



THE MULTILINGUAL *Paris and Vienne*

JACQUES DERRIDA'S FAMOUS ESSAY *Le Monolinguisme de l'autre* constructs a series of imagined dialogues to explore the proposition "Je n'ai qu'une langue, ce n'est pas la mienne" (I have only one language/tongue, it is not mine). Derrida's essay unpacks the complex modern associations that are made between the French language as a sign of culture, nation, and race, in order to expose them as illusions, just as the "mother tongue" itself is a deeply embedded fantasy.¹ Derrida's *monolanguage* reflects the fact that language, while it shapes and determines our every perception, is also multiple, unreliable, and alienating. Every language, even the "mother tongue," comes from the other, and it may be lost, forgotten, or taken away.² In this final section I examine fifteenth-century works that are marked by the developing association of French and Catalan with national languages. If the *monolanguage* is characterized by an uneasy awareness that the mother tongue is an illusion, neither mother nor a single tongue, these texts may be viewed as three very different explorations of that tension.

Seeing is not necessarily believing; so says the opening *autoritas* of the romance of *Paris et Vienne* by Pierre de La Cépède:

Alain, qui moult fu saige, a escript au livre de ses doctrines une auctorite que dit en latin: hoc crede quod tibi verum esse videtur. Et veult autant dire ceste auctorite, extraicte du latin en françois: tu croyras des chouses que te ressembleront estre veritables. (Kaltenbacher, 391)³

[Alanus, who was very wise, wrote an *autoritas* in the book of his doctrines that says in Latin: *hoc crede quod tibi verum esse videtur*. This *autoritas* means, once it is taken from Latin and put into French, "You will believe in the things that appear to be true to your eyes."]

Pierre warns his reader twice, once in Latin and once in French, to be wary of what they see. He comments that he has always taken pleasure in

reading romances and ancient chronicles (“romans et croniques des ystoyres anciennes”) that are impossible to credit with any truth value (“impossibles a croire”), but he makes an exception for a work such as *Paris et Vienne* on the grounds that “la matiere me semble estre bien raisonnable et asses creable, et aussi que l’ystoyre est asses plaisant” (its matter seems to me to be quite reasonable and believable enough, also because the story is quite pleasing) (392). He draws attention in conventional terms to the perils of reading fiction while praising his choice of story on the grounds that it seems reasonable enough to him. Pierre’s subjective assessment as a reader who is fond but critical of romances is that tales such as this are endowed with more verisimilitude than are others; this implies that his reader owes the text primarily to La Cépède’s moral discernment and good taste in literary matters. The prologue also places *Paris et Vienne* at further remove from its audience, as he claims that his preferred tale is accessible only through two layers of translation: “j’ay tenu ung livre, escript en langaige prouvensal, qui fu extraist d’ung aultre livre, escript en langaige cathalain . . . cy ay entrepris a vous estrayre l’ystoire du langaige provincial en francoys” (I had a book that was written in the Provençal language and had been translated from another book written in Catalan. . . . I set out to translate the tale for you from the language of Provence into French) (392). Lest we should believe that we are dealing with a reliable translation, Pierre apologizes for his poor French, “que je ne suis pas Francois de nature, ainz fuz nes et nouris en la cite de Marcelle” (for I am not French by birth, but I was born and raised in the city of Marseille).

This is an ambiguous opening for a romance that draws its authority from its credibility. If entertaining texts are deceptive illusions, what can the reader make of Pierre’s assertion that he has the impression (“me semble”) that this tale has some credibility and that he has struggled to render his secondhand source into a language he does not master? He makes no assurances within the text that the story is true. It is never anything other than a fiction that relies more on psychological motivation than on the marvelous, unlike its Arthurian rivals. All we are given to rely upon is an *auctoritas* that spells out a simple warning against gullibility but that needs a translator to make its sense accessible to the reader.

Compared to the opening of *Le Livre de Boece de Consolacion* (c. 1350–60), which became in the fifteenth century one of the most widely read French translations from a Latin source, Pierre’s prologue seems ever more tentative.⁴ Here, we are told that too many people are led by the evidence of their senses into illusions and ill-humored disappointment about worldly

and sensual things. They can learn to use their reason in an educated manner to move away from their entrapment in superficial impressions: “A telz gens doncques est proufitable la translacion de cest livre et mesmement a ceulx qui n’entendent pas le langage des Latins” (The translation of this book is useful for such people, as well as for those who do not understand Latin) (Cropp, 19–20). Here, vernacular translation is designed to primarily serve the original text, to clarify it, and to teach the intellectual skill of clear reasoning to a wider public. By contrast, Pierre’s prologue is almost opaque, for vernaculars are piled on top of vernaculars and the text itself seems to derive its credibility only from the subjective impressions of its reader and scribe. However, Pierre depicts his heroine, Vienne, as someone who seeks to emulate “l’ystoire qui se nomme ‘Boece, de Consolation,’” a tale she has heard often and that she assumes is as familiar to others as to herself, as if her sufferings were intended to be read both as a vernacular translation and as a *translatio* from masculine to feminine subjects, of the French text: “Et pourtant quant a moy, que ne suis que une simple fame, en qui a peu de scens et de vertu . . . je ne scay trover aultre remedde, fors seulement comme ledit Boesse trova, c’est avoir bonne pacience en tout et louer Dieu de tout ce qu’il luy plaira ordener” (Yet as for me, a mere woman bereft of good sense and virtue . . . I can find no other remedy save the one that Boethius found, that is to say, to be patient in all things, and to praise God for whatever he wishes to ordain) (Kaltenbacher, 531).⁵ Listening to the translated story of Boethius has been *proufitable* to Vienne, who is, it seems, as discerning a reader (or listener) of vernacular texts as La Cépède.

The geographical origin of this romance is not in doubt, as three of the surviving manuscripts of Pierre de La Cépède’s *Paris et Vienne* were copied in Provence in the first half of the fifteenth century. A copy dated internally December 1438 (n.s. 1439) attributes the text to two names: “escript par Pierre de la Cypede de Marseille, traslatie par Inart Beyssan.”⁶ By the mid-fifteenth century, *translator* had acquired its modern sense of “translation” as well as of “rendering or reworking”; Beyssan appears to relegate La Cépède to the role of a mere scribe.⁷ Kaltenbacher noted that Beyssan’s copy of La Cépède’s romance was strongly marked by Occitanisms, and he certainly seems to be working from an Occitan or Catalan source, since he names the heroine Viana. This, along with the date of the manuscript, makes it possible that Beyssan, and not La Cépède, was responsible for rendering an Occitan or Catalan text into French. Another manuscript (Paris Bibl. de l’Arsenal 3000) was copied in the Provençal castle of Orgon, which also points to local diffusion through its connection with the house of Anjou-Provence.⁸

La Cépède's text is a long and evidently expanded version of the *Paris et Vienne* tale that circulated widely, mostly in print, in the last decades of the fifteenth century. Anna Maria Babbi has named La Cépède's text version α , and the anonymous shorter version β . Ironically, no Occitan text survives of a romance that was read from the late fifteenth century in Italian, English, Dutch, Swedish, Castilian, *aljamiado-morisco* (Castilian transliterated into Arabic script), Catalan, Yiddish, and Armenian.⁹ Babbi's extensive published work on the multiple versions of *Paris et Vienne* demonstrates the remarkable popularity of the tale. This is also reflected in the speed with which multilingual book markets such as that of Antwerp responded to the demand for translations. Gherard Leeu printed a French text in Antwerp in 1487. In the ensuing year, Leeu published translations of this text into Flemish, German, and Dutch (Low German). He also reproduced Caxton's English version of 1485 in 1492. The Tuscan version of the romance (printed in Treviso as early as 1482 and also edited by Babbi), was later translated into Armenian (printed in Marseille in 1540 but probably composed in Venice), and an *ottava rima* poem in Yiddish attributed to the humanist Elia Levita (*Pariz un' Viene*, c. 1514, printed in Verona in 1594). Later, the Italian version was adapted into Greek verse by the Cretan poet Vitzentzos Kornaros (*Erotokritos*, 1640).¹⁰ The tale was rendered into Latin for the instruction and amusement of children by the humanist bishop of Rieux, Jean Le Pins (printed in Venice, 1516, and Paris, 1517). It is true to say that *Paris et Vienne* version β was both a multilingual and a popular text.

Only one manuscript in French survives of version α , and this along with the manuscript evidence suggests that until it was printed, La Cépède's text had an aristocratic reading public.¹¹ Some two decades after La Cépède's work, Antoine de La Sale announced that he would write his own version of the tale as part of a series of tales dedicated to Jean de Calabre, the son of René d'Anjou.¹² This version does not appear to have been written, but it was intended by this Provençal-born author for an Angevin patron who was familiar with Provence, northern France, and the kingdom of Naples and whose court was keenly aware of the competing prestige of its political rival, the Aragonese court. La Cépède presents his romance as one he prefers to Arthurian and marvelous tales, and his choice is reflected in La Sale's projected compilation, which placed it alongside similar narratives: an extract from a chronicle; the chivalric romance *Jehan de Saintré*; and Rasse de Brunhamel's translation of a Latin *novella* by Nicolas de Clamanges, *Floridan et Elvide*. La Sale terms the couple "martirs d'amours," as does Fra Rocabertí's *Gloria d'Amor*, a fifteenth-century emulation of Petrarch's *Trionfi*, which extols

Vienne (Viana) as a singular example of martyrdom in the cause of love, placed as she is between the murdered troubadour Guilhem de Capestany and Tristan and Iseut.¹³ I will return to Viana's martyrdom in the second part of this chapter; the following section concerns the importance of mother tongue and acquired languages in the text as well as in its transmission.

La Cépède's prologue was dismissed by earlier scholars as the clichéd attribution of an exotic source to a text that had been newly composed in French.¹⁴ However, this is not an author's alleging that his source was either a Latin chronicle at Saint-Denis or a romance written in Arabic, as La Cépède states at the outset that his mother tongue is the Occitan of his purported source. He implies that his language choice defers to his patrons but reflects his personal taste in literature and his wish to share his favorite reading matter with a readership that could not understand his form of Provençal, and still less the Catalan original.¹⁵ Alfred Coville viewed these claims as a political justification of language choice by a Provençal author aiming to please the Francophone Angevin court.¹⁶ Moreover, the dates of 1432 to 1439 may be significant, as this was the period of René d'Anjou's failed attempt to win the kingdom of Naples from the claims of King Alfons el Magnànim of Aragon, who owned a copy of a Catalan romance of *París i Viana*, one of three Catalan manuscripts (all now lost) that have been traced prior to La Cépède's French text.¹⁷

It is not possible to know if this lost Catalan version was in prose or verse, as the verses inserted in Fra Rocaberti's *Gloria d'amor* (c. 1461) are probably not direct quotations. Certainly, Cortijo Ocaña has credited the romance with the inception of the distinctive generic markers of the Spanish *novela sentimental*.¹⁸ In the absence of any stronger evidence, it seems wisest to accept Cátedra's conclusion that the story found its first appreciative audience in Catalan and entered French through the medium of Occitan. The only surviving Catalan text, however, is a printed text (Girona, 1495) that has been identified by Cátedra as a translation of the Tuscan version of β that was first printed in 1482.¹⁹ Anna Maria Babbi's analysis of the Italian and French traditions leads her to conclude that as the sole French manuscript of version β (which is also the source for the printed French text) also seems to be strongly influenced by the Italian versions, this may indicate that the romance enjoyed an extensive period of transmission in Tuscany after its initial composition in Catalan.²⁰ There is, of course, no doubt that the Angevin court in Provence and Naples, the Aragonese court in Barcelona and Naples, and the papal court of Avignon all provided a supportive environment for the kind of cross-fertilizations

that are suggested by the Tuscan, Catalan, and French texts. It would seem that the movements across the Mediterranean within the diegesis of *Paris et Vienne* is echoed in the transmission of the text.

It remains that La Cépède does not specify what his mother tongue is, but presents his Marseillais upbringing as an impoverishment, as it limits his fluency in French. Provençal Occitan is not flagged up as some kind of personal possession. Instead, he depicts it as a mediating language between French and Catalan that is accessible to him alone, not to his audience. He suggests that the Occitan text is less authoritative than the Catalan version, which he has not translated, but which he presents as his source. La Cépède places himself as writer-translator in the same mediating position as the “languaige provençal” that mediated between the Catalan and French versions. Both language and writer facilitate movement between two speech communities. The context for the writer and the language is the cultural environment of Marseille, a port that was the site of several languages, French, Provençal, Genoese, and Catalan. This appears to distinguish the text from those produced in other environments. For example, Gaston Phébus’ preface to his *Livre de la chasse* makes a more conventional apology for his use of French as his second language, in that he cites no second, mediating vernacular and minimizes his use of Latin.²¹

It is clear that La Cépède is adopting a role familiar to postcolonial studies as that of go-between, or linguistic and cultural mediator. His treatment of French is similar to that of poets and novelists who have chosen to write creatively in a second language, usually one learned as an adult as a result of migration, and have termed their complex relationship as one with the “stepmother tongue,” that is to say, either an adoptive parent or a hostile rival.²² Assuming that La Cépède’s version α represents an eccentric treatment of *Paris et Vienne*, version β , his authorial and translating action start to seem paradoxical. He takes a short romance and extends it, displaying his mastery of French, and in so doing creates a new text that erases the prior languages he cites as his source.

Despite the evidence in favor of a Catalan source for the romance, it would still be unwise to assume that *París i Viana* was identified by its readers as a Catalan work. In Francesc Alegre’s *Somni recitant lo procés d’una qüestió enamorada* (c. 1470), París is identified as “lo francès París” and attacked by Macías for his shameless behavior as a Frenchman ignorant of the mores of “los nostres espanyols.”²³ Alegre, who was a merchant in Barcelona who also spent some years in Sicily, underlines the tale’s Frenchness, embodied in París’ name, in order to identify his readership as part of “los notres espanyols”

and to present what Cortijo Ocaña sees as an intriguing development of an opposition between “national” treatments of love literature. Whatever its origins might have been, the tale was received by the end of the fifteenth century as an example of a particularly French-influenced view of love, and this surely reflects the success it enjoyed in print. In the following discussion, all references to version β will cite the Catalan text edited by Càtedra, with references as necessary to the French text edited by Babbi.

Synopsis

París’ talent as a musician and singer is the starting point of his love for the higher-born Viana, for he serenades her incognito. Viana’s outraged parents suspect he is a minstrel. Both París and Viana use the bishop of San Lorenç as an unwitting go-between, by claiming religious concerns in order to meet at his house. París wins prizes at a tournament that has been arranged to identify the mystery lover. Viana and her mother visit París’ father, who is ill, and Viana gains access into París’ bedroom and private chapel. There, she sees his tournament prizes and takes them away. París returns, discovers the theft, and accuses his mother of letting intruders enter his bedroom. Viana pretends to the bishop that she wants to confess her theft to París. When Viana’s parents refuse the match and arrange her marriage to someone else, the couple attempt to elope, but Viana is captured. Viana’s parents imprison her and her companion Ysabel in an underground cell they have built specially for her within their house. París runs away to Genoa. Viana and Ysabel are on a diet of bread and water, but they are fed in secret by París’ friend Aduardo, who also sends París letters with news of developments. Before her father’s approved suitor is introduced, Viana’s father attempts to fatten her up with a meal of roast chicken. She places bits of the chicken under her armpits, to put off her suitor by her smell. She claims to be sick. Three years pass. París travels to the eastern Mediterranean, grows a beard, learns to speak Arabic fluently, and earns himself high office at the court of the sultan of Babylon. Meanwhile, Viana’s father is sent by the pope to spy on Babylon in preparation for a crusade. When the Dalfin is arrested and jailed in Alexandria, París asks to be allowed to question him, with a friar as interpreter. The Dalfin promises to give París his lands if he succeeds in freeing him. París frees the Dalfin, accompanies him back to Vienne, and asks for Viana’s hand in marriage. He visits her in her prison, and has been forewarned by Aduardo’s letters, so overlooks the sickening stench. The friar, who is faint at the smell, acts as interpreter between the

imprisoned lady and the Moor. París then hands Viana the ring she gave him and speaks to her in their language. There follows a speedy disclosure of París' identity, reunion, and marriage. Ysabel weds Aduardo.

A poetic young man who feigns religious conversion in order to gain access to his beloved has echoes of the Occitan romance *Flamenca*, as does Viana's cunning manipulation of imprisonment to gain her own emotional freedom. However, Viana's role is ambiguous, in that she is a virginal noblewoman who makes false confessions to a bishop, steals objects from a young man's bedroom, and makes herself repulsive to unwanted suitors.

París' response to Viana's predicament is surprising, for he appears to turn to language acquisition as a means of ensuring their reunion. He travels to distant lands and learns to speak Arabic, "e apres de parlar morisch tam be com si fos nat alli" (and he learned to speak Moorish as well as if he were born there) (Cátedra, 157). He wears Moorish clothing; grows a beard; and travels through the lands of India and Prester John before returning to Babilonia, where he gains the sultan's favor. Three years later, when Viana's father is imprisoned in Alexandria for spying on behalf of the pope, París obtains permission from the sultan to travel to question him, with a friar as interpreter, for he pretends not to know the Dalfin's language. He gets the Dalfin's agreement to give him his lands in exchange for freeing him. He then offers to return the Dalfin's lands to him if he will marry Viana to him. At Vienne, París is careful to speak only Arabic (163), and uses both the friar and the bishop of Saint Lorenç to present his offer of marriage to her (163–64). Viana uses her hidden rotting meat, as a person "mig podrida" (half rotted) with sickness, to chase away this unwanted suitor (164), but París makes the friar tell her that he can overlook the illness (164). He gives her the ring she gave him as a token of their love (165) and speaks to her in their shared language:

E Viana que estaue merauellada del diamant fon mes merauellada com hoi parlar aquell qui iames hauia parlat: entant que estech espantada. (165)

[And Viana, who marveled at the diamond, was more amazed when she heard speak the one who had never spoken: so much so she was frightened.]

Viana is fearful at hearing a silent man speak and in seeing a ring she thinks belongs to a dead man. París tells her he has returned, and her reaction is so

intense that she, in turn, nearly dies (166). When París reveals his identity to the Dalfin, he is stricken dumb for an hour (168). Both the father and daughter, who have been imprisoned, are unable to speak when the sultan's go-between reacquires their language.

París' manipulation of languages to gain access to Viana seems unusual, but it makes sense within the tale as a whole. Viana first identifies her night-time musician as a noble knight when she visits his bedroom and private oratory, on the basis of visual signs such as his armor and the prizes he has won at a tournament (131–33). She steals his prizes. She manipulates the bishop of Saint Lorenç into enabling the pair to meet by claiming that she needs to confess her theft to París. In the first part of the tale, Viana uses language to give a respectable gloss to her pursuit of her own desires, whereas París uses disguise and concealment, posing as a *joglar*, a postulant, and a masked knight. París' flight abroad leaves Viana trapped in a pretense of illness and real starvation. París takes on a new linguistic and cultural identity as a Christian who speaks Arabic (a Mozarab). Viana uses olfactory and visual signs to indicate her refusal of marriage: she is "half rotted" in her prison, hostile to any suitor except the one she has selected for herself. París learns and uses an international language, and a shared courtly understanding of falconry, as means of winning wealth and lands both overseas and in the city of Vienne.

Readers of the Catalan version printed in Gerona and Barcelona (1495), as well as of the French version written by a secular man raised in the thriving mercantile port of Marseille, would have appreciated the linguistic turn taken by París in winning Viana. An ultimate sign that the text can be read as a recommendation of the advantages of languages and go-betweens is that in the Catalan version, the children of París and Viana marry into the royal houses of France and Aragon (Cátedra, 169).

In the French β version of *Paris et Vienne*, Paris uses translation in subtle ways. He approaches the imprisoned Dauphin with a friar whom he uses as his interpreter, introducing a go-between he does not need, as someone who speaks Arabic proficiently, in order to construct a convincing negotiation between the Dauphin and himself. The friar is at this point presented as a tool: "Paris commença a le consoler par la bouche du frere" (Paris began to console him through the mouth of the friar) (Babbi, XXXVIII.125).²⁴ Later the friar speaks to Vienne "en personne de Paris" (in the role of Paris), as his interpreter, but in fact enacts Paris' disguised identity as the unnamed Moor who has freed her father (XLII.132). In both instances, Paris uses the interpreter as a mask, not as a channel for clear communication. On Paris'

second meeting with Vienne, he carries a magnificent “espee moresque,” but hands her the diamond ring she gave him in pledge; one sign marks him as Moor, the other as Paris. Vienne is then surprised to hear the Moor speaking in “plain langage” (XLIII.135). Ysabel wakes up to see Vienne in the arms not of Paris but of a Moor:

elle s'eveilla et, quant elle vit demourer Vienne entre les bras du maure, dist:—Ma dame, et qu'esse s'y? Avez vous perdu le sens que ainsy demourés entre les bras de ce maure? Vous a il enchantee que vous souffrés que si grant privance il ait desja avec vous? Et esse la foy que vous tenez a Paris, pour lequel avons tant de maux souffert? (XLIII.136)

[She woke up and when she saw Vienne in the arms of the Moor, she said: “My lady, what is this? Have you lost your mind to be staying like this in the arms of this Moor? Has he cast a spell on you to make you accept him already having such intimate contact with you? Is this what has become of your loyalty towards Paris, for whose sake we have suffered so much?”]

Ysabel's appeal to Vienne's *foy* puns on her misreading of the scene as a cross-religious as much as an unfaithful love. Robert Muchembled has noted the frequency of assaults in late medieval Artois (a linguistic frontier for French and Flemish) against men who were overheard speaking a foreign language, whether English, Spanish, or even Latin.²⁵ Ysabel's aggression is aimed primarily at the Moor's appearance and religion, but the linguistic aspects of his persona, as a man who may have enchanted her mistress with his interpreted words, are important too. When Paris kneels before the Dauphin to say who he is, he hands him his “espee moresque” with which he invites him to punish him, as if his visual token of foreignness were to be turned against him (137).

Paris' *engin* sheds new light on Vienne's trick, for she is surprised to find that Paris does not react to her own subterfuge because he finds the smell of the rotting meat good: “estoit a Paris toute la puanteur bonne, car ne sentoit riens et disoit:—Je ne scay pas que vous sentez, car je ne sens nulle chose de mal!” (Paris found the stench good, because he smelled nothing, and said, “I don't know what you are smelling, because I can smell nothing wrong!”) (XLIII.133). The friar cannot interpret the stench intellectually (he does not know its cause), so he is disgusted by it, whereas Paris is immune to its effects because he translates it as “nulle chose de mal.” Paris inhales the same

smell as the friar, but both of them apply a moral reading to the evidence of decomposition, as signs of wrongdoing or disgusting phenomena.²⁶

Jean-Jacques Vincensini has studied Vienne's stratagem as an exercise in making abject both her body and the generic conventions he ascribes to the text as a *roman idyllique*.²⁷ While Vincensini's argument is convincing, it rests on Julia Kristeva's thoroughly modern definition of what constitutes abjection in physical and psychoanalytical terms. It is important to reassess what a reader, in any of the many cultures that translated the text in the late fifteenth century, may have considered abject about what William Cotton has called the "chicken incident."²⁸ In Christian ideology of the later Middle Ages, abjection is strongly associated with penitential activity and with martyrdom, something that may be reflected in the treatment of Vienne as a martyr to love. La Cépède's Vienne associates her imprisonment, starvation, and physical humiliation with the patient suffering of Boethius. Her stratagem for protecting her virginity is in fact drawn from the ambiguous preaching exemplum of two Lombard noblewomen who hide chicken meat in their bodices to avoid rape. In the version that circulated in fifteenth-century Castile, the young women are contrasted with their mother, who surrenders their castle to a besieging army because she is lusting after its king. Her daughters are rewarded for their chastity with a kingdom each, whereas the mother's *luxuria* proves fatal to her.²⁹ This makes Vienne's action emblematic of women's bodily struggle between chastity and lust. Her abjection is less connected to moral opprobrium, and to comedy, than it may seem to a modern reader.

Vienne's behavior breaches none of the codes of courtly behavior in terms of dress, language, and action, and there is a risk of anachronism in assuming that a smell of natural putrefaction, as opposed to one of evil, would have been offensive. As the text twice overlays a love narrative with connotations of interreligious conflict (a lack of faith) and of sexual misbehavior, it seems that the texts should be read closely for pointers to the scene's full significance. William Caxton's translation omitted only anticlerical words from his French source and did not alter Vienne's self-imposed stench.³⁰ Stench is a diffuse and subjective concept, but bodily smells were most frequently associated with diseases such as leprosy.³¹ In *Jaufre*, a murderous leper is likened to a well-dressed man, like a painted wooden panel that has rotted internally. The stinking leper is viewed as a man whose sickness is caused, or expressed, through sexual appetite. Vienne's stratagem makes her symbolically a leper, as does her isolation within her family home and the contrast it presents to her beautiful appearance. However, Vienne's stratagem is strongly connected

to her gender, as in addition to the exemplum mentioned above, it also alludes to a commonplace of misogynistic literature expressed in works such as Francesc Eiximenis's *Llibre de las Donas* (1396):³²

Qui pren muller que no sap què sera
 Ell mateix se pos' a risch de matar
 E la mort per tostemps se procurar.
 ¿Què farà si la pren tal que sera
 com a sepulcre daurat:
 defora bell e de dins pudirà?

[Whoever takes a wife he does not know is putting himself at risk of being killed and obtaining death for ever for himself. What shall he do; should he take her as she is, like a gilded tomb: beautiful on the outside and rotten within?]

Vienne presents her suitors with evidence of Eiximenis' warning against marrying a woman of unknown moral standing. As she has attempted to elope with her lover, and has pledged herself to him, she may indeed be considered to have diminished her value in the marital market. Paris, of course, knows Vienne well, so he can look into the gilded tomb and know that its rottenness is as cosmetic as her fine clothes.

Vienne's ironic manipulation of her observers' misogynistic fears may account for part of the success of the narrative, but (again) it is not the whole picture. The comic and dramatic impact of Vienne's aggression lies also in her deliberate misuse of cooked food. She refuses to eat it, and she secretes it not inside her body but beneath her clothing, under her armpits. The rotting chicken flesh is placed strategically in proximity to her courtly heart and desirable and nutritive breasts, while being radically removed from the acceptable social order of food that must be ingested and excreted. This food is entombed along with its consumer. Her refusal is framed by her father's determination to starve her into submission and by his own experience of starvation when he is imprisoned at Alexandria. Indeed, La Cépède subtly makes the Dauphin the agent of Vienne's stratagem, for when he uncovers her plan to persist in her love for Paris and to ignore his alternative marriage plans, he threatens to eat her: "Si te dy que ains que je consentisse ad ce que tu penses, je te destruiroye et defferoye de tous tes membres l'un après l'autre, et ta cher a beaux petis morceaux, et les menge-roye" (I tell you that before I consent to the thing you are thinking, I would

[rather] kill you, and tear you limb from limb, [tear] your flesh into little pieces, and eat them) (Kaltenbacher, 530). La Cépède's Vienne projects this violence onto the meat she is given in preparation for her suitor's visit, as she feigns penance and fasting in obedience to her father's wishes; breaks the chicken carcass in two; and tears off segments of it, which she tucks between her breasts (551–52). Her second assault on food occurs on the eve of Paris' visit to her cell, and she repeats this gesture, this time on a piece of mutton (610). Vienne's father has threatened to reduce her to *cher* that he will consume, and she chooses to embody inedible food: "la cher fut aussi pugnayse comme charoyne" (The flesh stank like a corpse) (610), as if she were signaling that she is a consumable product on a par with other food-stuffs that are processed, dressed and served up, in her parents' kitchen.

When the friar repeats the Moor's offer of marriage, Vienne threatens to beat her head against the wall, "et je me feray issir les cervelles par la bouche" (and I shall make my brains come out of my mouth) (Kaltenbacher, 133). Vincensini interprets Vienne's graphic threats as another instance of the romance's disruption of the idyllic. It is also worth noting that Vienne is threatening to use her mouth not to speak or to ingest food, but to expel the thinking part of her body, and in so doing, to deny herself the ability to give both mental and verbal consent. Her threatened suicide underlines her value as an autonomous thinking being and as a living creature that both eats and vomits.

Good food may be contrasted with corrupt and corrupting language, especially the words that are cooked up in the malicious heart. Michel Jeanerret has traced the development, from fifteenth-century Italy outward, of an association between cooks and those who use Latin badly, the *culinaria lingua* criticized by early modern Latinists. This is a branch of a long-standing tradition of macaronic and dog Latin multilingual poetry, of "churchmen who cultivate their stomachs and talk about it in bad Latin," from the *Cena Cypriani* to multilingual collages of liturgy, *auctores* and carnival.³³ Monolingual vernacular examples are also extant that work on a contrast between good and bad food, such as the exchange of Occitan *coblas* by the Catalan Monk of Foissan (possibly Jofre de Foixà) and an anonymous respondent, in the later part of the thirteenth century:³⁴

Hoc dixit monachus de Fuxano

Sobrefusa ab cabirol

Porc ab [un] unyó novell,

E gallina ab juxell,
 E capó rostit d'un an
 Vull que hom me pos denan,
 E formatge torrador,
 E vi rosat en Pascor,
 E giroflat quan iverna.

[Strong sauce on kid, pork with fresh onions, and chicken with thick sauce, and a roasted yearling capon. I want all that set before me, and creamy cheese dessert, rosé wine at Eastertide, and wine with cloves in the wintertime.]

Responcio sibi facta

Truja vella morta a dol,
 Et al ventre haja porcell,
 E cols ab magre anyell,

 Vull que hom li pos denan
 Aquel monge enganador,
 E vi torbat part Martror,
 E haja foc de lanterna.

[An old sow that died of grief, with a piglet in its belly, and cabbage with thin lamb. . . . I want all that set before him, that deceitful monk; and clouded wine at the feast of All Souls, and may he have lantern light.]

The monk's stanza lists foods that are associated with fertility, such as milk-fed kid, as well as rich sauces and desserts made with eggs. He adds the capon, a castrated cockerel, a noble food that peasants can only dream of eating. These foods are sophisticatedly produced with complex recipes. It is intriguing that the respondent uses carrion in the form of a compound image of a sow that is simultaneously old and pregnant, affected by the human emotion of grief. The kid is replaced with thin lamb, the fresh onions with cabbage. The *cobla* reaffirms the image of death with its reference to All Souls and cloudy wine drunk by lantern light. The monk's *cobla* called for festive wines at Easter and Christmas, as well as feast food of venison and roast capon. Feast food is set against impossible food, images of death and fertility

intertwined. In the writings of Francesc Eiximenis, fatty chicken meat is a feast food that he contrasts to some comic effect with the traditional fare of a religious man.³⁵ In such poems, the cook and the kitchen become sites of renewed fertility, allowing for the cycle of birth, death, and consumption.³⁶ Vienne usurps the cook's prerogative, turns roast chicken from feast into debased famine, and by her actions transforms the required gestures and words of obedience and consent into a violent rejection of her social role as a marriageable daughter.

This detail also points to why Vienne is a "martirs d'amours," for the witnesses to her smell believe that she must be a saint to endure the stench of her ghastly disease and spread the rumor that she has become a holy woman (Kaltenbacher, 557–58). Pierre de La Cépède allots Vienne a standard renunciation of worldly love, one that is associated with mystery plays. Vienne says, "je veulh du tout le monde abandoner pour estre au service de Dieu" (I want to abandon the world entirely in order to put myself in the service of God) (Kaltenbacher, 611–12). Vienne's words are found in the mouth of the virgin martyr Agnes, the subject of a fourteenth-century mystery play composed in the region of Marseille:³⁷

Mais sapias ben que ieu non farai
cest putage nil cosintraï,
anz portarai a mo senor
tostems mais de mon cor honor,
si com bona moller deu far
qe deu fort son marit onrar.

(*Jeu de Sainte Agnès*, lines 65–70)

[But know well that I shall not act like a whore, nor consent to it;
rather I shall always bear the honor of my heart for my lord, as a good
wife should, who should honor her husband well.]

The *passio* of Saint Agnes pits the child saint's determination to stay betrothed to her spiritual groom against the authority of the Roman prefect, the father of her rejected suitor. As she has described marriage as akin to whoring, she is placed in a brothel (lines 281–344). The stinking sheets of the brothel are taken away by two archangels, who also cover her naked body with a white robe and tidy her cell (lines 403–509). Agnes's body erases the stench of the brothel and replaces it with divine perfume, and the prostitutes surrounding her are converted. Like Vienne's specially

constructed prison cell within her parents' house, Agnes's cell juxtaposes a brothel, a prison, and a monastic retreat. She is both exposed and protected. The lustful prefect's son is struck down dead when he attempts to touch the child saint:

Filius prefecti dicit sibi sic ironice:

Fora putan? Anz ti penrai
es am tu mal grat tieu jhairai,
que jha honor non volrai far
a cel dieu que ti vol gardar.

(lines 556–59)

Modo venit versus lectum et credit ipsam accipere, et diabolus accipit ipsum ad gulam et stinxit eum et cadit in solum, et omnes diaboli veniunt et portant animam in infernum sibilando.

[The prefect's son says to himself with irony: "Here, whore? Now I shall take you and against your will I shall lie with you, for I do not want to honor that god that wishes to protect you." He goes toward the bed and wants to touch her, and a devil grabs him by the throat and chokes him; he falls down on the ground, and all the devils come and carry him off, hissing, into Hell.]

In La Cépède's text, Vienne's martyrdom is ironically patterned on such tales as this. She claims that she has consecrated her virginity to a hidden lover, and uses odor to repel her suitors, but in both instances she is following her physical desires (see also Kaltenbacher, 557):

Lors Vienne ouvrit son som, dont il yssist une si grant pueur, qu'il sembloit que il y eust ung chien pourry, dont l'evesque et le frere commensarent a closre les nez et torner le visage aultre part. (611)

[Then Vienne opened her bodice, from which there issued such a great stink that it seemed that there was a rotting dog in there. Thereupon the bishop and the friar began to pinch their nostrils and turn their faces away.]

In a construct far from the devil grabbing a lecherous suitor by the throat, it is Vienne's body odor that attacks the clergymen who approach her. There are

no archangels in her cell, only her servant, who is condemned to suffering the same fate as hers, and it is she who spreads foulness to protect her virginity for worldly purposes. When Saint Agnes is handed over to torturers on suspicion of witchcraft, her silence is taken to indicate her guilt: “Il es vaudesa, so mi par, / Per que non nos vol mot sonar” (It seems to me she’s a Waldensian, because she doesn’t want to say a word to us) (lines 608–9). One of her tormentors suggests that she should be hanged by the tongue until it is ripped out as a punishment for necromancy (lines 600–607). Vienne’s silence, by contrast, is a sign neither of heresy nor of witchcraft. It is associated with her use of olfactory language. Her smell gives the false impression that there is a rotting dog located somewhere, either in the cell or in her bodice. However, it is precisely looking that resolves the mystery of what exactly is rotten around Vienne’s body, for when he is treated to the same olfactory assault as the friar and the bishop, Paris chooses to look where they have averted their eyes: “regardoit dans le seym de Vienne” (He looked into Vienne’s bosom) (611).

La Cépède’s Paris creeps into the cell, overhears her lament, then speaks to her “en langue latine” (615). This is his familiar *parler* and Vienne recognizes him by it, but it is not the vernacular (615–16). Later, his father mitigates this by saying he recognized Paris, as did his companions, by his voice (624). Paris’ action is not separate from his ability to recognize a rotting stench for what it is: a subterfuge. Pierre de La Cépède’s prologue to the romance cites a proverbial warning that one should be wary of the evidence of one’s eyes (391). His version of the tale demonstrates that seeing and smelling are not always believing. If Vienne appears to be a martyr, it is only because she has donned a particularly effective disguise in order to preserve her chastity, not for God, but for her lover. Similarly, the smell of putrefaction does not automatically denote either a deadly disease or a corpse.

I would suggest a different reading to Vincensini, one that moves away from abjection as a disruption of generic patterns, in order to explore the cultural association that was made between the abject female body, food, and martyrdom. If Vienne’s actions are read as an ironic parody of the abasement visited on virgin martyrs such as Agnes in mystery plays, this would compel a reader to interpret the tale less as a serious story of “*martirs d’amours*,” and more as a gentle subversion of the very concept of suffering in love. Corruption touches on language as well as pieces of roasted chicken, for both are distorted from their true natures. Vienne’s aggressive silence is a perfect complement to Paris’ skilful manipulation of silence and speech.

The chicken stratagem may go beyond language itself. Laura Marks has noted that odors are particularly difficult to represent in aesthetic media

and that perfume and stench are both relegated to the minor arts that are the kitchen and perfumery. Unlike visual or aural material, scents cannot be symbolized. When Vienne stinks, her stratagem goes beyond any of the languages that narrate her tale; she is placed, at that moment, simultaneously in the kitchen and in the reader's earliest memories of food and disgust. To invoke smell is to invoke affect and to release the text at that moment from translation or interpretation into a realm that is purely subjective.³⁸ Every reader is alone with the associations he or she may make with food and decomposition, and this appeals to a personal idiom that lies beyond grammar or verbal interpretation. If La Cépède is viewed as one of the best readers of the β version, he draws from it the warning that when vernaculars and Latin *auctoritates* overlap, the result may not necessarily be a cacophony, as long as one keeps an eye on the affective, subjective, and associative material that is beyond spoken languages. It may be thanks to this pungent detail that the romance appealed to so many translators from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, a period that precedes the change, wrought by the Enlightenment, in how odors were described and experienced in French, and ultimately Western, culture.³⁹

Paris and Vienne was a multilingual phenomenon of the late fifteenth century. The romance emerged through translation and was diffused in an impressive number of idioms until the seventeenth century, but it seemed to lose its appeal thereafter. The *aljamiado-morisco* version seems especially relevant for Venuti's theory that "translation is scandalous because it can create different values and practices, whatever the domestic setting."⁴⁰ Paris acquires Arabic during his exile overseas; the Castilian printed text was rendered in Arabic script, probably by an *alfaquí*, for an Aragonese Morisco community. The text would have been illicit, as texts composed in Arabic script were suppressed by the Inquisition.⁴¹ Here, the tale of *Paris and Vienne* acquires a symbolic value as a work of intercultural resistance, affirming the cultural and religious identity of a Castilian-speaking community that was banned from learning the Arabic that comes so easily to the protagonist.

By restoring the tale to its probable origins in Catalan and Occitan literature of the fourteenth century, it may be concluded that the romance appealed to a multilingual audience because of its diegetic engagement with language as the vehicle of illusions and as something that might be transcended through a singular conflation of the cultural constructions of smell, food, and martyrdom. In the following chapter I will examine a text that is very close to *Paris and Vienne*, but that explores language through a different treatment of both translation and alienation.