisse as a means of deceiving her sickness through forgetting about it. It seems necessary to return to the opening scenes of the text and to reassess Clarisse's conception of Richars as it is told by the narrator, rather than its protagonists.

Prior to her rape, Clarisse's consumption of food and drink is placed in an incestuous continuum, in that Clarisse's father has displayed his young daughter in the public hall throughout her *norreture*, her upbringing, and enjoyed the sight of her (line 129). He has made her eat every day at his royal table "sans dangier" (without threat) at the marriageable age of fifteen (lines 180–81). As she reaches puberty, the king realizes that his daughter's public consumption as a substitute wife may make her vulnerable, or at least he fears that *someone* will eventually ravish her. He replaces his banqueting table with the enclosed garden traditionally used by the jealous husband to imprison his wife (lines 189–212). Clarisse becomes a *puella custodita*, familiar from other texts. In Gautier d'Arras' *Eracle* (a text preserved in the same manuscript as the sole copy of *Richars*), Athanaïs' adultery is excused on the grounds that by imprisoning her, her husband made her adultery inevitable.⁷ The imprisoned wife or marriageable daughter is the target for many seducers in literature, but unlike Athanaïs or Flamenca, or indeed the mythological figure of Danaë, all Clarisse experiences is a diet of fruit, indigestion, and assault.

If a bodily tremor is taken by her and by Loÿs as a sure sign of pregnancy, her symptoms on awakening may well be misinterpreted by both of them, as she has merely returned to the state she was in before she drank the spiced wine. In medieval and early modern gynecology, shivering was a known sign of quickening, the first movements of the fetus that are felt by the mother some three months after conception. Clarisse has already displayed the sure sign of either conception or established pregnancy before Loÿs enters the garden. As her father has imprisoned her in an orchard and encouraged her to eat her fill of its fruit on the grounds that she is safe to do so (in the same way that she could eat at his public table "without danger"), there is a strong hint that he, not Loÿs, has planted the seed that will make Clarisse bear fruit. This possibility may in turn be silently recognized by the governess, for abortions were traditionally induced through the administration of a heavy dose of alcohol mixed with medicinal herbs, and this orchard doubles as a herb garden.

Clarisse's father returns and notices immediately that his daughter's face has altered in color (another sure sign of pregnancy). Both Clarisse and the governess suggest that she is merely suffering from a sickness of three days' standing that will pass within a week, but the girl spends eight months in her father's castle, and in the ninth, she becomes a mother (lines 471–76). Her father has a violent reaction to the infant's birth (lines 481–92). Richars is exposed, wrapped in a silk cloth given by Clarisse (not the cloth that covered her face in the orchard), and a luxurious belt and buckle (lines 521–26). He is unbaptized and has a pinch of salt (in a ritual observed for newborns prior to baptism) tucked into his clothes (lines 562–63).⁸ He is found by a huntsman, who undresses the child and observes that he is a “belle proie” (line 646). Richars is viewed as a good prey, just as Clarisse regretted losing her son's soft flesh (“tendre chars”) (line 531). The huntsman takes Richars to his wife, who also unwraps the infant and scrutinizes his face (lines 647–62). Both agree that their find is a good piece of game and observe that “il est digne de haute table” (he is worthy of a noble table) (line 667). Richars is literally presented as the fruit of Clarisse's imprisonment in the orchard, albeit turned into hunted game, “chars” (line 531), by his exposure. He, like his mother, is worthy of consumption at a nobleman's table, and he, like Clarisse, is stripped of a covering of silk cloth by someone who perceives his unveiled face as good prey for a predator. These images continue the subtle hints of exploitation that surround Clarisse's fate in her father's court. The two crosses on the baby's shoulder should identify his noble lineage, but they are noted by the countess only after she has identified him as a fine object of consumption (line 669).

Joan Brumlik has suggested that the medieval romance tradition known as the Flight from the Incestuous Father thrives on actively suppressing the father's rape of his daughter, because heroines such as Manekine and Emaré flee before their fathers can act on their desires.⁹ However, Elizabeth Archibald has pointed out that although father-daughter incest was silenced in both legal and literary texts, medieval adaptations of incest narratives find common ways of symbolizing without naming the consummated incest of their source, mostly through riddles and through food metaphors. One example cited by Archibald from the Prose *Tristan* combines a verse riddle and a food metaphor that is particularly apposite for *Richars li Biaus*:¹⁰

Un arbre, fait il, oi jadis,
Que j'amai plus que paradis.
Tant le gardai que fruit porta;

La biauté del fruit m'enorta
 A ce que je la flor en pris.
 Après le fruit tant en mespris
 Que le fruit manjai sanz refu.
 Vassal, devine que ce fu!

[He said, "I once had a tree that I loved more than Paradise. I watched over it so long that it bore fruit; the beauty of the fruit excited me so much that I took its flower. Afterward, I despised the fruit so much that I ate it without any refusal. Vassal, guess what happened!"]

Here the father, a cannibalistic giant, boasts that he deflowered his daughter, the "fruit" of his beloved wife, and later ate her. It is striking that a fourteenth-century adaptation of *Richars li Biaus*, *Lion de Bourges*, should contain an explicit father-daughter incest narrative.¹¹ Such texts are also strongly concerned with the tensions between a marital system that was predicated on exogamy but that sought to keep lands within kinship and alliance groupings, something that would be guaranteed by marrying a blood relative or affine (endogamy). As Yin Liu has pointed out, in medieval romances, "to be strictly accurate, the threat is not only incest but also the violation of exogamy."¹² The majority of the French and Middle English incest-themed romances play on the threat that is posed to exogamy by possessive parents and by courtiers who privilege the maintenance of patrilinear succession. In this context, *Richars li Biaus*, composed in a linguistic borderland region but in a single language, appears to question the reliability of grafting a family tree. Clarisse is emphatically associated with both father-daughter incest and with an ambiguous conception scene, one that is narrated repeatedly in order to display its inherent unreliability. Loÿs is a passing stranger who makes an opportunistic assault on a desirable, enclosed noblewoman, but he may well be accidentally led into membership of an incestuous lineage that has already been established.

Food and consumption mark Richars' reunion with this problematic maternal lineage. When the adult Richars meets his grandfather and mother, they are eating together at a table that is illumined by Clarisse's beauty (lines 1951–58). Richars' sexual desire for Clarisse is stalled only by the prompt warnings of Nature, who tells him not to touch her, and he sits down at the same table to join in their meal (lines 1981–82). Clarisse scrutinizes this handsome stranger and calls on God, the "father of all" to witness that he looks like the man who lay with her when she was sleeping alone in the

orchard (lines 1991–93). Later, as Richars fights their assailants, she prays to God, her father, “who made your daughter into your own mother” to save this man but cannot fathom why she feels a loving and protective urge toward him (lines 2055–60). It is the silken cloth, not his birthmark of two crosses, that enables Clarisse to recognize her son, as if the ostensible sign of noble birth were a red herring throughout the text, and her recollection of her rape were the true marker of their connection by blood (lines 2328–46, 2363–68). A silk cloth, initially placed over her face to protect it, stripped away by Loÿs, and another cloth used to wrap and identify the infant as a noblewoman’s child, act as the sign that *almost* allows exogamy to happen: the king is both pleased and aggrieved to see the arrival of his grandson Richars (lines 2369–70). The narrator adds that this piece of silk was originally sent to Clarisse from Carsidone (line 2366), which is the city ruled by the sultan who is currently, many years later, besieging the court in the hope of abducting Clarisse and marrying her (lines 2813–15). This cloth represents yet another vain attempt to move the daughter out of her father’s clutches and into an exogamous marriage. Clarisse may be an adult who has long ago experienced childbirth (and therefore betrothed by *unitas carnis* to the child’s father),¹³ but she is still imprisoned within her endogamic fortress and is besieged by a foreign suitor who is fought off by both her father and her son. Richars, in turn, is tormented by the need to find his biological father in a location as far removed as possible from this incestuous court, but he forbids Clarisse to marry anyone else until he has found him (lines 2400–2409).

Richars li Biaus provides striking contrasts with the Catalan and Franco-Italian tales studied in the previous chapter, because they relate their sleeping, enchanted, or dead heroines with exogamy as the consequence of violent invasion and deceptive diplomacy. Clarisse, like Sor de Plaser, Brianda, and Anfelis, is her father’s sole heir. However, the French text is concerned with the deadly impact not of a stranger’s invasion, but of imprisonment within the family unit. According to Catherine Jones, the silken cloth Clarisse uses both to drape her face and, later, to wrap her newborn son, is a term used often in other texts for a shroud.¹⁴ Clarisse’s reaction to her rape, on awakening, is to say that she has been killed. After her son is exposed, she resumes an incestuous cohabitation with her father. Clarisse only perpetuates this stifling family unit by marrying her rapist, because the initial ambiguous conception comes full circle to ensure that Loÿs can be made king of Frisia by Richars’ claiming the right to act not as Clarisse’s son but as “li niés le roy” (the grandson of the king) (line 5433). Richars’ quest to find his father

may be viewed as an attempt to make himself legitimate, but it also ensures that Clarisse is definitively enclosed within the violent manipulation of her body that was inaugurated by her father, and that ties her irrevocably to his decision to imprison her within his orchard.

This text that predates *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser* and *Blandin* draws attention to the threat of endogamy that can be traced in the Catalan tales. Sor is visited in her tower only by her parents, whose distress at seeing her pregnant encompasses only two possibilities: a bird, or the Holy Spirit. As Sor was not deemed to be marriageable even before her death, her mother does not assume that a lover could be involved. Frayre's invasion of this enclosed space, like Loÿs', is presented as *raptus*. He has already prepared remedies and made arrangements to reward Virgil with lands, as if he already knows he will marry the emperor's daughter. Yet the protagonists are designated as siblings by their names and hold corresponding rings, not as a sign of predestined love between social equals, but rather as a gesture that highlights the suppression of marriage outside the kinship group and the fear of invasion by a "foreign" lineage and language that marks the prologue. In *Blandin*, Brianda's rescue is made possible by her brother's request and orders to Blandin, as if he were explicitly welcoming the opportunity to allow her to marry a knight errant from a distant land.

It is tempting to ascribe a direct connection between the orchard rape of *Richars li Biaux* and the tale of Troÿlus and Zellandine, which is woven into the adventures in the third part of the romance *Perceforest*.¹⁵ Gilles Roussineau emphasizes one key divergence from the early modern Sleeping Beauty tradition as well as from *Frayre*, which is that the two protagonists are already in love and have exchanged rings before Zellandine falls into her enchanted sleep.¹⁶ However, this detail is important to the interlaced structure of the romance, rather than to the tale itself. Zellandine's sleep is set among a number of other episodes in which sleep, both natural and enchanted, offers opportunities for trickery or influence. Such episodes are especially important when they are slotted between episodes of the story of Troÿlus and Zellandine (L, LI, LII, LIX, LX). In chapter LIII, Estonné has an enchanted dream that assists him in consummating his marriage to Troÿlus' sister Priande at the most propitious moment for conceiving an heir. In chapter LIV, the villainous Bruiant sans Foi puts Maronès to sleep to do him harm, and in chapter LVI, King Perceforest wanders through the enchanted forest, alternating between sleeping and waking. The sequences continues after the tale of Zellandine has moved on. In chapter LVII, Bruiant sans Foi and his

men kill two knights in their sleep. It is thematically important to this vast and complex work that Zellandine's unconscious state should be identified as sleep rather than either death or sickness.

When the episode is read in the light of *Richars li Biaus*, the emphasis on endogamy resurfaces. Zellandine has returned home to the island of Zel-lande, which is ruled by her father, Zelland, and, it seems, by his unnamed sister, who sleeps in a room near to his own (LII.90, lines 449–50). Zellande is a realm marked by doubles and deceptively incestuous sibling relationships, but Zellandine's own brother Zellandin is absent on a quest to find his lady, so any hint of excessive sameness between this sibling pair is neatly averted (L.58). The only place where people live together on this barren, flat, depopulated island is the Chastel Jumel, but the castle is deceptively placed next to another unnamed castle, and it is not clear to observers such as Troÿlus which one of the twin castles is King Zelland's seat.¹⁷ Zellandine is already destined to marry Nervin, the son of a neighboring lady of the Nervinois lineage, and Nervin tries to act as Troÿlus's substitute in order to win Zellandine (L). Meanwhile, Troÿlus is adopted as a curative fool with the patronage of a "natural fool" at Zelland's court (L.293–96).

The island's divine rulers are the three goddesses of love, childbirth, and destiny: Venus, Lucina, and Themis (or Sarra). It is Venus who ensures Troÿlus's successful conquest of the endogamic fortress. Zellandine falls into a stupor after pricking her finger while spinning flax, but her elderly aunt has forgotten Themis's curse to this effect, one she overheard soon after Zellandine's birth during the feast of thanks she organized for the divine trio of midwives. As the aunt forgot the curse, she also forgot that Venus promised to rescue Zellandine from her enchantment by ensuring that the offending shard of flax would be sucked out of her finger (L.70, lines 464–85; LIX. 211–12). The aunt knows both the cause and the cure for the girl's coma, but her forgetfulness ensures that events pursue their course in making Zellandine bear Troÿlus's son. Forgetfulness is a feature of the island of Zel-lande, as Nervin's mother makes Troÿlus both amnesiac and insane in the hope of leading him away from his quest to find Zellandine, and this enchantment is broken only by Venus.

Nor is Troÿlus's intellect much valued in this realm. Once he is released from the enchantment that turns him into a court fool, Venus gives an oracular order to Troÿlus to enter the tower where a beautiful girl is lying "like a stone" and to "pluck the curative fruit in the furrow" (LII.80, lines 46–53). He cannot interpret her words. Venus's feminine voice ("la voix

femenine”) explains curtly that the only gloss her riddle requires of him is his physical action as a man:

Les vers n'ont point mestier de glose.
 Non pourtant je dys une chose:
 Amours trouvera la raïere
 Et Venus, qui scet la maniere
 Du fruit trouver, le queillera.
 Nature le composera.
 Se tu es homs, tantost va t'ent.
 Ne nous fay cy long parlement.

(LII.80, lines 67–72)

[The verses need no gloss, but I'll say one thing anyway: Love will find the furrow and Venus, who knows how to find the fruit, will pluck it. Nature will construct it. If you are a man, go your way now. Do not keep us talking here.]

As the maternal goddesses covertly weave events, King Zelland takes the advice of his physicians and places Zellandine at the top of a walled tower in the hope that she may be cured by the intervention of the sun god. Zelland and his forgetful sister are Zellandine's only visitors. Like Clarisse, Zellandine is enclosed within an endogamic fortress marked by the faulty mental processes of her protectors. This cognitive malfunction affects the king and his sister's interpretation of the events that follow.

Zellandine's tower is walled up except for an east-facing window, which has been left open as “la voie des dieux” (the way of the gods) to welcome the divine visitor whom Zelland hopes will come to cure his daughter (66, lines 331–33; 82, lines 123–24). He believes that a god has indeed come to visit when he sees a bright light shining at the window (91, lines 433–59), but it is in fact a torch that has been lit by Troÿlus to enable him to see in Zellandine's room. This ironic detail has been interpreted in various ways,¹⁸ but it points most strongly to an intertextual connection with Jupiter's visit to the bed of Danaë in the form of a shower of gold.¹⁹ Danaë, a paradigmatic *puella custodita*, is particularly relevant, as she is enclosed in a bronze chamber by her father to prevent her conceiving a child:

In thalamum Danaë ferro saxoque perennem
 Quae fuerat uirgo tradita, mater erat.

(*Amores* 3.4, lines 20–22)²⁰

[Iron and stone, indestructible materials, composed the bedchamber
Danaë entered a virgin; she left it a mother.]

Danaë's chamber is located at the top of a tower in Ovid, and underground in other versions.²¹ In the *Perceforest*, Zellandine's chamber is accessible first via an underground tunnel, then by climbing to the top of the impregnable tower (91, lines 452–57).

Zelland and his sister glimpse the intruder as he escapes through the window, clad in full armor, on the back of a giant bird. Zelland concludes that this must be Mars, the god of battles, because he is their lineage ancestor (92, lines 471–74). Zellandine's aunt interprets her crumpled bed linen as a sign that the ancestor's cure may have been more than medicinal, and the narrator exploits the double meaning of *niepce* to hint once again at an incestuous continuum: “la dame se doubta que Mars, dieu des batailles, n'eust trop acointé sa niepce” (The lady suspected that Mars, god of battles, had been too familiar with her niece/his granddaughter) (93, lines 506–9). In *Amores* 3.4, Ovid comments that placing women under armed guard is futile, as Rome's founding fathers were engendered by the god Mars “non . . . sine crimen” (not without crime) (lines 39–40), alluding to the conception of Romulus and Remus (see also *Amores* 2.19, line 27). Intriguingly, the tale of Danaë was interpreted in divergent ways in the Middle Ages, both as a narrative concerning a prostitute and as an allegory of virginity.²² Zellandine's predicament is certainly ambiguous, but the interpretation of it by her paternal relatives seems perverse. They prefer to ascribe her “cure” to someone within their kinship group, despite having been repeatedly told that Troÿlus is the predicted agent of her awakening. Zellandine's family maintains an endogamic ethos, certain that fertilization by its own patrilinear ancestor can only add to its prestige (211, lines 58–63). The rulers of this island that worships the three goddesses of sexual reproduction appear to suffer from a distorted vision of what constitutes aristocratic fertility.

When Zellandine awakes and her aunt remembers both Themis's curse and Venus's promise (§ LIX.209–10),²³ this does not affect how the family interprets the pregnancy. The aunt still believes that Mars has fathered the child, especially when a bird-siren (in fact an emissary from Morgane la Faee) takes him away (212–13, lines 119–26). It is only a fortnight later, when Zellandine recalls her love for Troÿlus (and, in redaction C, plans to conceal her rape and childbirth from him [318]), that she notices that she is no longer wearing the ring she exchanged with him, and she puzzles over how he could have visited her to exchange their rings (213–14). Even as she realizes that Troÿlus visited her as she slept, Zellandine retains the illusion

of divine conception. In version C, she concludes with a powerful, absurd logic that Mars must have stolen the ring.²⁴ She seems to have absorbed her family's belief that only a paternal ancestor can be at the root of her mysterious adventure. She is soon disabused and reunited with Troÿlus, and the tale ends with an ironic acknowledgment by Zellandine of the family's distorted interpretation of events. As she elopes with Troÿlus, she sends a maid to tell her father and aunt that she has been taken away by Mars to his lands, to escape the forced marriage to Nervin that they had planned (LX.236, lines 780–84). Throughout the tale, Mars acts as the Zelland lineage's encoded sign for the maintenance of a hermetic, self-perpetuating kinship group against the pressures of exogamous suitors.

If Zellandine's situation dramatizes her family's psychological entrapment in sameness and lineage, Troÿlus breaks into this endogamic stronghold in several ways. He reaches the island of Zellande thanks to two chance meetings with the mariners seeking out Zellandine's brother Zellandin, whose ship refuses to take them to England (§ L; § LX, 225–26). If her brother cannot make good his escape from the patrilinear fortress, Troÿlus finds it equally difficult to obtain access. Once he reaches the island, he is saved from a rising tide by Nervin's mother. She casts a spell on Troÿlus in his sleep that makes him both forgetful and mad, so that her son can don his armor and win Zellandine for himself. Troÿlus gains access to Zellandine's tower only thanks to the intervention of Venus, who cures his madness while he sleeps (again) in her temple and sends him the spirit Zephir as his helper (L.85, lines 226–28). Two periods of sleep allow Troÿlus to obtain the right kind of assistance in his quest, but they also illustrate the connection between sleep and forgetfulness, especially the kind of forgetting that may (as in *Richars li Biaus*) mask an uncomfortable truth about the causes and motives of the protagonists' actions.

Troÿlus's actions are consistently more passive than those of Frayre de Joy, in keeping with the former's role as the enactor of the three goddesses' plan, and with his hope that he may cure, not seduce, Zellandine. He is carried to the window by Zephir in bird form and finds himself in a room that is lit by a single lamp (§ LII.86–87). He finds Zellandine lying naked on a bed hung with white drapes and hears her gentle breathing. He lights a torch to look at her more closely and it seems to him that she is of a healthy color (87, lines 300–310). Troÿlus whispers to her to wake up, and then prods her repeatedly with his finger, “il la bouta de son doy par plusieurs foyes” (87, line 318). He despairs that his lady, as beautiful as a goddess (“belle comme une deesse”), should be so insensible to

his efforts (87, line 322). The gods continue to intervene in his actions. Prompted not by his own thoughts but by Venus's son Amours, Troÿlus asks Zellandine to give her consent to his kissing her: "Pucelle, plaise vous que je vous baise?" (88, line 343). At this point the personifications Discretion and Reason appear to caution him against intruding further into a sleeping woman's private space (88, lines 345–48). Personified Desire then makes an appearance and pleases Troÿlus by contending that his kisses may well cure Zellandine: "car baisier porte medecine en pluseurs manieres, et par especial il resuscite les personnes tressaillies et sy appaise les troublez" (For kissing is curative in many ways, and especially in that it resuscitates people who have lost their senses, and it appeases those who are troubled) (88, lines 353–55). He kisses her lips more than twenty times over, but he loses confidence as she does not revive. Troÿlus then prays to Venus for help, as she promised that Amours would assist him in finding "la raïere ou gist le fruit dont la pucelle doit estre garie, et vous mesmes le me devez aprendre a coeillier, car je ne sçay ou celle herbe croit!" (the furrow where the fruit lies that will cure the girl, and you [Venus] in person must teach me to pluck it, because I do not know where this herb grows!) (89, lines 374–77).²⁵ Venus stands invisibly beside Troÿlus and urges him to make love to Zellandine, despite the protestations of Loyalty (89–90). Thanks to these allusions to the closing passages of the *Roman de la rose*, the lover obeys the orders of Venus and breaches the imprisoning tower of this lady, once again via a window, to pluck not a flower, but a curative piece of fruit: "le fruit est coeilliet dont la belle sera garie" (The fruit is plucked through which the girl will be cured) (90, lines 422–23). Unlike Frayre de Joy's and Loÿs' solitary decisions to overlook their victims' lifeless state, the small room is crowded with literary allusions, personifications, and invisible deities, who urge Troÿlus to act on his erotic "heat."

However, these elaborate discussions of Troÿlus's wish to "cure" Zellandine of sleep are undermined by his reaction to the "bref soupir" (short sigh) she lets out after he has finished taking her virginity (90, line 415). He leaps away from her, ready to deny his actions should she accuse him of rape, and leaves at Zephir's prompting (lines 416–19). Troÿlus's guilty reaction at this point is very reminiscent of Loÿs' flight in *Richars li Biaus*. No matter how much his supernatural helpers present metanarratorial justifications, Troÿlus remains conscious of the fact that he is a man who has abused a sleeping woman in her bedchamber. The most obvious distinctions of the *Perceforest* episode at this point are that Zellandine is immobile but far from either physically sick or dead, and that Troÿlus is not motivated

by opportunism. On the contrary, the narrative emphasis is on his preordained role in freeing her from her imprisonment.

The tale in the *Perceforest* cannot be separated from its place in a much more complex genealogical romance. The goddesses and Morgane la Faee place great emphasis on Benoïc, the “fruit” of this transgressive cure, who is destined to be the ancestor of Lancelot du Lac. Troÿlus’s sufferings in the cause of his love match with Zellandine seem to be overlaid with intertextual allusions to Lancelot’s troubled love for Guinevere. However, what seems evident is that it is also a description of the efforts made by both Troÿlus and Venus to undo Zellandine’s entrapment within a stiflingly close patrilinear structure and an intended marriage to a nobleman of the island of Zellande whom she does not love. Intriguingly, Zellandine persists in his determination to marry the reawakened Zellandine to Nervin (LX.226–27). This is despite the fact that Nervin has confessed to his mother’s dishonorable manipulation of Troÿlus (LI.77, lines 35–44). In manuscript C, Zellandine remembers her love for Troÿlus a fortnight after her reawakening, but her love has, says the narrator, been asleep a full year, not nine months. Its “sleep” dates from the sickness that struck her on her departure from England.²⁶ It seems that it was her return to her father’s castle, not the enchanted sleep caused by the pricked finger, that made her forget her love for Troÿlus.

This is only a short tale set within the imposing spread of the *Perceforest*, and it forms part of a lengthy exploration of perception and interpretation, focused closely on the nature of signs and writing. This broader thematic element returns us to the fruit metaphors that were explored earlier in *Richars li Biaus*. Troÿlus has an adventure before he is reunited with Zellandine in which he defeats Bruiant sans Foi, the paradigmatic traitor-knight villain in book 3 of the *Perceforest*, thanks to an apple that is handed to him from the Fairy Queen’s mysterious chariot (LX). This apple, I will argue, shed significant light on the tale of Zellandine. Troÿlus encounters the Fairy Queen’s horseless and driverless chariot as it travels silently through various scenes in this part of the romance. He hears the voices of two women keening behind its thick cloth-of-gold drapery, and he fears that it may contain someone on his or her deathbed:

Or advint que au passer du charriot le bachelier perceut une main qui se boutoit hors parmy la couverture, tenant une pomme vermeille, et oÿ que dedens le charriot une demoiselle disoit: “Chevalier, tenez cette pomme et la donnez a vostre hoste.” Le chevalier, qui entendy ses moz, print la pomme, et lors il perdy soudainement la veue du charriot, dont il fut moult esbahi. (LX.215, lines 33–39)

[Now it happened that when the cart went by, the youth glimpsed a hand that stretched out of the drapes, holding a red apple, and he heard a young woman inside the cart saying, “Knight, take this apple and give it to your host.” The knight who heard these words took the apple and suddenly lost sight of the chariot, which amazed him.]

Troÿlus looks at the red apple and sees that it is marvelous (“moult merueilleuse”),

car l'en avoit escript dessus aucuns signes dont il ne sceut cognoistre la substance. Sy s'appensa qu'il la mettroit appart et que elle ne lui estoit point donnee sans grant mistere. (215, lines 39–44)

[for on it were inscribed some signs that he could not decipher. So he thought that he would set it aside and that it could not have been given to him without some great mystery.]

Troÿlus seeks hospitality overnight in a sinister castle and falls through a trapdoor into a pit. He eventually remembers that this “pomme a plenté de figures par dehors escriptes” (apple inscribed with many figures on the surface) (219, lines 164–65) may be destined for his captor and may help to free him and his fellow prisoners. The Chevalier au Dauphin exclaims that such an apple cannot be mere fruit and must possess special powers, “il ne peut estre que ceste pomme ne ait aucune vertu” (line 169). Accordingly, the prisoners use the nobly worked apple (“pomme noblement ouvree”) (line 188) to bribe their jailer. The jailer covets the bribe as an object that is richly worked (“ouvree”), but its immediate action on his heart stems from it being a mere apple (lines 193–96). He helps the men to escape by replacing them with statues and poses as a madman before his master. Bruiant sans Foi kills the jailer for his absurd corruption by the gift of an apple when a gold coin would have sufficed (222, lines 271–78). The *mistere* and *vertu* of the apple appear to be promised by its unreadable inscription, but once it has been handed over to Troÿlus's jailer, its unreadable signs seem to be invisible both to him and to Bruiant, and its impact comes from the fact that it remains simply a piece of fruit. At the moment of its transfer from the dark cell to the jailer's space outside it, the coveted object begins to act within those who hold it, rather than from the outside. The “figures par dehors escriptes” of the apple determine the jailer's actions; unreadable signs have been absorbed, despite the material worthlessness of the bribe. The double action and opaque interpretative status of the inscribed apple secures

the knights' release from their unlit, underground dungeon. This reminds the reader of Troÿlus's incitement to rape by an assemblage of opaque fruit and medicinal metaphors, invisible deities and personifications that make him read the wordless, opaque signs of Zellandine's unconscious body (her slight blush, her short sigh) in the light of a sexual invitation.

Through this apple, which is interpreted as either an enchanted object covered in unreadable signs, or plain food, Troÿlus is reunited with the "fruit de la medicine" that he was told he would find in Zellandine. He is led to Morgane la Fae's castle and introduced to her charge, their son Benoÿc. Benoÿc bears a mysterious image on his shoulder, designed, explains Morgane, to protect him from the jealous cunning of bad mothers, "*car quant elles se voient delivrer de mauvais fruit, souventesfois par leur malice elles le changent a ung bon*" (for when they discover they have given birth to bad fruit, they often exchange it maliciously for a good one) (LX.230, lines 565–67). Benoÿc is the closely protected fruit that he and Zellandine produce to cure her of her entrapment in endogamy, in the double prison of an impregnable tower and of sleep. He is destined to grow up in the care of Morgane, because he is the ancestor of a great lineage. As was seen earlier, Zellandine's family systematically misinterpret Benoÿc's conception and disappearance. Troÿlus, however, achieves knowledge through encounters with unreadable signs, the engraved apple and his son's protective mark, as well as his own willingness to accept their power without demanding a gloss of their symbolism.

It is not the beauty, still less the significance, of the apple's signs, that impress the jailer enough to free the men. Somehow, his emotions are altered when he realizes that all they have given him is the object itself. The apple, a simple object without other meanings ascribed to it, prompts him to assist the men. Similarly, Zellandine's family consistently fail to comprehend that their daughter's impregnation at the hands (so they believe) of the god Mars is in fact exogamy, the grafting of a new branch onto their etiolating family tree. When Troÿlus achieves an understanding of the role that he and Zellandine have played in creating a new lineage through the conception of Benoÿc, he also accepts that their own narrative has been no more than an element in the service of a metanarrative (the Arthurian cycle) that he is closed to him. Venus tells Troÿlus invisibly in the temple of the three goddesses, "*De toy . . . est issue la semence dont la fleur de proesse naistera. Sy n'en demande plus, car nous l'avons en garde*" (From you came the seed from which the flower of Prowess will be born. Now do not ask any more about it, for we are looking after him) (LX.230–31, lines 587–89).

For all its complexity, Troÿlus's encounter with Zellandine was, it seems, no more than an act of fertilization.

In two monolingual narratives, it would seem that women who consume fruit and who fall asleep are exposed to invasion by lovers and that these tales are subtended by a silenced narrative, that of incest. In her essay *Vivre l'orange*, Hélène Cixous redefines the patriarchal commonplace associating women with the giving of apples (Eve, the Hesperides, the apple of Discord) by playing through languages, to enable a feminine writing that would have access to concepts not otherwise allowed in patriarchy.²⁷ These intensely autobiographical, physical modes of association and signification are termed, in Cixous' blended authorial and personal voice, the orange. Cixous' essay deploys different ways not of consuming the orange (a pun on her multilingual birthplace, Oran), but of living it: of entering a dream state, beyond conscious reality and within languages, that allows the unconscious to be experienced rather than mediated:

Dans la traduction de la pomme (en orange), j'essaie de me dénoncer. Façon de prendre ma part. Du fruit. De la jouissance. De me risquer à dire ce que je ne suis pas encore en mesure d'assurer par mes propres soins. De me pousser au-delà de mes limites, de m'obliger à m'avancer où je n'ai pas pied, au risque de m'abîmer.²⁸

[In the translation of the apple into an orange, I try to betray/denounce myself. It's a way of taking my part. Of the piece of fruit. Of *jouissance*. Of trying to say something that I am not yet able to ensure I can say by my own means. Of pushing myself beyond my own boundaries, forcing myself to move forward into a place where I cannot touch the floor, where I run the risk of sinking/damaging myself.]

Cixous' words draw attention to the multiple connotations of languages. Will she sink into the depths of the unconscious (*s'abîmer*) or be bruised, like a dropped fruit (*s'abîmer*)? The writer's task, she suggests, is to peel off the layers of social obligation and to ripen autonomously. In this state, the feminine author can write for no audience or patron: "Et elle écrit pour personne, elle donne des noms, des fruits, la main, dans le noir" (And she writes for no one, she gives names, fruit, her hand, in the dark) (43). Just as the disembodied hand emerges from a curtained cart to give Troÿlus an apple inscribed with signs that neither he nor anyone else can read, so he has to read Zellandine's body and both consume it and fertilize it, without a gloss.

The *entredeux* emerges as a highly permeable, multilingual, and atemporal state that may be both vulnerable and fruitful and may potentially allow hidden narratives to be put into corporeal form. In this way, the statement “Elle n’écrit pour personne” has two inferences: she writes for the eyes of no one, and she writes in the voice of no one but her own. Yet a writing that has no Other at all can hardly avoid falling into self-referential traps, “s’abîmer” into its own *mise-en-abyme* of the creative process, or (worse) it risks committing what may appear to be incest but without an aggressor. Incest with the self, without a desired Other, may resemble the underlying concerns of the monolingual narratives produced in linguistic borderlands that have been examined in this chapter.

The narration of love in the *entredeux* may be reinscribed as a mode of writing, one that also may be read “in the light of an apple,” overturning traditional constructions of gender, eroticism, and narrative. It could be argued that the fruitful sleep of these heroines is less vulnerable than it seems, in that such scenes interrupt the workings of the marital traffic in women, the basis of exogamy in terms of a social system controlled by the spouses’ parents, and allow them to conceive in secret, in ways that are represented as incest, but that are hidden narratives, only represented through unreadable signs. The unreadable apple refers to the unspoken incest narratives that subtend both the tales in *Richars li Biaus* and the *Perceforest*. It also points to the perils of assuming that a monolingual text is to be viewed as a simple expression of a collective mother tongue.