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Pierre de Provence et La Belle Maguelonne

THE SUCCESS OF *Paris et Vienne* may have inspired its textual sibling, *Lystoire du chevalier Pierre de Provence et de La Belle Maguelonne* (c. 1453) (henceforward *La Belle Maguelonne*). The romance resembles *Paris et Vienne* in many ways and has often been studied alongside it, although surviving manuscripts do not preserve the two romances together.[1] Unlike *Paris and Vienne,* the romance makes no claims concerning its sources. All the late medieval versions that survive in Western Europe preserve the geographical setting in Provence and the kingdom of Naples, which would point to a single source for the European tradition. Surviving manuscripts point to patrons in northeastern France and Paris, as do the features of the narrative that are derived from the French romances of *L'Escoufle* and the Handless Maiden tradition. The romance was translated into German (1453) soon after its composition and later into Flemish (1510) and Castilian (1519). It was diffused in other languages during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[2]

Synopsis

Pierre is the only son of the count of Provence and an heiress of Barcelona. He leaves his distraught parents, claiming to go on tournaments, but really to meet the daughter of the king of Naples, Maguelonne. His mother gives him three rings. Pierre, presenting himself as "le chevalier aux clefs," courts Maguelonne via meetings in church with her nurse, and he lures her in by refusing to tell her his name until she will meet him alone. He gives Maguelonne his three rings, one by one. Maguelonne disobeys the nurse and runs away with Pierre (who asked her permission to visit his parents) but they are separated in a seaside forest, as the start of a divine punishment for their presumption. Pierre has ripped open Maguelonne's bodice as she sleeps and removed a red silk cloth containing the three rings. A bird of prey thinks the red bundle is a piece of meat and steals it. Pierre runs after the bird, throwing

stones at it; it drops the cloth onto a rock. He leaps into an abandoned skiff, but a storm whisks him off. Pierre is rescued by some corsairs, who give him to the sultan of Babylon, who adopts him and teaches him several languages. Maguelonne wakes up, climbs trees, sets their horses loose, and swaps her rich clothes for the rags of a woman pilgrim. She covers her face in earth and saliva and makes her way alone to Rome, Genoa, and Aigue-Mortes as a pilgrim; she founds a church and hospital. As "la saincte hospitaliere" of the island of Port Sarrasin, Maguelonne tends to the sick, enacts her penance for her elopement, and helps Pierre's parents grieve for their missing son. Pierre asks the sultan for permission to visit his parents and embarks on a Provençal ship bound for Aigues-Mortes with fourteen barrels filled with gold that he claims are a cargo of salt. Pierre is abandoned on an island, then hospitalized for nine months in a port. A big fish is brought to the count and countess and is found to contain the cloth and three rings. They go into mourning. Another Provençal ship takes Pierre to the hospital, now a shrine renamed Saint-Pierre-de-Maguelonne. There, Pierre and Maguelonne are reunited. She reunites Pierre with his parents. Their son rules both Naples and Provence.

Recurring claims have been made that *La Belle Maguelonne* shares the Catalan origins of *Paris et Vienne,* notably on the basis of a printed version of 1616.[3] However, this printed text is late, and it is believed to be a translation of a Castilian version of the French short version, so the claim is tenuous at best. It seems more convincing to view *La Belle Maguelonne* as a romance that was composed in French for a readership that appears to have had an informed interest in the Provençal island harbor and its maritime connection with both Genoa and Naples. As the narrative, as was said above, is quite dependent on northern French models, its earliest patrons may well have been connected to the court of Anjou.

La Belle Maguelonne presents itself as a foundation narrative for the Cathedral of Saint-Pierre at Villeneuve-lès-Maguelonne (Hérault). It narrates the complex courtship and the reunion after penitential suffering of the son of the count of Provence and Barcelona and the daughter of the king of Naples, which is possibly an allusion to René d'Anjou's claims over both the kingdom of Naples and the county of Provence. As Coville pointed out, the romance is explicitly embedded in a recognizable Provençal and a less reliable Neapolitan topography.[4] Its treatment of Catalan lands is very vague, something that weighs further against a Catalan source. Whereas Vienne and Genoa in *Paris et Vienne* are little more than place-names, *La Belle Maguelonne* is a text that insists on the heroine's physical as well as nominal connection with both

her birthplace and her adult home, as the daughter of King Maguelon and as the founder of a hospital at Maguelonne.

However close the text's relationship may be to its geographical setting, its early readers appear to have received it in an international, multilingual context. A manuscript now in Coburg (dated 1453) is a copy of the French text with a complete interlinear translation into Latin and marginal glosses in German. Anna Maria Babbi has interpreted this as material evidence that the text was used as a teaching tool and that tutors sought to entertain their pupils by making them learn Latin versions of familiar works such as *Paris et Vienne* and *La Belle Maguelonne*.[5] She particularly noted the didactic and moral tone of some of the glosses on this luxury manuscript and the contrast that this makes with the comparatively poor quality of the surviving paper copies of the French text. Other scholars have suggested that the Coburg manuscript is evidence of a translator's method, in that he (or she) may have found it easier to translate French into German through the interpretative medium of Latin.[6]

Among the precise geographical and political references of *La Belle Maguelonne,* it comes as a surprise to find an allusion to Jason and Medea. I will argue in this earlier part of the chapter that there may be a direct relationship between this apparently classical allusion and the possible uses made of the text as schoolroom literature. In the first part of this chapter, I shall examine how this romance explores the (m)other tongue through its intertextual relationship with one of the most monstrous versions of this mythical narrative, one that is traceable to the French literary production in the kingdom of Naples and Italian developments from it.[7] The second part of the chapter concerns the romance's manipulation of both mother tongue and patronymics to suggest that "national" identity is elective rather than a matter of either geography or birth.

After their elopement, Maguelonne wakes up on a seashore to discover that Pierre has disappeared. While the reader is fully aware that Pierre has been abducted by pirates, Maguelonne leaps to the conclusion that he has made a new Medea of her. She exclaims, "Certes vous estes le second Jason et je suis la nouvelle Medee" (25v).[8] She argues that Pierre has deceived and misled her. Despite no wrongdoing on her part, for she has merely deceived her royal father by eloping with a knight errant, Maguelonne associates her predicament with her guilt, and she embarks on a penitential journey to Rome and Pierre's homeland.

Roger Dubuis suggested that the fleeting allusion to the myth of Jason and Medea is a negligible display of erudition on the part of the text's multiple

redactors. Indeed, the allusion was dropped in the popular printed edition that circulated in France after the sixteenth century, which implies that its relevance declined after the rediscovery of Euripides' play.[9] This contrasts with the fact that in around 1519, a young Clément Marot appears to have responded to the allusion to Medea in an elegiac poem in which he treated Maguelonne as if she were one of the abandoned heroines of Ovid's *Heroides*. Marot's early sixteenth-century Maguelonne is likened repeatedly to Dido, possibly because he recognized the Medea allusion as a borrowing from the *Aeneid* (IV, lines 365–87), but also as a response to intertextual allusions that were already present in the prose romance.[10] Marot's poem, and the allusion itself, are arguably less about erudition than about the network of vernacular texts that underscore Maguelonne's predicament.

In histories of the Trojan War, Jason and Medea formed part of a historical narrative directly connected with dynastic ambitions in royal circles, especially those of France, and later the ducal court of Burgundy. Raoul Lefèvre's *Histoire de Jason* (1460), which was composed specifically for Duke Philip the Good, reflects the Burgundian courtly appropriation of the Golden Fleece as a court emblem of noble chivalry, as does Guillaume Fillastre's treatise, *La Toison d'Or* (1468, printed in 1516). Both Lefèvre and Fillastre reinscribe Jason's exploits within a Christian and Burgundian chivalric frame and depict Jason's ultimate reconciliation with Medea after her revenge, a detail taken from Boccaccio's *Genealogie deorum gentilium*.[11] Maguelonne's allusion, however, is neither to Burgundian texts nor to Catalan versions of Seneca's tragedy. It is traceable to the prose *Roman de Troie* tradition as it was transmitted in French and Italian texts from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, a complex multilingual phenomenon that may well be described, in Rita Copeland's words, as "a fairly integrated textual system" of translations and independent developments. In this respect, *La Belle Maguelonne* may be viewed as an example of Copeland's concept of "secondary translations," apparently newly composed works that do not openly declare their relationship with their Latin or vernacular sources, unlike "primary translations," which do signal their derivative status.[12] What *La Belle Maguelonne* presents, within its humble form as a minor romance, is an intriguingly rich picture of what can emerge through a series of both interlingual and intralingual translations.

This Prose *Troie* "system" owes much to the verse poem of Benoît de Sainte-Maure, and very little to Benoît's Latin sources, but it acts also as a tributary of many different influences and texts.[13] On their return journey with the Golden Fleece and Medea, Jason and the Argonauts find themselves on an island. According to a Tuscan translation of Guido delle Colonne's

Historia destructionis Trojae, and its Venetian counterpart, Jason decides to abandon Medea as she lies asleep under a tent:

> E uno giorno sendo Medea adormentata sotto un padiglione, Gianson pensa dislealtade verso Medea di volerla lasciare in su questa isola, aceiò che niuna persona potesse dire chella detta vettoria avesse auta per lei e non per suo prodezza.[14]
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> [One day as Medea was asleep beneath a pavilion, Jason planned a disloyal act toward Medea, thinking of leaving her on this island, so that no one might say that he owed his victory to her rather than to his own prowess.]

The Argonauts abandon her, unaware that she is pregnant with twins. Medea awakes and delivers a lengthy speech addressed to several Olympian gods, bewailing her fate and applying it to the common lot of humanity. She prays to Saturn: "Ma guarda cogli ochi tuoi pieni di misericordia la fragelità della nostra carne misera, la quale é sottoposta a tanta corruzione" (But look down with your eyes full of mercy on the fragility of this miserable flesh of ours, which is subject to so much corruption) (Gorra, 475) The animals of the island gather to look pityingly on her as she bewails her abandonment by Jason, who has left her "tradita e ingannata" (betrayed and deceived), and demands divine vengeance. The speech reflects a conflation of Medea with the abandoned Ariadne of the *Heroides* (X, lines 6–12), and it reflects into Maguelonne's speech, as she refers to the wild animals that threaten her now she is alone. There are other parallels with Maguelonne's abandonment, both her predicament on awakening and her own lengthy speech, in which she cries out to Fortune and the Virgin Mary. This passage is glossed in a marginal note to the trilingual Coburg manuscript as "Planctus et lamentatione Maguelone" (the *planctus* and lamentation of Maguelonne), noting that she blames herself for the ill fame that her elopement and Pierre's abandonment have brought on her.[15] The "nouvelle Medee" is a comprehensible and important allusion for this particular German reader and translator.

The Tuscan/Venetian Medea is marooned for three years on the island with her two infant sons, living on roots and grasses until they are rescued by a ship. She works her passage to Thessaly by deploying her talent as a storyteller. Once there, she lives incognito in a cave on the outskirts of the city and begs for food in the streets, where she occasionally catches sight of Jason's cavalcades. Jason marries the daughter of the king (named Creuso in

the Venetian text, Pelleus in the Tuscan), and falls sick. Medea grasps the opportunity this presents for revenge. In the Tuscan version, she murders her two sons and carries their bodies into Thessaly in a sack. She dresses herself as a male physician, gains admission to the palace on the pretence of offering a cure for Jason (it is here that she murders their two sons in the Venetian version), and serves up their hearts at a banquet. Jason eats his medicinal dish unwittingly. In the Tuscan version, Medea narrates her story and her revenge to the assembled lords of the palace. They judge her actions to have been justified and let her go (Gorra, 479).

In the Venetian version, Medea's revenge is more comprehensive. She sends Jason to bed with a sleeping draught, pins the boys' corpses to the door of his chamber by thrusting daggers through their necks, and also affixes a written declaration of what she has done: "Sapia zaschuna persona che questi si e li fioli de Jaxon e de Medea; e Jaxon si manzo ieri al disnar li suo chuori e llo miedigo lo qual li li de fo Medea instessa" (May each person know that these are the sons of Jason and Medea. Jason ate their hearts last night at dinner, and the physician who did this was Medea in person).[16] She sets fire to the bed, kills the still-sleeping Jason in the conflagration, and flies off into clouds that drip blood. The Venetian Medea flees the scene and delegates her declaration of her actions to a written note. She does not give a motive for her actions. She eventually commits suicide by throwing herself down from the clouds that bore her away onto a sword blade that happens to be fixed upright in the ground. The Tuscan Medea is allowed to leave unharmed, and she continues her adventures in keeping with Guido delle Colonne's original text, but the Venetian antiheroine performs the grievous sin of self-murder with a subtle echo of the suicide of Dido. The conflation of Medea and Dido's death by the sword also occurs in the late fifteenth-century *Histoire de la destruction de Troye la Grant* (c. 1495–1500). However, this is a translation of Guido delle Colonne that may well also share a source with the same Venetian text. Marie Jacob has pointed out that this unusual version of the tale is definitely Italian, as it was also depicted on a fourteenth-century wall painting in Florence.[17] Given the strength of the evidence, it may well be more cogent to argue for the status as source of the extant Venetian tale than for a lost French original.

The grisly tale contrasts with the no less violent but far more faithful revenge scene in Raoul Lefèvre's Burgundian *Histoire de Jason* (1460). Here, Medea flies out of a chamber within the palace, seated on four dragons and carrying her naked son, to interrupt Jason's wedding feast. She tears the boy limb from limb and throws him into the laps of Jason and his wife, Creüsa,

while the dragons destroy all those in attendance with fire and venom, with the exception of Jason, who is protected from these substances by the ointment that was originally given to him by Medea.[18]

Quite unlike Lefèvre's Medea, but like the Italian one, Maguelonne resorts to disguise (first as a beggar and then as a healer) in her pursuit of Pierre, albeit for ends that are the reverse of those of the classical antiheroine, as they are both curative and devout. Indeed, Maguelonne's adventures are presented as a penitential pilgrimage that expiates her foolish decision to elope with Pierre and makes amends through healing work. In this respect she does indeed appear to be presented as an "anti-Medea," much as Ruth Morse suggested could be the case with the tale of Griselda.[19]

Heinrich Morf and Léon Mallinger concluded that the abandonment-revenge Medea tale represents a conflation of Trojan material with Ovid's *Heroides* that can be observed in several other instances during the Middle Ages, notably from the way the Neapolitan tradition of the French Prose *Troie* text (versions 3 and 5) interpolate or append French versions of up to thirteen of these poems. Intriguingly, none of these transmits a translation of *Heroides* book 12 (Medea to Jason).[20] The Medea abandonment-revenge tale first appears in French in the mid-thirteenth century Prose *Troie* 1, which is the most widespread prose tradition and appears to originate from a French colony in Morea, possibly the city of Corinth.[21] It differs from the Tuscan and Venetian texts in several details that I have italicized below (Constans and Faral, § 23):

> Et en la parfin l'en mena Jason aveuc lui en son païs, dont elle fist grant follie, et mout s'en repenti après, *si comme li autor dit,* quar celi lassa sur une ille de mer, et si estoit grosse de dous enfans. Et puis fist elle tant que *elle se parti de l'isle et se delivra des enfans,* et tant quist Jason qu'ele le trova, et lors tua ses deus enfans, si en prist les cuers et les entrailles et les dona a mangier a Jason qui engendrés les avoit de sa char, et puis *après geta devant lui les piés et les mains des enfans et li dist que ce estoient les membres de ses filz que il avoit engendrés,* dont il avoit les entrailles mangiees, et qu'ele avoit cen fait en venjance de ce qu'ele l'avoit delivré de mort et il l'en avoit rendu aspre guerredon comme d'elle laissier en une ille sauvage. Por quoi les sages jugent que ceste fu la plus crüel mere qui onques fust.
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> [In the end Jason took her with him, to his lands, in which she acted most foolishly, *as the authorities say,* for he left her on an island in the

> sea, and she was pregnant with two children. *Then she succeeded in escaping from the island and giving birth to her sons,* and she sought out Jason so much that she found him, and then she killed her two children, took their hearts and entrails, and gave them to Jason to eat, for he had fathered them from his own flesh. Then she threw down the feet and hands of the children *and told him they were the limbs of the sons he had fathered, whose entrails he had eaten,* and that she had done this as revenge for she had saved him from certain death and he had given her a harsh reward by abandoning her on a desert island. Which is why wise men consider her to be the cruelest mother that ever lived.]

This version explains the cannibalistic act as the logical return to Jason of his own flesh. Intriguingly, the Valencian poet Joan Roís de Corella's version of Medea's story (after 1450) has her congratulate herself on her self-control for not having served up her sons to Jason as food.[22] However, there are no signs here of Medea's storytelling, or of her medical disguise, one that seems to be important if Maguelonne identifies herself coherently as Medea. The Tuscan and Venetian versions develop these two aspects from Medea's other widely disseminated roles as a witch and physician.[23]

None of this explains why an innocuous heroine such as Maguelonne should be likened to a marginal Medea tradition that is truly monstrous. As has been pointed out by Ruth Morse and Alessandro Ballor, fifteenth-century treatments in French of the tale of Jason and Medea reflect a number of contradictory discourses.[24] This tradition restores Medea's infanticidal aggression, but ties it to a premeditated and spectacular revenge, not to the spontaneous outpouring of bitterness and jealousy one might expect from a more explicit reception of the *Heroides*. Ruth Morse noted that it is Medea's function as traitor to several aspects of patriarchal authority that characterizes the reception of the myth in French literary works composed between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. She suggests that the myth produced a literary type, the "Medean woman" who was associated with danger and destructiveness.[25] By comparison, Maguelonne is far from threatening to patriarchy. She is reunited with Pierre after she disguises herself as a beggar, a pilgrim, and a saintly nurse. Maguelonne's decision to identify herself as Medea signals the romance's association with a complex network of texts that are all tributaries of Benoît de Sainte-Maure's vernacular reworking of the matter of Troy. Her *planctus et lamentatione* is not so much an allusion to the *Heroides* as it is to a singular vernacular tradition, one that places the

romance squarely within the interlingual politics of the vernaculars rather than in a deferential posture with respect to Latin learning.

Babbi's interpretation of the Coburg manuscript raises the possibilities that *La Belle Maguelonne* was read by children and that it was used for the acquisition of Latin. This might certainly explain why Clément Marot's juvenilia should include an otherwise eccentric treatment of Maguelonne as an Ovidian heroine. But if the text was received in the schoolroom, it was also intratextually determined by the harrowing exemplum of a Medea known through vernacular rather than Latin sources. Of course, Medea may be viewed as a figuration of the "cruelest mother that ever lived" in terms of the mother tongue. Where the mother tongue represents a reliable connection between nature, nurture, and genealogy (as lineage/language), the Medean mother is violently opposed to genealogy: she kills her ex-husband's sons as well as her brother, and so destroys two lines of male succession. Her relationship with nature is flawed, as she practices magic and manipulates cooking to produce poison. The Medean mother's treatment of her role as *nutrix* probably needs no further gloss. The vernacular developments play on Medea as storyteller and as the author of written documents. Joan Roís de Corella composed a letter-cum-dialogue by Medea is which she justifies herself to women readers. The vernacular versions also expand on the violence visited by Medea on her sons, rather than on Jason.

On a more global narrative level, *La Belle Maguelonne* is explicitly concerned with the oscillation between being foreign and familiar and with elopement as the moment of release from the maternal realm symbolized by Maguelonne's nurse. The prologue of the Coburg version states that the tale was put "en cestuy langaige" in honor of the shrine of Saint Pierre-de-Maguelonne in 1453 (Babbi, app. 1, § I). It is, then, appropriate to consider the text once again as one that is rooted in its geographical setting and its intertextual relationship with *Paris and Vienna*.

As Babbi has noted, *La Belle Maguelonne* reads like a complementary response to *Paris and Vienne*.[26] Paris and Vienne's companions Aduardo and Ysabel are replaced by a single go-between, Maguelonne's nurse. *Paris et Vienne* depicts Vienne's obstructive parents and Paris' passive, sick father, but *La Belle Maguelonne* allots considerable importance to both sets of parents, especially Pierre's mother, and treats the go-between as a maternal substitute. The relationship between the lovers is reversed: Maguelonne elopes with Pierre successfully but they are separated by accident. Unlike Paris, Pierre does not travel to Babylon of his own accord, but as a corsair's gift to the sultan. Pierre learns to speak "Moorish," Greek, and Persian, because

the sultan regards him as an adoptive son, and does not make great use of his languages during his journey to Provence. It is Maguelonne who travels independently and uses both disguise and false identity to be reunited with her lover. The sickness motif is also reversed at the end of the text, where it is Pierre who is the patient and Maguelonne the physician.

The events recounted happened "when Christianity came into France," as well as in Provence, Languedoc, Guyenne, and Comminges (Babbi, I. 1–5).[27] Pierre is the son of the Provençal count Jehan de Cherisse and the daughter of Count Alvaro d'Albara (app. 1, § II) or Ilnaro d'Alboro (I.6–8). Pierre's parents are distressed when he wishes to travel to seek out both adventure and Maguelonne, because they fear that if their sole heir came to grief, "nostre conté et seigneurie seroit perdue" (II.31–32). The understated distinction made between "France" and the counties of Provence, Guyenne, and Comminges frames Pierre's decision to leave his home. As Pierre later identifies himself as "ung povre chevalier François qui serche le monde" (V.44) and "le seul filz au conte de Prouvence et suis nepveu au roy de France" (XIII.55–56), there is no intrinsic narratorial reason for making this distinction. However, toward the end of his adventures, Pierre meets some mariners who speak the "langaige de prouvence" and take him to Maguelonne's hospital at Aigues-Mortes. It is only in these closing stages of the tale, after Pierre has become a proficient linguist, and apparently lost his local knowledge, that a specific language is identified with this place (34v).

This narrator is more concerned with the importance of Pierre's position as a "jeune chevalier qui est estrangier" (VII.40) once he leaves his *pais* to join the ranks of the "chevaliers estranges" who wish to compete in King Maguelon's jousts (IV.38–39, V.13–15). Pierre has no need for interpreters on his travels in Europe but he experiences the city of Naples as a place where he has to set aside the "estranges viandes" served at dinner and feed his eyes on his love for Maguelonne instead (VI.20–23). He fights dressed in red and adorned with the keys of Saint Peter, as "le chevalier des clefs" (V.1–9, VI, 3). These arms reveal his name, yet no one seems able to read them, not even his own uncle (XVI.25–27, 93–94), as they persist in regarding him as a nameless knight. Perhaps, despite their geographical proximity to Rome and Maguelonne's rank as the most beautiful of Christian princesses, they do not have the "key" to his emblem. He refuses to declare his lineage, and this makes him a dangerous suitor for Maguelonne in the eyes of her nurse, who means specifically that they do not know if he is of noble rank or what his intentions might be (VII.36–42). The nurse does not see Pierre's assurance of his noble rank as sufficient reason to allow Maguelonne to love him, for his

namelessness makes him still "ung estrangier" whose love would shame her. At this point, Maguelonne rejects the term altogether: "Ne me le nommez plus estrangier, car cestuy est mon seigneur et non autre. Par quoy n'est pas a moy estrangier, ne au monde n'ay plus chiere parsonne que luy, car je suis toute sienne ne jamais homme ne me muera de cestuy propos; par quoy je vous prie que jamais ne me vueillez dire semblables paroles se vous voullez avoir m'amour et ma grace" (IX.41–46). "Estrangier" has become an unacceptable term to Maguelonne, but she promptly dreams that she asks Pierre where he is from and what his name is (IX.69–73). Maguelonne's refusal to hear the term *estrangier* cannot withstand her obsession, even in dreams, with finding out his lineage. Once Pierre does reveal who he is, she is relieved because he argues (and she concludes) that he has left his homeland and parents solely in pursuit of her love (XIII.56–61, 79–80). Maguelonne's words and actions, particularly in her dialogue with her nurse, echo once again the tale of Medea's love for the foreign Jason in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and offer an intriguing contrast with Raoul Lefèvre's *Histoire de Jason*. Lefèvre's Medea has an exchange with her nurse where the typical fear of the stranger is expressed as Rebecca Dixon has noted.[28]

> Quant la dame oy ces parolles, elle commença a plourer et dist: "Ma fille, hellas! Et qu'avez vous fait? Je suis bien deshonnouree par vous qui priez les estrangiers d'amours! Les estrangiers! O quel oultrage! Ilz s'en tromperont de vous, et, s'il est sceu, jamais honnouree ne serés." (Pinkernell, § 14.14)
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> [When the lady heard these words, she began to weep and said, "Alas, daughter, what have you done? I am dishonored by you, for you are flirting with foreigners! Foreigners! Oh, how shocking! They will deceive you and, if it gets out, you will never be treated with honor."]

However, Medea's words do not offer any echo of the nurse's xenophobia. In her response, she emphasizes her role as a courtly lady moved by Pity to love a valorous knight (§ 14.14). The concept of Jason as a foreign threat to the stability of the kingdom of Colchos is dissolved, in keeping with Lefèvre's emphasis on Jason as the model of Burgundian knighthood. In the geographical and political worldview that underpins *La Belle Maguelonne,* Pierre's foreignness is important because his eventual match with Maguelonne will seal the otherwise unlikely Angevin union of Provence and Naples.

Maguelonne's identification of Pierre as a new Jason is fleeting, and she proposes that they have been separated by the devil as a punishment for their sinful love, with Pierre having been taken "en quelque estrange region pour son desplaisir et pour le mien" (into some foreign region for his displeasure and for mine) (XXIV.67–68). Her words echo those uttered to her by Pierre: "j'ay deliberé en moy de ne jamais partir de vostre païs que je verray la fin de vostre adventure, et j'ameroye plustost mourir que vous laisser ne vous faire ung seul desplaisir" (I have decided not to leave your land before I see the end of your adventure, and I would rather die than displease you even once) (XVIII.5–8). The abandoned Maguelonne reinterprets Pierre's reference to *desplaisir* as a possible reflection of his boredom with their unconsummated relationship (XVIII.20–21). "[P]our son desplaisir et le mien" becomes a double-edged idea. She is sorrowful to lose him to some foreign soil, "quelque estrange region," but she is also afraid that he may be unfaithful, and her quest for him becomes all the more urgent. Maguelonne's quest takes her through these *estranges regions,* first to Rome; next to Genoa; and finally to the port of Aigues-Mortes, where she asks a charitable woman if *estrangiers* such as she can travel safely in these lands (XXVI.65–66). She travels in order to become the *estrangiers* that her nurse initially rejected in Pierre. Pilgrimage deracinates Maguelonne and removed the name that denotes her connection to the kingdom of Naples ruled by Maguelon. She is no longer hostile to the concept of foreignness and has adopted it herself in her quest for her estranged Pierre. Maguelonne's new friend does not reply directly, but tells her that her safety is guaranteed because the count of Provence rules both Provence and Aragon safely, despite his sorrow over the disappearance of his son Pierre on his travels "de par le monde" (across the world) (68–80). To be a stranger in this vast territory is to enjoy a degree of safety that is not available in other regions, and it is here that Maguelonne reinterprets her own name, no longer as the daughter of the king of Naples, but now as the founder of a shrine and hospital, places of safety for travelers.

Maguelonne never equates *estrangiers* with linguistic difference. She needs no interpreter to speak to the women she encounters in the forest of Naples and in Provence. Maguelonne's travels are interesting for her ability to receive support from other women such as the pilgrim who gives her both a sermon and clothes, the woman who gives her a meal, and the countess of Provence. Although she founds the hospital initially to protect her chastity, there are no suitors or abductors in evidence during her travels. Unlike the traveling Paris, she seems able to use a common mother tongue,

which is also that of her nurse. This is not a transparent language between women, however, for neither the woman pilgrim nor the hostess answers her questions directly (XXV.21–24, XXVI). Both answer more in terms of the narrative than of her proposed dialogue. Her extended dialogues with her nurse prior to her elopement may illuminate this feature of the text, because the nurse is associated with both the acquisition of speech and the maternal function. She initially addresses Maguelonne as "ma belle dame et chiere fille," and Maguelonne tells her, "ie vous vieulx obeir comme a ma chiere mere et nourrisse" (VII.24, XIV.35–36). The nurse acts as a surrogate maternal figure that ensures the connections between mothers and offspring. The nurse, a figure traditionally associated with the primary acquisition of language, is placed initially in a mediating role that allows the pair's courtship to emulate a conventional aristocratic betrothal: she distances Maguelonne from her own mother (who interrupts her first meeting with Pierre [VI.53–66]). She also precipitates both their elopement and their separation by giving Maguelonne the three rings that were given to Pierre by his mother, a gesture that echoes a betrothal by proxy.

Maguelonne effectively weans herself from the nurse by absconding into a world where she may emulate Pierre in traveling incognito through other linguistic regions. Once she is the "saincte hospitaliere," however, Maguelonne develops a close relationship with the countess of Provence and finds comfort for her own mourning for Pierre in soothing her maternal sorrow. Maguelonne's lack of language barriers and her flexible choices of name are also intriguing. In a text that places some stress on Pierre's name as a signifier that can be hidden and can become as powerless as a pebble thrown after a bird, the heroine's name shifts seamlessly. Maguelonne fleetingly attempts to rename herself "la nouvelle Medee," but prefers to don an anonymous pilgrim's clothing. She is known at Aigues-Mortes as "la belle hospitaliere." However, Maguelonne somehow imposes her patronymic as a toponym in her lover's homeland. It is not clear if, at the end, Pierre has reached a hospital, his homeland, or her body as metonymy for her ownership of the island of Maguelonne on the shore of Aigues-Mortes (a place-name that alludes both to salt production and to the paradoxically curative but inert waters of the Dead Sea).

If language is one issue for Maguelonne, the second aspect of the *nutrix,* nourishment, affects Pierre. The second part of the text describes Pierre's adventures in a world where food and bodies are confused, and he is repeatedly mistaken for food. When he wins King Maguelon's tournament, the court feasts their eyes on Pierre's white flesh, gray eyes and red gold hair and

think, "bien euree estoit la mere qui avoit porté tant noble fruit" (The mother was fortunate who bore such noble fruit) (XVI.166–73). The "estranges viandes" (strange foodstuffs) served up on the king of Naples's table are ignored by Pierre, who prefers to consume Maguelonne's beauty with his eyes. Both fruit and flesh of his mother's body, Pierre prepares to elope with Maguelonne by packing enough food for two days (XIX.1–5). When their elopement is discovered, King Maguelon shows his grief by fasting for a whole day (XX.36–37). The scene is set for a separation predicated on nourishment. When Pierre and Maguelonne reach the shore and Maguelonne falls asleep, Pierre takes advantage of this opportunity and opens her bodice to feast on the sight of her breasts. He finds a bundle of red silk tucked into her bosom and unwraps it to find that it contains his mother's three rings. He places this treasure laden with maternal and erotic connotations on a rock (*une pierre*) (XXI.22). A passing bird of prey ("oysel vivant de rapine") thinks the red bundle is a piece of meat ("une piece de char") and swoops down to steal it (XXI.28–29). Pierre is disturbed to have lost Maguelonne's concealed treasure "et commença a suivre l'oisel et luy lanssoit pierre" until it lands on an offshore rock (this time, a *roche*). Pierre throws another *pierre* at the bird so it flies away and drops the bundle into the sea (XXII.4–12). Pierre tries to recapture the bundle by sailing out to the rock in a fisherman's abandoned boat, but he is lost at sea.

Much later, Pierre's mother is required to interpret the cloth and rings when they are found in an unusually large and beautiful fish that has been caught by fishermen and given to the count's cooks (XXVIII.1–11). She concludes that her innocent son has been eaten by fish: "quel mal avoit fait ceste innocente creature que les poissons aient mangié sa chair?" (What harm had this innocent creature done, for fish to have eaten his flesh?) (XXVIII.20–21). Pierre is by this point of the text reduced to a worthless commodity, no more than fish food and undigested maternal objects, his passing witnessed, says his mother, by "une creature inraisonnable et morte qui ne voit ne oyt ne sant" (a dead, irrational creature that can neither see nor hear, nor feel) (XXVIII.27–28). An innocent creature eaten by an irrational one, Pierre has been absorbed into inert matter. He is lost at sea on a boat that has been abandoned by fishermen because they thought it was worthless, and he reacquires some value only in commercial terms when he is rescued by corsairs, because his good looks and the gold chain he wears round his neck make him a worthy gift for a sultan anxious to recruit a young nobleman to serve at his table (XXII.21–23, XXIII.5–10). If Maguelonne flirts repeatedly with a new identity as Medea, Pierre is far less a new

Jason than a human version of the Golden Fleece: desired and valued both as a symbol and an object, but intrinsically a useless remnant of uncooked mutton.

Pierre's confused grasp of signs reaches its apex in Alexandria, where he is once again nameless and *estrangiers*. There are interpreters at this court to assist the sultan, and Pierre acquires proficiency in Moorish, Greek, and Persian within a year. He acquires great influence at court and the sultan loves him like a son (XXIII.14–15, XXX.2–10). Yet Pierre, unlike Paris, proves incapable of putting his language skills to subtle use. He insults the sultan's paternal love by asking for his permission to return to Provence to visit his mother and father (XXXI.3–10), and in so doing loses the inheritance that was about to fall to him (12–19). He attempts to return to Provence with fourteen barrels filled with gold, but presents these to the Provençal mariners as barrels of salt. They are perplexed by a traveler who wants to take salt to one of the most important centers of the saline industry of the northern Mediterranean, but they allow him his whim, as he has paid them handsomely (XXXI.49–70). Unfortunately for Pierre, the barrels of food-preserving salt appear to desiccate the ship's crew, as they are forced to stop on the island of Sangana to collect some fresh water (XXXII.73–76).[29] Pierre is seasick and goes ashore. He is distracted by the beauty of a flower on this island (where there is no food) into thinking of Maguelonne and falls asleep (XXXII). He, like she before him, is stranded, when the ship leaves without him, and only the worthless barrels of salt reach Maguelonne's hospital of "Saint Pierre de Maguelonne" (XXXII.29–40, XXXV). Pierre is far from classical allusion at this point. Far from being eaten by fish, a confused, parched, and starving Pierre is rescued once again and fed by fishermen (XXXV.49–55), and after nine months of hospitalization and good food in the port of Crapena meets yet more mariners who speak the "langaige de Prouvence" and take him to Saint-Pierre de Maguelonne, which has been miraculously enriched and enlarged, unbeknownst to him, thanks to his mislaid barrels of gold (XXXVI.59–24).

This narrative sequence plays on the paradoxes of salt, a product of the sea that was valued essentially for its peripheral role in preserving meat from rotting and for enhancing the taste of food, yet one that cannot be eaten in significant quantities and cannot be drunk. Salt is both dead and alive, a dispensable product, a treasured commodity, and a poison. It was subject to fierce commercial competition, yet it was literally as plentiful as the sea. Like salt, Pierre dissolves whenever he is tested by contact with water, and like salt, he is associated with fish and with food.

Pierre thus appears to metamorphose into a series of foodstuffs, as his reunion with Maguelonne is heralded and made possible by barrels of salt that could preserve the fish his mother believes have eaten him. Maguelonne has searched for him in Rome, the location he initially claimed as his by using the *armes parlantes* of the keys of Saint Peter. She is subsequently condemned to await his reappearance from the sea in a church she dedicates to Saint Peter. However, Pierre is never recognized by his first name or his lineage: he recognizes Maguelonne's name in the hospital, but fails to identify her. Rather, he fantasizes that she (or rather her attractive flesh) has been eaten by animals because of him: "Et suis cause que les bestes sauvages luy ont rompue et mangee sa chair, qui estoit tant belle et tant noble" (It is because of me that the savage beasts have torn and eaten her flesh, which was so beautiful and noble) (XXXVII.14–16).

However, as it is necessary to reunite the two protagonists so the tale may end, the narrative abandons Pierre's fixation on flesh as food and reverts to the concept initially raised by Maguelonne of what defines the *estrangier.* Pierre tells Maguelonne that he is the son of a nobleman who abandoned his parents because he had heard about the beauty of "une fille qui estoit en ung estrange pays" (XXXVIII.5–7). In retelling his tale and mentioning no names once he is back in Provence, Pierre reformulates the roles the two protagonists have played. Maguelonne is now redefined as the *estrangier,* as her elopement and disguise doubly mean that she now has neither a name nor a lineage. The toponym she has imposed on the island of Port Sarrasin has a dual function: it unites the names of the separated lovers as well as their two lineages, and it affirms Pierre's initial dedication to Saint Peter. A third function is also obvious in that the name makes a "Saracen" port of Provence into a Christian shrine named after the king of Naples.

La Belle Maguelonne stages a detailed alienation of both protagonists from their lineage and homeland, so that the category of *estrangiers* is redefined, from an intolerable or frustrating word signifying marital and social rejection, to an object of desire. Accordingly, Maguelonne dresses in royal clothing in order to unveil herself before him as the daughter of the king of Naples, the "estrange pays" that led Pierre to abandon every ounce of his identity as the son of the count of Provence, to the point that he became no more than a series of signs and substances (XII.1–20), keys, rock, ring, and fish.

In many respects the tale again exhibits strong connections with *Paris et Vienne,* where the port of Aigues-Mortes is also exploited as a base for travel and return (XIX, XL). Pierre de La Cépède's statement that he has taken the name of Saint Peter also hints at the symbolic exploitation of Pierre's

name: "Et c'il vous plaist savoir qui je suis: de Saint Piere j'ay prins le non, de la Cypede pour sournon" (And if you want to know who I am: I have taken the name of Saint Peter and the surname of La Cépède). To conclude, *La Belle Maguelonne* operates within a network of "secondary translations," texts that do not declare their relationship with their source and that display a competitive attitude toward contemporary or prior compositions in the vernacular. In terms of the romance's allusion to a classical source, it is embedded in a dense textual field encompassing French adaptations of the matter of Troy that were in turn translated into other French texts and give rise to Latin, Tuscan, and Venetian versions. As a vernacular romance, it explores the mother tongue and *nutrix* tongue through images of parentage and nourishment. In so doing, it appears to depict both ethnic and familial identities as elective concepts that are grounded in language. The romance is explicitly connected with the problematic claims to empire of the Angevin house of Anjou-Provence, and it is this complex multilingual court, in direct competition with the house of Aragon and Catalonia, that determines its geographical and linguistic ambiguities.