



INTRODUCTION

WE OPEN WITH A marginal image in a bilingual treatise, composed and translated around 1350 in Avignon by the Austin friar Peyre de Paternas, the *Libre de sufficientia e de necessitat* (27v; fig. 1).¹ At the top of the left-hand column is the end of a chapter in Occitan. It is then followed by the opening of the subsequent chapter in Latin; Occitan translation follows the Latin text. A large marginal image appears below the two columns of text. It shows an ox standing on its hind legs and guiding a long plow pulled by two men, one bearded and one clean shaven. The ox is shouting in French, “Grizel, avant!” (Move, Grisell!), and prodding the men with a lance that stretches the full length of the plow. The name “Maistre Jehan de Mazeres” has been written next to the heads of the two men.

The marginal image (which dominates the folio and as such cannot truly be regarded as “marginal”) is an interpretation of the common proverbial expression for doing things in the wrong order, “Mettre la charrue devant les boeufs,” the French equivalent of the English “putting the cart before the horse,” except that the cart has been replaced by a plow. The name inscribed beside the men may be that of the illuminator. The manuscript is also signed by its Breton copyist, Guillaume ar Bleiz de Kergoat, and either Guillaume or an assistant occasionally wrote instructions for the illuminator in French. If the illuminator is one of the two men tied to the plow, his companion may well be the Breton copyist. The hybrid human-ox plowman is not identified.

Peyre de Paternas prefaces his bilingual work by describing it to its female dedicatee as a work written “en nostra lingua maternal” (in our mother tongue) (1r). Delphine de Belfort was a noblewoman from the Limousin, and the manuscript contains her portrait as well as her coat of arms, which is often set beside that of her husband Hugues de La Roche. The frontispiece of the manuscript contains the coat of arms of Delphine’s uncle, Pope Clement VI (the Limousin-born Pierre Roger) and of four cardinals who

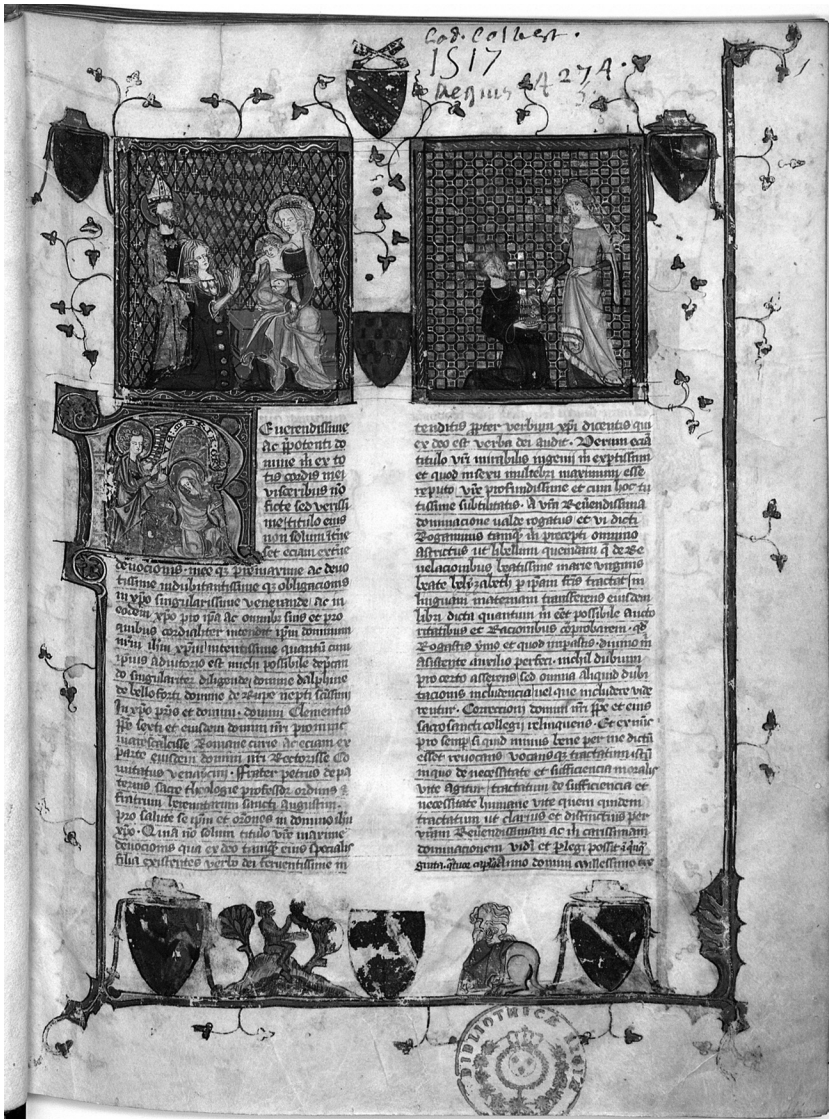


Fig. 2 Peyre de Paternas, *Libre de sufficientia e de necessitat*, MS Paris BNF fr. 3313A, fol. 1r. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

were their kinsmen (fig. 2). Peyre makes much of the language that he shares with both Delphine and the pope. He claims that he was recruited to the Avignon Augustinian house because there was no other Paris-trained master available who could teach “de lenga ocana.” Delphine was from the Limousin and Peyre was from Provence, but he asserts that this *lenga ocana* was a single mother tongue (*lingua materna*) and that this was in demand among the most influential figures in the papal curia.

Peyre’s prologue creates two audiences for his book, one reading Latin, the other requiring Occitan either to have access to the Latin or to replace it. The French and Francophone Breton team that produced the book as a physical object construct a third. Peyre’s book presents itself as a Latin work supported by an Occitan translation of equal weight and value. It is in the spirit of the prologue of the Occitan *Elucidari*, which describes the young count Gaston of Foix poring perplexedly over Bartholomeus Anglicus’s *De proprietatibus rerum*, then exclaiming to a passing translator:

L’estil del libre m’es salvagge,
 escur, subtil: yeu requier declaragge;
 sera m’util, expres en mon langage.²

[The style of the book is aloof from me, obscure, subtle: I need some clarification. It will be useful to me once it has been expressed in my language.]

It would surely be discourteous of Peyre de Paternas to imply that the members of the papal curia were unable to read Latin, so the purpose of the *Libre de sufficientia* has to lie beyond such clarification. Occitan is used in this instance both as a vehicular language for a text in Latin that would (theoretically) remain inaccessible to Delphine and as a prestigious idiom used by Peyre to proclaim his personal usefulness both to the Avignonese papacy and to its geographical and dynastic location in Provence.³ The young count of Foix demands a linguistic support of his commissioned translator “en mon langage” (my language), the language of his lineage and of his possessions.

I have chosen these two examples in resistance to the prevalent view of late medieval Occitan writing as the last, sad expression of a decadent or politically oppressed minority language. As is well known, Occitan functioned as a vehicular language in some western European poetic circles from the twelfth to the early fourteenth century. It was gradually supplanted in

Italy by Tuscan and gave way more slowly in Catalonia, first to a hybrid Occitan-Catalan narrative poetry and ultimately to works in both poetry and prose that were composed in Catalan. Occitan functions throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as a literary and cultural go-between. Kevin Brownlee has described the “conflicted genealogy” that is embedded in Italian receptions of French texts, where the anxiety of influence is affected by competition over cultural prestige and dominance: “Dante’s notion of *translatio* is therefore not the progression from Greece to Rome to the France of Chrétien de Troyes and the French literary tradition but rather, from Greece to Rome to Italy, including of course, from Dante’s perspective, Provençal as part of the Romance vernacular lyric tradition on the basis of which he (in part) positions himself in the *Commedia*.”⁴ Occitan (formerly Provençal) is viewed as posing “no threat” to Italian culture (Brownlee’s term), largely thanks to its lack of a canonical narrative tradition. It is a lyric mode of expression that could be learned and adapted without the declaration of any political allegiance, one of the few Romance languages that did not eventually become the official idiom of a nation-state and, as such, is reducible neither to the wholly modern concept of “Southern France” nor to a *koine*.⁵ As Catalan and French both moved in very different ways toward the position of a national language, Occitan lost its prestige. Where in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries it was a vehicular language for poetry that enjoyed a strong international reputation, by the late fifteenth century it had become the carefully controlled and protected expression of regional and civic identity in certain centers such as Toulouse and Arles. It changed from a deracinated and genuinely international idiom into a minor provincial art form.

The literary context of Occitan in the fourteenth century was mapped more than twenty years ago by Maurizio Perugi in a study that demonstrates the close ties between the Toulousain poetic revival, the less well-known aristocratic poetry of Rodez, and the regions touching on the papal court at Avignon.⁶ Occitan narrative works were still being composed in various genres, among them saints’ lives, miracle plays, and local histories such as Bertran Boysses’s *Roman d’Arles*. The *chanson de geste* was popular in the sense that several Occitan epics survive only in fourteenth-century manuscripts, and the unusual *Guillaume de la Barra* (1318) was written partly from epic models. Perhaps most important is the fact that troubadour *chansonniers* were produced in the mid-thirteenth to mid-fourteenth centuries in northern Italy and Catalonia as well as in the Toulousain and Pyrenees.⁷ Occitan-speaking regions became increasingly Francophone after the end of

the thirteenth century, through annexation into the French crown of much of the Languedoc, the establishment of a French-based Angevin county of Provence, and the monarch's close political involvement in the Avignon papacy. English political domination was of course marked in Aquitaine and Gascony during much of this period. Contact with both northern and southern Italy was ensured through the Angevin kingdom of Naples as well as Avignon.

However, the dominant view of Occitan literary production remains negative. Despite his sympathetic treatment of this period and region, Perugi uses a number of striking images to condemn what he views as a rhetorical continuity that was marred by lexical and grammatical stagnation:

La controparte linguistica è costituita dal progressive irrigidimento e imbastardimento della lingua letteraria occitanica, sulla quale agiscono le spinte convergenti di un processo di codificazione imbalsamatrice e carico delle strutture grammaticali, e di un parallelo arricchimento—o piuttosto inquinamento—lessicale con una massiccia intrusione di vocaboli appartenenti ai registri linguistici più bassi e di forestierismi, in particolare provenienti da *oil*.⁸

[The other side of the linguistic equation is made up of the progressive increase in inflexibility and bastardizing of the Occitan literary language, under the converging influences of an embalming process of codification of the grammatical structures, and a parallel lexical enrichment (or rather, impoverishment) by the major influx of words taken from lower linguistic registers and foreign loan words, particularly those from northern French.]

Stiff, embalmed, bastardized, invaded by “low” and “foreign” (French) words—there is little left of the troubadour koine. This mummified yet decomposing corpse stalks the other side of the Pyrenees as well, for Martín de Riquer decried the deadening influence of Occitan poetry on nascent Catalan prose and suggested that its domination until the last years of the fourteenth century compromised promising literary and cultural exchanges with Italy thanks to a style that was “vulgar, bland and prosaic” (*vulgar, fada i prosaica*).⁹ Perugi riposted that the poet Ausiàs March (c. 1400–1459) could not have composed in a Catalan that he sought to free from the language of the troubadours, had he not been strongly influenced by the troubadour tradition, admittedly in part as it reentered Catalonia via Italian lyric

poetry.¹⁰ Perugi emphasizes the importance of rejection in reception. He also emphasizes that Raimon de Cornet is one of a number of Occitan poets whose works and career point to a livelier engagement with their times. More recent studies have echoed Perugi's conclusions, but have also emphasized that Occitan and Catalan literary interaction has a more long-standing and richer history than the theory of Occitan precedence would allow.¹¹ More recently still, the infiltration of Occitan literary culture by gallicisms has come to be viewed as a reflection of fashion rather than decadence, evidence of a dynamic intercultural exchange rather than colonized defeat.¹²

Studies of manuscript production point to substantial levels of multilingualism within courts as centers of patronage, as well as in towns where manuscripts were commissioned, copied, and illuminated. Francophone book production reached far beyond Francophone regions, as is also observed for Occitan manuscripts, many of which are the products of workshops and compilers in northern Italy, "a veritable melting pot" of linguistic interaction.¹³ Sermon collections and reports also point to a substantial amount of overlap, as well as some careful marking of boundaries, such as the dissimilar languages used for the same sermon collection compiled in the Pyrenean villages of Organyà and Tortosa and the Catalan prose translation of Matfre Ermengaud's *Breviari d'amor*. Linguistic interference appears in surprising locations too.¹⁴ In the fifteenth century, writers in Provence were more inclined to seek patronage by composing in French, thanks especially to the officially Francophone but polyglot court of René d'Anjou, which also offered patronage to Catalan writers. The Toulousain poetic revival shares the learned basis of Peyre's manuscript, but it coincided with enduring patronage of troubadour poetry in aristocratic courts in both Occitan- and Catalan-speaking regions.

The *Libre de sufficientia* may symbolize the rich linguistic mix of Avignon (admittedly while it suffered a recruitment crisis during the Black Death), a place where friars composed texts in Occitan and Latin and worked harmoniously with French and Breton-French craftsmen to produce luxury volumes that would adorn the bookcases of nobles and prelates alike. Yet the marginal illustration also suggests that someone thought that Peyre de Paternas had muddled his political and linguistic priorities. An Augustinian friar recruited and employed by the pope has, perhaps, placed his Occitan plow before the French oxen that allow the Avignon papal court to produce luxury volumes of this sort. On the frontispiece, the shield of one of the four cardinals is flanked by an ape with an owl perched on its arm, which may be read as a sly allusion to the courtly prelate who goes hawking,

“aping” the lay aristocracy, and who makes a public display of his ignorance (one of the many associations of the owl), perhaps by acting as patron to a translation into Occitan of a Latin treatise. The ox may shout orders in French, much as the French king was believed to dominate the schismatic curia, but it is not clear if anyone can understand his words.

Delphine and Peyre are connected, so he claims, by a common “mother” tongue, but should a “feminine” genealogy of this sort be privileged in the context of a court dependent on the paternal protection of the French monarch? Peyre has placed his manuscript under the aegis of genealogy. By highlighting Delphine’s kinship with her powerful uncles, the illuminator extends the theme to present a critical gloss on his enterprise. The historiated letter O counterbalances the marginal image with a depiction of the Massacre of the Innocents. In genealogical thinking, the ox should precede the plow; secular men’s genitals should plow the fertile earth. The Massacre of the Innocents depicts a crime against medieval views of genealogy, in that the mother’s fate should be subordinate to that of her male offspring. It is also a reversal of logic, this time that of lineage. Other literary examples point to a similar dilemma concerning the feminine “mother tongue” (as we will see in Chapter 3) and the connection between lineage and language (Chapters 3, 4, and 5).

If we return next to the count’s request in the *Elucidari*, “mon langage” is evidently presented as a clear, unobscure, and useful medium that is shared by the count and the narrator in the text. This may well seem to be a definition of the mother tongue for a modern reader, but it could just as easily be the image of Latin for an educated reader of that time. If the count is struggling to understand his book, it is not because he cannot read it, as he can make out the words. He lacks the knowledge to see beyond the words on the page, so he requests a vernacular gloss. It is this gap in knowledge that motivates both him and the author of the poem to begin the process of translation. The prologue introduces the count of Foix to a new palace modeled on his own, that of Lady Wisdom (lines 18–26). The narrator overlays the count’s castle and his lands with a book that allows him to know (by inference, to own) the properties of all things, mapping vernacular words onto objects and locations that are familiar to him. One layer of vernacular words is placed over aristocratic lands, and the count is urged to gloss the incomprehensible world of a Latin encyclopedia in terms of his home and body, as if these were also “his language.” The properties of all living things are mapped onto the valleys and buildings of the northeastern Pyrenees and expressed in an idiom supposedly comprehensible to its inhabitants.

Paul Zumthor traced a vertical relationship between “high” Latin and the “low” vernaculars and a horizontal or contiguous relationship between these less elite languages.¹⁵ Zumthor was not satisfied with this assumption, but it provided a useful working model for his study, as it maintained Latin in its cultural position, as if it were a high tower dominating a plain of vernaculars. Where these vernaculars come into contact, their interaction may not produce a common reference back to Latin or a smooth interpenetration. They may display intense competition. For example, the troubadour Raimbaut de Vaqueiras composed a *descort* (discord), a poem in which each stanza has a different metrical form. Raimbaut wrote each stanza in a different language: Occitan, French, Gascon, Galician-Portuguese, and Tuscan (PC 392, 4; Linskill, XVI).¹⁶ Furio Brugnolo has argued that Raimbaut’s song may appear to display a harmonious coexistence of literary idioms, but it also demonstrates to any listener how easy it is to adapt troubadour poetry to other Romance languages.¹⁷ As Raimbaut was one of the first troubadours to obtain extended patronage in Lombardy, his *descort* amounts to a demonstration not of his skill in his mother tongue, but of his role as the provider of a flexible lyric medium to courts that did not speak the language of his songs. Similarly, Miriam Cabré has read Cerverí de Girona’s “Cobla en sis lengatges” as part of his persona as a “cultural bridge,” transmitting Occitan culture in the Catalan household of Pere el Gran (1276–85), which was also in touch with Sicilian curial culture (c. 1259–85).¹⁸

Raimbaut de Vaqueiras was a contemporary of the Catalan Raimon Vidal de Besalú, the author of the *Razos de trobar* (c. 1190–1213), the first datable treatise for the acquisition of Occitan as a poetic language. Raimon presents the choice between two vernacular languages in strictly aesthetic terms:¹⁹

La parladura francesca val mais et [es] plus avinenz a far romanz et pasturellas, mas cella de Lemosin val mais per far vers et cansons et serventes. Et per totas las terras de nostre lengatge son de maior autoritat li cantar de la lenga lemosina qe de neguna altra parladura. (lines 72–75)

[The French tongue is better and more attractive for composing romances and *pastourelles*, but the one of the Limousin is better for composing *vers*, *cansos*, and *sirventes*. And throughout the lands of our language, the songs of the Limousin tongue have greater authority than any other language.]

This language of the Limousin applies to the dialects spoken in “Limousin, Provence, Auvergne, Quercy, and adjacent provinces” (lines 61–64), a linguistic field now labeled Occitan. Raimon’s treatise intends to teach correct usage borrowed from a standardized poetic language (koine) applying it to a neighboring tongue that lacked certain grammatical features that made it suited to complex poetic form. Occitan and French are vernaculars which are part of “las terras de nostre lengatge,” but Occitan has greater prestige as a language with *auctoritas*. It is a vernacular with the authority of Latin, one of the languages to which Raimon is offering an alternative. He is probably also countering the prestige within Catalan lands of Arabic and Hebrew as literary and scientific languages, as he says *trobare* is practiced by men of all social ranks, from kings to shepherds, Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike (lines 20–27). Raimon’s treatise is composed for an audience of Catalan aristocrats and he is clearly offering them a poetic and historiographical language: “Et tuit li mal e.l ben del mont son mes en remembransa per trobadors” (And all the good and bad things of the world are commemorated by troubadours) (lines 27–28). He adds that “trobars et chantars son movemenz de totas galliardas” (*trobare* and singing are the impulse for all great deeds) (lines 30–31). This koine may structure the narratives of the future as well as the past. Occitan may offer a suitable language, but it needs to be clearly understood by both its authors and its audiences. Raimon criticizes those who pretend that they can understand songs when they do not (lines 32–36) and insists that it is necessary to learn the “saber de trobar” in order to tell the difference between good and bad songs. Acquiring a lyric language is a matter of acquiring intellectual mastery, as well as a certain degree of control over how the past and the future of a lineage or court are narrated.

Raimon may have had some acquaintance with the multilingual poetry that flourished in regions south of Catalonia a little more than a century earlier, such as the *muwashshahat* in vernacular Arabic and Hebrew, which featured refrains (*kharijas*) in a Romance language identified as Mozarabic. While direct contact still remains to be established, a broader intercultural contact has been suggested by María Rosa Menocal.²⁰ The *muwashshahat* depend on bilingual performers, one masculine voice enacting the erotic material of the main song and the refrain in Romance vernacular placed in the mouth of a woman. Medieval Arabic writers commented that the *muwashshahat* were vulgar songs and that their multilingual content associated them with the lowest rank of performers: “gypsies,” prostitutes, and those who travel and who are paid for their entertainment.²¹ A key figure in the

performance of the corpus seems to have been the Mozarabic slave, usually female, who was employed as a musician in *taifa* courts. María Rosa Menocal has made much of a report that an eleventh-century Norman crusader listened to a group of female performers and appeared to understand some of their song. One chronicler claimed that William IX of Aquitaine (the earliest known troubadour) grew up in a court that included “Saracen” women musicians and dancers who had been captured by his father.²² Both accounts are seductive but neither says that the nobleman did more than exploit the women’s skills. The troubadour Marcabru (fl. c. 1130–50), whose early career was at the court of Poitiers, appears to have borrowed both the meter and the rhyme sounds of an Arabic *muwashshaha*, but not the sense of the song. The Arabic piece is a love song, but Marcabru’s version is a crude parody of a three-way dialogue between a lover, his lady, and a messenger bird. More intriguingly, a troubadour of the following generation, Peire d’Alvernhe, rewrote Marcabru’s two songs as a serious dialogue between a lover, a nightingale, and the lady. Have the Occitan poets done more than borrow an attractive Andalusian melody? It is well known that musical instruments such as the ‘*ud* (lute) were transmitted across western Europe through the High Middle Ages. Both troubadours take as their central character a messenger bird who interprets the words of the lover to his distant lady. In troubadour poetry, birds are figures that sing in their language (*lati*, “Latin”) without being comprehensible beyond the general sense that they are singing about their love. Both Marcabru and Peire d’Alvernhe enjoyed periods of success in the courts of northern Spain, but how much these audiences would have understood the finer points of their often complex poems is clearly debatable. This single instance of direct poetic exchange certainly does not suggest that the *content* of troubadour songs may be traced reliably to Andalusian sources, though instruments, melodies, and styles of performance are a different matter.²³ A troubadour in this context may have been as incomprehensible as a bird.

Troubadour songs were performed in courts that did not speak Occitan, and the songs owed their success in part to the *razo*, what seems to have been an oral introduction or commentary to a song. Indeed, one of the reasons for the success of troubadour poetry is that by the mid-twelfth century it was adopted and translated into several other vernaculars around Europe. The performance of a song in its original form with an explanatory *razo* in the audience’s vernacular is an efficient means of diffusing a poem outside its speech community, although it may open up countless new modes of interpreting and (mis)understanding it. Raimon Vidal was addressing a Catalan

audience that had already produced some notable troubadours and would continue to do so. His treatise was copied and improved on for another century in Catalan, Occitan, Italian, and Sardinian regions. A number of treatises produced by Catalan poets for collections of Catalan texts also cover the presumed hiatus between the 1280s and 1324, when there is little extant evidence of cultivation of troubadour poetry beyond isolated instances in the Pyrenees.²⁴

The language Raimon Vidal sought to teach to Catalan speakers in the 1190s was in such a parlous state in the Languedoc by the 1320s that it was reimported. The new *Consistori de la sobregaia compania del gay saber*, founded in Toulouse in 1323 on the model of northern French poetic Puits, sought to provide an adequate treatise for would-be poets, Occitan speakers who would have been trained in Latin prosody. In 1341, the Consistory member Joan de Castellnou added refinements to Raimon Vidal's original theory, in the light of ample evidence of nonstandard usage in the Occitan-speaking regions:

Tug li vocable de Limosi ni d'Alvernha no son abte ni covenable a far dictatz. E qui vol allegar Raimon Vidal, pot hom respondre que ço que il ditz deu hom entendre quant al cas, no pas qant a tots los mots singulars.

[Not all the words of Limousin and Auvergne are either apt or acceptable for making poetry. And if anyone brings up Raimon Vidal as evidence, one can reply that what he says should be understood in terms of the case system, not in terms of individual words.]

The long process of composition of the *Leys d'Amors* manuscripts reveals two dominant impulses. The first is a drive to create a standardized form of poetic expression that would place the Occitan *parladura* on a par with Latin. The second is a strong sense that the standardized language is already dead.²⁵ The Catalan language starts to develop in literary and cultural terms from the time the Occitan lyric tradition dwindles, and nonlyric authors such as Ramon Llull and Arnau de Vilanova are key figures in this transition, which the present study is too limited to cover. In Part 2, I will examine texts that are composed in octosyllabic rhyming couplets in a hybrid blend of Occitan and Catalan. This was the standard vehicle for narrative expression in Catalan-speaking regions until the late fourteenth century, when Catalan prose writing developed its distinctive identity, largely through a

strong curial culture that devoted funds and energy to translating Latin, Italian, and French works into Catalan. This phenomenon is the subject of Chapter 6.

Medieval literature is intercultural in the sense that lyric poetry, Arthurian tales, or *chansons de geste* provided a singularly coherent basis on which many culturally specific variations could be played.²⁶ These dialogues have been readdressed as medievalists have moved toward what might be termed a postcolonial view of literary culture.²⁷ Sociopolitical context is important when reading different versions of the same story in different languages. It is evident, for example, that there is a cultural and political gap between Catalan royal patronage (focused on a colonizing and expansionist international policy, developing a “national” language, associated with military Christianity) and the claims that have been made concerning troubadour poetry even up to very recently as a proto-heretical, subversive, and individualistic genre.²⁸

In this book I examine the literary use of competing Romance vernaculars in the later Middle Ages. A porous borderland has produced striking examples of multilingual interaction, especially between French, Occitan, and Catalan,²⁹ which I believe are worth exploring in an awareness of cultural differences as well as sociopolitical pressures.³⁰ In Chapter 1, I will examine an earlier text, usually dated to the late twelfth century, because it provides an exceptionally good illustration of multilingualism and contrasts very fruitfully with the text from 1318 that I study in Chapter 2. I have included several works from the mid- to late fifteenth century and do so in deference to Lola Badia’s point that there is no distinction between “Renaissance” and “medieval” in Catalan literary works produced between 1380 and 1500.³¹ One point is in my view axiomatic, that every text is to be read individually, on its own merits, rather than as part of a grand metanarrative of what happens to the literary vernaculars in this region and period. Each chapter explores one or more texts in its or their own terms and linguistic, geographical, and (if possible) historical context.

In the three chapters that make up Part 1 of this book I reassess representations of interlinguistic tension (Babel, Pentecost, Soloi) in three Occitan works: the twelfth-century epic *Girart de Roussillon*, a *roman d’aventures* of 1318, an Occitan translation of a universal history that was probably produced in Avignon about the same time, and the Toulousain *Lays d’Amors*. In Part 2, I explore the possibility that what we now regard as the fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty may function as a secular allegory in which linguistic and geographical boundaries are figured. I look at treatments of the same

motif, first in hybrid languages (Occitan-Catalan and Franco-Venetian), and second in monolingual texts (Old and Middle French). This second part of the book ends with a chapter that is devoted to the clash in Catalan literature around 1400 between monolingual writing produced through translation, and multilingual writing. In Part 3, I turn to the period when Occitan had given way to French. In Chapters 7 and 8, I analyze two fifteenth-century French romances that are believed to originate in Provence. *Paris and Vienne* is a work that enjoyed extensive diffusion in many translations. *La Belle Maguelonne*, by contrast, is the product of translation, including that of the French *Roman de Troie*. This section ends with a chapter in which I explore the complex ways in which a French-speaking author from Provence, Antoine de La Sale, navigated the Angevin domination of Naples.