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LANGUAGES AND BORDERS IN THREE *Novas*

Sitot Francess a bel lengatge
No-m pac en re de son linatge,
Car son erguylos ses merce,
E-z erguyll ab me no-s cove,
Car entre-ls francs humils ay apres;
Per qu'eu no vull parlar frances.
Car una dona ab cors gen
M'a fayt de prets un mandamen,
Qu'una faula tot prim li rim,
Sens cara rima e mot prim,
Car pus leus, se dits, n'es apresa
Per mans plasenters ab franquesa,
Per mans ensenyats e cortes.

(lines 1–13)

[Although the French have a beautiful language, I do not like their lineage at all, for they are mercilessly proud, and pride does not sit well with me, for I learned among honest, humble people. Which is why I do not wish to speak French. For a lady with a lovely body has given me a command of great worth, that I should rhyme her a neat fable, without "rich rhymes" or subtle words—for it is said it will be more easily learned by many pleasant and sincere people, [and] by many knowledgeable and courtly ones.][1]

ONE OF THE EARLIEST SURVIVING VERSIONS of the tales of "Sleeping Beauty" is an anonymous fourteenth-century *nova* titled *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser.* The prologue posits an opposition between, on the one hand, the *linatge* (lineage) and *lengatge* (language) of the French and, on the other, the unnamed language the narrator claims he or she has acquired among people

who are "*francs* humils": sincere and humble. The narrator announces that he or she has been commissioned to compose a tale by a lady who is defined only by her physical beauty and by her request for a short narrative or fable composed in *prim* verse, without *cara rima* or *mot prim*. The lady's request is double edged, and she may be read as having asked for either an "easy" poem without "easy" words, or a "subtle poem" without "subtle" words. The narrator responds by criticizing the choice of French in this context, as a sign of both linguistic and political subordination to an undefined French lineage. The lady has asked for a *faula* couched in a particular style of poetry, but not in a specific language. It is the narrator who has decided that the simplicity, humility, and precision that she requires are best expressed in a language that is not French, for the benefit of a designated audience that shares the virtues of "franquesa" (sincerity) and humility.

The prologue sets up an opposition between the ethically dubious language of "the French," characterized as a mixture of arrogance, powerful lineage, and insincerity, and the desirable qualities (especially for a woman reader) possessed by the language of the poem: subtlety, sincerity, and simplicity. This is not a statement concerning the mother tongue of the narrator, for she or he says that the language was acquired in a particular social and ethical context ("for I have learned it among honest, humble people"). It is rather a statement about the political associations of genre and language choice in a particular political and cultural context. Moreover, the poem is composed in an artificial literary idiom, a hybrid mixture of Occitan and Catalan in *noves rimades*, octosyllabic rhyming couplets. This hybrid language was used by Catalan poets of the fourteenth century in what appears to have been a transitional period between the decline of Occitan lyric poetry and the rise of Catalan prose and verse.

What the prologue depicts as a dramatized political tension between a humble language and an oppressive rival is in fact a cultural tension between Occitan lyric poetry, its Catalan derivatives, and the perceived ascendancy of written French, and I would argue that this tension is also a gendered one. Between the lady whose mother tongue is not defined and the narrator, there is a gap. The prologue does not say that she has commissioned the content of the narrative (what troubadours termed the *razo*), merely that she sought to dictate the style of a *faula*. As readers, we are obliged to read and to understand the Catalan-Occitan poem, so do we assume that the lady would have done so too? Is she a Frenchwoman whose request is met only halfway, in a second (literary) language that she is also able to comprehend? The narrator's refusal to use a particular language imperils the

lady's comprehension of "her" work, should she prove unable to read it. Or is she someone whose courtly upbringing ensures that she has learned both French and Catalan-Occitan without either being her first language? The *Francess* (both "Frenchman" and "the French language") who is proud of his lineage is a silent, masculine presence in the prologue, vehemently rejected by the narrator. Neither the lady nor the narrator is ascribed a particular mother tongue. Such tensions appear elsewhere, for example, in Francesch de la Via's *La Senyora de Valor* (1406) the narrator observes some birds teaching their chicks their first words, "piu piu." The little birds amaze him by eventually producing a *baixa dansa* complete with French lyrics, "e suy meravelhat / de l'auzel qui ffrancès / Havion gent après" (and I was amazed by the birds that had beautifully learned French).[2] Chicks in the nest acquire courtly French lyric as their "mother tongue," but the emphasis is on the fact that it is acquired with effort from their parents.

The narrator does not make his or her gender explicit in the prologue. Narrator and lady are connected by a shared comprehension of two literary languages, but they are not complicit. I would argue that their relationship is constructed as an encounter between two autonomous subjects. The poet does not merely provide the *faula* that has been commissioned, and the lady's wishes are not fully fulfilled, but the poem is created nevertheless. Their contract (if it may be termed thus) is one of intersubjectivity, rather than a straightforward transaction between the patron and the poet.

In this chapter I will examine *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser* as a poem that stages the complex political, linguistic, and sexual anxieties that surround linguistic conflict. Accordingly, I will examine first the problems that this poem poses as a work straddling two linguistic and disciplinary boundaries. In the second part of this chapter I look at what the poem has to say about language, boundaries, and consent. Finally, I will compare the work with two closely related texts, the Catalan *Blandin de Cornoalha* and the Franco-Italian *Roman de Belris*.

Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser survives in two manuscripts. One is a collection of fourteenth-century Catalan romances that was originally located in Carpentras and is now in Paris. The other is a miscellany of Catalan allegorical and lyric pieces that includes a fragment of the Occitan *nova Flamenca*.[3] Despite its evident formal and internal resemblances with such recognized "Occitan" narratives as *Blandin de Cornualha* or *Flamenca*, it has taken some time for *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser* to be classified alongside these works. *Frayre de Joy* was published in 1884 as a Catalan-Occitan text and in 1983 included in an anthology by Arseni Pacheco of Catalan short texts. In 1996,

Suzanne Thiolier-Méjean reedited the text as an Occitan *nova* and subsequently included it in a coedited anthology of courtly *nouvelles* in Old French and Occitan. This courteous border dispute between genres and disciplines is a fruitful issue, in that it illustrates the potential for fresh readings of texts once their context is altered. In this instance, the distance stretches from the southeastern borders of the Pyrenees to Aquitaine. The poem's closing words, stating that the narrator has moved on to see the king and his *corts* (lines 823–24), places the text under Catalan aristocratic patronage, in common with the political as well as the literary situation for Occitan lyric poetry of the fourteenth century.

Synopsis

The unmarried daughter of the emperor of Gint-Senay dies suddenly. Her parents place her perfect body in a moated tower accessible only by a bridge of glass, surrounded by a garden, and the empire goes into mourning. The girl's tower has a magnetic attraction for visitors from other lands, including the son of the king of Florianda. This youth, Frayre de Joy, goes to Rome, to ask a magician named Virgil to teach him sufficient art to break into the tower and see the girl. He does so, finds her smiling face welcoming, and has sex repeatedly with the corpse. Despite being dead, she becomes pregnant. Nine months later, the corpse of Sor de Plaser gives birth to a baby son, much to the consternation of her parents, who find the infant feeding from her breast. In response to their prayers, she lifts her hand. At this moment, a jay appears with a curative herb. It brings the girl back to life once her parents have left. The jay is the gift of Virgil to Frayre de Joy (in exchange for Frayre's own birthright, the kingdom of Florianda). He is from the lands of Prester John and is a skilled linguist and diplomat. He tells the girl the child's father wishes to marry her. Sor de Plaser refuses to give her consent, on the grounds that he committed rape. The jay tries flattery, threats, and promises, but she relents once she hears that it is Frayre de Joy, a young man who has a great reputation. Their wedding is attended by the kings of every nation, the Holy Roman emperor, Virgil, Prester John, and the pope. Their son is named Joy de Plaser. Frayre de Joy becomes emperor of Gint-Senay.

The Perrault *conte de fées* now known in English as "Sleeping Beauty" (tale types 550 and 551 in Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*) is believed to be drawn from Basile's Neapolitan tale collection, *Lo Conto de li cunti* (1634–36). In variants on the tale, a youth makes love to a sleeping

woman in order to win an enchanted bird for his father.[4] Another Occitan-Catalan narrative composed in the fourteenth century, *Blandin de Cornoalha*, contains a condensed version of the tale that is closer to this variant narrative, in that Blandin obtains a falcon and saves a girl from an enchantment that keeps her asleep and imprisoned in a tower.[5] There is a distant echo of *Frayre de Joy* in sixteenth-century Castile, as the chivalric romance *Palmerín de Oliva* (1511) includes an episode in which Palmerín, helped by the Muslim magus Muça Belín, travels to obtain a bird that will cure princess Zerfira of her disfigurement after she has breathed the scent of some poisoned flowers (chaps. CXXI–CXXXV).[6] At the end of this chapter, I will examine the tale as it appears in a Franco-Italian text dating from about the same period as the two Catalan works.

From Perrault on, modern versions of the tale have tended to suppress the heroine's rape and pregnancy, most recently in reflection of Bruno Bettelheim's influential interpretation of the tale as an allegory of puberty.[7] Marc Soriano suggested that the tale was an irreverent exploration of the virgin birth; this seems quite credible for *Frayre de Joy*, as will be seen below. However, recent critical work on seventeenth-century French *contes de fées* (which were mostly female authored) has traced a pervasive concern with the perils of pregnancy and childbirth.[8] This emphasis on cultural sources overlooks literary predecessors such as the late antique Greek romances and their "false death" (*Scheintod*) motif (typically, the heroine is thought to be dead and placed in a tomb), which resurfaces in Chrétien de Troyes' *Cligés*.[9] Translations of and commentaries on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* also ensure that we may credit strong thematic relationships with the myth of Persephone and Demeter, but as there is as yet no single identifiable source for this particular tale beyond the similar story told in *Blandin*, we must suppose that the literary circles of Occitan and Catalan courts provided a fertile environment for its composition as a *nova*.

As with *Blandin*, there is no explicitly Arthurian setting for *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser.* The texts most obviously share generic and formal features with some Breton *lais*. *Blandin de Cornualha* has been viewed as either an ironic pastiche of French Arthurian romance or a provocatively minimalist stylistic exercise, termed by Jean-Charles Huchet the "degré zéro du roman arthurien," or a precursor of the Catalan chivalric romance.[10] Cornelis Van der Horst offered a detailed refutation of *Blandin*'s reliance on any one French model and preferred to read it as evidence that Arthurian material was received in Occitan regions with some irony. His and Huchet's views appear to be based on a definition of Arthurian romance in terms of

the works of Chrétien de Troyes and the Tristan tradition, both of which are well attested in Catalonia by the fourteenth century.

If Catalan patrons are so present in the *novas*, the *novas* start to look less closely tied to the sociopolitical context of Languedoc. Several romances exist that are sometimes included in the corpus of Occitan *novas*, such as *Jaufré*, which was composed for a king of Aragon, either Alfonso II or Jaume I (c. 1268–76) and was known to court circles in northern Spain for several centuries, as the romance eventually entered the popular literary canon of Spain, not of France. All the Catalan texts placed under the generic term *noves rimades* come from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and emerge from a sophisticated, international literary culture that had strong connections with Provence, the Balearic Islands, Sardinia, and the kingdom of Naples. Catalan-speaking courts offered patronage to poets writing in the troubadour tradition consistently between 1175 and 1450. Several manuscripts show that the royal court also produced compilations of poetry that seem more inclusive than the collections produced in Italy at the same time. Pere, count of Ribagorça and Ampuries (1305–c. 1358), composed poems that were performed at coronation ceremonies and was the dedicatee of a treatise on *trobar.* Treatises on Occitan language and versification were composed for Jaume II of Aragon (1291–1327) while he was ruling Sicily.[11] Nor is this purely a question of influence, as between the thirteenth and the fourteenth century the Angevin court of Provence and Naples produced manuscripts of French and Occitan verse that were subsequently owned and added to by Catalan poets, no doubt in the Neapolitan context, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[12]

Do we then have a corpus of courtly narratives composed by often Catalan poets for Catalan patrons, which happens to have been divided into two distinct groups on the grounds of date and transmission? Or should it be read as a corpus of Occitan poetry, most of which happens to have been written by and for Catalan speakers? The *novas* corpus is the starting point for Catalan literary history and of tragic decline for the Occitan lyric tradition. To deny the borderline dividing the two is tantamount to denying two important and complementary modern constructions of literary history. When confronted with confusion, contradiction, and compromise, it is desirable to question generic classifications.

If language is political in *Frayre de Joy*, geography is deterritorialized, in that it is overtly fantastical. The fictional empire of Gint-Senay and the kingdom of Florianda are surrounded by the empire of Prester John and a Rome that is inhabited by the magician Virgil.[13] This contrasts with the

geographical and temporal precision of Raimon Vidal's *novas*. In *Frayre de Joy*, the possession of many languages is the greatest asset of the jay, a bird from the lands of Prester John, one who is a diplomat as well as a messenger. He is said to carry letters, *salutz* and *novas*, but in this context, he acts as the essential gift from Virgil to Frayre, in his capacity as someone who can fly across the world to find medicine as well as a diplomat, a bird that combines the marvelous traits of travel literature with the lyric function of the bird as go-between. His name may be based on etymological play: he is *jais*, destined to serve the *joi* of Frayre de Joy, as he would have done "en aquel temps c'om era jais." The jay's function as go-between is essential, because the denouement depends on obtaining Sor's consent. By extension, this problem rests in language. The jay can communicate directly with the revived girl in a way Frayre was unable to when she was dead. Furthermore, the text makes the problem of communication explicit.

When Frayre enters the tower, he contemplates and interprets the girl's beauty in terms that suit his own desires. She is immobile and expressionless, but he attempts to read her features for a sign:

> Que ja- m mostr'ab sos uylls abdos
> Per semblant c'ab me vuyla parlar.
>
> (lines 156–57)

> [For now she shows me with both her eyes, and her appearance, that she wants to speak to me.]

Frayre makes a speech to Sor (lines 164–209), in which he emphasizes the emotions to which he wishes to see her respond:

> Ay! gentil, plasent creatura,
> La plus bela re que anc vis,
> Axi con me mostrats al ris
> Amor e-m fayts als ulls semblant,
> Amessets me, e no ges tant
> Con eu a vos.
>
> (lines 164–69)

> [Alas! Noble, pleasing creature, loveliest thing I have ever seen, how you show me your smile, and show me the semblance of love with your eyes, you could love me, and not as much as I love you.]

He decides that he will ascertain if she loves him by kissing her, because her face will show an emotional reaction to his action (lines 204–9). He kisses her a hundred times until he forces her lips to move in apparent response:

> E fo li semblant c'un dolç ris
> Li fass,' e qu'en fos paguada;
>
> (lines 212–13)

> [And it seemed to him that she was smiling gently at him, and that she was satisfied.]

Frayre reads consent in Sor's eyes and in her smile. Can a smile be taken to indicate consent? It seems that it can as far as this character is concerned. Frayre's next move is to remove the coverlet that is concealing Sor's body. The narrator points out that it is "gent cosit d'estranya guisa" (nobly embroidered in a strange manner) (line 219). The signs on the coverlet are unreadable. He interprets her tunic, however, as a clear message: embroidered in silver and gold, it is beautiful because, he decides, she put it on for him. However, Frayre's subjective reading of the inert body before him needs to find some confirmation. This comes through explicit linguistic signs. He discovers that she wears a ring on her finger, which is "escrit ab letres que desien / Aycells que llegir-les sabien" (inscribed with letters that say, for anyone who can read them) (lines 231–32),

> Anell suy de Sor de Plaser
> Qui m'aura leys pora aver,
> Per amor, ab Plaser viven,
> Can ach de joy pres complimen.
>
> (lines 233–36)

> [I am the ring of Sor de Plaser; whoever will have me, can have her as well, through love, with living pleasure, when he has taken his full measure of joy.]

Since Frayre also wears a ring inscribed with his name, all he needs to do is swap her ring for his, and their mutual consent will have been given. His ring also exonerates his rape, as it promises that Frayre de Joy will love a woman not like a peasant, but as the son of a king (lines 240–43). He swaps the rings and has sexual intercourse with her. The text endorses his forceful

reinterpretation of her dead body as a consenting partner with a proverbial expression:

> Plaser ama, plaser desira,
> Pesar fai regard, plaser guia.
>
> (lines 253–54)

> [Pleasure loves, pleasure desires; thinking brings worry, pleasure guides.]

Since the pleasure invested with such autonomous desire is part of Sor's name, the fact that Frayre has taken pleasure from a dead woman is erased by the pretence that Pleasure is an active participant. Frayre has read the signs disposed on Sor's body in a certain way, has swapped one name for another, one sign for another, and thereby assumed that she has given her consent. In terms of canon law, Frayre's actions have effectively placed the words of exchanged consent on Sor's lips. The words on the ring bestow *verba de futuro*: future consent. According to formulations of marital law from the late thirteenth century onward, the presumption of marriage was sealed by the sexual consummation that follows this apparent exchange of consent by the two parties. Sor de Plaser is, after all, not related by blood to Frayre de Joy, and she has made no prior betrothal. She is neither underage nor insane. The fact that she is dead should, of course, preclude the use of force on her body. According to Pope Alexander III, proven force in coerced marriage had to be sufficient to "move a constant man," and in this instance, no force is needed.[14] Needless to say, canon law made little comment on marrying corpses.

Sor becomes pregnant. Her mother notices her rounded belly, and she cries out that this is "against nature and against reason," since only a bird or the Holy Spirit could have entered Sor's tower-tomb (lines 283–85). The mother views Sor's dead maternity as a paradox, for the dead do not give life, whereas living women fear for their lives during childbirth (lines 289–93). Sor's mother prays for her daughter to revive. Sor's body promptly makes a gesture that the narrator interprets as one of reassurance:

> La donzella la ma levet,
> Quays que dixes—mas no parlet—
> "Viva son, no plorets huymay";
> E torneron lur dol en guay.
>
> (lines 312–15)

> [The damsel lifted a hand as if to say (but she didn't speak): "I am well, do not cry anymore." And they turned their grief into joy.]

Here, Sor's body presents an ambiguous sign that is interpreted as if it were a coherent speech. Her paradoxical body, lying in between life, death, and gestation, makes bodily gestures such as raising a hand and suckling an infant, but her mind plays no role in these movements. For her aggressor, Sor's smile was a sign that Frayre chose to interpret as consent, not calm repose. Theoretically, Sor's consent to sexual intercourse (which would have implied her consent to marriage, according to some canonists) should have been given verbally and before witnesses, while Frayre has acted unseen. In practice, a woman's consent was often an irrelevance and there were instances where a girl's smile (for example, if she was an infant who had not yet learned to talk) could be taken as sufficient consent not to her suitor but to her father's choice of husband. However, the public bestowal of consent depends on language, whether verbal or physical, as much as on the exchange of rings. Frayre's interpretative gestures are an illustration of the fragility of consent when it rests on such signs, a point made by Irwen Resnick:[15] "Consent theory . . . introduced enormous difficulty by its reliance on some more or less explicit sign of consent expressed either at betrothal or in the exchange of marriage vows. Because it was clearly understood that consent could be forced by threat of physical violence, expressed in secret, or attested by unreliable witnesses, a theory that relied upon consent alone as the sign of a marriage appeared to place in jeopardy the stability of that marriage." The words inscribed on the rings are more important in this text than their function as material signs of betrothal, for they interpret Frayre's gesture as his obedience to an external command that states that Sor already "belongs" to him. In an intriguing piece of narrative sleight of hand, the rings already destine Sor to Frayre, and the fusion of their names and bodies is cemented in the name given to their child (Joy de Plaser) at the story's close. Canon law on abduction and rape made it possible to ratify a clandestine marriage that had been made without witnesses or public declaration and without parental consent. In this context, the fact that Sor raises her hand before her parents, "as if to say" that she is unharmed, would appear to make her complicit with Frayre's actions. Furthermore, it was argued by some authors that procreation indicated that a woman had experienced some form of carnal pleasure (*delectatio*) even if she was raped, and the very name of Sor de Plaser associates her with this.[16] However, once Sor is returned to life and regains her status as a rational being, the narrative focuses on making her give her consent retrospectively.

From the moment the jay opens a dialogue with Sor, the issue of consent becomes a matter of explicit debate within the text as well as outside it.

The importance of Sor's consent is emphasized once it is compared to the treatment of a similar scene in *Blandin*. In this text, Blandin is encouraged to revive a sleeping girl by her brother. He enters the tower in which she is sleeping, but only looks at her. He then goes to a second tower where he kills a dragon, a serpent, and a Saracen giant, in order to free a white falcon that he must place on her hand, in order to free her from her sleep. In this text, the girl's body is kept safely enclosed within her tower, and Blandin's aggressive assault is redirected toward a second tower, where the falcon (her cure) and the supernatural creatures (her guardians) are located. Once she is awake, Brianda offers him marriage and her lands as his reward, but Blandin insists that he wants to marry her for love. Brianda's chastity is preserved to the point that Blandin must ensure that even her own offer of marriage is based on love, not coercion. The narrator subsequently states that this is a conquest, but seems to be uncertain of who has conquered whom:

> Ar vos hai dic de Blandinet
> consi Brianda lo conquistet.
>
> [Now I have told you about Blandinet, and how Brianda conquered him.]
>
> Blandinet anet recontar
> al bon Guillot de Miramar
> l'aventura que atrobet
> quan Brianda conquistet.
>
> [Blandinet went and told good Guillot de Miramar about the adventure he had when he conquered Brianda.]

Brianda later reveals that she orchestrated the chain of events that led to her release, thus suggesting that she has indeed conquered him by posing as an enchanted prisoner. By comparison, Sor has no doubts about the nature of Frayre's conquest. She refuses the jay's offer of Frayre's love on the grounds that he has violated both her body and her mind:

> -Ja no diray que Deus vos sal
> Vos ni lui, N'auzell, per ma fe,

Per so car anc gauset de me
Reprendre ses lo meu voler;
Mas si-l mal sofris ab plaser
Que-l joy d'amors li dones
E mon causiment atendes,
Axi-l tengra eu per gentil.
Que-l mon no ha dompne tan vil
C'om dege pendra ni tocar
Re del seu sens luy demandar;
C'aytal fait forsat no so bo,
Ne tant no saubrets de rayso,
En gay, qu'eu dret no-us gazany
D'amor qu'un anelet d'estany
Dat per amor no vayla mays
Que d'aur emblats ab fis balaxs.

(lines 397–413)

[I won't ask God to save either you or him, Sir Bird, by my faith, because he has dared to take something from me against my will; but if he had endured with pleasure the suffering that joy of love was giving him, and if he had waited for my consent, I would then regard him as a noble man. For there is no lady in the world so vile that anything of hers could be touched or taken without asking her first; such forced deeds are not good. And you will not have enough reasons, Sir Jay, to oppose to my proving to you that, according to love, a little ring of tin given with love is worth more than a stolen ring made of gold and set with rubies.]

Sor says she has not given Frayre her love, and that he has stolen her "car puncelatge" (line 429), her prized virginity. Sor's argument may be logical, but it is legally weak, for, according to Peter Lombard, her uncomplaining cohabitation with Frayre after his first rape constituted "subsequent consent (*consensus ille consequens*)," although admittedly Sor has no possibility of escape during the time she is visited by Frayre.[17] The jay changes his strategy and abandons his initial protestations concerning Frayre's courtly valor and love. Instead he turns to political arguments and obtains her consent by reinterpreting Frayre's actions as his purchase of the empire of Gint Senay. The jay tells both Sor and her parents that Sor's body was part of the price

paid by Frayre, along with his ring and his kingdom of Florianda ("a kingdom more powerful than France") (line 502), to revive her:

> E com per haver son cors bell
> Li det apres lo seu anell
> E com per haver sa amor granda
> Donet lo regne de Florianda.
>
> (lines 678–81)

> [And how, in order to have her lovely body, he gave her his ring, and how, to have her great love, he gave away the kingdom of Florianda.]

In fact, Frayre subsequently gives Florianda to Virgil in exchange for the jay (lines 345–52), which does not sound quite as altruistic. The jay also points out to Sor de Plaser that she is now owned by Frayre, as she bears a ring that announces, "De Fray de Joy suy" (I belong to Brother of Joy) (line 517). The ring's inscription has shifted from a statement that it (the ring) belongs to Frayre, into the proclamation that Sor's body is now his possession.

Sor surrenders to the dominant interpretation of her predicament. She comments that that "when she was alive," she knew Frayre de Joy by his great reputation (lines 521–22). She reconsiders the marriage in terms of their exchanged rings and their compatible names (lines 539–44), although strictly speaking a brother and sister could not have been awarded official consent to marry, and courtly Joy and unthinking physical Pleasure are incompatible in terms of *fin'amors*. Sor is forced to concede after the event that Frayre's purported sacrifice of his father's lands makes sufficient repayment for her own body, honor, and reason, as well as for her own parents' lands. The jay seals the enforced match by building and populating a magnificent castle for the couple (lines 716–21). At the close of the text, the empire of Gint-Senay passes into the hands of the son of the king of Florianda, and of an heir he has obtained through rape, deceit, and diplomacy, with the public approval of the Holy Roman emperor, the pope, Virgil, and Prester John (lines 793–822). Lands are granted in exchange for bodies, and Virgil the magician is the new king of Florianda.

It is tempting to read *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser* as an allegorical narrative of an aggressive conquest, followed by diplomatic activity and an official alliance. The child's birth has already sealed Frayre's appropriation of Sor's body, but Sor has to be seen to give her enthusiastic consent to the

match, and this has to be followed by the negotiations of the go-between and her parents. The linguistic conflict signaled in the prologue as the narrator's refusal to speak French because she or he protests the arrogance of the French lineage is expressed in the narrative in terms of the triumph over reason and chastity of the ambitious foreign prince's manipulation of his lineage and power. Virgil is a figure symbolizing the importance of both learning and trickery for ambitious princes.

María Rosa Menocal has suggested that the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages offers an exceptionally clear picture of the "agonistic process" through which official languages emerge. Languages are seen literally fighting for supremacy in territories to which they might be linked indirectly, as the vehicles of an ideology, or an ambitious power group. I would add to this a comment made by Kathleen Biddick, that the position of linguistic go-between, when it is combined with that of a culturally transitional position, requires a certain distance vis-à-vis the language that is presented as the mother tongue.[18] In *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser*, there are numerous ways of reading written and visible signs, but only one language seems to be the preferred idiom. Yet this language is not a language associated with either religious authority (Latin), a monarchy (French or Catalan), or a poetic corpus (Occitan). It is a hybrid blend of Occitan and Catalan, lyric and narrative. It cannot be the mother tongue of either the narrator, or the lady, or even their audience. *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser* explores the flexibility of verbal signs and the skill with which any language may be used to present rape as consent, death as life, and the conquest of an empire as a fair transaction. The language used in the text is an artificial mode of artistic communication that may be learned by those who intend to twist the words to make them suit the desired facts.

In this context it is telling that, unlike the other versions of the tale, this text affirms repeatedly that the girl is neither asleep nor enchanted, but dead. It hinges on several impossibilities: a corpse that does not decompose and one that may conceive, give birth to a child, and breastfeed it. The reader, like Sor's mother, may begin to doubt the value of the term *mors*. The dead body is passive but fertile and nurturing. Whether alive or dead, and despite an initial attempt on her awakening to contradict Frayre's version of events, Sor de Plaser cannot act autonomously. Sor de Plaser's body becomes more than a victim of others' enchantment or potions, as it appears to be at odds with itself. She cannot decompose or become invisible, and she cannot, even in death, avoid pregnancy. In this tale, only a nonhuman creature can bring her back to life. Her story is suggestive of Hélène Cixous' explorations of the complex workings of the (m)other tongue and

of language, especially her concept of the *entredeux*: "The word *entredeux*: it is a word I used recently in *Déluge* to designate a true in-between—Between a life that is ending and a life which is beginning. For me an *entredeux* is: nothing. It *is*, because there is *entredeux*. But it is . . . a moment in a life where you are not entirely living, where you are almost dead. Where you are not dead. Where you are not yet in the process of reliving."[19] It is also a moment of interruption, "everything that makes the course of life be interrupted" (9). When the interruption happens, "strange material" is uncovered that may be fruitful if it is then written out in the "passage" (10) from "l'une à l'autre," not from the one to the other, but from an other to an other. Only through a process of radically "other" writing, of distancing oneself completely from the language being used, can the *entredeux* be written about. This concept may encompass the "strange material" uncovered by such problems as a corpse giving birth, or a woman complaining that she was not asked to give her consent when she was dead.

This "strange material" is only to be expressed in a language that passes "de l'une à l'autre," from the narrator to the lady in the prologue. For Cixous, what defines the *entredeux* is internal conflict and estrangement within the self: "This being abroad at home is what I call an *entredeux*." The *nova* corpus straddles a sensitive cultural and linguistic boundary. By highlighting the slipperiness of official or authoritative language, it also points out the extent to which apparently simple transactions may be the product of force. In this text, the hybrid Catalan-Occitan language is "abroad at home": used to pass an awareness of "strange material" and to point out the existence of the *entredeux*.

Is this conflict pertinent only to this particular text and context? It is useful to turn to a near analogue in Franco-Italian. Like the Tuscan *cantari* of *Il Bel Gherardino* and *Carduino*, the Franco-Italian *cantare* of *Belris* (c. 1350–80) derives in part from the French *Bel Inconnu* tradition, but it also provides a parallel to both *Frayre de Joy* and *Blandin*.[20] The poem is written in the Italianized (or rather Venetian) version of French that developed as a literary language in northern Italy, most probably in the workshops where many French and Occitan literary manuscripts were copied.[21] While Günter Holtus prefers to view Franco-Italian as a written language, Carla Cremonesi suggested that it was developed as a performance tool for *cantastorie* who would have rendered Old French text into a culturally domesticated idiom closer to that of their audience. A few autonomous texts (neither translations nor adaptations of French works) appeared in Franco-Italian during the fourteenth century, but it never became a major literary idiom.

Monfrin edited and reconstructed the lost sections of the *Belris*, surmising that the missing folio at the middle of the poem narrated Belris's rape of a sleeping woman in her enchanted tower. Belris says as much later, when he recounts his actions to her (lines 811–33). The summary below follows Monfrin's reconstruction:

[Lost opening: King Galafre of Livaris sends off his two sons for his capital, Varia, to capture an enchanted falcon. The successful son will become his sole heir.] Belris follows a hind into a forest and meets Machabia, who reveals that she knows he is looking for a marvelous falcon. She promises him her help in exchange for his promise that he will return to her; he takes her ring and makes love to her. The hind guides Belris to a revolving castle, in front of which a lion and a serpent are fighting. Belris kills the lion and the serpent kisses him. Belris rushes into the castle and sees four chained lions. A lady appears and tells him she was the serpent and that she and her two sisters have now been saved by his kiss from a magician's enchantment. She sends him on his way by boat with four maidens who inform Belris that all the events to date have been engineered by their lady Machabia. On their seventh day at sea the enchanter attacks them astride a dragon. Belris kills both and finds a golden box inside the dragon's body. Four days later, they reach the deserted city of Salubrea/Salubera. Belris climbs the thirty floors of a tower that is guarded by a lion and defeats two swords wielded by a golden and a silver arm, affirming his loyalty to Machabia as he goes.

[Lacuna. *Belris later says he reached the top of the tower and found a woman lying asleep on a bed, next to the falcon. He made love to her and took away the falcon, but left a note with his name and the name he wished her to give to the son she had conceived.*] Belris travels on with his falcon, avoiding further assistance, but one of the four maidens appears flanked by a lion, predicts a combat, and gives him a box containing curative "flowers of Paradise" that were brought back by Alexander the Great from the Dry Tree. Belris defeats three knights and cures himself by ingesting the flowers. However, his older brother Malçaris claims victory for himself before Galafre. Galafre besieges Belris in the fortress of Montclier/Cliermont (lines 557, 561). Meanwhile, Queen Anfelis wakes up when she gives birth to Clairavis, and the city's enchantment is broken. She is delighted to find she has a "bel rité" (heir), reads the letter Belris left behind him, and gathers her army to find him. She reaches Varia, challenges Galafre by letter and embassy to surrender Belris to her, and sets a test of courage that allows Anfelis to unmask Malçaris's false claims. She

threatens to destroy Varia if Galafre does not surrender Belris to her. He complies and makes peace with his son. During his coronation and wedding at Salubrea, Belris sends a letter written in letters of gold to Machabia in which he invites her to visit his city and to meet his wife. Machabia sends Belris the ambiguous reply that she will soon come to Salubrea, with her son, Manador. She stabs herself and writes him a letter in her own blood. The four ladies sail with her body and the baby to Salubrea. Belris holds a grand funeral for Machabia, and he and Anfelis raise Manador as joint heir with their nine children. Machabia's four servants marry, respectively, the kings of Armenia, Spain, Montpellier, and England.

The tale is a dense intertextual mix of *Bel Inconnu* and other romance traditions.[22] *Belris* shares its motifs of the enchanted sleep and the falcon with *Blandin de Cornualha*, although it overlays it with the rape of *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser.* It splits the heroine into two rival figures. Anfelis is restored to life and made a wife, and Machabia dies and leaves an orphan son.

Because of the emphasis on the rival claims of the two boys fathered by Belris during his adventures, it seems that Machabia's intervention in the dynastic crisis of Livaris is predicated on the settling of inheritance on Belris, and ultimately on their son. The tale opens with Galafre's decision to forego primogeniture and to decide inheritance through a competition he creates between his two sons. Belris complains to his father that he is no longer his heir: "Ça non son vostra rité, / Char m'avés desarité" (I am no longer your heir, for you have disinherited me) (lines 726–27). Machabia pushes her son's claims even in death, by constructing a tableau that proves successful, as Belris raises Manador with Anfelis's son. The poem appears to resolve a crisis of succession by privileging opportunism and adoption over aristocratic concerns for the maintenance of primogeniture. In the *Belris*, the language of consent is less important than the power of written words in matters of inheritance.

Belris's sons are both born illegitimate. Manador is conceived a fortnight before Clairavis, but Belris's written note to Anfelis means that he has recognized Clairavis at the moment of the child's conception (lines 589–90), whereas Machabia makes Belris aware of the existence of only Manador, first verbally and then in writing, after she reads his letter announcing that he has an heir (lines 968–76, 1119–59). Machabia as the text's substitute narrator hopes that Manador will be recognized as Belris's heir, but she fails to tell Belris enough about the narrative she has "written" in advance. His lovemaking to Anfelis's unconscious body disrupts Machabia's narrative

in that he dedicates his victory to her in words, but he places his written signature and seed at the point of his (and therefore Machabia's) success. Machabia continues to give Belris assistance after this episode, as if she were unaware of the subplot he has created in Anfelis's tower. Indeed, when Belris announces his victory to his brother Malçaris, he says he has won the falcon through the love of God and of his "dama çentil, / Machabia la signoril" (lines 499–500).

Anfelis does not object to Belris's behavior, as she credits his theft of the falcon as her liberation from the enchantment and identifies herself as "la dama d'onor / Char trova se al pavion" (the woman of honor [or lands] who was in the pavilion) (lines 849–50). However, the test of courage and largesse that she imposes appears to symbolize a more dubious aspect of Belris's actions. She has cloth of gold laid on the road that leads from the *bourg* to the *cité* and invites "the man who took the falcon" to ride upon it (lines 648–52). Belris tramples on the cloth, demonstrating not so much his courage or largesse as his willingness to inflict physical damage on a precious object in pursuit of his aims. This is another instance of Belris's writing on a surface, this time imprinting hoof marks on gold cloth. Galafre sees his own dynastic plan undermined by events, as Belris is taken away to become the king of Salubrea, and he is compelled to make the cowardly Malçaris his heir (lines 871–904).

Belris writes to Machabia in a *brief* (letter) that he composes in letters of gold (lines 935–36), the reverse of the dirt he has flung onto the cloth. The letter tells Machabia that she should not hold him guilty of *vilania* and should visit Salubrea, to see his city, his heir, and his wife (lines 938–53). On reading this, Machabia faints several times and is laid on a bed. She sighs to her ladies, "Le civalier ben m'aunoré" (The knight has honored me indeed) (line 962). The verbal message she sends to Varia echoes Belris's letter and points out that he now has two male heirs:

> E lo re Belris me salué
> e Anfelis ch'é soa muier
> e Cleravis ch'é soa rité.
> da la mia part si li conté
> avanti che sia tre mes pasé,
> io si sero in soa cité
> cun Manador le fiol me,
> car de son cors son gnenere.
>
> (lines 968–76)

> [Send my greetings to King Belris, and Anfelis, who is his wife, and Cleravis, who is his heir. Tell him from me that before three months have elapsed I shall be in his city with Manador, my son, for he was conceived from his body.]

Machabia sends out her four attendants into the garden and stabs herself in the chest. She gathers her blood in a basin of gold and uses it as ink to write a letter to Belris (lines 1011–17). Her bloody riposte to Belris's gilded words is also an assertion of her connection by blood to his son (lines 1019–59). She identifies the blood as the expression of her physical suffering, her death for love, and the surrender of her body to his (lines 1120–24). Body, letter, and child are sent by ship to Belris, so he can view both Machabia's words and the tableau she has constructed to prove their son's claim: "Vit Machabia al vis clier / E Manador ch'é soa rité" (He saw Machabia of the bright face and Manador, who is her/his heir) (lines 1114–15). She is a woman "al vis clier," a challenge to Anfelis and Belris's chosen name of Clairavis for their son. The exchange of letters operates on two levels, through close reading of the words and a manipulation of both letters and inks as objects (gold and blood) that are distinct from the finer points of language. The letters have both a linguistic and a supralinguistic aspect.

Machabia's elaborate suicide puzzled Monfrin, as it seemed to jar with her similarity to fairy mistresses in French and Italian texts.[23] Ovid's *Heroides* are most probably an influence on this poem, as Dido associates her suicide with her living son, Iulus (as well as with her destruction of Aeneas's unborn child), and with the creation of a bloodstained self-portrait through her letter (*Her.*, bk. 7, lines 181–90). Machabia sends both her letter and her corpse to Belris, with her infant son, Manador, laid out beside them. Machabia's letter is written with the blood she sheds after she stabs herself, making literal Dido's promise to Aeneas that once he has read her words, he will not be free of the mental image of his wife's bloodied face ("coniugis ante oculos deceptae stabit imago / tristis et effuses sanguinolenta comis" [*Her.*, bk. 7, lines 69–70]). Machabia's blood also makes literal the blood connection that will be perpetuated by their son, Manador. Letter and action are closely associated through the creation of an ironic gap between the literal and the figurative sense of words.

Belris appears to blend disparate material such as Ovid's *Heroides*, the travels of Alexander the Great, and the Christian legend of the Dry Tree, as if it were engaged in a process of intercultural dialogue. This permeability and flexibility also affects the protagonists' names, as Na Belris (Lady Beautiful

Smile) is a *senhal* used by Lanfranc Cigala (PC 282, 12, Branciforti, song XIV, line 19).[24] Anfelis's name may be derived from the Saracen wife of Foucon de Candie, who reappears as Anfilizia in the Tuscan *Narbonesi*, or it may echo that of a *chanson de geste* character mentioned by a troubadour.[25] The Veneto is the location for the compilation of a significant number of troubadour *chansonniers*, as well as *chansons de geste* such as *Macaire*, which subsists only in the Franco-Italian *Geste Francor.*[26] Machabia's name is probably not a reference to Macaire, but rather an echo of the Macchabees, who were a biblical model of altruistic suicide and were also heroes of a *chanson de geste*.[27] These allusions confirm the cultural breadth of *Belris*'s intended readers.[28]

Belris raises a number of questions, as it displays many similarities in form and style to the two Occitan-Catalan *novas* studied above. This undeniable family resemblance may reflect the presence of minstrels and scribes who had experience of many courts and language areas.[29] It is tempting to place the Franco-Italian *Belris* opposite the two Catalan-Occitan poems and to suggest that although all three works are concerned with the delicate processes of negotiating language and lineage, the *Belris* positions its *entredeux* in a confident literary and epistolary culture that is completely multilingual: Latin texts cohabit with French and Italian poems. Machabia wields both spoken and written language to leave Belris in no doubt about her consent and her resistance to the events of the narrative.

The "Sleeping Beauty" motif appears to be fruitful for reading texts in which languages are brought into dialogue. In the following chapter I will examine texts in Old and Middle French that appear to explore an ambiguous perception of monolingualism in another border zone, that between French and Flemish. Here, I will explore the possibility that monolingualism is associated with the negative effect not of conquest, but of its opposite, endogamy.