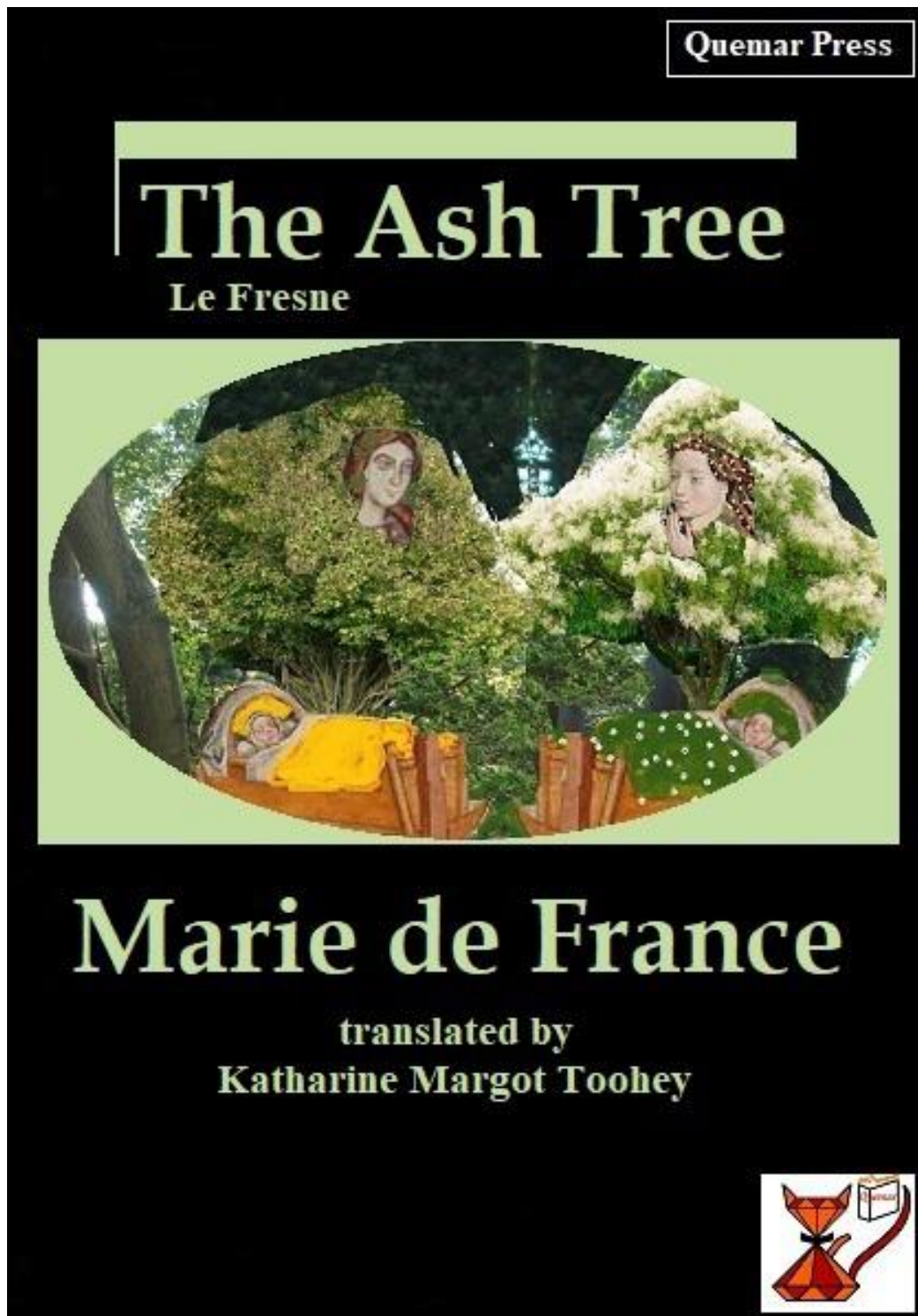


Second Preview



The lai of the Ash I'll tell
from a story I know well.



A long time ago, in Brittany
two knights lived closely.
They dwelt and had such riches,
knights with valor, knights courageous,
each next to each, in the country.
They had each married a lady.
One of them was to have a child.
When it was at last delivered
at that time she had two children.
Her lord was glad and rejoiced then.
He felt such pleasure
he sent word to his neighbour
that his wife had two sons.
Now he was entrusted with twins
so he would ask soon
that one be given his name.
The rich man was seated to dine
when the messenger came this time.
At the dais, he came to kneel
and he told all he had to tell.
For this the lord thanked God
and gave him a beautiful steed.
The knight's wife began to grin
as she dined next to him.



At that time, she was proud and false,
slanderous then and still envious.



Le lai del Freisne vus dirai /Sulunc le cunte que jeo sai.

En Bretaine jadis aveient/Dui Chevaliers, veisin esteient;/Riches hummes furent è
manant,/E chevaliers prux è vaillant./Prochein furent, d'une cuntrée,/Chescun femme
aveit espusée;/L'une des Dames enceinta/Al fin qu'ele délivera/A cele feiz ot deus
enfanz/Sis Sires est liez è joianz;/Pur la joie que il en a./A sun bon veisin le
manda,/Que sa femme ad deus fiz éuz,/De tanz enfanz esteit créuz./L'un li transmettra
à lever,/De sun nun le face nomer./Li riches hum sist al manger/A-tant es-vos le
messenger;/Devant le deis s'agenoilla,/Tut sun message li cunta./Li Sire en ad Deu
mercié,/Un bel cheval li ad doné./La femme al chevalier surist,/De juste li al manger
sist;kar èle ert feinte è orguilluse/E médisante è enviuse.



She spoke as one mad
and before all her people said:
'Help, God: I'm amazed
where this good man was advised
to disclose all to my lord here,
all the disgrace and all the dishonour
that his wife gave birth to twins,
so much shame for his wife and him.
What happened is clear to us.
It never came to pass, nor was:
never may it happen in this instance
that when giving birth at once
a woman produce two children
but two men had fathered them.'
Her lord, studying her say this,
blamed her, said she was amiss:
'Lady, let it go.
It isn't yours to speak so.
In all honesty, that other lady
has been regarded very highly.'



Through the house, those within
came to remember her words then.

So they were said, known widely
throughout all the lands of Brittany.

She was hated for them everywhere,
with such scorn, all the more.

Every woman hearing the speech
despised her for it, poor and rich.

That messenger who had come to call
returned to his lord to tell of all.

Having listened and turned to go,
suffering, not knowing what to do,

he hated his noble wife,
deeply distrusting her past life.

He held her under duress,
not knowing she was guiltless.

The Lady who spoke ill of her
became pregnant the same year
- she was pregnant with two.

Her neighbour was avenged now.



She carried them to term:

two girls. It weighed so firm

then, her strong sorrowing grief.

She began lamenting to herself:

'Alas, what to do in future!

I will have no reputation, no honour!'



Ele parlat mut folement,/E dist devant tute sa gent,/Si m'eït Deus jo m'esmerveil/U cest Preudum prist cest conseil/Qu'il ad mandé à mun Seigneur,/Sa hunte è sa deshonor,/Que sa femme ad eu deus fiz,/E il, è èle en sunt huniz./Nus savuns bien qu'il i afiert./Unques ne fut ne jà n'en iert./K'en avendrat cel aventure/Qu'à une sule portéure/Que une femme deus fiz eit,/Si deus hummes ne li unt fait./Sis Sires l'a mut esgardée;/Mut durement l'en ad blamée;/Dame, fet-il, lessez ester,/Ne devez mie issi parler:/Vérité est que ceste Dame/Ad mut esté de bone fame./La gent qui en la meisun èrent,/Cele parole recordèrent,/Asez fu dite è conue/Par tute Bretagne fut seue./Mut en fu la Dame haïe,/Pos en dut estre maubalie./Tutes li femmes ki l'oïrent/Povres è riches l'en haïrent./Cil qui le message ot porté/A sun Seigneur ad tut cunté,/Quant il l'oï dire è retraire./Dolent en fu, ne sot qu'i faire;/La preude femme en haï/E durement l'a mescréi,/E mut la teneit en destreit./Sanz ceo qu'ele nel' déservait./La Dame qu'isi mesparla,/En l'an méismes enceinta;/De deuz enfanz est enceintié/Ore est sa voisine vengié./Dèsqu'à sun terme les porta,/Deus filles ot, mut li pesa;/Mut durement en est dolente,/A sei méismes se desmente; /Lasse, fet-èle, que ferai!/Jamès pris ne honor n'aurai!



To be continued

