INTERVENTIONS: NEW STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL CULTURE Ethan Knapp, Series Editor

For my mother, Fen-Ying "Fran" Horng Hsy (1948–2001)

Trading Tongues

MERCHANTS,
MULTILINGUALISM, and
MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

Jonathan Hsy

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in The Book of Margery Kempe," in The Sea and Englishness in the Middle Ages: Maritime Narratives, Identity and Culture, ed. Sebastian I. Sobecki (Cambridge: Brewer, 2011), 159–78; "Oure Occian': Littoral Language and the Constance Narratives of Chaucer and Boccaccio," in Europe and Its Others: Essays on Interperception and Identity, eds. Paul Gifford and Tessa Hauswedell, Cultural Identity Studies 18 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), 215–24; and "Translation, Suspended: Literary Code-Switching and Poetry of Sea Travel," in The Medieval Translator/Traduire au Moyen Âge, Vol. 12, eds. Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2009), 133–45.



London's Languages and Translingual Writing

Contact Zones, Modern and Medieval

Multilingual welcome signs and other navigational markers in London's Heathrow and Gatwick airports—including texts in Chinese, Hindi, and Punjabi, not to mention English and a number of European languages—offer the overseas visitor some indication of the many languages one can encounter on the streets of London today. Anyone who has lived in or traveled to London might find it unsurprising to learn that the city has been characterized (in popular media and academic scholarship alike) as "the most linguistically diverse city on earth." Indeed, one London newspaper has colorfully hailed it as "one of the very few cities in the world where you can order breakfast in Farsi, book a taxi in Urdu, ask for afternoon coffee in Arabic and spend the evening chatting with your friends in Cantonese." Although the singularity of London's multilingual character

1. Andrew Buncombe and Tessa MacArthur, "London: multilingual capital of the world," *The Independent* [London], 29 March 1999. In their response to this article, linguists John Eversley and Philip Baker cite their own research on the city's languages and deem it "very likely that London is the most linguistically diverse city in the world" ("Letter: London's languages," *The Independent* [London], 6 March 1999). For examples of Baker's assertion in linguistic scholarship, see Kingsley Bolton, "Language," in *Encyclopedia of Race and Ethnic Studies*, ed. Ellis Cashmore (London: Routledge, 2004), 236; Kingsley Bolton, "Vari-

can be disputed (other cities around the globe can very well vie for the title of most linguistically diverse, depending on how one defines a "language" and "diversity"), this newspaper article's effusive praise for the city suggests the very *idea* of London's linguistic diversity exerts a strong imaginative appeal.² In order to provide a compelling "hook" to what is essentially a summary of a numerical survey of languages used in London, the journalists invite readers to adopt the perspective of a single person ("you") going about business in the city. In this description of everyday life, the city's plethora of tongues implicitly serves as an index for London's global stature and multiethnic character. At the same time, each scenario in this urban trajectory is underlaid by the combined forces of global migration and commerce. An ongoing exchange of money for goods and services drives the hypothetical Londoner's interactions with people of different professional and (presumably) ethnic backgrounds over the course of a single day.

London's multilingual character and status as a major commercial center would appear to mark it as a quintessentially modern global city, but the conjunction of everyday business and cross-linguistic encounter is in itself nothing new. An anonymous early fifteenth-century poem known as London Lickpenny presents a vivid portrayal of medieval city life, narrating a remarkably similar trajectory punctuated by cross-linguistic exchanges. Inhabiting an urban environment through pedestrian experience, this medieval poem offers its own fictive itinerary of a single person in transit throughout a busy, polyglot London.³

In this poem, a visitor from outside the city, identified only as "one of Kent" (20), travels to London to seek justice for wrongs, but he is unsuccessful in his pursuits. As it describes the narrator's movements throughout the day, the poem posits that money (or the desire for it) drives all interactions in the city, and the narrative offers a seemingly incidental survey of the linguistic demographics of different neighborhoods. For instance, the speaker's interactions with legal professionals in Westminster feature

eties of World Englishes," in *The Handbook of World Englishes*, eds. Braj B. Kachru, Yamuna Kachru, and Cecil L. Nelson (Singapore: Blackwell, 2006), 305.

^{2.} The Index of Linguistic Diversity (ILD), for instance, draws its methodology from ecology in an attempt to develop a standard rubric for measuring the "language richness" of locations around the globe. David Harmon and Jonathan Loh, "The Index of Linguistic Diversity: A New Quantitative Measure of Trends in the Status of the World's Languages," Language Documentation and Conservation 4 (2010): 97–151, esp. 100, 102.

^{3.} The poem survives in two manuscripts: London, British Library, Harley MS 367 and Harley MS 542. All citations and line numbers follow *Medieval English Political Writings*, ed. James M. Dean (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 1996), which is based upon Harley MS 542.

highly specialized forms of language, including a healthy dose of Frenchderived legal terminology employed in pleading and other court procedures. The penniless first-person narrator submits a "complaynt" (4) and ponders how to "procede" [litigate] (6) before making a final appeal to the court of "Chauncerie" (34). At the Court of Common Pleas, the speaker states, "I tolde [...] my case, as well as I coude" (28) to "one with a sylken hoode" (26)—a legal professional seated on high at the bench—but this hooded man says nothing in response, since the narrator has no money to offer. When the speaker then moves into the Chancery court, he discerns many cries of "qui tollis," the Latin phrase used by clerks to summon claimants to the bar, "[b]ut I herd no man speke of me" (36). In this Westminster episode, legal professionals employ an obscure mix of Francophone and Latinate jargon that the narrator, an outsider, struggles in vain to navigate.

Once the speaker exits Westminster, the linguistic landscape of the poem alters. Instead of encountering professionals employing specialized forms of French and Latin, the speaker interacts with merchants who use less prestigious vernaculars. Outside the doors of Westminster Hall, "Flemings grete woon" (great crowds of Flemish merchants) approach the narrator, crying: "Mastar, what will ve copen or by—/Fine felt hatts, spectacles for to rede?" (51–54). The odd phrase "copen or by" is a rare, if not unique, occurrence in a Middle English text. This mixed-language utterance—featuring Middle Dutch and Middle English equivalents of the verb "buy" effects a subtly stylized representation of the speech of Flemish immigrants who try to get the narrator to purchase some of their wares.⁴ In the rest of the poem, the speaker encounters other varieties of Middle English. In "Estchepe," a victualing district, the poet hears vendors clanging pots, crying, and singing songs (89–96), but he cannot purchase anything they offer; and in the waterfront district of Billingsgate, a bargeman rudely rebuffs the speaker when he states he cannot afford the fare for a trip back across the Thames and out of the city (115-19).5

The vivid pedestrian perspective in London Lickpenny provides a survey of the demographic and linguistic diversity of the medieval city's neighborhoods. It depicts French- and Latin-speaking legal professionals in Westminster; Flemings outside Westminster gates negotiating two related Germanic vernaculars; and retailers elsewhere throughout town crying,

^{4.} The Middle Dutch copen also finds its way into Middle Scots through overseas trade networks; see C. I. Macafee, "Older Scots Lexis," in Charles Jones, ed., The Edinburgh History of the Scots Language (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 182-212, at 206.

^{5.} On related street cries in medieval Paris and London, see John Norton-Smith, William Langland (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 56.

singing, and scolding in Middle English. Although the imagined Londoner in the modern newspaper article is happily conversant across tongues and the fictive first-person speaker in this poem is not so fortunate, medieval London—like its present-day counterpart—nonetheless emerges as a profoundly polyglot city: a space that absorbs and sustains people of diverse ethnic, social, and professional backgrounds. In *London Lickpenny*, commerce is not just an incidental feature of everyday life; rather, it provides the vehicle for the urban subject's motion through diverse sociolinguistic environments. A cross-temporal comparison allows us to conceive of the city, medieval or modern, as a dynamic contact zone: a place that draws together peoples of disparate origins, professions, and social classes, often under the aegis of trade.

This book, Trading Tongues, examines how multilingualism and commerce shape texts written in medieval contact zones, from London during the time of Chaucer and his contemporaries through the early Tudor era. When referring to a contact zone throughout this book, I simply mean to indicate any venue (such as a city) that facilitates ongoing interactions between people and exchange among languages. This term "contact zone" has a critical pedigree that can be traced back to Mary Louise Pratt's examination of colonialism in the Americas. In her groundbreaking work, Pratt employs the self-described "coinage" of the term "contact zone" to refer to "the space of colonial encounters . . . in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict." As a critical term, "contact" claims its disciplinary origin in linguistics, where it applies to the study of how languages change through mutual interaction over time. Pratt's coinage of the "contact zone" imbues the phenomenon of language contact with an important spatializing force, drawing attention to how languages mix and commingle within particular geographical and social environments. Insofar as it implicitly conjoins notions of language and space, this formulation has provided a productive conceptual framework for subsequent investigations of social exchange and interaction in past and contemporary settings alike. In *Trading Tongues*, I adjust the scope of Pratt's formulation.

^{6.} Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (London: Routledge, 1992), 6.

^{7.} Pratt's characterization of contact zones as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" has been mobilized not only in literary criticism but also in scholarship on multiculturalism,

I grant the contact zone the capacity to encompass the meeting (or clashing) of peoples and tongues through cross-cultural encounters or politically charged scenes of social conflict, but I primarily focus on more mundane interactions of the sort facilitated by trade or travel. Throughout this book, I am interested not so much in uncovering systems of radical inequality or sociopolitical power imbalance but rather in tracing instances of sociolinguistic fluidity, exchange, and interpersonal negotiation. My readings illustrate a pervasive intercourse among tongues in everyday life, and I attend to the manifold forms of social leveling engendered by urban commerce.

In framing medieval trading environments as contact zones, I am not simply transporting postcolonial or modern sociolinguistic discourses back to the Middle Ages; instead, I seek to help us better understand how writing within multilingual contact zones is historically situated and constituted. This book's title, Trading Tongues, signals two major interventions in our thinking about medieval literature and culture. First, it illustrates how profoundly commerce in medieval contact zones, particularly in cities and coastal environments, shapes how language is used in literary texts. Mercantile and legal languages that were employed to conduct daily affairs in urban centers like medieval London—including specialized forms of French and Latin—were not neatly circumscribed within professional domains; these intertwined languages of business readily informed both the style and the form of imaginative literary texts from lyric poetry and romance to travel writing.

This book's second and related objective is to investigate how medieval writers engaged in linguistic exchange, "trading tongues" by moving across languages—and combining them—in the texts they created. Urban professionals like merchants, lawyers, and scribes were quite capable of shifting between different languages (or identifiable registers of any given language) in their writings, often due to practical considerations such as adopting a more specialized realm of discourse or addressing (or excluding) a particular audience. In modern sociolinguistics, this type of movement across languages or registers is known as code-switching.8 Trading Tongues

globalization, literacy, and classroom pedagogy. Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," Profession 91 (1991): 33-40, at 34.

^{8.} On the use of the term "code-switching" in historical linguistics, see Herbert Schendl, "Linguistic Aspects of Code-Switching in Medieval English Texts," in Multilingualism in Later Medieval Britain, ed. David A. Trotter (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 77–92. For the related term "language crossing" in linguistic anthropology, see Constant Leung, Roxy Harris, and Ben Rampton, "The Idealised Native Speaker, Reified Ethnicities, and Classroom Realities," in Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader, 2nd Edition, ed. Alessandro Duranti (Singapore: Blackwell, 2009), 137-50, esp. 140.

maintains that polyglot poets and other medieval writers code-switch not only for pragmatic purposes but also for deliberately artistic ends: using different languages to develop distinct expressive registers, to stylize certain types of speech, or to evoke a vivid sense of place.

Throughout this book, I argue that we broaden our appreciation for the complex literate practices of medieval code-switchers by conceiving them as translingual writers. In his recent anthology of essays by contemporary authors around the globe, Steven Kellman expansively defines translingual writers as those "who write in more than one language or in a language other than their primary one."9 Ruth Spack and Lydia H. Liu have offered more sharply delineated understandings of translingualism, using this term to designate literary writers who cross over into another language in order to reappropriate, subvert, or reinvent it. 10 If I had to adopt a modern point of comparison, I would say my own approach to medieval "writing across tongues" resonates most strongly with the heterogeneous work of a writer like Gloria Anzaldúa, whose reflections on life and travel throughout la frontera (the borderlands) spanning Mexico and the United States asserts the strategic power of using more than one language simultaneously. Rather than "crossing over" from Chicano Spanish and assuming a new (Anglo) identity, her writing interweaves English and Spanish to sustain a flexible locatedness, and she presents her lyrical language as "neither español ni inglés, but both."11 In this book, I stress the capacity of medieval writers to employ many languages at once, not simply "crossing over" from one language or identity into another. Medieval writers inhabited a world prior to the establishment of modern nation-states with discrete official languages and national literatures, and my approach to translingual writing stresses the capacity of medieval people to both think and write in more than one language concurrently.

The medieval writers I examine all worked in busy urban environments where one so-called "primary" language or native vernacular, English, coexisted and commingled with professionalized forms of French and Latin.

- 9. Steven Kellman, Switching Languages: Translingual Writers Reflect on Their Craft (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), ix. Kellman's Translingual Imagination (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000) employs the identical definition of "translingual" but only in application to modern contexts.
- 10. Ruth Spack, America's Second Tongue: American Indian Education and the Ownership of English, 1860–1900 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002). Lydia H. Liu, Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900–1937 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).
- 11. Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007, orig. pub. 1987), 77. I return to Anzaldúa at the end of this book.

Approaching the mixed-language texts they produced as examples of translingual writing is particularly useful since the polyglot milieu of these writers troubles stable notions of linguistic difference in the first place. If "multilingual" denotes the fact that languages coexist and occupy the same di- or triglossic space, then "translingual" emphasizes the capacity for languages within such spaces to interact: to influence and transform each other through networks of exchange. As I will show in this book, medieval texts that cross between varieties of English and French can be mediated by interactions with a *third* language (often Latin or Dutch). And even within an English–French framework, the fluid quality of writing across these two vernaculars requires readers to break out of binary thinking altogether, shifting from "either/or" linguistic distinctions to more capacious "both/and" orientations. The flexible linguistic and literary practices of medieval writers provide ample opportunities for exploring the artistic features of translingual writing and its myriad cognitive effects.

Through close reading of texts by translingual writers, this book simultaneously investigates the wide-ranging literary and *theoretical* implications of medieval language traversal. Mixed-language texts reveal complex strategies for portraying trade, travel, cross-cultural exchange, and affective belonging, and I contend that medieval translingual writing offers new opportunities for conceiving these social phenomena that need not rely solely upon formulations developed in modern contexts. Throughout this book, I examine how medieval people created their own modes of thinking about language contact and linguistic transformation, drawing upon resources at their disposal in their own time and place: bureaucratic and legal registers, personification allegory, and artisanal craft discourses.

Just as this book shows how medieval people wrote and thought about their own multilingual environments, it reveals how they experimented with diverse modes of articulating their own identities in, and across, different tongues. To this end, I often stress how medieval social identities are expressed through transit across languages and movement across different spaces. By tracing the linguistic and spatial orbits of translingual writers, *Trading Tongues* might even have the potential to imagine the entire Western Middle Ages afresh: not as a fixed point of origin for nation- or language-based literary histories (or even as a precursor to later eras of globalization) but rather as a dynamic world that is already in perpetual motion.¹²

12. Literary and linguistic scholarship has increasingly engaged with the polyglot character of the Western Middle Ages. Recent approaches to medieval England most resonant

In the ensuing chapters, I will discuss Geoffrey Chaucer and other canonical writers who (by any account) loom as important early figures in the creation of English literature—but I am not invested in reinscribing them as foundations of an emergent or cohering literary tradition in the English vernacular. Instead, I reveal the pervasive translingualism of their work. Resituating these medieval writers in a mobile world that decenters English per se, I offer an alternative to narratives of teleological development that trace the "rise of English" as a vehicle of literary expression. Indeed, I view Middle English as one vibrant vernacular whose intricacies are best understood by examining its relationship to, and interplay with, other tongues. Chaucer, a Londoner long revered as "the father of English poetry," composed major literary works while simultaneously serving as a diplomatic envoy and customs official; conversant in (at the very least) English as well as French and Latin, he traveled in Flanders, France, Italy, and Iberia, and his writings engaged local and continental influences. William Caxton, the first English printer, was in addition a mercer, translator, and diplomat; he spent years in Cologne and Bruges before setting up shop in Westminster, and over his career he produced texts in English, French, and Latin, not to mention English translations from Dutch and a bilingual French-English phrasebook. As participants in a transnational flow of languages, ideas, and technologies, these agents so pivotal in what we later have come to call English literary history are most accurately conceived as wayfarers in medias res—textual creators who are spatially, linguistically, and temporally "in the middle of things."

The fact that some medieval people could be so restlessly mobile may strike modern readers as counterintuitive, but sociologists like Georg Simmel have provocatively conjectured that merchants and scholars

with my own multilingual orientation toward literary analysis include Ardis Butterfield, The Familiar Enemy: Chaucer, Language, and Nation in the Hundred Years War (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ed., Cultural Diversity in the British Middle Ages: Archipelago, Island, England (New York: Palgrave, 2008); Mary Catherine Davidson, Medievalism, Multilingualism, and Chaucer (New York: Palgrave, 2010); and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al., eds., Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England, c. 1100–c. 1500 (Rochester, NY: York Medieval Press, 2009). I would also refer my readers to two works that were in production at time I completed this book: Mark Amsler, Affective Literacies: Writing and Multilingualism in the Later Middle Ages, Late Medieval and Early Modern Studies 19 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2012); Craig Bertolet, Chaucer, Gower, Hoccleve and the Commercial Practices of Late Fourteenth-Century London (Farmham: Ashgate, 2013). For a compelling example of a single-authored multilingual approach to literary history outside of the British Isles, see Karla Mallette, The Kingdom of Sicily, 1100–1250: A Literary History (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

conducted more travel in the Middle Ages than their counterparts in the beginning of the twentieth century—presumably because modern postal systems, modes of transport, and technologies of mechanical reproduction dramatically lessened the imperative for people to physically move from one place to another in order to transport information and commodities.¹³ Sociologist John Urry observes that Simmel's "schematic account of the Middle Ages is interesting for its emphases on movement and fluidity, and for the ways that travel was deemed obligatory for many to exchange information, money, and objects"—and, I would add, languages—prior to the "large-scale movement" that we tend to associate with our modern age. 14 It is this sense of a hypermobile Middle Ages—a conception of the world that presumes an ongoing exchange of languages, media, and ideas—that animates this book. Trading Tongues challenges us to conceive of the entire medieval world as one in perpetual motion, and I invite us to interrogate the perceived singularity of the "large-scale movement" of peoples, goods, and tongues in our own time.

In order to set this book in motion, I begin with a brief discussion of a late fourteenth-century Latin/English poem commonly known as The Stores of the Cities, followed by an expanded treatment of the narrative and formal structure of London Lickpenny. In each of these texts, medieval poets incorporate multiple languages to depict urban life. The Stores of the Cities infuses Latin with Middle English nouns and place names, while London Lickpenny sprinkles its Middle English with snippets of French, Latin, and Dutch. Although these poems draw upon London's languages in their own idiosyncratic ways, each text conceives of an urban subject on the go, in transit through multiple sociolinguistic spaces. In each poem, travel throughout the city is inextricably tied to the traversal of its tongues.

Stores of the City: London's Properties

I turn to one of the most intriguing works of poetry about medieval London: a single stanza of just three lines. These verses appear in a riddling sequence of mixed-language stanzas, anonymously composed c. 1375–1400,

^{13.} Georg Simmel, Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings, ed. by David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London: SAGE, 2000, orig. pr. 1997), 165-67.

^{14.} John Urry, Mobilities (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007), 21–22.

describing the attributes of English urban centers. 15 This sequence opens with lines about London:

Hec sunt Londonis: pira, pomusque, regia, thronus, Chepp, stupha, Coklana, dolium, leo verbaque vana, Lancea cum scutis—hec sunt staura ciuitatis.

[These are London's: pear and apple (scepter and orb), palace, throne, Cheapside, the Stews, Cock Lane, the "Tunne," the "Lion" and empty words,

Lance and shields—these are the stores of the city.]

Rendered in Latin with internal rhyme and Middle English place-names thrown into the mix, these lines provide an overview of London's attributes by referring to locations within and outside of city walls. Many of these locations have clear referents: e.g., "pira, pomusque, regia, thronus" (scepter, orb, palace, and throne, longstanding symbols of kingship) denotes Westminster, the seat of royal power; "Chepp" (a variant spelling of Middle English "Chepe") refers to Cheapside, a busy commercial area; "Coklana" (a hybrid English-Latin coinage) denotes Cock Lane, the market in Smithfield. Some of this poem's geospatial references are, by contrast, tantalizingly oblique. For instance, "leo" [lion] and "tunne" [i.e., tun, a large cask or barrel] may refer to specific prisons commonly known by these nicknames, but these Latin words could suggest signpost emblems that stood outside any number of inns. 16 Moreover, "[l]ancea cum scutis" could refer to the sight of lances and shields at, say, one of the jousts at Smithfield, or the poem could suggest numerous heraldic devices (shields) that would have been erected throughout the medieval city.

In taking account of the "staura" [stores, properties] of the city in this fashion, these lines on London and the other stanzas that follow (York, Lincoln, Norwich, Coventry, Bristol, and Canterbury) explore the complex process by which any city comes to be perceived—or, at least, imagined—as a single entity. Each city, these verses suggest, is somehow greater than

^{15.} This poem is most commonly known as *The Stores of the Cities*. The transcription and translation follows A. G. Rigg, "An Edition of a Fifteenth-Century Commonplace Book (Trinity College, Cambridge, MS 0.9.38)." 2 vols., D.Phil. dissertation (Oxford, 1965), 15–16. See also A. G. Rigg, "Stores of the Cities," *Anglia* 85 (1967): 127–37.

^{16.} On the "Lion" and "Tunne" references in this poem, see Marion Turner, "Greater London," in *Chaucer and the City*, ed. Ardis Butterfield (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), 23–40, esp. 28–29.

the sum of its disparate parts. While such stanzas may appear alien and enigmatic to a modern reader, the verses foreground the metonymic function that landmarks (signs, emblems, or other symbols) can serve for citydwellers as they make their way through urban environments. As Michael Camille states in a discussion of street signs in medieval Paris, "urban life"—medieval or modern—places considerable "emphasis on visual recognition, and the importance of visual signs certainly suggests some type of quotidian literacy, not based upon textual learning but another system of understood symbols and structure."17 We might say that this stanza on London, replete with "insider" knowledge and encoded visual symbols (and a clear understanding of the city's locations), reveals how "the urbanized subject creates an imaginary urban landscape, which is constructed partly by the materiality of the city."18

These mixed-language verses, in their dense patterns of allusion, comprise more than a series of interpretive puzzles. They reveal the complex process by which the essence of any given city—a socially, politically, linguistically, and culturally complex entity—might be encapsulated in the form of a single literary text. This London stanza not only characterizes the city through key landmarks, but it also conveys this poet's considerable interest in the city's distinctive toponyms (place names). The text, by extension, exhibits a curious topophilia: a delight in employing toponyms (or strategically encoded allusions to locations) to capture the atmosphere of a city, or even its intangible character. 19 Indeed, the rich array of toponyms in medieval London—suggested by this poem's use of the Middle English "Chepp" and hybrid English-Latin name "Coklana"—suggests how any place name, in and of itself, can imbed clues to a location's social life. In this poem, "Chepp" or "Chepe" (from Old English cēapian, "to bargain, trade") signals the area's longstanding commercial function. The name "Coklana" [Cock Lane] likewise signaled in its own time the sale of commodities (poultry). Of course, evocative toponyms still survive in the landscape of London to this day. Modern place names like Bread Street or Fish Street suggest the types of commercial activity once associated with these areas, and other surviving toponyms like Lombard Street

^{17.} Michael Camille, "Signs of the City," in Medieval Practices of Space, eds. Barbara Hanawalt and Michael Kobialka (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 1-36, at 9.

^{18.} Steve Pile, The Body and the City: Psychoanalysis, Space, and Subjectivity (New York: Routledge, 1996), 236.

^{19.} On "topophilia" and premodern urban poetics, see Elisabeth Hodges, Urban Poetics in the French Renaissance (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008).

or Old Jewry evoke merchant communities that formerly occupied these neighborhoods.²⁰

The mixed linguistic quality of this poem is an integral part of its modus operandi, since, as we have seen, the text synthesizes Latin and English in its use of place names. Modern scholars have tended to characterize these verses as "dog Latin" (i.e., a form of Latin seemingly corrupted by the use of English words and other vernacular graftings), and the poem's internal rhyme within each line is often inexact, if not awkward.²¹ Nonetheless, the text's idiosyncratic use of language achieves brilliant stylistic effects. The verses creatively interlace Latin and English toponyms, and the text's transmutation of individual words and spellings including hybrid constructions like "Coklana" evoke the fluid, mixed character of contemporary civic documents along the Thames. Such documents, often concerning business matters, were written out in Latin or French while incorporating a hefty dose of local vocabulary in Middle English and other vernaculars.²² On a broader level, the linguistic transformations in this poem evoke the "verba vana" [empty words] of late-medieval London, which in its day had quite the reputation as a site of gossip, slander, and discursive conflict.²³

The seemingly garbled linguistic texture of this poem surprisingly enhances its literary resonance, and London toponyms are anything but arbitrary signifiers or "verba vana" [empty words]. "Chepp," "Coklana," and other locospecific indicators of commercial activity are as much a driving force in this poem as its encoded symbols of governance and power. Ultimately, the "staura" [properties] of the city include not just its stores but also its words (in all its languages). London—in just three lines—emerges as an important center of governance and also as a profoundly polyglot center of verbal storage, exchange, and circulation.

The mixed, riddling quality of this text is in many respects disorienting, as the poem refuses to chart a clear trajectory through the city; even seemingly discrete toponyms can lack clear referents. The term "stupha," an

- 20. Other traces of past communities imbedded in modern London place names are more oblique; see for instance Eilert Ekwall, *Street-Names of the City of London* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1954).
- 21. For disparaging views of this poem's Latin style, see Catherine A. M. Clarke, *Literary Landscapes and the Idea of England*, 700–1400 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006), 24–26.
- 22. On mixed-language business writing, see Laura Wright, Sources of London English: Medieval Thames Vocabulary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- 23. On "verba vana" in London, see Turner, "Greater London," 29; see also Marion Turner, Chaucerian Conflict: Languages of Antagonism in Late Fourteenth-Century London (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Anglo-Latin word recalling its Anglo-French cognates estuve (or estuwe) as well as the Middle English "stewes," is an ambiguous term that potentially denotes public "baths" or brothels of ill repute located just over the Thames river in Southwark; alternatively, "stupha" or one of its cognates could insinuate any number of public "stews" around town that were notorious as sites of illicit sexual encounters.²⁴ The late fourteenth-century Anglo-French Anonimalle Chronicle recounts a 1381 riot against "une measone de stwes" [a house of stews, i.e., bathhouse] frequented by certain "frows de Flaundres" [Flemish women], and a 1390 petition submitted by men of Southwark urges the King to close down "cynk Estufes de bordell" [five bordellos, i.e., brothels] in another part of town.²⁵ In each of these texts, a reference to the site in question provokes a movement out of a formal style of French into a recognizably different linguistic register: e.g., Middle English "stwes" [sic], the loanword "frows" (Middle Dutch vrouw, "woman"), or the curious and linguistically indeterminate term "Estufes." This brief excursus on the word "stupha" illustrates how toponyms can activate clusters of social meanings. In its oblique style and strategic incoherence, this highly compressed London stanza suggests the city's status as a manifold place: the city functions as a fluid venue for linguistic intercourse or (to put things slightly differently) a dynamic stew of languages.

It must be said that this poem has garnered some praise for its oblique evocation of city life. As Catherine A. M. Clarke has observed, its "competing, incongruous and chaotic images [and] thematic and literal cacophony of aural fragments" offer a "[compelling] version of the urban experience."26 Moreover, each city's boundaries are not fixed but rendered porous through the translingual poet's verbal artistry. Poetic topophilia is not confined within the London stanza but spills over into lines about other cities; indeed, this overarching rhetorical feature invites us to conceive this poem (or is it a series of smaller poems?) as an organic whole, a (net)work of writing with a dynamic, nearly stable refrain.

This text effectively demonstrates how any city, medieval or modern, does not exist in isolation but is readily implicated in a broader network of urban centers. Landmarks and other features in this poem individualize urban centers just as they invite comparisons among locations. Cities are aligned with appropriate cultural institutions and types of human activity:

^{24.} See Henry Ansgar Kelly, "Bishop, Prioress, and Bawd in the Stews of Southwark," Speculum 75, 2 (Apr. 2000): 342-88, esp. 351-52.

^{25.} Kelly, 360.

^{26.} Clarke, 126.

London with the crown and apparatus of power and governance (1–3); Coventry with wool and its attendant trades (13-15); and Canterbury with the church, its authorities, and social practices such as pilgrimage (19–21). In addition, the poem's refrain shifts depending on the location. The Coventry stanza, for instance, rhymes Latin (or French?) "cordons mille" [thousands of wool combs] with "hec sunt insignia ville" [these are the distinctions of the city] (15). If we grant, as Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift have asserted in a different context, that cities are not "systems with their own internal coherence" and have "boundaries [...] too permeable and stretched, both geographically and socially [...] to be theorized as a whole," then each city in this poem emerges as an "amalgam of often disjointed processes [...] a place of near and far connections, a concatenation of rhythms; always edging in new directions."27 Most importantly, these stanzas enact the conspicuous juxtapositions of unlikely phenomena that so often transpire in cities themselves. In creating a text that juxtaposes and combines languages, the anonymous translingual poet theorizes each city as a heterogeneous contact zone: a dynamic confluence of discordant elements and features.

London Lickpenny: Negotiating the City

Through its topophilia and rich linguistic texture, *The Stores of the Cities* conceives cities as interconnected zones of exchange. Each stanza invites us to consider the cognitive process by which an urban subject conceives any city, and reading the stanzas in sequence suggests how profoundly cities are linked by the movement of goods, people, and languages. *London Lickpenny*, as mentioned above, narrates the movements of a single person throughout the city, illustrating how one individual encounters speakers of many different tongues within a single day. If the *Stores* poet attempts to theorize the city in the abstract, then the *Lickpenny* poet gives more thought to the nuances of urban social practice. The text attends to how people deploy languages and adapt, often abruptly, to the different types of social interactions that city life requires.

As mentioned above, *London Lickpenny* transports the reader on a journey through London's linguistic communities. Westminster constitutes a particularly disorienting environment for the first-person narrator, as its

^{27.} Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift, Cities: Reimagining the Urban (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 8.

legal professionals use specialized forms of Francophone and Latinate jargon: at the Court of Common Pleas, the speaker addresses a man in a silk hood who says nothing in response (28); in the Chancery, the speaker hears many a "qui tollis" yet nobody announces his name (36). The narrator's estrangement from language and power in Westminster is compounded by spatial and sartorial distinctions: the hatless, penniless narrator stands below men on high, who are arrayed in costly robes and "longe gowne of ray," i.e. legal garments with striped sleeves (41). Throughout the Westminster episode, the first-person narrator is profoundly alienated—by language and by social status—from an elite professional circle.

The narrator soon abandons his endeavors, and once he is "[w]ithout the dores" of the Hall, he enters a strikingly different milieu. As mentioned above, the narrator encounters "Flemings grete woon" (great crowds of Flemish merchants, i.e., immigrants from the Low Countries), and as they approach en masse, they cry: "Mastar, what will ye copen or by—/Fine felt hatts, spectacles for to rede?" (51-54) In a reversal of sociolinguistic positioning, this narrator finds himself addressed as if he were the social superior. By addressing the unnamed protagonist as "Mastar" (cf. Middle Dutch meester), these Flemish vendors plead for the man's favor. Here, the mixed use of verbs could convey a subtle interpersonal dynamic. A Flemish vendor might attempt to identify the ethnic origin of a passerby "on the fly" in an impromptu attempt to make a sales pitch. Such a strategy could suggest that a medieval pedestrian might not be able to distinguish between a native English person and a Flemish immigrant on sight.

At this point, the speaker proceeds "[i]nto London," retracing some of the territory covered in the London stanza of The Stores of the Cities. For instance, he enters "into Chepe" or Cheapside, where he sees "moche people" offering "Paris thred, coton" and other commodities (73–76). Going "forth by London Stone"—an important medieval landmark—the poet wends his way "[t]hrwghe-out all Canywike strete" (81-82). In the Candlewick Street area, working location for many involved in cloth production, the poet encounters "[d]rapers [calling] to me" offering "[g]rete chepe of clothe" (83-84).28 In "Estchepe," a victualing district that housed butcher's stalls and cookshops, the poet hears Middle English cries of "[r]ibes of befe, and many a pie!" (89–90) Remarkably, when he makes a brief detour "[i]nto Cornhill"—an area filled with less wealthy vendors and

^{28.} On medieval Candlewick Street and its clothworkers, see John Stow, A Survey of London, Vol. II: Reprinted from the Text of 1603, ed. Charles Lethbridge Kingsford (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), note to lines 36 and 37, on p. 313.

more transient populations—he sees "myn owne hode" for sale in a shop (96–103).²⁹

As the poem wends to a conclusion, the narrator ventures south "to Byllingesgate," the waterfront district nearest to London Bridge (113). The Billingsgate ward, the location of London's fish market and customs house, was a particularly busy area, not only for fishmongers but also for sailors, importers, and customs officials. The medieval London Bridge has even been characterized as "a village in itself," as it was covered with shops, residences, two taverns, and a chapel.³⁰ At this point in his journey, the speaker seeks a barge to take him across the Thames and out of the city: "I praye a barge man, for Gods sake, [to] spare me myn expens" (115–16). As he lacks money he is, predictably, rebuffed: "Ryse up, man, and get the hens!" [Get up, man, and get thee hence, i.e., get out of here!] (117)

This final encounter in the poem, concluding with the harsh words of a bargeman, leaves an especially unflattering impression of this part of the city. To late-medieval merchant classes and city officials, the Billingsgate ward was strongly associated with coarse, abusive language. Disputes and transactions in the vicinity of the "woolkee de londres" [wool quay of London]—the site of the Customs House, where commodities were processed prior to export—produced a voluminous amount of French, Latin, and mixed-language texts, many attesting to tensions among city-dwellers, native and alien, of different trades. When the narrator fails to persuade the bargeman to "spare me myn expens," the poem suggests just how readily Billingsgate resonated as a setting for such contestation and negotiation.

In its vivid detail, London Lickpenny associates different linguistic communities with particular urban spaces: Latinate and French-speaking legal professionals work in Westminster; Flemish vendors outside the gates of Westminster Hall negotiate two related Germanic vernaculars; and retailers in Chepe and bargemen in Billingsgate cry out in Middle English.

- 29. For an analysis of the population in this area, see Barbara Hanawalt, "Reading the Lives of the Illiterate: London's Poor," Speculum 80, 4 (2005): 1067–86.
 - 30. D. W. Robertson, Jr., Chaucer's London (New York: Wiley, 1968), 57.
- 31. Post-medieval usage also attests to the close association between Billingsgate and "vituperative language," "[s]currilous vituperation," and "violent abuse." See "Billingsgate," def. 1a., def. 1b., def. 2., and def. 3. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, eds. John Simpson and Edmund Weiner, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989).
- 32. This phrase "wolkee de londres" comes from a French document pertaining to Chaucer's work as a customs official for the Port of London (Kew, The National Archives, C 18/1394/87). See chapter 1 for further discussion. On mixed-language writing along the Thames, see Wright. On the status of English in London's "variously di- or triglossic" civic culture and waterfront disputes over the use of waterfront space—including instances of scolding, angry talk, and "vnlawfull langage," see Butterfield, Familiar Enemy, 210–16.

Employing a satisfying geographical methodology, this poem's itinerary lends shape to its restless narrative. In addition, verse form lends structure to the narrator's movements. When the speaker transitions from one place to another, the new location is announced in the first line of a new stanza, and the sentiment concluding each stanza—"But for lacke of money I might not spede" (88)—regularizes what might otherwise be a chaotic literary enterprise. The refrain, in other words, provides a discursive point of return despite the perpetual motion of the narrator.

In presenting a fictive itinerary through different neighborhoods or even a methodical survey of London as a whole, this poem's mode of locating the reader in the city offers a marked contrast with the disorienting presentation of urban phenomena in The Stores of the Cities. This being said, London Lickpenny's clear narrative itinerary belies the profound mobility of medieval city dwellers themselves. Mapping discrete vocational or merchant communities onto discrete neighborhoods is a difficult project, as it would require good deal of rhetorical simplification and poetic license. To see how this works, just a few words about medieval London's structure are useful. Late-medieval London was organized into wards, which served as administrative districts for the city. Throughout the later Middle Ages and beyond, the city's council consisted of a mayor, aldermen, and key officials elected from the merchant classes.³³ Those involved in similar crafts and trades tended to cluster within the same ward (or wards). As one might suspect, medieval toponyms often signal types of commercial activity typically conducted in the area (the Vintry, Fisshe Strete, Brede Strete, and others), and the merchant classes did self-segregate to some extent. Some of the most prominent merchants, among them mercers and goldsmiths, occupied wealthier areas in the Chepe. Mercers, for instance, lived predominately in the Chepe and adjacent Cripplegate and Cordwainer wards.³⁴ Less wealthy craftsmen and artisans like blacksmiths

^{33.} For a masterful overview of London and its governance, see Caroline M. Barron, London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People, 1200-1500 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

^{34. &}quot;[T]he area [in the Cheap] east of Ironmonger Lane was the Mercery, one of the wealthier sections of the city. On the south side of the street was the Great Seld, a covered market where many merchants had stalls" (Robertson, 39). For more on the prominence of the Goldsmiths in West Cheap, see A. R. Myers, Chaucer's London: Everyday Life in London, 1342-1400 (London: Amberley, 2009), orig. published as London in the Age of Chaucer (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972, repr. 1988), 23-24. For a map indicating the highest concentration of mercers' dwellings by wards in 1475, see Anne Sutton, The Mercery of London: Trade, Goods, and People, 1130-1578 (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), Fig. 7.1, at 192.

and bricklayers were "well represented in the Aldgate ward," within the city walls on the eastern part of the city. Fishmongers and international traders occupied much of Billingsgate, with some traders holding valuable waterfront properties in this and neighboring wards. 36

In London Lickpenny, the itinerary of the speaker—fictional though it may be—conforms to the geography of a historically verifiable London, strengthening the poem's veneer of authenticity. The speaker moves from Westminster in the southwest, eastward through the City through the Chepe, to Candlewick Street, and East Chepe, and after a brief detour up to Cornhill he turns southward to the waterfront and (presumably) back across the Thames into Kent. However, the poet-narrator's linear itinerary runs counter to the restlessness of an urban populace that does not fix itself so easily. Merchants, most conspicuously, occupy the space of the entire poem—no matter where in the city the speaker happens to locate himself.

Insofar as it presents a sociolinguistic survey of urban space, London Lickpenny reveals some of the messy aspects of urban mobility, and it illustrates how languages are only contingently tied to categories like vocation or ethnicity. The poet's use of the Flemish verb "copen" constitutes a mild stylization of non-native Middle English speech, but other London texts could use non-English vernacular speech as a more insidious form of marking ethnic difference. The late fourteenth-century Anonimalle Chronicle, written in what one modern reader characterizes as "a quasi-legal style" of Anglo-French, depicts anti-Flemish and anti-Lombard violence during the 1381 uprising: "[L]e commons fesoient crier que chescune que porroit prendre ascune Fleminge ou ascun manner de alien de quel natione que il fust que ils deueroient couper lour testes" [the commons proclaimed that anyone who could lay hands on any Flemings or any other non-native persons of whatever nation must cut off their heads]; the houses of "Lumbardes et des aliens" [Lombards and foreign merchants] are robbed, and "hideus cryes et horrible noies" resonate throughout the city.³⁷ As the violence against the "Fleminges" ensued, tradition holds that the mob asked

^{35.} Robertson, 51.

^{36.} Namely, the Vintry and Queenhithe. For more on merchants' houses on the water-front, see Myers, 26–30.

^{37.} George Trevelyan, "An Account of the Rising of 1381," *The English Historical Review* 13, 51 (July 1898): 509–22, esp. 517–18. The phrase "hideus cryes et horrible noies" resonates with the "'hydous . . . noyse" and shrill "shoutes" that transpire as Kentish rebels kill Flemish merchants in Chaucer's *The Nun's Priest's Tale* (3394–3406); see chapter 1 in this book. For a transcription of the chronicle and discussion of its linguistic features, see Vivian Hunter Galbraith, *The Anonimalle Chronicle*, 1333 to 1381: from a MS. written at St Mary's Abbey, York (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1927; repr. 1970).

merchants to say the English words "bread and cheese," and anyone who pronounced the words as "brod and case" was deemed Flemish in origin and immediately killed.38

In less tumultuous circumstances, however, London was "overwhelmingly polyglot and multilingual" and the coexistence of different peoples in the city was relatively naturalized and even taken for granted, as Ardis Butterfield and Christopher Cannon have both described in slightly different contexts.³⁹ In both literary and nonliterary texts, the presence of foreign victuallers, traders, and artisans is common knowledge, from repeated references to Italian-speaking "Lumbardes" (mostly moneylenders and bankers) and Dutch-speaking "Fleminges" (including itinerant vendors, craftsmen, and other skilled workers) to German-speaking "Esterlynges" (traders of the Hanseatic League), and other types of people with overseas origins.

Even though non-native merchants were participants in the everyday life in the city, medieval Londoners viewed Flemings with a discernible degree of ambivalence, as these immigrants could be considered simultaneously alien and assimilated. Chaucer's fictional Cook "of Londoun" cites a Middle Dutch proverb in response to one of the Host's comments—"sooth pley, quaad pley, as the Flemyng seith" (4357)—a joking proverbial citation that suggests Londoners could be quite familiar with the cadences of Flemish speech.⁴⁰ The degree to which London assimilated speakers of different languages who came from outside the city—including immigrants of Flemish, Hanseatic, Italian, and Iberian origins—varied from group to group, and the rates at which Continental immigrants gained citizenship varied as well.⁴¹ Although some Flemings (like the ones evoked in London

- 38. Charles Oman, The Great Revolt of 1381 (Kitchener, ON: Batoche, 1906; repr. 2001), 49. London, British Library MS Cotton Julius B.ii (dated 1483) is written out in Middle English and uses the phrase "Case and Brode" (fol. 16v); see Chronicles of London, ed. Charles Lethbridge Kingsford (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), 15 (see also xxxvi). Although the veracity of this account is debatable, the very idea that a Flemish shibboleth could be detected suggests the perceived significance of linguistic difference in areas of crosscultural contact. Moreover, this episode potentially alludes to the Biblical account of how the Gileadites managed to identify and kill the Ephraimites (Judges 2:5-6).
- 39. Butterfield, "Detritus of the City," in Chaucer and the City, ed. Butterfield, 3–22, esp. 18. See also Christopher Cannon, "Chaucer and the Language of London," in the same collection, 79-94.
- 40. Craig Bertolet, "'Wel bet is rotten appul out of hoord': Chaucer's Cook, Commerce, and Civic Order," Studies in Philology 99, 3 (Summer 2002): 229-47.
- 41. Derek Keene, "Introduction: Segregation, Zoning, and Assimilation in Medieval Towns," in Segregation, Integration, Assimilation: Religious and Ethnic Groups in the Medieval Towns of Central and Eastern Europe, eds. Derek Keene, Balázs Nagy, and Katalin Szende

Lickpenny) were itinerant, other more skilled craftsmen known as "Duchmen"—an expansive Middle English term that could denote a range of Flemish, Dutch, or German laborers—were highly valued, and a few of these immigrants even gained admittance into some of London's most prominent craft guilds.⁴²

Other mercantile communities within London, by contrast, formed more self-contained linguistic and cultural islands within the city. The merchants of the Hanseatic League, for instance, occupied a residence known as the Steelyard (German *Stalhof*), a walled community within the city complete with its own warehouses and lodgings and which operated largely under its own jurisdiction, exempt from London taxes or customs.⁴³ Italian moneylenders along the wool wharf drew themselves apart from other Londoners through language use as well as distinctive accounting practices.⁴⁴

The fleeting reference to Flemings in London Lickpenny suggests that aliens were not entirely segregated into discrete parts of the city and could intermingle with native Londoners on an everyday basis. For the most part, as James Bolton observes, coexistence was the norm: "Malgré quelques difficultés, étrangers et Londoniens cohabitaient dans la ville et ses banlieues, et il n'y avait pas de ghettos de Gastarbeiter comme on trou-

(Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 1–14, esp. 4. On alien merchants' varying degrees of cultural and political assimilation into medieval London, see Keechang Kim, Aliens in Medieval Law: The Origins of Modern Citizenship (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also Sylvia Thrupp, The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300–1500 (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1948; repr. 1989), 220–22.

- 42. On the expansive range of the word "duchmen" in the Latin and French records of London Goldsmiths, see Lisa Jefferson, ed., Wardens' Accounts and Court Minute Books of the Goldsmiths' Mistery of London, 1334–1446 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), xxxiii. On the demographic composition of Flemings, Dutch, Germans, and Italians in London, see Barron, 92–93.
- 43. On London's Hanseatic environment, see James L. Bolton (tr. Marie Fournier), "Du seuil de la Cité à la formation d'une économie morale: l'environnement hanséatique à Londres entre XIIe et XVIIe siècle," in Les étrangers dans la ville: minorités et espace urbain du bas moyen âge à l'époque moderne, eds. Jacques Bottin and Donatella Calabi (Paris: Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1999), 409–24. See also T. H. Lloyd, England and the German Hanse, 1157–1611: A Study of Their Trade and Commercial Diplomacy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and T. Weinbaum, "Stalhof und deutsche Gildhalle zu London," Hansische Geschichtsblätter 53 (1928): 45–65.
- 44. On differences between accounting practices of Italians in London and native Londoners, see R. H. Parker, "Accounting in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales," Accounting, Auditing, and Accountability Journal 12, 1 (March 1999): 92–112. See also Justin Steinberg, Accounting for Dante: Urban Readers and Writers in Late Medieval Italy (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

vait, par exemple, à Florence" [Despite some difficulties, alien and native Londoners dwelled together in the city and its surroundings, and there were no ghettos of Gastarbeiter (i.e., guest workers) like one would find, for example, in Florencel.⁴⁵ In comparison with other urban centers throughout Europe, boundaries between native and alien communities in the city were in many cases quite fluid, and alien Londoners were not necessarily segregated from native residents, nor confined to ethnic enclaves. 46

In seeking to represent a population so diverse and potentially unwieldy, the poet of London Lickbenny adopts a formal strategy to structure the work. Employing stanzas with a fixed rhyme pattern, and concluding each with a refrain about money, the poet at times levels out internal variations within each of the city's communities (including differences in trade, status, profession, or ethnicity). Merchants are conspicuously dispersed across multiple urban spaces. Form and content reinforce one another quite well in this poem, as the text conveys a coherent tone and theme despite the inherent heterogeneity of the communities it depicts. The refrain insists that commerce (or rather, money itself) is the engine of urban life and the shared motivation of the city's varied social groupings.⁴⁷ In its formal integrity, London Lickpenny provides much more than an engaging satire: the text imposes a provisional unity upon a mixed collective of native and alien peoples that resists coherence.

Through its narrative trajectory and stanzaic structure, London Lickpenny lends shape to a diffuse, ever-shifting zone of economic and linguistic exchange. Its vivid account of movement through urban communities explores how city life provokes rapid shifts in linguistic and social positioning. In his musings on pedestrian experience in the modern city, Walter Benjamin observes that "[p]orisity" (i.e., the porous quality of the urban environment) is the "inexhaustible law of the life of [the] city," and the potential to interact with different types of people and penetrate disparate spaces makes the city an improvisational "theatre of new, unforeseen

- 45. James L. Bolton (tr. Fournier), 431–32. I have slightly adapted the punctuation here, capitalizing the German word Gastarbeiter.
- 46. On the dispersal of non-native populations throughout London, see Bolton, "Du seuil de la Cité à la formation d'une économie morale: l'environnement hanséatique à Londres entre XIIe et XVIIe siècle," in Les étrangers, eds. Bottin and Calabi, 409-24, esp. 409-11.
- 47. While I have emphasized the speaker's capacity to move through diverse linguistic environments, Liana Farber stresses how the speaker is excluded from the guild communities he encounters. An Anatomy of Trade in Medieval Writing: Value, Consent, and Community (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 174-89.

constellations."⁴⁸ London Lickpenny's pedestrian itinerary illustrates the dizzying array of encounters and reconfigurations that medieval urban life enables. All in all, the poem presents the medieval city as a multilingual venue for improvisation and invention. London is a crowded space that engenders perpetual shifts in sociolinguistic positioning, and its mixed urban environments inspire experimentation in poetic language and literary form.

Polyglot Perspectives

The two poems discussed above exhibit divergent strategies for representing polyglot London: the London stanza from The Stores of the Cities employs toponymic riddles and abstracts the city through oblique, richly coded allusions; the later stanzaic poem London Lickpenny explores the city as an intricately rendered lived experience. Each poem adopts a slightly different orientation toward the city as a whole, and these texts—when read as a pair—provide mutually informing vantage points on a shared urban environment. One posits a more totalizing, omniscient view, while the other conveys a ground-level perspective. By creating texts that richly incorporate different languages, these two anonymous poets suggest some of the ways a medieval city dweller might move across tongues as well as urban spaces. The ensuing chapters continue this exploration of commerce and city life, examining how other medieval writers perceived, represented, and theorized the commingling of peoples and languages in their respective environments. Within each chapter, I suggest how a particular subset of medieval materials can reshape current thinking about literary translingualism.

Chapter 1 investigates the relationship between language and dwelling. It approaches the most famous of medieval Londoners, the poet Geoffrey Chaucer, as an urban writer deeply engaged with the medieval city's many tongues. In *The House of Fame* (which evokes locations throughout London) and *The Shipman's Tale* (set in the market town of St. Denis in France and the busy port of Bruges in Flanders), Chaucer depicts the richness of commercial life. Most importantly, the poet employs poetic language to fictively inhabit polyglot spaces along London's waterfront as well as continental France. By infusing his Middle English with French and Latin

48. Walter Benjamin, One-Way Street and Other Writings, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1997), 171, 169.

influences—and inviting the reader to think across languages through intertextual allusions and interlinguistic puns—Chaucer creates a flexible poetic style that evokes foreign (Continental) locations just as vividly as it recalls local hometown spaces.

Chapter 2 explores connections between translingual writing and overseas travel. It examines texts about maritime trade composed by poets on both sides of the Channel, including Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, and Charles d'Orléans (primarily known as monoglot, trilingual, and bilingual poets respectively). Through polyglot protagonists and first-person speakers, these writers align traveling and displaced poets with seafarers and international traders. When taken as a whole, such writing exhibits a keen awareness of the types of language that take shape in transit, when one's social identifications are temporarily suspended between destinations or diffused across locations. Translingual maritime writing challenges its readers to entertain flexible, ever-shifting conceptions of geographical orientation, native language, and affective belonging.

Chapter 3 offers a comparative analysis of John Gower and the printer William Caxton, tracing the ways these figures exploited resources of the city (especially the social practices of lawyers and merchants) to construct their own literary authority. Both Gower and Caxton produced texts in Latin, French, and English, and my readings trace how the poet and the printer theorized their respective translingual careers—most conspicuously through first-person excursuses. Rather than tracing the role that Gower and Caxton play in establishing an English literary language or shaping a London-based standard of written English, this chapter demonstrates how far their literary ambitions extended beyond English per se to encompass transnational circuits of exchange. Although Gower resided along the Thames and Caxton was much more peripatetic, both the poet and the printer produce forms of literary autobiography that reflect upon the status of their own translingualism and engage in ad hoc sociolinguistic theory.

Chapter 4 moves to an urban center beyond London to Lynn, a busy port in East Anglia. The Book of Margery Kempe (c. 1436), written down a generation after the deaths of Chaucer and Gower, is often considered the first autobiography in English, yet I contend that Kempe's urban contexts and multilingual networks invite us to consider the entire text as an intricate work of travel writing. Not only does the Book evoke the polyglot milieu of Kempe's hometown—which included Latinate clerics, Anglo-Germanic immigrants, and French-speaking traders and burgesses but it also offers stylized episodes of cross-language encounter during its accounts of overseas travel. From Anglo-Hanseatic contexts to crosscultural exchanges elsewhere on the Continent, the *Book* exhibits a sustained interest in mundane and miraculous forms of translingual communication. Most profoundly, the *Book* foregrounds its status as a text dictated to and written by multiple scribes, implicating the text in an active network of linguistic and cultural exchange. In its rich verbal texture, the *Book* challenges us to consider how one's orientation toward home and native language can shift by virtue of travel.

Chapter 5 returns to London through multilingual merchant compilations, discussing three manuscripts that were each compiled by a merchant across the late-medieval and early Tudor periods. These compilations—which gather together works in English, French, and Latin, as well as texts that mix languages—reveal how merchants recorded and organized wide-ranging interests in commerce, history, and literature. At the same time, the mixture of languages and genres that each book assembles challenges longstanding monoglot biases in Anglophone literary and linguistic historiography. By examining code-switching practices in each of these collections, I explore these merchants' individual literacies and language capacities, and I reveal their creative approaches to translingual writing, comparative literary study, and translation theory awant la lettre.

Trading Tongues concludes with a brief coda, which reconsiders the Channel-crossing, bicultural poet Charles d'Orléans through a more experimental theoretical framework. Drawing upon ongoing conversations between medieval and postcolonial literary studies, this discussion explores the potential for medieval translingual writing to take comparative literary criticism in new directions.

The chapters in *Trading Tongues* explore different facets of translingual writing throughout a number of medieval contact zones. As stated above, this book serves two purposes within medieval studies: it demonstrates how pervasively trade languages inform literary production, and it explores the complex code-switching practices of literate urban communities. On a broader level, this book seeks to model forms of literary analysis that are just as rigorous in their understanding of local linguistic practices as they are in exploring wider movements of languages and people. In his collection of essays on modern travel, anthropologist James Clifford advocates an approach to cultural studies that is sensitive to everyday practices like dwelling but also mindful of the experience of travel: a critical mode that attends carefully to "roots" as well as "routes." In its approach to medieval

^{49.} James Clifford, Routes: Travel and Translation in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), esp. 6 and 78.

literature and culture, Trading Tongues addresses both the "roots" and the "routes" of translingual writing.

Extending the implicitly botanical metaphor of "roots" a bit further, it could be said that Trading Tongues sustains an interest in arborescent (tree-like) understandings of linguistic development as much as it limns rhizomatic modes of interconnection: organic networks that extend and disperse in multiple directions with no single point of origin. 50 To restate these parallel investments in more conventional disciplinary terms, my approach to medieval literary texts respects the methodological underpinnings of traditional philology and historical linguistics while also setting languages in motion through broader social circuits and systems of exchange.

As I will suggest throughout this book, our approach to English literary history changes dramatically once we consider the pervasive contact and interpenetration between Middle English and other languages, and writers (such as Caxton or Chaucer) whom we might perceive as quintessentially "English" or associated with a particular city like London emerge as writers who are profoundly implicated in negotiating polyglot spaces beyond England per se. If, as Clifford states in the context of modern travel, we can adopt "a view of human location as constituted by displacement as much by stasis," then "travels and contacts [become] crucial sites for an unfinished modernity."51 In an insightful reflection on the perceived status of medieval culture in our time, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen observes that the Middle Ages is "characterized too often as a field of undifferentiated otherness against which modernity [emerges]."52 In the heterogeneous writings of medieval polyglots, we can discern a social environment that evokes Clifford's sense of an "unfinished modernity"—a dynamic un- or premodern world that is always-already in change and motion. By examining how travel and language contact shape literary production, I aim to help us gain a richer understanding of the cultural meanings of medieval texts, and suggest new ways to challenge the perceived intractable alterity between the Middle Ages and our present. This book not only examines how cultural

^{50.} The terms "arborescent" and "rhizomatic" derive from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari; for important readings that attend to the rhizomatic aspects of The Canterbury Tales, see Glenn Burger, Chaucer's Queer Nation, Medieval Cultures 34 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, Medieval Identity Machines, Medieval Cultures 35 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 22.

^{51.} Clifford, 2.

^{52.} Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Introduction: Midcolonial," in The Postcolonial Middle Ages, ed. Cohen (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 1-17, at 4.

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phenomena like commerce and code-switching shape medieval literature in its own time; it also maintains that texts by medieval translingual writers present unexpected opportunities to rethink the processes of travel and linguistic exchange—the endless migration of peoples, media, and tongues—in our own globalizing era.

chapter 1

Chaucer's Polyglot Dwellings HOME AND THE CUSTOMS HOUSE

Chaucer in Aldgate and The House of Fame

What did Geoffrey Chaucer's hometown sound like? Although the precise location of Chaucer's childhood dwelling in London is disputed, the property of his wine-merchant father was certainly within the Vintry, in close proximity to (and within earshot of) city dwellers who spoke native tongues other than English: e.g., the Hanseatic Steelyard, neighboring Italian bankers, and waterfront Genoese traders. In his own re-creation of the poet's life, Peter Ackroyd claims Chaucer as a quintessential Londoner, a man who "came to maturity in a cosmopolitan city [and] would have known intimately [its] clamorous thoroughfares." Depicting Chaucer as a city dweller who, sponge-like, "thoroughly absorbed the language of the streets," Ackroyd notes the poet's proximity to non-English neigh-

^{1.} Thomas Bestul, "Did Chaucer Live at 177 Upper Thames Street? The Chaucer Life-Records and the Site of Chaucer's London Home," Chaucer Review 43, 1 (2008): 1–15. On immigrant merchant communities in London, see Keechang Kim, Aliens in Medieval Law: The Origins of Modern Citizenship (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Sylvia Thrupp, The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300–1500 (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1948; repr. 1989), 220–22.

^{2.} Peter Ackroyd, Chaucer (London: Chatto & Windus, 2004, repr. New York: Nan A. Talese, 2005), 3–4.

bors in the Vintry and waterfront, and in order to evoke a sense of the mixed social environment of Chaucer's hometown Ackroyd culls snippets of French songs and English dialogue from Langland's *Piers Plowman* and vernacular expressions spoken by fictional characters in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.³ In addition to these verbal utterances, Ackroyd evokes nonhuman sounds such as gates, horses and carts, the river, and church bells. In Ackroyd's speculative biography, the desire to recreate sounds of Chaucer's polyglot milieu engenders imaginative, even indulgent, narrative fictions. More profoundly, Ackroyd's writing suggests the fantasy that we can reconstruct a bygone era through the apparent universality of phenomenological experience: the very sounds of urban life, human and nonhuman. Ackroyd takes a simple historical fact—Chaucer was a resident of a multilingual city—and seeks to fictively inhabit that mixed environment through a carefully crafted narration.

The polyglot milieu of Chaucer's home has become an increasingly prominent feature in Chaucerian scholarship for a variety of different ends; scholars readily invoke the sounds of the medieval city not just to recreate the past *per se* but to launch their own explorations of urban conflict and the phenomenology of sound, as well as to advance ongoing discussions in postcolonial studies, historical linguistics, and sociolinguistic approaches to medieval literature. Ather than seeking to discern exactly how Chaucer transmits the true sounds of his medieval surroundings, this chapter investigates how London's polyglot character informs Chaucer's fictive portrayal of urban living. How does Chaucer, in his own time, perceive his relationship to the city and his own movements through different urban spaces? What might Chaucer's writing reveal about the poet's affective relationship to the city, as well as its many languages?

- 3. Ackroyd, 6–9. Allusions include Middle English cries in William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (Prologue of B-Text, 225–26), "thilke newe Frenshe song, 'Jay tout perdu mon temps et mon labour" (*Parson's Tale*, 248), and "My lief is faren in londe!" (*Nun's Priest's Tale*, 2879).
- 4. Ardis Butterfield, "Chaucer and the Detritus of the City," in Chaucer and the City, ed. Butterfield (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), 3–22; Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Postcolonialism," in Chaucer: An Oxford Guide, ed. Steve Ellis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 448–62, esp. 451–52. For recent Chaucerian scholarship addressing polyglot contexts, see Robert M. Stein, "Multilingualism," in Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature: Middle English, ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 23–37; Mary Catherine Davidson, Medievalism, Multilingualism, and Chaucer (New York: Palgrave, 2010); Tim William Machan, English in the Middle Ages (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and an important early essay by William Rothwell, "The Trilingual England of Geoffrey Chaucer," Studies in the Age of Chaucer 16 (1994): 45–67.

Focusing on The House of Fame and The Shipman's Tale, this chapter explores the resonance of two London locations closely associated with Chaucer's adult life: his residence above Aldgate along the city wall and the customs house on the waterfront (Chaucer's place of work). The House of Fame and The Shipman's Tale are rarely read together, perhaps since they are often seen as representing "early" and "late" stages in Chaucer's career (respectively) and the literary and linguistic traditions informing these works appear so disparate. The House of Fame, a dream vision, confronts weighty Latinate and Italian traditions; The Shipman's Tale, a comic fabliau, flirts with lighthearted French contexts. Despite their apparent differences, both works explore the richness of urban living—from mundane domestic details to professional accounting practices—and these texts directly engage with the mixed-language milieu of Chaucer's tenure as a customs official for the Port of London.

This discussion considers how Chaucer's writing, in its "early" and "late" stages, negotiated some of the rich polyglot spaces the poet inhabited. In this chapter, I place Chaucer's writing alongside contemporary French, Latin, and mixed-language documents (including civic records and merchant account books) to reveal how his poetry fictively evokes urban environments at home and abroad. Most importantly, I set out to show that Chaucer's writing does not merely reflect "the polyglot reality of medieval life," but that his poetry offers highly stylized portrayals of an urban existence that requires living among and across tongues.⁵ His poetry not only lends insight into his own subjective perceptions of diverse linguistic landscapes around London's waterfront, but also suggests his intimacy with multilingual urban centers overseas.

In many respects an autobiographical work, The House of Fame was composed sometime during Chaucer's tenure as controller for wool customs (c. 1374-1386).6 Throughout the 1370s, Chaucer was dispatched as an envoy to Italy, France, and Flanders on matters of diplomacy and court intrigue, but his duties as customs controller for the Port of London during this same period were not nearly as glamorous. Surviving documents attest to the arduous task of maintaining meticulous records and supervising the collection of taxes on a continual stream of commodities

^{5.} Stein, "Multilingualism," 28.

^{6.} On the dating of this poem, see Turner, Chaucerian Conflict, 12-13. On 10 December 1384 as a possible date for the poem's composition, see Helen Cooper, "The Four Last Things in Dante and Chaucer: Ugolino in the House of Rumour," New Medieval Literatures 3 (1999): 39-66, esp. 63-64.

deemed most crucial to the state's economy, among them wool.⁷ However, *The House of Fame* invests less in the quotidian details of Chaucer's "day job" to focus on his more personal endeavors. The poem even provides a few clues regarding its creation. For instance, the first-person narrator is addressed as "Geffrey" (729), and the purported date of the text's composition, 10 December, appears twice (63, 111).⁸ In Book 2 of the poem, an eagle speaks to "Geffrey," and Chaucer's vocation in the customs house is explicitly linked to his private domestic activities:

But of thy verray neyghebores,
That duellen almost at thy dores
Thou herist neyther that ne this;
For when thy labour doon al ys,
And hast mad alle thy rekenynges,
In stede of reste and newe thynges,
Thou goost hom to thy hous anoon;
And, also domb as any stoon,
Thou sittest at another book
Tyl fully daswed ys thy look . . . (649–58)

Acknowledging Chaucer's daily journeys from his work on the waterfront back "hom to thy hous," this passage suggests that the customs official (by day) and poet (by night) inhabits a loud, crowded city. The "verray neyghebores" who "duellen almost at [the] dores" produce a significant amount of noise, but "Geffrey"—so absorbed in his reading, or possibly his own writing—acts as if he hears nothing, sitting "domb as any stoon" at yet "another book." In his description, the eagle characterizes Geffrey as a solitary figure, inhabiting a world of silence despite his apparently noisy urban surroundings.

This transient glimpse into the poet's private life juxtaposes the sounds of neighbors with silent activity inside Geffrey's house. Elsewhere in *The House of Fame*, sound and silence characterize domestic spaces, but within a figurative dream landscape. Most strikingly, a majestic stillness pervades the interior of Fame's castle. Upon entering the great hall, the narrator views representatives of prestigious cultural and linguistic traditions stand-

^{7.} For French and Latin documents pertaining to Chaucer's controllership, see Martin Crow and Clair Olson, *Chaucer Life-Records* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 244–70.

^{8.} All Chaucer citations follow *The Riverside Chaucer, Third Edition*, gen. ed. Larry Benson with introduction by Christopher Cannon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

ing atop high pillars. Among these static figures are Roman poets ("Latyn poete, Virgile" and "Venus clerk, Ovide," 1483-87), Greek authorities ("gret Omer . . . to Grekes favorable," 1466-79), and a Jewish historian ("Ebrayk Josephus" holds up the "fame . . . of the Jewerye," 1433–36). Just outside this castle, the narrator navigates a street-level soundscape that is anything but silent or solitary. A crowd of poets and musicians bustles "al withoute . . . [t]he castel-yate" (1195-1296). Suggesting Chaucer's interests in ephemeral sounds and linguistic diversity, this fictional assemblage includes performers from wide-ranging points of origin: Celtic ("the Bret Glascurion" and other harpers, 1208), Germanic ("[p]ypers of the Duche tonge," 1234), and Iberian ("[al] that used clarion/In Cataloigne and Arragon," 1247–48).

This poetic excursus imports into Middle English a veritable treasure trove of specialized vocabulary from other vernaculars: Francophone musical terminology ("cornemuse and shalemyes" and "doucet," 1218–21), Middle Dutch names for ring dances ("sprynges,/Reyes, and these straunge thinges," 1235-36), and other forms of entertainment with origins in Provence and Gascony ("Colle tregetour," 1277).9 The poet simultaneously punctuates these descriptions with casual, off-hand references to his own Italian travels. For instance, the castle's gold-plated roof is "[a]s fyn as ducat in Venyse,/Of whiche to lyte al in my pouche is" (1348-49). In this episode outside the "castel-yate," Chaucer suggests a breezy familiarity with many cultural environments, evoking a city teeming with people from afar. Insofar as this scene evokes a holistic vision of Chaucer's London, it imbues the city with a noisy, cosmopolitan sensibility. The poet incorporates material from diverse cultural and linguistic sources, suggesting a dizzying network of connections between his home and the wider world. 10

One might perceive Chaucer's poem drifting far beyond London at this point, but this episode nonetheless imbues the text with a distinctly local resonance. Setting this episode "al withoute [the] castel-yate" unexpectedly links the scene back to the earlier portrayal of Geffrey at home. In a document written in authoritative Latin clauses, the Mayor and Aldermen in 1374 granted "Galfrido Chaucer" the residence that would remain his home during his tenure as controller. Chaucer gains "totam mansionem

^{9.} On the etymological link between "tregetour" and the Provençal transgitar (juggler), see Walter W. Skeat, ed., The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer: The House of Fame, The Legend of Good Women, and The Treatise on the Astrolabe, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940), 237.

^{10.} On the limits of Chaucer's cosmopolitanism, see Cohen. See also John Ganim, "Cosmopolitanism and Medievalism," Exemplaria 22, 1 (Spring 2010): 5-27.

supra portam de Algate" [the entire residence along the top of the gate at Aldgate], "cum domibus superedificatis et quodam celario subtus eandem portam in parte australi eiusdem porte cum suis pertinenciis . . . ad totam vitam eiusdem Galfridi" [along with the rooms built on top, and a certain cellar underneath the said gate, on the southern side, with all its appurtenances . . . for the lifetime of this same Geoffrey]. 11 In The House of Fame, this same "Geffrey" engages in silent nocturnal activity at home. However, this fictive portrayal obscures the extent to which Chaucer's mansio [abode, dwelling above the gate was situated in a world of urban sound. The porta [gate] at Aldgate, along the fortified city wall, was key to London's defenses, and the structure served as a watchtower and security checkpoint. 12 The top of the gate would have served not only as a strategic visual vantage point but also an acoustic one. In Troilus and Criseyde, also written during his tenure as controller, Chaucer conveys some of the sounds one could perceive from above a city gate: "The warden of the yates gan to calle/ The folk which that withoute the yates were" (5.1177–78). Moreover, the sound of the "folk" entering the city at nightfall is compounded by the presence of animals: the warden "bad hem driven in hire bestes alle,/Or all the night they most bleven there" (5.1179–80).

Chaucer's spacious Aldgate abode functions as much more than prime medieval real estate, inundated with quotidian sounds "withoute the yate." This location presumably provided access to more extraordinary sounds one might hear in times of turmoil. Chaucer, housed in Aldgate, could very well have witnessed the "hideus . . . noyse" and shrill "shoutes" of the Kentish crowd killing Flemish merchants he briefly evokes in The Nun's Priest's Tale (3394-406), and other passages in The House of Fame offer subtle allusions to the noise of 1381. For instance, the House of Rumor "[stands] in so just a place" that "every soun mot to hyt pace,/Or what so cometh from any tonge,/Be it rouned, red, or songe" (719–21). During the 1381 upheaval, an Aldgate alderman named William Tonge allegedly allowed rebels to pour into the city through this very gate, and when Chaucer describes Fame's dwelling "in so just a place" that it absorbs sound that "cometh from any tonge," he may implicate Tonge's questionable role as warden. During the night, some say, Tonge opened the strategically positioned gate, allowing the crowd to enter the city, kill people, and burn houses. Potential links between The House of Fame and events of 1381 become even clearer once we recognize that Latin records alleg-

^{11.} Corporation of London, Letter-Book G, fol. 321. Also transcribed in Crow and Olson, 144–45. All translations are my own.

^{12.} See Crow and Olson, 146-47.

ing Tonge's complicity in these events deem the Kentish rebels men of "ill fame," and even a single narrative can transmit truths as well as rumors. One Latin juror account, dated 4 November 1382, refuses to offer a single, authoritative account of Tonge's motivations on that night.¹³

In addition to subtle allusions to local sound, noise, and murmuring, more overt references to Aldgate appear elsewhere in The House of Fame. In one scene, the eagle speaks to Geffrey while transporting him across the sky:

"Now," quod he thoo, "cast up thyn yë. Se yonder, loo, the Galaxie, Which men clepeth the Milky Wey, For hit ys whit (and somme, parfey, Kallen hyt Watlynge Strete) That ones was ybrent with hete, Whan the sonnes sone, the rede, That highte Pheton, wolde lede Algate hys fader carte, and gye. The carte-hors gonne wel espye That he koude no governaunce. . . . " (935–45)

Stephen Russell reads the eagle's lines as "thick with allusions to the Peasants' Revolt," replete with references to burning houses and "Watlynge Strete," a major London thoroughfare, as well as a subtle pun on "Algate" (933), a common Middle English variant of "Aldgate." 14 Drawing Phaeton imagery from Ovid's Metamorphoses (2.32-328), Chaucer's rich classical allusions participate in a local flurry of Latinate writings recalling the noise of 1381. One contemporary London poem, for example, oscillates between lines in alliterating English and rhyming Latin: "Laddus loude thay loghte,/ clamantes voce sonora;/The bischop wen they sloghte,/et corpora plura decora" [churls loudly laughed, crying with loud voices, as they slew the Archbishop and many excellent people; Latin italicized (33–36). ¹⁵ John Gower's

^{13.} Roll A 24, Membr. 9 [1381]. See also A. H. Thomas, ed., Plea and Memoranda Rolls, Vol. 2: 1364-1381 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929). On the multiplicity of motivations for Tonge, see B. Wilkinson, "The Peasants' Revolt of 1381," Speculum 15, 1 (Jan. 1940): 12–35, with Latin transcription in appendix; see also Turner, 35.

^{14.} Stephen Russell, "Is London Burning? A Chaucerian Allusion to the Rising of 1381," Chaucer Review 30, 1 (1995): 107–109.

^{15.} Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 369, fol. 46v. My citation follows James M. Dean, ed., Middle English Political Writings (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 1996).

Vox Clamantis, written in Latin elegiac verse, famously depicts 1381 London as "new Troy," and the poet's account of the upheaval transmits the cries of allegorical rioter-animals.¹⁶

Chaucer's potential allusions to events of 1381 in The House of Fame are certainly open to debate, as the precise year of the poem's composition is not firmly established.¹⁷ Nonetheless, the complex negotiation of Latinate traditions and urban space in this poem is unmistakable. In an astute reading of the eagle's words, Ardis Butterfield observes that "Geffrey lives an improbably solitary, silent life" while "Chaucer represents the aporia of the city: the paradox of aphasia in the midst of gossipy excesses of verbal 'murmurynge.'"18 In his portrayal of Geffrey and his Aldgate dwelling, Chaucer achieves more subtle effects: he troubles any clear distinction between the busy, noisy city during the day and the eerie (anti)social space the city becomes once night falls. Just as an earlier scene bridges Chaucer's day job and Geffrey's nocturnal dwelling, so does this "Aldgate" reference superimpose night and day. Testifying once again to Chaucer's interests in the juxtaposition of languages ("Galaxie" is the Greek form of the Latin via lactea, or "Milky Way"), The House of Fame equates daytime work and nighttime leisure. In other words, the poet conflates the Milky Way—filled with stars in the night sky—with Watlynge Strete, the urban thoroughfare filled with daytime pedestrians.

In its portrayal of daily and nocturnal activity, *The House of Fame* provides much more than a series of discrete autobiographical vignettes or even richly encoded allusions to local events. The poem offers a complex poetic inhabitation of city space and evocation of urban rhythms. Here we see the soundscapes of fictive otherworldly realms readily recall those of quotidian urban settings. The House of Rumor—like the city itself—has the remarkable capacity to receive and absorb utterances in any human language ("what so cometh of any tonge"), by any mode of aural transmission. Such vocalizations could be spoken, recited, or sung ("rouned, red, or songe"), and it doesn't matter whether these ephemeral vocalizations are even set to writing or (presumably) musical notation.

16. For an excellent facing-page translation of Book 1 of Gower's Vox Clamantis, see David Carlson, ed., and A. G. Rigg, trans., John Gower: Poems on Contemporary Events: The Visio Anglie (1381) and Cronica tripertita (1400), Studies and Texts 174 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2011). For more on medieval writing about the events of 1381, see Steven Justice, Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), and Christopher Baswell, "Aeneas in 1381," in New Medieval Literatures 5 (2002, repr. 2003): 7–58.

^{17.} See Cooper, 63-64; Turner, 12-13.

^{18.} Butterfield, "Detritus," 11.

This discussion of Chaucer's Aldgate dwelling would not be complete without considering the poem's culminating figure: Fame (or Rumor) herself. In Middle English, "fame" (derived from the Latin fama) denotes "reputation" or "rumor," and Marion Turner observes that Chaucer's description of Fame hews more closely to Ovid than to Virgil.¹⁹ Nonetheless, The House of Fame transmits a particularly Virgilian obsession with how sound is perceived and transmitted. Virgil's Fama is, after all, a distinctly urban phenomenon. She flies at night over great cities, stands watch on rooftops and high towers, and with her many tongues she spreads both fact and fiction (Aeneid, IV.173-90). Virgil's synecdoche and anaphora suggest how readily rumor spreads: "tot [oculi], tot linguae, totidem ora sonant, tot subrigit auris" [as many eyes, as many tongues and mouths speaking, as many upraised ears] (IV.182-3).20 Moreover, alliteration conveys the sonic similarity between fact and fiction: "facta atque infecta canebat" [she was singing equally fact and fiction] (IV.190). Both the Aeneid and The House of Fame readily explore urban vantage points and the circulation of sound, and The House of Fame is most laden with anaphora precisely when it describes acoustics and urban spaces.²¹ Upon closer examination, The House of Fame not only participates in Latinate traditions, fusing Ovidian and Virgilian poetic models, but it also incorporates Francophone, Celtic, Germanic, Iberian, and Italian influences. Transmuting disparate influences, the poet artfully shapes and stylizes his noisy Aldgate dwelling.

Although Chaucer's poem draws together a seemingly random assortment of figures representing diverse linguistic and cultural groups (past and present), the poet carefully differentiates the fictive settings he constructs. Named authors housed within the hall of Fame's residence are attached to texts written in the prestigious languages of Antiquity, Latin (Virgil, Ovid) or Greek (Homer, Josephus); the anonymous figures outside the gate, by contrast, employ less illustrious vernaculars. Insofar as he imaginatively disperses languages across space, Chaucer implicitly evokes a sense of London as a heterogeneous contact zone composed of adjacent neighborhoods, each with its own sociolinguistic character. As discussed in this book's introduction, the anonymous poet of London Lickpenny depicts Westminster Hall as a space where certain prestigious languages are used, but the protagonist's trajectory outside the doors of the Hall and throughout the city's streets is the setting for encounters with less prestigious vernacu-

^{19.} Turner, 16-17.

^{20.} Italics in Virgil quotations are my own.

^{21.} See Il. 856-58, 899-903, 1203-33.

lars. Chaucer's *House of Fame* suggests a similar understanding that urban neighborhoods vary in sociolinguistic composition, with the grand hall of Fame's castle evoking a space like Westminster and the noisy atmosphere outside its gates conveying the mixed vernacular settings of Aldgate and the waterfront. ²² *The House of Fame* effectively intertwines aspects of the two London poems discussed in this book's introduction. Chaucer combines the narrative transit and subjective experience of *London Lickpenny* with the diffuse theoretical phenomenology of *The Stores of the Cities*. In its rich stylization of urban life, *The House of Fame* not only reflects upon the poet's particular mode of dwelling in his residential neighborhood; it also suggests Chaucer's own nuanced perception of diverse sociolinguistic spaces in and around London.

Writing on the Wall: Chaucerian Traces

As we have seen, The House of Fame engages with Latinate models (Ovidian and Virgilian) while also incorporating influences from other languages. When it is taken seriously as a London poem, the text exhibits a keen awareness of and sensitivity to local linguistic diversity, and the work richly inhabits the poet's own Aldgate dwelling. But this poem also evokes another London location closely associated with Chaucer's life: his workplace at the customs house. Given the plurilingual environment of his working life, it is not surprising that contemporary records of Chaucer's official duties would survive in the form of lengthy Latin, French, and mixed-language documents. His 1374 appointment as controller (contrarotulator) for the Port of London (the same year he was granted his Aldgate residence) is written out in Latin, requiring "quod idem Galfridus rotulos suos in dicta officia tangentes manu sua propria scribat" [that the said Geoffrey shall write his rolls pertaining to the same office in his own hand and that he "continue moretur ibidem et omnia que ad officia illa pertinent in propria persona sua et non per substitutum suum faciat et exequatur" [continue to safeguard these same rolls and execute all things pertaining to this office in his own person and not through a substitute].²³ Appar-

^{22.} On the movement from the House of Fame to the House of Rumor as evoking a movement from the court or "palace" setting to a mixed "plebian" environment, see J. A. W. Bennett, Chaucer's Book of Fame: An Exposition of 'The House of Fame' (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 100–15.

^{23.} Kew, The National Archives, C 66/290 (48 Edw. III, m. 13), transcribed in Crow and Olson, 148.

ently held personally responsible for writing and maintaining meticulous records, Chaucer elsewhere laments that "men ben distreyned by taylages, custumes, and cariages, moore than hire duetee or resoun is."24 In its portraval of the poet's bureaucratic endeavors, The House of Fame suggests how much "labour" is involved in making "all [these] rekenynges" (652-53). One might say that the "labour" of maintaining customs accounts is, quite literally, taxing—not only for those whose imports are taxed but also for the civic administrators who supervise the collection and transfer of revenue.25

In addition to voluminous Latin records, Chaucer's tenure as controller can be traced through any number of legalistic French documents. Although the oath Chaucer took upon assuming office does not survive, a 1376 oath for the controller of petty customs requires the controller to swear "ge vous frez continuele demeure en le port de Loundres" [that you will reside continually in the Port of London], and an additional requirement that the controller perform his duties "en propre personne" [in person] was intermittently relieved by a deputy when Chaucer was abroad on royal business.²⁶ In May 1378, for example, "Geffrey Chaucer cont[r]erollour de le wolkeve en le port de Loundris" [Geoffrey Chaucer controller of the wool wharf in the port of London] appointed one Richard Barett "soun lieutenaunt en loffice avant dite" [his deputy in the aforesaid office].²⁷ In 1385, Chaucer received a royal license to "avoir suffisant deputee en loffice comptrolour a le wolkee de Londres" [have a satisfactory deputy for the office of controller at the wool wharf of London].²⁸ Although Chaucer gained permission to leave his post while on business in France and temporally transferred his duties to a deputy (a point I will address near the end of this chapter), the general expectation that a customs controller should both reside in the city and write out accounts himself demonstrates an understanding that the civil servant's daily work protected the King's interests.29

- 24. The Parson's Tale, line 751.
- 25. For detailed accounts of Chaucer's specific functions as contrarotulator and his implication in the state apparatus, see Jenna Mead, "Chaucer and the Subject of Bureaucracy," Exemplaria 19, 1 (Spring 2007): 39-66; and David Carlson, Chaucer's Jobs (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 5–15.
 - 26. Kew, The National Archives, E 207/5/11, transcribed in Crow and Olson, 157–58.
- 27. Kew, The National Archives, E 207/6/2 (East. I Ric. II), transcribed in Crow and Olson, 164.
- 28. Kew, The National Archives, C 18/1394/87, transcribed in Crow and Olson, 168. For discussion and image, see Simon Horobin, "Adam Pinkhurst, Geoffrey Chaucer, and the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales," Chaucer Review 44, 4 (2010): 351-67, at 354.
 - 29. On this point, see Crow and Olson, 173.

Chaucer's depiction of the daytime activities of Geffrey at home in his own Aldgate abode, as I have suggested, evokes aspects of the civil servant's day-job in the customs house—and this convergence becomes all the more striking once we consider the shared architectural features of both sites. In 1376—not too long after Chaucer was granted his lease on the Aldgate property—a merchant, John Chircheman, "a Norfolk man who was making a small fortune in London," purchased the wharf near the Tower, and he erected on the location a site that would officially become the customs house.30 It clearly served the interests of the Crown to establish "one fixed place to have [wool] weighed and customed ready for export," and the "joint venture" between the Crown and a London grocer to build the new customs house at this location attests to the building's important function.³¹ Moreover, one document's observation that the structure recently erected at "le Wollewharf" served the "quiet" of merchants suggests additional factors at play.³² Elevated upper rooms apparently provided some degree of stillness for people-including controllers, clerks, and other administrators—who weighed wool and reckoned amounts amidst a noisy waterfront environment. Moreover, additional rooms were built on top of the computatorium [counting house] together with a latrine, rendering the location habitable for extended periods of time.³³

The customs house was, in other words, its own kind of polyglot space, not least because the activities conducted there produced a voluminous amount of mixed-language documents. A variant of the phrase "le Wollewharf"—another hybrid English-French coinage "wolkee" [wool quay]—appears within the above 1385 license written out by Adam Pinkhurst, a London scribe whose connections to Chaucer are increasingly acknowledged.³⁴ The very coexistence of terms like "le Wollewharf" or "wolkee"

- 30. Caroline M. Barron, London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People, 1200–1500 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 52. See also Crow and Olson, 171–72.
 - 31. Barron, 53.
- 32. An indenture, dated 4 July 1382 (Patent Roll, memb. 36), attests to Chircheman's role in the construction of this building and grants him 40 s. a year in order for the Crown to use this space. Calendar of Patent Rolls: Richard II, A.D. 1387–1385, Vol. 2 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1897), 149.
- 33. T. Tatton Brown, "Excavations at the Custom House Site, City of London, 1973," *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society* 25 (1974): 117–219, esp. 138–41.
- 34. Linne Mooney, "Chaucer's Scribe," *Speculum* 81, 1 (2006): 97–138; Alexandra Gillespie, "Reading Chaucer's Words to Adam," *Chaucer Review* 42 (2008): 269–83. For an outstanding online catalogue of scribal hands including sample images of texts written out by Pinkhurst and others, see the "Late Medieval English Scribes" website http://www.medievalscribes.com/>.

throughout such business documents suggests the fluid commingling of English and French that pervaded civic environments in London (and other ports). On the waterfront and texts associated with the "wolkee," interpenetration of languages was particularly common. Nick Havely observes that a "mixed form of Latin" was "familiar in accounts and inventories" to London's merchant classes, and a "kind of 'pidgin'" on the waterfront could have served as a spoken "portal to Italian," aiding Chaucer on Italian missions or interactions with Genoese merchants.³⁵ Moreover, historical linguist Laura Wright has examined "macaronic business writing" along the Thames, revealing how pervasively Latin or French documents (like Pinkhurst's) engaged in "lexical borrowing," drawing in words from English and Dutch.³⁶ In sum, London's waterfront most likely provided a space for a spoken lingua franca and other intermediate varieties of speech, and it also enjoyed close proximity to other locations in the city where specialized forms of mixed-language writing were produced.

Documentary traces in Latin, French, and mixed-language records provide a tantalizing glimpse into "the polyglot reality of medieval life," and even if the medieval customs house and Chaucer's Aldgate residence no longer exist other physical traces of polyglot medieval contexts survive in present-day London's landscape. A series of signs conceived by the Museum of London in 1984, collectively entitled "The London Wall Walk," encourages pedestrians to retrace the steps of the lost medieval wall. At the point in the itinerary where Aldgate once stood stands Panel 5, affixed to an ordinary brick wall. This sign commemorates the former abode of Aldgate's "most famous resident," Geoffrey Chaucer.³⁷ (See Figure 1.) Accompanying its explanatory text is a partial reproduction of the Ellesmere manuscript bearing the handwriting of Pinkhurst, the aforementioned London scribe. The partial image provides an unexpected trace of the scribe's multilingual acuity. A Latin "Explicit" precedes a Middle English rubric "Here begynnyth Chaucer[s tale]," so that the plaque attests to the polyglot milieu Chaucer inhabited. Indeed, Pinkhurst not only wrote down the French license granting Chaucer's "deputee en loffice comptrolour a le wolkee de Londres" (cited above), but he also wrote

^{35.} Nick Havely, "The Italian Background," in Chaucer: An Oxford Guide, ed. Steve Ellis (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 313–31, at 313–14.

^{36.} Laura Wright, Sources of London English: Medieval Thames Vocabulary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

^{37.} The image included here depicts one of these panels in situ. To access PDF versions of the original signposts, see http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/Collections-Research/ Research/Your-Research/Londinium/Today/LondonWallWalk/>.

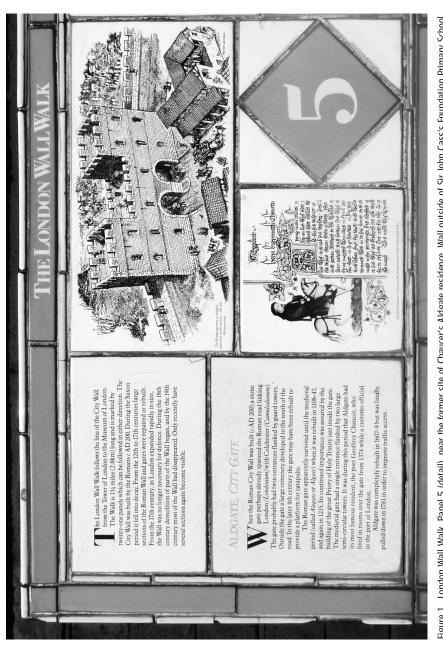


Figure 1. London Wall Walk, Panel 5 (detail), near the former site of Chaucer's Aldgate residence. Wall outside of Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School, near the intersection of Duke's Place and St. Botolph Street, London. Photograph by the author, 24 May 2010.

the most famous manuscript containing Chaucer's Middle English texts and its Latin glosses. Pinkhurst's multilingual output thus incidentally conjoins the "labour" of the daytime Chaucer-controller and the nocturnal Geffrey-poet.

As we have seen, The House of Fame offers a complex meditation on fame and the endurance of authorial reputation while also transmitting the most quotidian of urban details. Insofar as the sign functions as a physical testament to Chaucer's Aldgate dwelling and the poet's fame, its placement on a mundane city wall resonates, however unexpectedly, with The House of Fame itself. The modern sign transforms an urban architectural feature into an impromptu site of poetic commemoration, intertwining Chaucer's enduring fame with his everyday existence.

Panel 5 of "The London Wall Walk" is in some respects a paradoxical site: it forces the modern pedestrian to confront a Chaucerian London that is at once made visible while it is also rendered conspicuously absent. The sign reproduces a portrait of Chaucer from the Ellesmere manuscript and a modern artist's vision of what Aldgate would have looked like centuries ago, along with an explanatory text informing the viewer that the entire structure was demolished in the eighteenth century. As part of a series of signs that invite pedestrians to trace the path of a lost city wall, the Aldgate panel of "The London Walk" not only marks Chaucer's absent site of dwelling; this site also becomes an evocative monument to the poet's fame imbedded within the material reality of the modern city.

In an influential reading of Chaucer's work, David Wallace posits London as an absent presence throughout The Canterbury Tales: the city informs the poet's writing, yet it profoundly resists description as a coherent, single entity.³⁸ Once we encounter the Aldgate panel of "The London Walk," we can start to entertain a different view of Chaucer's representational practice. We could say that The House of Fame registers the diffuse omnipresence of Chaucer's hometown—the varied character of its disparate neighborhoods, languages, and spaces—as opposed to its general absence. Chaucer exhibits a deep interest in inhabiting highly localized urban environments, leaving it up to the reader to imagine—or ignore—a vision of the city as a unified whole.

^{38.} David Wallace, Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 156-81.

Linguistic Fluidity and The Shipman's Tale

Chaucer's domestic abode and his workplace at the customs house are explicitly linked in The House of Fame, and we have seen that the poem suggests some of the intimate connections between his Aldgate setting and waterfront contexts. The poem links Chaucer's dwelling and his workplace on the Wool Quay as sites of urban "rekenynges," each location implicated (in its own way) in everyday business and trade. The broader interplay between waterfront settings and overseas trade networks is explored in greater detail in another urban poem, The Shipman's Tale. Necessitating an imaginative journey across the Channel, this tale transports the reader beyond the London neighborhoods so powerfully evoked in The House of Fame to a range of new domestic spaces and polyglot ports overseas. Departing from the market town of Saint-Denis in France, the merchantprotagonist in The Shipman's Tale travels to Bruges where he interacts with Italian bankers. Throughout this narrative, Chaucer demonstrates his keen understanding of the polyglot existence of medieval merchants and sailors and the "trading of cultures, languages, and goods" that characterizes waterfront activity.39

A fabliau about a merchant, his wife, and a monk, the text we now call The Shipman's Tale might not seem particularly suited to a sailor. Indeed, scholars attending to how Chaucer shuffled and rearranged tales within the fictional frame narrative of The Canterbury Tales have maintained that this lewd fabliau was originally intended for the Wife of Bath, if not some other speaker.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the attribution of this tale to the Shipman in the manuscript tradition (including the Ellesmere manuscript and other early witnesses) foregrounds how readily this fabliau resonates with a maritime milieu. After all, Anglo-Flemish-French trade networks pervade The Canterbury Tales, with mariners and merchants moving in a shared orbit of cross-cultural transactions, rivalries, and exchanges. The Shipman, "a good felawe" and experienced navigator (395, 401–9), steals from merchants whose merchandise he transports: "Ful many a draughte of wyn had he ydrawe/Fro Burdeux-ward, whil that the chapmen sleep" (396-97). The Merchant, meanwhile, relies upon shipmen to transport his merchandise, concerned that the Anglo-Flemish sea corridor be

^{39.} Ardis Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy: Chaucer, Language, and Nation in the Hundred Years War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 228.

^{40.} Joseph A. Dane, "The Wife of Bath's Shipman's Tale and the Invention of Chaucerian Fabliaux," Modern Language Review 99, 2 (2004): 287–300.

protected from piracy: "He wolde the see were kept for any thing/Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle" (276-77). "Shipmen" (sailors) and "chapmen" (merchants) relied upon and somewhat distrusted one another, and the Shipman's humorous tale about a merchant suggests some of these vocational animosities.

Although The Shipman's Tale exploits professional tensions between the shipman and merchant, it is the very circulation of language that provides the most salient convergence between these two figures. Elsewhere in The Canterbury Tales, the Man of Law praises well-traveled merchants as "fadres of tidynges/And tales" (The Man of Law's Prologue, 129-30). Like Fama, merchants are adept at spreading stories, and The Man of Law's Tale makes clear how maritime networks facilitate both the transport of commodities and the oral transmission of knowledge (171–82). On a more practical level, mercantile language and sea-terms were highly mobile in the realm of international commerce. In his analysis of medieval shipping terminology, Bertil Sandahl observes that "[m]ore than most other words, sea terms have a tendency to migrate from one country to another," and David A. Trotter further maintains that "medieval shipwrights and port officials" (the latter category including civil servants like Chaucer) were "accustomed to encountering (and working with, and on) ships from all over Europe," and employed "terminology drawn from all over the known world."41 In the multilingual nexus of Thames trade extending across the Channel to the Continent, shipmen and merchants transported and exchanged goods just as they imported and exported language. 42

This fluid movement of language through trade networks is an abiding concern of The Shipman's Tale and the most salient feature of its poetic style. Although the tale itself is devoid of sea terminology (the tale's merchant, albeit a traveler, never actually leaves the Continent), the tale does employ an impressive range of merchant vocabulary. In one painstakingly detailed sequence, the "marchant [of] Seint-Denys" leaves "[to] Flaundres-ward" and comes "unto Brugges murily," where he conducts

- 41. David A. Trotter, "Oceano vox: You never know where a ship comes from: On multilingualism and language-mixing in medieval Britain," in Aspects of Multilingualism in European Language History, ed. Kurt Braunmuller and Gisella Ferraresi (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2003), 15-33, at 17. See also Bertil Sandahl, Middle English Sea Terms. 3 vols. (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1951, 1958, 1982), at 3 (1982).
- 42. On the flow of water, people, and currency across medieval urban networks, see Suzanne Conklin Akbari, "Currents and Currency in Marco Polo's Devisement dou monde and The Book of John Mandeville," in Marco Polo and the Encounter of East and West, ed. Suzanne Conklin Akbari and Amilcare A. Iannucci with John Tulk (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 110-30, esp. 120 and 122.

a series of exchanges via Italian bankers (300–301). In Bruges, he "bisily . . . byeth" merchandise on credit (he "creaunceth"), spending "twenty thousand sheeld" in the process. At the same time, he enters a pledge to repay the amount: "he was bounden in a reconyssaunce/To paye twenty thousand sheeld anon" (330–31). Since the merchandise costs more than he predicted ("that chaffare is so deere," 327), he returns to Saint-Denis to collect French francs he holds there; he then transports these francs to Paris, where he takes out a loan for the remaining amount he needs to repay to redeem his bond: "this marchant is to Parys gon/To borwe of certeine freendes that he hadde/A certeyn frankes" (332–34). To summarize, a chain of transnational exchanges occurs: the merchant spends money in Bruges in the local Flemish currency of credit (shields), but pays back the amount in a different currency (francs) in a different location (Paris).

In the merchant's final transaction, he redeems his bond from a Paris branch of what is apparently an Italian bank run by "certeyn Lumbardes" who had originally lent him the "twenty thousand sheeld" in Bruges: "This marchant, which that was ful war and wys,/Creanced hath, and payd eek in Parys/To certeyn Lumbardes, redy in hir hond,/The somme of gold, and gat of hem his bond" (365–68). Ultimately, the merchant profits from his (ad)venture: "hoom he gooth, murie as a papejay,/For wel he knew [t]hat needes moste he wynne in that viage/A thousand frankes aboven al his costage" (369-72). Narrated in precise technical language and traversing urban centers, this intricately wrought passage inhabits the perspective of the merchant whose dealings yield a net profit. The proliferation of Francophone business jargon that overtakes the narrative ("creaunce," "chaffare," "costage," "reconyssaunce") has the potential to mystify anyone outside the merchant's profession, but such "murie" and vibrant forays into Francophone lingo befit the tale's fictional setting and intertwined business networks.

Not only does Francophone merchant jargon infuse this narrative, but key puns and multilingual *doubles entendres* also circulate throughout the text, adding another layer of complexity. While the merchant is conducting his "curious bisynesse" (225) in the "queynte world [of] chapmanhede" (236–38), he is unaware of the "curious" and "queynte" liaisons transpiring back home between his wife and his "fumilier . . . freend" (32–33), a monk who frequents the house. In one case of translingual semantic drift, the monk and merchant swear a bond of "cosynage" or kinship but the connotation of this French-derived term mutates throughout the story. At first "cosynage" denotes the oath of sworn brotherhood: "The monk hym [the merchant] claymeth as for cosynage,/And he agayn" and "[t]hus been

they knyt with eterne alliaunce" (36-42). When the monk disavows his bond to the merchant to swear allegiance to the wife instead (149–55), "cosynage" shifts into different semantic domain, connoting deception. Underlying the dual valence of "cosynage" as both kinship and deception is a play on contemporary French usage. Fourteenth-century French readily conveyed the slippage between coconage (connoting "often shady" commercial transactions) and cosinage (kinship).⁴³

In a similar instance of translingual slippage, Chaucer famously exploits the auditory correspondence between "franks" (a French loan word) and "flanks" (a native English word). The monk says to the wife: "I wol brynge yow an hundred frankes"—and the narrator adds "with that word he caughte hire by the flankes" (202-3). What is at stake in this humorous slippage between native and foreign languages is a simultaneously literal and metaphorical financial transaction: the wife promises to submit to the monk's advances if he gives her one hundred franks, which she needs to pay a debt, and when the monk borrows the money from the merchant and gives it to her, she repays his "frankes" with her "flankes." The most striking instance of wordplay in the text, however, is the manifold deployment of "taillynge" at the tale's conclusion. When the merchant returns and asks for his payment, the monk says he has given the amount to the wife, and when the merchant asks his wife for the coins, she claims she has already spent them and he can "score [the debt] upon my tayle" in bed (417). At this point, the narrative resolves: "Thus endeth my tale, and God us sende/Taillynge ynough unto oure lyves ende!" (434–35). This final convergence between "taillynge" and tale-telling is a sophisticated pun that would resonate most strongly with multilingual readers, as it nicely parallels "the play common in French fabliaux on con/conte as female genitalia and story" (as Karla Taylor observes); moreover, Chaucer's wordplay must imagine a "fully competent audience [that] would grasp this as well as other French-inflected puns" within the text.44

The above examples demonstrate how readily Chaucer exploits the porous boundaries between vernaculars and the migration of language in mercantile environments. Moreover, these multilingual puns are materially indebted to contemporary mercantile practice and language use. That is, the "taillynge" pun presumes an audience who has facility with more than one language and recognizes how merchant accounts were actually kept.

^{43.} Karla Taylor, "Social Aesthetics and the Emergence of Civic Discourse from the Shipman's Tale to Melibee," Chaucer Review 39, 3 (2005): 298-322, esp. 308.

^{44.} Ibid., 304.

More than just a bilingual pun on "tale" and "tail" or a lewd double entendre that coins, in English, an equivalent to the French con/conte, Chaucer's "taillynge" effects (if anything) a triple entendre that additionally puns on the Middle English equivalent of the modern word "tally." Appearing initially as a noun in Latin (talia/talea) but later deployed as a verb in both Anglo-Norman (tallie/taille) and Middle English (taille/tayle), "taille" refers to the tally stick, one mode of keeping track of debts and payments in the Exchequer or between merchants. A scored tally stick could function as anything from a record of debt, to a receipt, or even an instrument of credit.

The tally stick was just one method of recording debts and payments, as one could also register such transactions in written form, i.e., an account book. Silently overlooking merchants' use of tally sticks, John Ganim posits double-entry bookkeeping as the primary accounting practice underlying the flexible merchant jargon in *The Shipman's Tale*. ⁴⁵ This bookkeeping system, "undoubtedly practiced [by] Italian commercial interests" with whom Chaucer would have been acquainted, records how "debits from one party are credited to another, and vice versa" within the pages of a book, so that "all profits and losses are simultaneously [and] perpetually in view" to the reader. ⁴⁶ Transforming "concrete transactions [into] fluid and manipulable abstractions," double-entry bookkeeping serves as "a form of rhetoric as well as a technique," and this flexible orientation towards language informs much of the tale. ⁴⁷

Ganim's assertion that double-entry bookkeeping assimilates transactions into an "abstract formal system" certainly informs how the merchant's wife exploits the fluidity of language, abstracting her body ("flankes") and converting it into a form of payment ("frankes"). One could develop Ganim's insights even further, as bookkeeping not only converts transactions into an "abstract formal system" but it also achieves an important effect: it generates narrative. Like "taillynge," which implies tallying (use of a tally stick) and tale-telling, the Middle English verb "rekken" carries multiple valences. To "rekken" is not only to make a calculation or enumerate something more generally, but it is also to give an account of an event or tell a story. In Middle English usage, both "taillynge" and "rekkenynge" refer to the act of rendering an account—whether it gives details of exchanges, the sum of transactions, or a narration of events.

^{45.} John Ganim, "Double Entry in Chaucer's Shipman's Tale: Chaucer and Bookkeeping before Pacioli," Chaucer Review 30 (1996): 294–305.

^{46.} Ibid., 295.

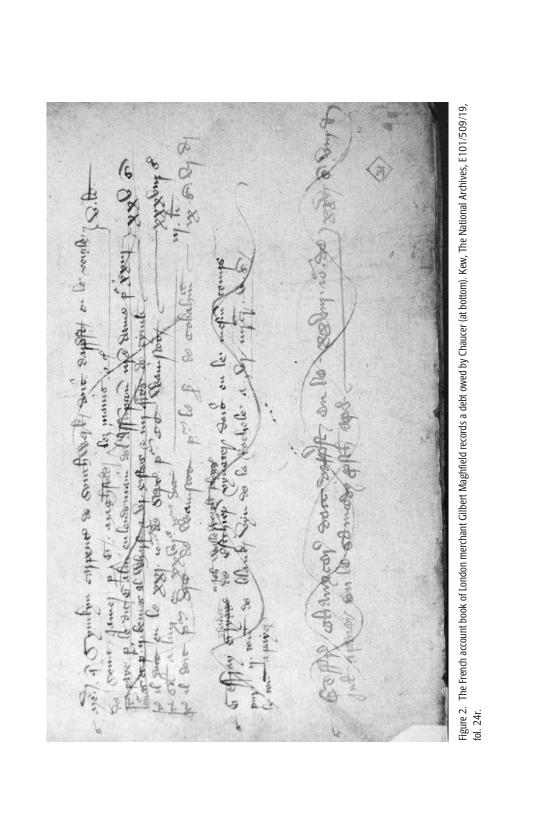
^{47.} Ibid., 294.

As it turns out, the simplest way for merchants to "rekken" debts, payments or other transactions in their books was precisely to narrate them. Indeed, the poets Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower both appear in narrative entries within the French-language account book of the London merchant Gilbert Maghfield, a frequent trader in Flanders whose residence on the Billingsgate wharf stood not far from Chaucer's childhood home (Kew, The National Archives, E101/509/19).48 (See Figure 2.) Although this book encompasses forty folios, there is a transitory quality to its entries. Each entry records a debt Maghfield is owed, but it is crossed out (scored) once the debt is paid. From July 1392 (later scored): "Geffray Chauxcer doit dapprest en le xxviij jo[ur] de Jul a paier le Samedi proschein apres xxvi s. viij d." [Geoffrey Chaucer owes 26 s. 8 d. from 28 July until the following Saturday] (fol. 24r). From October 1392 (also scored): "Memorandum ge Gybon Maufeld ad paye pour Johan Gower esquier a i schippman pour frett dune bras pott mis par lettre de Lynne jesges a Loundres—xvi d." [Reminder that Gilbert Maghfield has paid 16 d. "par lettre" (by bill of exchange) to one shipman, on behalf of John Gower, for the transport of a brass pot sent from Lynn to London] (fol. 27r).

In addition to recording payments as an "abstract formal system" (a list of debits and credits), this merchant's account actively narrates its transactions. The merchant pays a "shipman" a certain amount "par lettre" for the transport ("frett") of a "bras pott" shipped to London from Lynn (the port in East Anglia), all on behalf of Gower—who (judging from the scoring of this entry) repaid the amount. Maghfield's account book, then, reverses the operations of The Shipman's Tale. While the poet assimilates the "taillynge" of merchants in order to generate a narrative, the merchant's own narrative "taillynge" assimilates poets (i.e., Gower and Chaucer). The mercantile puns on "score" and "tally" in The Shipman's Tale suggest just how readily two poets might be drawn into a waterfront merchant's own narrative economy.49

Other aspects of Maghfield's account book more transparently conform to accounting practices portrayed in The Shipman's Tale. In Maghfield's

- 48. See also Crow and Olson, 500-503. I follow Maghfield's own numbering scheme in citing the text, converting Maghfield's handwritten Roman numerals into Arabic numerals. For a detailed article situating Maghfield in a local literary network, see Andrew Galloway, "The Account Book and the Treasure: Gilbert Maghfield's Textual Economy and the Poetics of Mercantile Accounting in Ricardian Literature," Studies in the Age of Chaucer 33 (2011): 65-124.
- 49. While Galloway employs the term "textual economy" as a means to explore the connections between Maghfield's account book and other texts outside itself, I use the term "narrative economy" to stress the internal narrative operations of Maghfield's book.



book, itemized lists of expenses can run down a folio and then conclude with a "summa," or tally of the total sum (fol. 38r). Other entries suggest that an annual December audit of his accounts has occurred: "Comp[utum] est en le veile de Nowell" [calculated on Christmas Eve] (fol. 32v). Moreover, Maghfield notes that this extensive list of "detours" [debtors] has been "trans[c]riptz" [recopied] from some other private document into the "foill[es] apres escriptz" [pages written hereafter] in this book (fol. 1r). Like "Geffrey" in The House of Fame, as well as Maghfield, the merchant of Saint-Denis engages in his own solitary "rekkenyng" in front of yet "another book." He ascends into his "countour-hous"—his private, enclosed comptoir (counting house)—to conduct a yearly audit: "up into his countour-hous" he goes, "[t]o rekene with hymself [o]f thilke yeer how that it with hym stood" (77–79). Surrounded by "bookes and his bagges many oon . . . biforn hym on his countyng-bord" (82–83), he is interrupted only when his wife knocks: "How longe tyme wol ye rekene and caste/Youre sommes, and youre bookes, and youre thynges?" (216–17).

With its puns on "taillynge" and playful engagement with merchant jargon, The Shipman's Tale reflects not only the material circumstances of merchants (accounting, dwelling) but also their linguistic capacities. For merchants like Maghfield and civil servants like Chaucer, French was not an "imported or alien tongue [but] a natural language" employed alongside English, as Ardis Butterfield states in a slightly different context.⁵⁰ Maintaining a personal account book in French is, for the overseas trader Maghfield, simply good business practice, and Maghfield is perfectly comfortable using a variety of French that could serve as a literal lingua franca in his dealings with Gascon and Flemish merchants.⁵¹ Maghfield's entries exhibit detours into other languages as well, suggesting a mercantile "habit of mind" that is more profoundly multilingual than "French" per se: e.g., "schippman," "bras pott" (Middle English), "frett" (Middle Dutch). Such lexical fluidity can be seen as a rich social consequence of the polyglot world that merchants and shipmen inhabit.

This notion of inhabitation informs the present discussion quite well, since, as Butterfield asserts, French (or any language) is a "habit of mind." 52

^{50.} Butterfield, "Chaucer's French Inheritance," Cambridge Companion to Chaucer, eds. Piero Boitani and Jill Mann, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 20-35, at 34.

^{51.} See Wright; see also Maryanne Kowaleski, "The French of England: A Maritime lingua franca?" in Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England, c. 1100-c. 1500, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al. (Rochester, NY: York Medieval Press, 2009), 103–17.

^{52.} Butterfield, "French Inheritance," 34.

Multilingual scribes, merchants, and civil servants were all clearly able to move between languages with great ease, infusing even the most workaday writings with complex linguistic textures. Chaucer confines his wordplay within a monolingual poem, but (as Maghfield demonstrates) even monolingual texts exhibit fluid digressions into other languages. Such translingual thinking can also lend creativity to literary representations, allowing poets to artfully convey the fictional setting that their characters inhabit. Take, for example, this instance of "local color" when Chaucer's merchant suddenly speaks French. The merchant's wife knocks on the door of his "countour-hous," and he responds from within: "Quy la?" [Who's there?] (214). This snippet of French encourages the reader to sustain the fiction that The Shipman's Tale—narrated in English—nonetheless transpires on the Continent. Intriguingly, Chaucer's tales set in Italy, Flanders, or other locations abroad make no such attempt to register the alterity of the setting or characters through such stylized dialogue. The "foreign" speech of the merchant thus enriches the complexity of this overseas tale, reminding us that characters who speak English and use any number of "native" English names (Peter, John) can nonetheless be read, and imagined, as French.

Chaucer's translingual puns and stylized dialogue suggest a sophisticated target audience who could hold other languages "on call" and at their disposal, even as they read monolingually.⁵³ In order for the tale's nuanced dialogue and puns to "register," the reader must imaginatively draw upon a multilingual cache of words. Other London poets, writing in French, could similarly invite their readers to activate knowledge of English. In Gower's French Mirour de l'Omme, "Marchant Triche" [Merchant Trickery claims London's waterfront as his habitat. A polyglot traveler who navigates through major ports ("Bourdeaux," "Civile" [Seville], "Paris," "Florence," "Venise," "Brugges," and "Gant"), he enacts illicit transactions upon arrival in the "noble Cité sur Thamis" [noble city on the Thames (25237-79, 25244-45).⁵⁴ Gower warns that Marchant Triche "par sa coverte glose/Te dourra craie pour fourmage" [through his sly flattery will give you chalk for cheese (25301-2). In this instance, the poet employs a Frenchified rendition of an alliterative Middle English expression ("chalk for cheese") that he uses elsewhere in his work: "ful ofte chalk for chese/He changeth with ful litel cost" (Confessio Amantis, 2.2346-

^{53.} Taylor, 302.

^{54.} Citations here follow John Gower, *The Complete Works: The French Works*, ed. G. C. Macaulay (Oxford: Clarendon, 1899).

47).55 Gower enacts his own inter-vernacular "inside joke" or unequal linguistic exchange. He invites members of a London audience to think in English and recognize a "native" proverbial expression even as they read, or hear, in French.

Elsewhere in his work, Chaucer suggests that one's subjective sense of belonging to a particular place is tied to one's manner of dwelling: "This same place that thow clepest exil is contre to hem that enhabiten here" (Boethius, 2.4.110). That is, a location that registers as foreign to a visitor or person in exile might actually feel entirely familiar to a native inhabitant (i.e., someone who resides there). One might metaphorically extend this Chaucerian insight to language as well. Throughout The Shipman's Tale, a language like French might register as "foreign" to someone who is not fully accustomed to it, yet it may nonetheless feel entirely comfortable to "hem that enhabiten" the language on a daily basis. The translingual poet, at home in more than one language, troubles the apparent dichotomy between foreign and native tongues. Texts associated with London's waterfront frequently expose the porous boundaries between languages and suggest a capacity to inhabit multiple languages at will. Cross-linguistic puns, stylized French/English dialogue, and proverbial English expressions imbedded within French verse all require readers to assume more than one linguistic orientation concurrently. In this environment, a vernacular language like French only provisionally registers as alien or familiar, depending on the context in which it is used.

The Shipman's Tale suggests the complexity of Chaucer's own translingualism, a quality particularly resonant in the text's internal exploration of the relationship between urban space and linguistic difference. The merchant's French utterance, first of all, transpires at a highly suggestive location: his "countour-hous" door. This architectural structure where the ensuing wife/merchant conversation unfolds fittingly marks the intersection between domestic life (private dwelling) and professional domains (place of work). As we have seen, The House of Fame presents the home and the customs house as two separate (if unexpectedly similar) spaces, and these two locations are effectively combined into a single structure here in The Shipman's Tale. The spatial orientation of the characters further enriches this scene, conveying the complex estrangement between the two

55. Citations here follow John Gower, The Complete Works: The English Works, Vol. 1, ed. G. C. Macaulay (Oxford: Clarendon, 1901). On the proverbial nature of this expression, see Bartlett Jere Whiting and Helen Wescott Whiting, eds., Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly Before 1500 (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), C134.

speakers. The merchant, reckoning with himself in his "countour-hous," speaks French. The wife, standing outside the door, speaks in (the narrator's) English.

It could be said that this poem associates French speech and Francophone business jargon with the merchant to the exclusion of the other characters in order to convey the very peculiar "habit of mind" of a person so obsessed with his private activities that he is oblivious to the affairs transpiring just outside. Evoking Geffrey at home myopically fixated on his book in The House of Fame, this merchant with his books is a solitary figure curiously isolated from the busy world that surrounds him. In the wife's response to the merchant, narrative setting and geospatial orientation become all the more complex: the wife is not actually speaking "English" per se but in French that has been translated into the narrator's Middle English. That is, the poet temporarily foregrounds the implicit suspension of disbelief that occurs when we must imagine we are in France despite processing an English narration. The utterance "Quy la?" slyly puts pressure not so much on the question of "qui" [who] speaks in this episode but rather the significance of "la" [there]. The reader is positioned as simultaneously at home and abroad—in England and in France, "here" and "there"—through this verbal exchange.

In my discussion of the poet's work as a customs controller, I briefly noted that Chaucer would have been expected to perform his waterfront duties "en propre persone," but he was occasionally granted permission to transfer his duties to someone else while he was abroad conducting royal business. In May 1377 Thomas Evesham "citein [sic] de Loundres" [citizen of London] was appointed "lieutenant [de] Geffrei Chaucer contreroulour de la grande custume e de la petite [du] port de Londres en absence du dit Geffrei" [lieutenant of Geoffrey Chaucer controller of the great and petty customs of the Port of London in the absence of said Geoffreyl.⁵⁶ Civic documents attest to the expenses accrued by Chaucer who "estoit . . . departy de nostre citee de Londres" [had departed from our city of London] on "diverse viages . . . vers Parys Monstroill et aillours a cause de certeines busoignes" [various trips through Paris, Montreuil-sur-Mer, and elsewhere pursuing certain business] on behalf of the king, and poet-historian Jean Froissart lists "Jeffrois Chaucie[r]" among English envoys attempting to negotiate a peace with France earlier in the same year.⁵⁷ In such docu-

^{56.} Kew, The National Archives, C 81/1568/9 (qtd. Crow and Olson, 162).

^{57.} Crow and Olson, 47. Jean Froissart, Chroniques, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove, viii (Brussels, 1869), qtd. Crow and Olson, 50.

ments, Chaucer emerges as a civil servant who is repeatedly interpolated as a resident of London's waterfront while he is also dispatched to France as a diplomatic envoy. Chaucer, who was sent among others "in secretis negociis regis versus partes Flandrie [et] partes Francie" [on the king's secret business throughout parts of Flanders and parts of Francel during his tenure as a customs controller, was a man intimately familiar with London as well as France and Flanders.⁵⁸ Moreover, these sundry records of payments, receipts, and expenses demonstrate just how inextricably the London waterfront was linked to networks of exchange on the Continent.

The French setting in The Shipman's Tale not only transports the English reader to a location across the Channel but it also evokes, through its fluid language, the polyglot business world that facilitates travel and generates so much narrative. When Chaucer refers to "eschaunge" (a concern that links the Merchant portrait in the General Prologue and The Shipman's Tale), he actually employs a conspicuously Anglo-French, not Continental French, form of the word—and the same could be said about other particularly resonant terms that circulate throughout The Shipman's Tale.⁵⁹ Chaucer, in other words, engages in a subtle linguistic sleight of hand. Although his stylized dialogue maintains the "strangeness" of the story's Continental setting, Chaucer's Middle English poetry is heavily inflected by local varieties of Anglo-French and sensitive to the multilingual capacities of his audience. The Shipman's Tale, in addition to suggesting a distant French setting, simultaneously recalls features of home: Chaucer's own porous linguistic habitat on London's waterfront. French, in other words, flows "here" and "there" at will, and The Shipman's Tale enacts a fluid deterritorialization of language.

Inhabiting Languages

This chapter has juxtaposed The House of Fame and The Shipman's Tale to illustrate the complexity of the shared urban contexts of these works. The intricate representation of bureaucratic accounting practices in these texts evokes Chaucer's own tenure as a customs controller in London while obliquely suggesting his travels abroad. More profoundly, both poems explore a dynamic relationship between urban space and language use. Chaucer inhabits the diverse linguistic and mercantile worlds of Conti-

^{58.} Pipe Roll, 244, 2. Ric. II, qtd. Crow and Olson, 46.

^{59.} Butterfield, Familiar Enemy, 222.

nental France as well as London's own polyglot waterfront, and his fictional portrayals of urban "rekynynges" and accounting practices exploit the interpenetration of languages within urban contact zones. Just as importantly, these texts expose the porous boundaries between urban spaces, including the civic or bureaucratic workplace of the "countourhous" to more private domestic dwellings.

In both these texts, Chaucer traverses apparently discrete domains of urban activity by virtue of their shared multilingual character. In The House of Fame, Geffrey's nocturnal activity in his "hous" comprises an explicit extension of his seemingly disparate "day job," his bureaucratic vocation in the "countour-hous." Instead of pursuing "newe things," the poet replicates his daytime accounting—which, presumably, would have been recorded in French or Latin—in front of yet "another book" at home in Aldgate. Textual and numeric forms of "rekynyng" are effectively elided, and the reckoning of accounts (in Latin or French) parallels, even enables, the generation of written narratives (in English). Likewise, pervasive translingual puns on "taillynge" in The Shipman's Tale align vernacular tale-telling with local accounting practices from tally sticks to account books. Chaucer's fictional merchant conducts his annual audit while enclosed in a private "countour-hous" associated with his own home, and the poet's fictive representation of living and working quarters foregrounds the perceived proximity between two multilingual sites of urban "rekenyng."

Placing Chaucer's Middle English poetry in conversation with local non-English writing allows us to more fully appreciate the poet's intricate relationship to the city and its many tongues. Inhabiting a fictional world indebted to Virgilian and Ovidian traditions, The House of Fame engages with Latin civic records attesting to Chaucer's urban dwelling. The Shipman's Tale, an overseas tale that circulates Francophone trade jargon, speaks to a waterfront merchant's French account book. As a polyglot inhabitant of, and active participant in, London's bureaucratic and mercantile worlds, Chaucer (and writers like him, literary and nonliterary) investigate how one may seek to inhabit a particular space as well as a particular language.

Throughout this chapter, I have examined a range of civic documents that intertwine references to Chaucer's residence in London, work on the waterfront, and travels overseas. In Chaucer's deposition during the Scrope-Grosvenor Controversy dated 15 October 1386, these phenomena all come together in the form of a single narrative. Chaucer—who spent his earlier years in military campaigns in France—testifies that he first saw Sir Richard Scrope employ a particular heraldic device "en Fraunce devaunt

la ville de Retters" [in France before the city of Rethel], but "estoit un foitz en Fridaystrete en Loundres" [there was one time on Friday Street in London] that he happened to see "un nouvelle signe" [a new sign] bearing the same device hanging outside an "herbergerie" [inn or hotel]; Chaucer asks if the sign bears Scrope's device, and "un autre" [another person] responds: "Nenyl sieur . . . ils sount depeyntez et mys la pur une [sic] chivalier del counte de Chestre" [No sir . . . they are painted and positioned there by a knight of the county of Chester]. 60 In this snippet of Chaucerian narration, seemingly circumstantial details suggest the speaker's veracity. This mundane exchange outside an inn on Friday Street transpires at a named location that would have been well known to Chaucer's audience as a site of negotiations and economic disputes; fishmongers and other merchants sold their wares there, and a church dedicated to St. Matthew, patron saint of tax collectors, was a prominent landmark. 61 Insofar as Chaucer constructs a narrative for his audience, this bit of dialogue—Chaucer's question and an anonymous response—is set against the backdrop of a familiar, believable urban setting.

It is difficult to discern from this document whether Chaucer was actually speaking in French during these proceedings or if his narration was delivered in English and then recorded in French; the locodescriptive phrase "en Fridaystrete" could evoke either possibility. In any case, this French transcript provides a glimpse into Chaucer's easy familiarity with spaces in France and London alike, and the deposition positions Chaucer as effectively bi-located, traversing two concurrent locations: "Fridaystrete" and "Fraunce." Put another way, this vernacular narrative associates Chaucer with both London and northern France, conjoining (as it were) the fictive settings of The House of Fame and The Shipman's Tale. My discussion of Chaucerian texts has revealed how spaces are imaginatively and discursively linked through travel and trade, and we gain in this French civic document an appreciation for Chaucer's concurrent, simultaneous status: his parallel existence as a London resident and a traveler in France.

Keeping Chaucer's trans-Channel orbits in mind, we can now reconceive The House of Fame and The Shipman's Tale as creative experiments in

^{60.} Kew, The National Archives, C 47/6/2, m. 28, also transcribed in Crow and Olson, 370-71.

^{61.} John Stow asserts that fishmongers dwelled on this street; see A Survey of London by John Stow, ed. Charles Lethbridge Kingsford (Oxford: Clarendon, 1908), 1:351. For a description of the urban environment of Friday Street, see Barbara Hanawalt, Growing Up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 32.

translingual writing. Moments of language crossing in Chaucerian texts—by which I mean texts by Chaucer, as well as civic documents about him—are best read not through the lens of "translation" per se (unidirectional conversion of something in one language into another), nor even in terms of a linguistic phenomenon along the lines of code-switching (alternating from one language to another or moving between identifiable registers within one language). Rather, translingual writing requires the simultaneous activation of languages at any one moment within any given literary text or any similarly stylized document. This chapter has illustrated how texts that are ostensibly written out in any "one" language can nonetheless invite their audiences to entertain cross-linguistic connections and meanings. As Michelle R. Warren observes in another context, even "monolingual' texts [can] become networks of multilingual transactions."

In addition to instilling a deeper appreciation for the polyglot environment of Chaucer's hometown, this chapter's parallel discussion of English and French materials urges us to expand our thinking about Chaucer's Middle English poetry in ways that might more effectively encompass his complex bi-vernacularity. As we see in his writings, French can often be deterritorialized, registering not entirely as "foreign" or "local" in character but rather as multiply located, evoking settings at home as well as abroad. Anglophone medieval literary scholarship, with a few notable exceptions, still struggles to adopt a mode of critical analysis that allows for the possibility of inhabiting multiple languages simultaneously.⁶³ If we start thinking about language as a dwelling, inhabitation, or habitat (natural or constructed), then we might gain more flexibility in future approaches to translingual writing. Chaucer's translingualism—evident even within his Middle English works—requires us to actively consider how a single writer might be multiply located, inhabiting more than one linguistic space concurrently.

In Le monolinguisme de l'autre: ou la prothèse d'origine (1996), Jacques Derrida reflects on his ambivalent relationship to the French language, asking if any language—whether it is affectively held as a native tongue

^{62.} Michelle Warren, "Translation," in Middle English, ed. Strohm, 51-67, at 58.

^{63.} A few Chaucerian scholars have taken steps in this direction by foregrounding the poet's multilingualism: see Butterfield and Davidson. Scholars of John Gower have been, to date, more likely to espouse translingual reading as an interpretive mode; see R. F. Yeager, "Learning to Read in Tongues: Writing Poetry for a Trilingual Culture," in Chaucer and Gower: Difference, Mutuality, Exchange, ed. R. F. Yeager (Victoria, B.C.: English Literary Studies, 1991), 115–29; Tim William Machan, "Medieval Multilingualism and Gower's Linguistic Practice," Studies in Philology 103, 1 (Winter 2006): 1–25.

or acknowledged as an imposed (colonial) language—can ever be properly considered one's own.64 Language is a faculty that one possesses, but language itself eludes all claims to possession. It paradoxically dwells within a subject and also constitutes one's dwelling or "habit of mind." My readings of translingual Chaucer suggest that we can push our thinking about language in new directions. Instead of drawing upon a Derridean discourse of possession or implicit Bourdieuvian models of habitus (linked to what Butterfield calls the "habit of mind" or social practices of an individual), we could instead entertain broader ecological notions of habitat (emphasizing how language itself moves through social environments and networks). If we think of language not only as vehicle of speech, sound, and writing but also as a phenomenon that occupies space and disperses itself across locations, then any language might be considered a living organism with its own agency. We might even conceive of any contact zone, such as a city or even its extended trade network, as a linguistic ecosystem. 65 These readings of Chaucerian materials have largely focused on discrete locations in one medieval city, but this chapter as a whole reveals how languages are only provisionally attached to particular communities, speakers, or dwellings. If we appreciate how readily languages coexist, intermingle, and spread through systems of exchange (verbal or economic), then Chaucer becomes but one participant among many in a much wider network of translingual creation.

^{64.} Jacques Derrida, Le monolinguisme de l'autre: ou la prothèse d'origine (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1996), also translated by Patrick Mensah, The Monolingualism of the Other, or, The Prosthesis of Origin (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

^{65.} On the city as ecosystem, see Krunica Hruska, "Notes on the evolution and organization of the urban ecosystem," Urban Ecosystems, 9 (2006): 291–98; on language ecology, see Machan, "The Ecology of Middle English," in English in the Middle Ages, 1-20. See also David Dalby, "The Linguasphere: kaleidoscope of the world's languages," English Today 17, 1 (March 2001): 22-26.



Overseas Travel and Languages in Motion

Literary Code-Switching and Writing in Transit

Dum ludis floribus (London, British Library, Harley MS 2253, fol. 76r) is an idiosyncratic anonymous lyric poem that interweaves three languages. This poem survives in a single copy within a diverse collection of English, French, and Latin texts compiled in the area of Ludlow (Shropshire) during the early part of the fourteenth century, and scholars have not reached a consensus on this manuscript's use, audience, or purpose. Whatever principles guided its collection, the manuscript contains lyrics that range in form and content, and Dum ludis floribus stands out as a fascinating trilingual example. Its opening line is in Latin, but its second line shifts into French, and the rest of the lines oscillate between French and Latin:

- 1. None of the lyrics in Harley 2253 bear titles. I use the title supplied in the Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse, ed. by Rossell Hope Robbins and John L. Cutler (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), Index of First Lines (694.5), 79.
- 2. See Dan Birkholz, "Harley Lyrics and Hereford Clerics: The Implications of Mobility, c.1300–1351," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 31 (2009): 175–230. See also Jason O'Rourke, "Imagining Book Production in Fourteenth-Century Herefordshire: The Scribe of British Library, MS Harley 2253 and his 'Organizing Principles,'" in *Imagining the Book*, ed. Stephen Kelley and John J. Thompson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 45–60; Susanna Fein, ed., *Studies in the Harley Manuscript* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 2000), 317–76.

Dum ludis floribus velud laciuia Le dieu d'amour moi tient en tiel angustia Merour me tient de duel e de miseria Si ie ne la ay quam amo super omnia (1-4)

[While you play among flowers as if in a wanton way,/The God of Love binds me in such anguish,/Holding before me the mirror of sorrow and misery,/ Because I do not have the one whom I love above all.]3

In this poem, the speaker praises a lady who is noble and beautiful—but she is, all the while, oblivious to the lover's suffering. This fictive scenario is quite commonplace in amatory lyrics, but the poem employs linguistic strategies that are anything but conventional. Not only does the lyric alternate between Latin and French, but it also avoids any consistent pattern as it moves across languages. For instance, the first line is entirely in Latin, the second and third are in French with the exception of their end-rhymes, and the fourth line is composed of French and Latin halves: four French words, then four Latin ones.

Such oscillation between languages is often understood as code-switching; in its broadest sense, this entails the alternation between languages (or different registers of any given language) within a single utterance or text. ⁴ The erratic quality of the poem's use of languages becomes even more apparent when it is compared to other multilingual lyrics elsewhere in the manuscript, which tend to maintain rigid code-switching patterns. A devotional poem on fol. 83r, for instance, consistently alternates between English and French half-lines:

Mayden moder milde oiez cel oreysoun From shome thou me shilde e de ly malfeloun

- 3. In this transcription, French is indicated by standard font, Latin is italicized, and English is in bold. My transcription of the word laciuia follows Seth Lerer, "Dum ludis floribus': Language and Text in the Medieval Lyric," Philological Quarterly 87, 3/4 (Summer/Fall 2008): 237-55, at 246.
- 4. This book employs an expansive definition of code-switching but other disciplines use the term more narrowly, referring only to language traversal as it expresses identity or articulates membership in a social group. See One Speaker, Two Languages: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on Code-Switching, eds. Lesley Milroy and Pieter Muysken (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). For code-switching in medieval texts, see Herbert Schendl, "To London fro Kent/Sunt predia depopulantes': Code-switching and medieval English macaronic poems," Vienna English Working Papers 6, 1 (1997): 52-66.

For love of thine childe me menez de tresoun Ich wes wod ant wilde ore su en prisoun (1–4)

[Maiden mother mild, hear this prayer./Shield me from shame, and from the Devil./For the love of your child, lead me from temptation./I was stubborn and unruly (but) now I am in prison.]⁵

The opening stanza of this devotional poem adheres to a strict pattern of rhyme (-ilde for the English, -oun for the French), and it neatly partitions languages across half-lines in this and all of its subsequent stanzas. By contrast, Dum ludis floribus code-switches in a more dynamic manner. Its opening lines shift between Latin and French across individual words, half-lines, or line-breaks, and the poem presents a much more restless persona, a speaker who simultaneously praises his lady and voices his own anguish.

While the code-switching in the opening lines of *Dum ludis floribus* is indeed remarkable, its final stanza—which suddenly shifts into Middle English—is arguably its most striking. It adds yet another language to its intricate code-switching repertoire:

Scripsi haec carmina in tabulis
Mon ostel est en mi la vile de Paris
May Y sugge namore so wel me is
Yef Hi deghe for loue of hire duel hit ys (17–20)

[I have written this poem upon my tablets;/My lodging is in the middle of the city of Paris./I can say no more, I am so joyful;/If I die for her love, it is a pity.]⁶

In this conclusion to the poem, the sentiment expressed in each line is appropriately tailored to the language that transmits it. When the lover describes the process of writing the poem, he uses Latin, evoking classical and scholastic traditions of composing on small tablets: "Scripsi haec carmina in tabulis" (17). When declaring his location in Paris, he employs French (18). When he expresses intimate internal longing, he employs a

^{5.} For other rigidly code-switching lyrics, see *The Anglo-Norman Lyric: An Anthology*, eds. David Jeffrey and Brian Levy (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 106–9, 233–36, and 255–56.

^{6.} The manuscript erroneously transcribes the first word in line 17 as "scripsit" [he/she wrote], and I amend it to "scripsi" [I wrote]. See Jeffrey and Levy, 250.

humble vernacular: a couplet in idiomatic Middle English (19-20).7 Dispersing a shared end-rhyme across all four lines, the poet ends the poem with a virtuoso display of linguistic mastery.

In addition to introducing a third language, the final four lines rather unexpectedly transform the poem by evoking a sense of place. In a full French line, the poet announces that he has composed the lyric in Paris. Nonetheless, the text exhibits conspicuously non-Continental features that would appear to belie the speaker's claims. The text's orthography, for instance, conforms to the variety of French that scholars variously call Anglo-Norman, Anglo-French, or more recently "the French of England"—as opposed to a Continental (Parisian) form of French.8 Moreover, each line of verse in the poem exhibits a pattern of four stresses, providing a rhythm that evokes French octosyllabic verse but with a heavy English "accent." Most conspicuously, the poet's dialect of Middle English localizes the speaker; he employs "sugge," a distinctly West Midlands variant of the verb "say." The text's many localizing linguistic features paradoxically support and undermine the speaker's own assertions.

The code-switching in this poem is, as I have indicated, quite complex, and the apparent tension between Continental references and non-Continental linguistic features in the text can be resolved once we recognize the fictive speaker as a traveler. The speaker employs a provincial dialect of Middle English directly after his French-language reference to Paris, suggesting some previous movement—real or imagined—across the Channel. At the same time, the reference to portable writing tablets ("tabulis") supports the fiction of writing in transit. Indeed, many literary texts from antiquity through the Middle Ages depict poets writing on tablets or jotting down notes while traveling.¹⁰ If viewed as a coherent whole, this

- 7. As Lerer states in a similar reading of these four lines: "The trilingualism is both obvious and subtle" ("Dum ludis floribus," 240).
- 8. In this poem, spellings like "pur" (8), "flur" (12) and "fere" (16) are noticeably non-Continental (compare pour, flour, and faire). For a brief overview of the dialectical and scribal features of Anglo-Norman, see Jeffrey and Levy, 27–29. On the overlapping denotations of "Anglo-Norman," "Anglo-French," and "French of England" as terms for literary analysis, see the introductions in Christopher Kleinhenz and Keith Busby, eds., Medieval Multilingualism: The Francophone World and Its Neighbors (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2011), and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al., eds., Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England (Rochester, NY: York Medieval Press, 2009).
- 9. Frances McSparran, "The Language of the English Poems: The Harley Scribe and His Exemplars," Studies in Harley Manuscript, ed. Fein, 391-26, esp. 400.
- 10. On portable wax tablets and the "metaphorics of cognition" in this poem, see Seth Lerer, "Medieval Literature and the Idea of the Anthology," PLMA 118, 5 (2003): 1251-67, esp. 1258-59. On the mobility of Ludlow scribes in general, see Birkholz.

poem or *carmina* deftly constructs a mobile persona through its fluid use of language, and it interweaves motifs of love and mobility. By traversing three languages, the Harley lyricist conveys a speaker who is fixed in his thoughts of love even as he is physically in motion. At the same time, the poet's frequent and abrupt code-switching dramatizes the distress and disorientation that the lover feels.

It must be acknowledged that some of the localizing features discussed above may constitute scribal additions to a now-lost original version of this poem. After all, the concluding trilingual lines of this poem employ a code-switching strategy that departs from its previous lines. Whether we read the trilingual lines as "scribal" or "authorial," they nonetheless reify the poem as a single composition (*carmina*), and the lyric's surprising conclusion invites the reader to conceive the poem as a unified work that features a single speaker in motion across space.

When viewed as a whole, this trilingual lyric offers a dynamic model of lyric subjectivity. The sentiments of the speaker differ depending on the particular language he employs, and the poem reveals that a lover—unwavering in his devotion—can be paradoxically fixed and in perpetual motion. The speaker's code-switching resists a consistent pattern, and the unpredictable language traversals in the poem destabilize the otherwise conventional and clichéd assertions of an anguished lover. Not only does this trilingual poem employ code-switching to evoke the disruptive, tumultuous qualities of love itself, but it also constructs the fiction of a disoriented, traveling speaker.

This poem's closing reference to writing "in tabulis" (a practice evoked in clerical and scholastic references to writing and scribal dictation), as well as its Paris location, has suggested to some readers a university setting. For the purposes of this chapter, I'd like to focus on how different aspects of this poem evoke the realms of trade and international travel. Merchants who engaged in overseas commerce, after all, had a facility with many languages, and writing on tablets was a feature of mercantile life as well as those in clerical or legal circles. Small "tables" covered with wax or ivory—which could be written upon with a small stylus, and then wiped clean—allowed notes and transactions to be recorded and later erased while on the move. Such writing materials were thus integral to mobile livelihoods.

Merchants in medieval England were readily understood to write "in

^{11.} For the poem's implication in local scribal networks, see Birkholz.

^{12.} Jeffrey and Levy entitle this lyric "A Student's Song" (248).

tabulis" in various senses of the phrase. An inventory of fourteenth-century grocer William Cost, for instance, includes many types of such "tables," all skewed toward professional interests.¹³ A Middle English household manual provides versified instructions on using wax "tabuls" to manage inventories: "At countyng stuarde schalle ben,/Tylle alle be brevet of wax so grene,/Wrytten in-to bokes, with-out let,/That be-fore in tabuls hase ben sett."14 Chaucerian references to a "table" or pair of "tables" can designate the writing surfaces of small tablets before or after containing writing.¹⁵ Other texts describing "tables" suggest that they could be put together in the form of a book (codex) for better portability. 16 By extension, the word "tables" could designate—as it does in Cost's inventory—any variety of books that contain written columns of text (cf. the modern English "table of contents").

Given the semantic range of "tables" in this period and their close association with merchants, the physical layout of the page upon which this poem appears is as stylistically distinctive as the lyric itself. Not only is folio 76r unique for its inclusion of three complete poems in three languages, but the poems are also transcribed as horizontal rows of text. 17 Seth Lerer suggests these rows of prose-like text physically resemble the form of writing that takes shape upon small tablets. 18 A set of six wax tablets uncovered by the York Archaeological Trust may well support Lerer's speculation. Excavated in a tenement district inhabited by artisans and shopkeepers, the York tablets contain ephemera like Middle English poems, accounts, Latin texts, and working drafts of letters—all riddled with abbreviations consistent with contemporary records for payments and property

- 13. Cost's bankruptcy inventory of 1392 (Kew, The National Archives, MS C 131/42/2) includes "j. tabulam cum calendar[i]o" [a calendrical table] and "j. tabulam longam" [a long tablet recording financial transactions]. For detailed analysis, see Ralph Hanna, London Literature, 1300–1380 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 13–14.
- 14. London, British Library, MS Sloane 1986, fol. 21. See F. J. Furnivall, ed., The Babees Book, EETS, o.s. 32 (London, 1868), 316.
- 15. "We ben wont somtyme by a swift poyntel to fycchen letters emprientid in the smothnesse or in the playnesse of the table of wax or in parchemyn" (Chaucer, Boethius, 5.m.4.19); "Tho tok I and waxed my label in manere of a peire [of] tables to receive distinctly the prickes of my compas" (Chaucer, Astrolabe, 2.40.30).
- 16. "Alipius, a litil be-for the court schuld be hold, walkyd a-lone with his reporting tables in his hand, studying ful bysily" (John Capgrave, Life of Saint Augustine, LALME, BL Additional MS 36704, 17/27).
- 17. For an image, see N. R. Ker, Facsimile of British Museum MS Harley 2253, EETS, o.s. 255 (London: Oxford University Press, 1965). See also the Wessex Parallel WebTexts website: http://www.soton.ac.uk/~wpwt/har12253/dumludis/dumlms.htm.
 - 18. Seth Lerer, "Medieval English Literature and the Idea of the Anthology," 1259.

transactions. Moreover, the writing inscribed upon each tablet assumes a familiar horizontal orientation.¹⁹

This claim to write "in tabulis," of course, not only evokes literate practices of merchants but it also foregrounds the physicality of writing itself. The invocation of "tabulis" by the poem's speaker advertises the authorial status of the writer who composed the text, while it simultaneously reminds the reader of the transitory aspects of writing. Indeed, one often takes out one's stylus and tables precisely when one needs to write swiftly. Whether or not this poem was *literally* composed on the spur of the moment upon a tablet, the trope of writing in one's tablets constructs a spontaneously speaking persona. Moreover, the tablet-using writer is often, fictively or literally, a traveler. Given their portable, erasable, and reusable qualities, wax or ivory tablets often constitute an intermediate stage of writing "on its way" to something (or somewhere) else: a future oral performance, transference of text to a more permanent writing surface like parchment, or the eventual carving of inscriptions onto stone or walls.

Just as tablet-writing suggests the itinerant, transitory quality of this poet's production, so do the trilingual final lines attest to a writer "on the go." The "ostel" of the final stanza may be a residence in a conventional sense, but it likelier suggests more temporary lodgings (cf. Old French or Middle English hostelrie); Paris is a university city but also a commercial center, and the poem's composition within the heart of the city places it within a larger context of urban activity. Although the speaker could be a student or cleric associated with the university, he could also be imagined as an Englishman momentarily in town on business.

This lyric could be seen as an aberration in its trilingual style and its unusual reference (within English lyric poetry) to writing in tablets, but the poem's traversal of languages in the context of a traveling speaker suggests a pervasive, common phenomenon: the act of writing, and producing poetry, in transit. The trilingual poem's intersections with material processes of business writing could even suggest the proximity between, or the very conflation of, the roles of itinerant merchant and professional poet. Most profoundly, this *carmina* demonstrates how skillfully a translingual writer can exploit code-switching to fashion a mobile poetic voice.

In the previous chapter on Chaucerian materials, I explored how Chaucer inhabits fictive urban spaces, infusing his Middle English with Latinate

^{19.} Michelle Brown, "The Role of the Wax Tablet in Medieval Literacy: A Reconsideration in Light of a Recent Find from York," *British Library Journal* 20, 1 (Spring 1994): 1–15, esp. 13. For images of the tablets, see Brown, Fig. 1 (p. 2) and Fig. 2 (p. 3).

and Francophone resonances to evoke environments around London and on the Continent. In this chapter, I examine how medieval translingual writers explore the disorienting effects of travel and maritime trade. In this lyric, the use of different languages constitutes a salient stylistic feature of the poem as well as a necessary aspect of the speaker's persona. The poet writes across languages to evoke a sense of perpetual motion and displacement. In the sections to follow, we will see what happens when poets explicitly situate such moments of linguistic displacement upon the open sea.

Chaucer, Gower, and Constance Narratives

In this poem by the anonymous Harley lyricist, code-switching conveys a mobile subjectivity, providing a compelling fiction of a first-person speaker in transit. Whether the poem was originally composed in England or the Continent, the trilingual poem situates itself in a transnational network and implicitly maps its speaker's journeys back and forth across the Channel. Other poets in England were certainly capable of investigating how travel transports people across languages, but they chose to do so through the form of extended fictional narratives. Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower, contemporaries intimately familiar with London's commercial and literary life, each wrote Middle English adaptations of a story about a seafaring female protagonist derived from a shared Anglo-Norman source (Les Chroniques of Nicholas Trevet). In their respective renditions of this story, these poets do not merely transplant a cleric's account (the tale of Constance, a devout woman) from a French context into an English one. Each poet explores what happens once the entire narrative apparatus (i.e., the fictive social context) of a story is transformed, and the cleric's tale becomes, instead, a merchant's tale.

Chaucer's Man of Law explicitly situates his Constance narrative in a mercantile milieu. Not only does the fictional narrator claim to have heard this tale from a merchant ("a marchant [m]e taughte a tale, which that ye shal heere"), but he also prefaces his tale with a paean to traders: "O riche marchauntz, ful of wele ben yee,/O noble, O prudent folk. . . . Ye seken lond and see for yowre wynninges . . . ve knowen al th'estaat/Of regnes" (122-29).²⁰ Even before launching his tale, the Man of Law presents the

^{20.} All Chaucer quotations are from The Riverside Chaucer, 3rd Edition, gen. ed. Larry Benson, with intro. by Christopher Cannon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

narrative itself as a valuable piece of cultural capital. The only character in *The Canterbury Tales* to recognize the pilgrim Chaucer as a poet, the Man of Law provides a catalogue of Chaucer's previous works (53–76) and then claims that the poet holds a monopoly over narrative itself. "I kan right now no thrifty tale seyn/That Chaucer [h]ath seyd hem in swich Englissh as he kan" (46–47), the Man of Law laments, and "I were right now of tales desolaat,/Nere that a marchant [m]e taughte a tale" (121–23). As David Wallace puts it, an unknown merchant has come to the rescue by supplying a story unclaimed by the "eager and long-practiced monopolist of English storytelling," the fictive pilgrim-poet Chaucer.²¹ As discussed in the previous chapter, Chaucer's *Shipman's Tale* explores the fluid circulation of Francophone business jargon via mercantile networks. Here in *The Man of Law's Tale*, the same poet attends to how merchants circulate narratives.

A number of scholars have noted that the Chaucerian tale known as *The Man of Law's Tale* bears an important analogue: Novella 5.2 in Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*.²² As mentioned in the previous chapter, Nick Havely observes that London's waterfront communities employed a maritime and possibly Romance-inflected *lingua franca* that could serve as a spoken "portal to Italian," and Chaucer's duties as a customs official for the Port of London could very well have entailed interactions with merchants of Italian origin.²³ Robert Hanning even speculates that Chaucer gained knowledge of the *Decameron* through interactions with Italian traders.²⁴ In the context Anglo-Italian exchange, Chaucer's portrayals of coastal languages and cross-linguistic contact in *The Man of Law's Tale* lend additional resonance with Boccaccio's analogous novella.

The Man of Law's performance suggests a considerable overlap between mercantile and legal communities around London, where interrelated varieties of "law French" and maritime "business French" were used on an

- 21. David Wallace, Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy (Stanford University Press, 1997), 201.
- 22. See for instance Wallace, Chaucerian Polity, 182–211; Carol Heffernan, The Orient in Chaucer and Medieval Romance (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 23–44; Geraldine Heng, Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy (New York: Columbia University Presss, 2003), 181–238.
- 23. Nick Havely, "The Italian Background," in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*, ed. Steve Ellis (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 313–31, at 313–14.
- 24. Robert Hanning, "Custance and Ciappelletto in the Middle of It All: Problems of Mediation in *The Man of Law's Tale* and *Decameron 1.1*," in Leonard Michael Koff and Brenda Deen Schildgen, eds., *The Decameron and the Canterbury Tales: New Essays on an Old Question* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 2000), 177–211, esp. 188.

everyday basis (see, for instance, the discussion of Gower in the next chapter). In his praise of "riche marchauntz, ful of wele" [e.g., wealth or good fortune], the Man of Law claims "in this cas" [e.g., with regard to wealth] merchants have been cast a good lot in life: "Youre bagges been nat fild with ambes as [two aces, or two ones],/But with sys cynk [six and five], that renneth for youre chaunce" (122-25). Evoking a roll of dice resulting in high numbers (the lucky "six and five" rather than the unfortunate "one and one"), the Man of Law playfully suggests the extent to which merchants themselves are "high rollers," engaging in risky but potentially very profitable business ventures overseas. In his apostrophe to merchants, the Man of Law mobilizes a pun on the French word "cas" in its legal sense (i.e., a particular "case" or matter) and a more general Middle English sense of one's "cas" or life circumstances. Moreover, the Man of Law's playful use of specialized Latinate and Francophone gaming vocabulary ("ambes as," "sys cynk") evokes the reckoning tables, French number lists, Latin cyphers, and treatises on games of chance that fill the pages of medieval legal and mercantile miscellanies.25

In addition to his appreciation for merchants' interests and preoccupations, the Man of Law reveals much of his own professional engagement with Latinate and Francophone domains of knowledge. In The General Prologue, the Chaucerian narrator claims the Man of Law can recite "every statut . . . pleyn by rote" (327), knows the "caas and doomes alle" since the "tyme of Kyng William" in proper legal "termes" (323-24), and he can "endite and make a thing" [compose and craft a document], presumably in high style French or Latin, so effectively that "no wight [koude] pynch at his writing" (325–26). In the Introduction to his tale, the Man of Law pointedly showcases a complementary subset of his erudition: his literary knowledge. Invoking "the Muses that men clepe Pierides" and Ovid's "Methamorphosios" (91–92), the narrator offers a catalogue of Chaucerian tales (e.g., tales from The Legend of Good Women), concluding with a reference to "Tyro Appolonius" (77-89, at 81): a prominent narrative within Gower's widely circulated collection of tales, the Confessio Amantis (Book VIII). Gower's Confessio contains an analogue to the tale the Man of Law is just about to relate, and it is quite possible that Chaucer satirizes his con-

^{25.} Note the alphanumerical cyphers and French numerical terms in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Tanner MS 407, compiled by Robert Reynes of Acle; see also Cameron Louis, ed., The Commonplace Book of Robert Reynes of Acle: An Edition of Tanner MS 407 (New York: Garland, 1980). The compilation of London grocer Richard Hill, Oxford, Balliol College MS 354, contains prognostication verses, as well as an English-French phrasebook with French numbers and accompanying Arabic numerals (fol. 141r); for more on Hill, see chapter 5.

temporary Gower through his fictive portrayal of the learned, multilingual Man of Law. ²⁶ Indeed, Gower's version of the Constance story enjoyed not only a wide degree of circulation in Chaucer's lifetime but also a considerable afterlife following the death of both poets. Gower's Constance narrative, for instance, is one of many "dyuers tales [and] dyuers reconyngs" in the miscellany of London grocer Richard Hill, who copied out the tale alongside that of Apollonius of Tyre, along with French, Latin, and bilingual texts (see chapter 5).

I have momentarily dwelled upon mechanisms of narrative and textual transmission here because the circulation of stories is itself a driving concern of the Man of Law's performance. In The Man of Law's Tale, narrative is, quite literally, the most precious resource that merchants transport. In addressing "marchantz" as the "fadres of tidynges/And tales" (129–30), the Man of Law anticipates how merchants set the tale in motion. Merchants from Syria, "a compaigne/Of chapman riche" who "dwelte [in] Surrye" (132-35), visit Rome on business, and they transport back to their Sultan news of Custance: the beautiful, virtuous daughter of the Emperor. The Sultan falls in love with her unseen, agreeing to convert to Christianity if she will marry him. Not only are the Syrian "chapmen" renowned for transporting exotic merchandise—"so thrifty and so new/That every wight hath deyntee to chaffare/With hem, and eek to sellen hem hire ware" (136–40)—but they are also in demand for transporting news from distant shores: "[t]idynges of sundry regnes" and "wonders that they myghte seen or heere" (181-82).

The Man of Law's own verbal performance often aligns itself with the worldview of seafaring traders. Adopting an elevated register, the Man of Law narrates dangerous journeys with great sympathy for tempest-tossed travelers. After a massacre at a banquet leaves Custance the sole Christian survivor in the realm, she is sent "[o]ut of Surrye" in a rudderless ship. A journey over the waves begins:

Yeres and days fleet this creature Thurghout the See of Grece unto the Strayte Of Marrok, as it was hire aventure. On many a sory meel now may she bayte;

26. See John Bowers, "Rival Poets: Gower's Confessio and Chaucer's Legend of Good Women," in John Gower, Trilingual Poet: Language, Translation, and Tradition, ed. Elisabeth Dutton et al. (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), 276–88. On Gower's legal vocation, see chapter 3.

After hir deth ful often may she wayte, Er that the wilde wawes wol hir dryve Unto the place ther she shal arrive [...]

She dryveth forth into oure occian Thurghout oure wilde see, til ate laste Under an hold that nempnen I ne kan, Fer in Northhumberlond the wawes hir caste, And in the sond hir ship stiked so faste That thennes wolde it noght of al a tyde; The wyl of Crist was that she shold abyde. (463–69, 505–11)

In its high pathos, piety, and wide geographical sweep (Rome, Syria, Greece, Morocco, Northumberland), the tale evokes the peregrinations of holy seafarers. The Navigatio sancti Brendani and Vita Brendani, two tenthcentury Latin texts narrating the sea travels of Saint Brendan who encounters numerous monsters and dangers before reaching the Promised Land, spawned (over the centuries) many narratives of saintly sea-voyagers in vernacular traditions across Europe, and the Constance tradition can be considered one later outgrowth of this capacious genre.²⁷ This passage of The Man of Law's Tale, in other words, overlays longstanding hagiographical traditions with mercantile overtones. The perils of sea travel are, after all, of great concern to merchants, for whom chance shipwrecks are disastrous. As Chaucer states elsewhere, merchants "moste putte [their] good in aventure," and "[a] marchant, pardee, may not ay endure. . . . Sometyme his good is drowned in the see,/And somtyme comth it sauf unto the londe."28 Moreover, the notion that Constance floats "as it was hir aventure" (i.e., subject to worldly chance) complicates the narrator's claim that her movements are directed by the steady "wyl of Crist." Constance is ultimately subject to the very same potential risks and hazards or "aventure" that merchants are known to face at sea: the random sort of luck that can make (or break) a commercial venture.²⁹

^{27.} For translations of the Navigatio and vernacular descendants, see W. R. J. Barron and Glyn S. Burgess, The Voyage of St Brendan: Representative Versions of the Legend in English Translation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, for University of Exeter Press, 2002).

^{28.} The Canon's Yeoman's Tale, lines 393-97.

^{29.} By the fifteenth century, the Company of Merchant Adventurers embraced aventure as part of their collective professional identity: "The Adventurer, unlike the Stapler, who went regularly to and fro between England and the English port of Calais, voyaged far afield, east, west, north, or south. . . . Such was William Haryot, 'a merchant,' says [Robert] Fab-

Chaucer and Gower, most profoundly, move multilingualism out of a clerical or hagiographical context (i.e., Trevet's *Chroniques*) to explore its functions in secular urban settings. Trevet's Constance is unusually schooled in academic disciplines and multiple languages:

E pur ceo qe nul autre enfaunt avouit, pur ceo a grant diligence la fist enseigner la foi Cristiene, e endoctriner par mestres sachaunz en les sept sciences, que sount logicience, naturele, morale, astronomie, geometrie, musiqe, perspectiue, qe sont philosophies seculers apelez, e la fist endoctriner en diverses langages. (297)

[And because he (the Emperor) had no other child, with great diligence he had her taught the Christian faith and instructed by learned masters in the seven sciences, which are logic, physics, morals, astronomy, geometry, music, and optics, called the secular sciences (i.e., the seven liberal arts of the clerical curriculum), and had her taught various languages.]³⁰

In line with the aims of clerical education, the protagonist of Trevet's narrative masters all academic disciplines and relevant skills necessary to transmit Christian teachings. When Constance encounters the "marchaunz paens" [pagan, i.e. non-Christian, merchants] who arrive "aportauntz trop diverses et riches marchaundies . . . de la grant Sarazine" [carrying much diverse and rich merchandise from the great Saracen land], she preaches to them: "E quant ele entendi q'il estoient paens, lour precha la foi Cristiene. Et puis q'il avoient assentu a la foi Cristiene les fist baptizer e enseigner parfitement en la foi Jhesu Crist" [And when she understood that they were heathens, she preached the Christian faith to them. And when they had assented to the Christian faith, she had them baptized and instructed perfectly in the faith of Jesus Christ] (297). Gower's Constance overlays Trevet's clerical vision with a more pragmatic ethos, rendering his own protagonist as both missionary and mercantile:

Constance, as the cronique seith,

yan, 'of wondrous adventures into many and sundry lands'" (144–45). E. M. Carus-Wilson, Medieval Merchant Venturers: Collected Studies (London: Methuen, 1954), esp. 143–82. See also Douglas Bisson, The Merchant Adventurers of England: The Company and the Crown, 1474–1564 (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993).

30. All citations of Trevet and Gower in this chapter are from Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales: Vol. 2, eds. Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2005). English translations from Trevet follow Correale, and I silently emend the French punctuation throughout.

Sche hihte, and was so ful of feith, That the gretest of Barbarie, Of hem which vsen marchandie, Sche hath conuerted, as thei come To hire vpon a time in Rome, To schewen such thing as they broghte; Which worthili of hem sche boghte, And over that in such a wise Sche hath hem with hire wordes wise Of Cristes feith so ful enformed. That thei thereto ben al conformed, So that baptesme thei receiuen And alle here false goddes weyuen. (597–610)

Through her eloquent speech, Constance interweaves merchandizing and proselytizing. It is "over that" (i.e., the process of conducting business) that she informs the merchants about Christianity. Gower economically relates the entire process of contact and conversion in one sentence, conveying how efficiently Constance operates: "in such a wise," she converts merchants with her "wordes wise." Gower's use of rhyme riche in this episode (his strategic use of the two forms of the word "wise," as a noun and as an adjective) further showcases the poet's capacity to maximize the value of a single word.

Chaucer, like Gower, transforms the clerical prose of Trevet's narrative into a versified merchant's tale by redefining the multilingual context of its events. Although she is not as formally schooled in languages as her counterparts in Trevet and Gower, Chaucer's "Custance" speaks an intermediate and mixed "latyn corrupt" to make herself understood once she washes ashore in Northumberland: "In hir langage mercy she bisoghte. . . . A maner latyn corrupt was hir speche,/But algates therby was she understonde" (516–20). In the parallel moment in Trevet's text, Constance (quite remarkably) speaks Anglo-Saxon English: "Et ele lui respoundi en Sessoneis . . . come cele q'estoit aprise en diverses langages" [And she, as one who was learned in diverse languages, answered him in Saxon] (303). Whereas Trevet's Constance exhibits a linguistic facility that more readily signals her clerical education and missionary functions, Chaucer's Custance speaks a more functional, pragmatic "latyn corrupt"—a mixed Latinate speech that French texts in England ascribe not to clerics, but merchants.31

31. For instance, the Anglo-Norman version of Fouke le Fitz Waryn features a man

Most strikingly, a moment of translingual recognition marks the pivotal episode near the tale's conclusion. In Gower's rendition, Constance is intercepted by a sailor as she sails toward Rome, and she claims her name is "Couste" (1163). Constance's new husband, King Allee, arrives in Rome, and he recognizes "Couste" as his long-lost wife through an act of silent, internalized translation: "Allee wiste wel ynowh;/Wherof somdiel smylende he lowh;/For Couste in Saxoun is to sein/Constance upon the word Romein" (1404-6). In the climax of Chaucer's tale the family reunites through visual recognitions, but Gower narrates recognition as a moment of internal cross-linguistic comprehension. Momentarily inhabiting the perspective (or rather, bilingual mindset) of Allee himself, Gower notes that the king equates his wife's acquired Saxon name "Couste" with her Latin birth name (Constantia, or "Constance"). That is, it is only when the woman's name is registered across languages that her identity is confirmed. After all her tribulations in far-flung locales, Constance has returned home to Rome, but as a changed woman: not only in her transmutation from imperial daughter to the wife of a Northumberland king, but more profoundly in how language itself transports her (through a new name, "Couste").

The dynamic intertextual resonances between the Constance narratives of Chaucer and Gower—these journeys abroad and return home, with a difference—posit a model of linguistic traversal that diverges from a presumed linear trajectory of translation. The word's Latin etymology, of course, implies "carrying something across" an imagined boundary, and readers like Geraldine Heng have elaborated on the many resonances of *translatio* in this tale, a narrative obsessed with perpetual movement across linguistic and cultural boundaries.³² Nonetheless, the unidirectionality implied by *translatio* as it is commonly conceived—a conversion of one thing into another, or transference of knowledge and power from one culture to another (*translatio studii et imperii*)—has its own limiting, even oppressive, teleology. If anything, these Constance narratives showcase the mutable qualities of linguistic exchange: any interaction between languages is (at least) a two-way street, with potential for back and forth. Whatever

from northern Britain who adopts the "gyse" of a merchant, speaking in an affected "latyn corumptus" during his stay with the Mayor of London: "Johan se apparilla molt richement a gyse de marchaunt, vint a Loundres, e se herberga a la mesoune le meyr. . . . E quanqu'il parla fust latyn corupt, mes le meir le entendy bien" [John very richly arrayed himself a rich merchant's attire and went to London, and he stayed at the home of the Mayor. . . . And all the while he spoke a corrupt form of Latin, but the mayor understood him very well] (London, British Library, MS Royal 12 C. XII, fols. 33–61; Hathaway et al., eds., 56.11–17).

^{32.} Heng, 188.

traverses a linguistic boundary is bound to be changed after crossing back again.

The mercantile nexus of trade and sea travel featured so prominently in the Constance narratives of Chaucer and Gower embraces the dynamic operations of linguistic exchange. These renditions of a shared story by two contemporary poets examine the complex processes by which language takes shape along the sea, on the shore, or other areas of cross-cultural contact. By transforming Constance's story from a cleric's narrative into a merchant's tale, both poets find a new literary mode that exploits the transitory and fluid potential of language traversal.

Distant Shores: Chaucer and Boccaccio

The above discussion has examined some of the shared mercantile and maritime contexts of Chaucer and Gower, and although it emphasizes the role of Latinate and especially Francophone influences, other linguistic and cultural contexts can inform the Constance narratives as well. Although Gower and Chaucer compose their Constance narratives within a shared London milieu, a broader cultural and geographical distance separates the Italian writer Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375) from these English poets. Composing his own Constance narrative a generation before Chaucer or Gower, Boccaccio's tale inhabits a Mediterranean milieu that draws upon a more intimate and sustained history of contact with the Muslim cultures it explores. Boccaccio adopts striking strategies for setting languages in motion over maritime networks in his novella, and his narrative ultimately offers another informative vantage point for understanding the transport of people and tongues in Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale—and, more specifically, the English poet's fascination with coastal contact zones.

In his version of the Constance narrative, Boccaccio presents Christian and Muslim worlds in close and familiar contact, and he systematically employs fictionalized geography to highlight the perceived proximity between different ethnic and linguistic communities. The Decameron relates the story of the beautiful Christian noblewoman Gostanza who lives on Lipari, a small island near Sicily: "vicin di Cicilia è una isoletta chiamata Lipari, nelle quale non è ancora gran tempo, fu una bellissima giovane chiamata Gostanza" [Near to Sicily there is a small island named Lipari, upon which—not too long ago—there lived a most beautiful young woman named Gostanzal (5.2.4).33 When Gostanza hears her lover has died, she

33. Italian citations of the Decameron are from Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio, ed.

is in suicidal despair and puts herself to sea alone on a rudderless boat. Instead of carrying her away to her death, a gentle wind transports her "a una piaggia vicina a una città chiamata Susa" [to the coastline near a city of called Susa], which lies, as the narrator states, some distance south of Tunis in North Africa (5.2.13). Although Mediterranean geography in the *Decameron* is typically quite accurate, the proximity between Susa and Tunis in this particular *novella* is conspicuously overstated. In this pivotal episode (the initial moment of relocation that sets the entire narrative in motion), the text demands quite a suspension of disbelief: the reader must imagine that a mere breeze could take a medieval traveler some three hundred miles down the African coastline in a single day.³⁴

What makes Boccaccio's narrative so striking, in addition to its uncharacteristic compression of physical distance, is how familiar Gostanza finds this new setting the moment she washes ashore. Whereas other medieval romances relate journeys to avowedly distant and exotic lands, Boccaccio violates this horizon of expectations. His female protagonist submits to the whims of random chance only to wind up in a place that is unexpectedly proximal and disarmingly familiar.³⁵ In line with romance conventions, random chance plays a pivotal role in the story; an unknown stranger arrives on the shore and "per avventura" [by random chance] she encounters the protagonist. The approaching stranger, a fisherwoman, discerns that Gostanza is a Christian from her clothing ("all'abito") and she addresses the shipwrecked woman in a language she can understand (5.2.15-17). Boccaccio specifies that the fisherwoman speaks a Latinate language ("parlando latino"); whether this means she addresses Gostanza in Latin or in a form of speech that we might now categorize as Italian, she employs some version of a Romance language readily intelligible to the young lady (5.2.15–17).³⁶ What begins as a conventional romance—a

by Vittorio Branca, 12 vols. (Milan: Mondadori, 1964); see also the English translation by G. H. McWilliam (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

^{34.} See Wallace, Chaucerian Polity, 206.

^{35.} On "generic crossroads" in medieval romance, see Patricia Grieve, "Floire and Blancheflor" and the European Romance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 159.

^{36.} English translators disagree on how to interpret Boccaccio's term "latino." J. M. Rigg uses its direct English cognate "Latin" (5.2.16–17); The Decameron of Giovanni Boccaccio (London: Navarre Society, 1921). McWilliam reads "latino" as "Italian," a plausible interpretation given Gostanza's Sicilian origins (380–81). I read such speech not as Italian per se but as an intermediate, mixed Latinate speech along the lines of William Rothwell, "The Trilingual England of Geoffrey Chaucer," Studies in the Age of Chaucer 16 (1994): 45–67, at 53. For the hypothesis that a transcontinental trade language was more distinctly Francophone than Latinate in character, see Maryanne Kowaleski, "The French of England: A maritime lingua

tale of a courtly protagonist setting forth into the unknown—has made a strange narrative detour: it stages a return to the familiar. Gostanza sets off to sea expecting to drift far away to her own death, but she finds herself face to face with a woman who not only receives her very kindly but also speaks her own language.

At this moment the narrative shifts into suspended animation. Upon hearing a spoken language ("la favella latina") that is unexpectedly if not disconcertingly familiar, Gostanza wonders if she has been driven back home to Lipari by a sudden change of wind: "La giovane, udendo la favella latina, dubitò non forse altro vento l'avesse a Lipari ritornata" [The young woman, hearing the Latin/Romance speech, wondered if the wind had not shifted, and had carried her back to Lipari (5.2.17). The unknown landscape and topography of the coastline clash with the unmistakably homely language she now hears, and Gostanza, "non conoscendo le contrade" [not acquainted with the surroundings] entertains the possibility that she has somehow returned to her point of origin. Gostanza is informed, in her very own language, that she is indeed in a new location. The fisherwoman states: "Figliuola mia, tu se' vicina a Susa in Barberia" [My daughter, you are near Susa in Barbaryl (5.2.18). In her words to Gostanza, the fisherwoman adopts a disarmingly gentle tone, employing not only an endearing term to address a complete stranger ("figliuola mia") but also adopting a maternal if not familial pronoun tu. This intimate and domestic language is indeed uncanny. The speech is simultaneously homely and familiar and yet, given Gostanza's temporary dislocation, quite strange.

The disorienting Boccaccian novella foregrounds a contingent relationship between language and space in coastal environments. Language itself is not sufficient to fix one's identity, but spatial orientation and one's own internal sense of geographical or cultural belonging is nonetheless facilitated by language (in this case, the phenomena of speech and naming).³⁷ The fisherwoman's statement suggests that language requires geography in order to be made intelligible, and only through the pronouncement of the name of the physical location does Gostanza's cognitive dissonance subside. Through this intimate moment of interpersonal communication, linguistic and spatial perception are abruptly realigned.

The cognitive dissonance provoked by Gostanza's psychic dislocation does not endure for long. She is quickly taken up "in casa d'una bonissima

franca?" in Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England c. 1100-c. 1500, eds. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al. (Rochester, NY: York Medieval Press, 2009), 103-17.

^{37.} On space and naming, see Paul Zumthor, La Mesure du monde: La Représentation de l'espace au moyen âge (Paris: Seuil, 1993), 54.

donna saracina" [into the home of a most kind Saracen lady]; she joins a community of women who take part in various trades; and they produce precious silk objects and work together as if they were a guild. Perpetuating a curious spatializing discourse, the Boccaccian narrator states that in a short expanse of time ("poco spazio di tempo") Gostanza comes to speak the language of her new co-workers: "in poco spazio di tempo, mostrandogliele esse, il lor linguaggio apparò" (5.2.25–26). Gostanza, Italian noblewoman turned North African silkworker, is linguistically and economically interwoven into her new society.

The pivotal moment of cross-cultural contact on the shore not only initiates the main action of the *novella* (as described above), it also lends structural symmetry to the tale's ensuing sequence of events. The kind woman who intercepts Gostanza on the beach is, as it turns out, a Saracen woman who had long ago entered the workforce of a Christian community and thereby acquired knowledge of "la favella latina" (5.2.17).³⁹ In an elegantly parallel, mirroring process, Gostanza moves into a new domestic sphere, and labor facilitates her own integration into a new society. She is incorporated into a company of women that inhabits a shared, hybridized domestic space. Upon the addition of its new member, the home ("casa") becomes an interfaith and multilingual community whose members speak a common "Saracen" language.

Chaucer's tale of Custance is seemingly far removed from the immediacy of Boccaccio's Mediterranean contact zones. Indeed, the English poet's rendition of Custance's itinerary, taking her "into oure occian/Thurghoute oure wilde see" to Northumberland (505–6), employs a first-person voice that emphatically relocalizes the narrator's discourse. When the speaker specifies that Custance crosses over into "oure" sea, he provides the audience with an implicit North Sea (North Atlantic) orientation to the events, as opposed to a Mediterranean one. Nonetheless, Chaucer's particular interests in coastal language contact suggest the possibility the poet could have been influenced by Boccaccio's rendition of this tale, in addition

^{38.} The adverbial phrase conveys how swiftly Gostanza acquires this new language; McWilliam translates the passage as "before very long they had taught her to speak their language" (382), and Rigg writes that "all the ladies . . . soon taught her their language" (5.2.26). I posit a more literal reading of the adverbial phrase, translating it as "in a short expanse of time."

^{39.} As Boccaccio states: "a cui ella disse che da Trapani era e aveva nome Carapresa e quivi serviva certi pescatori cristiani" [and in response to her she said that she was from Trapani and that her name was Carapresa and (in Trapani) she had served some Christian fishermen] (5.2.21).

to his more proximal source text of Trevet. In this regard, the observation that Custance speaks "a maner Latyn corrupt" in a location so very far away from the Mediterranean warrants more careful analysis. Chaucer specifies that his protagonist adopts an ad hoc language upon washing ashore, and (as suggested above) the poet might refer here to a form of Latin or Romance-derived speech that served as a lingua franca across coastal areas throughout the medieval Mediterranean as well as the Atlantic littoral. The exact language the Roman protagonist speaks on the British seashore is ultimately difficult if not impossible to identify, as Custance speaks in "a maner" (a certain type) of Latinate speech; this may entail a simplified form of Latin or, potentially, some other sort of Romance language.

Curiously, the ambiguous terminology Chaucer employs in order to describe this "maner Latyn corrupt" renders the coastal language strikingly similar, if not identical, to the "latino" or "favella latina" (unidentified Romance or Latinate language) that the women speak in Boccaccio's tale. For all its wide-ranging dislocation, strife, intercultural conflict, and miscommunication (including its much less flattering view of Christian-Muslim relations), Chaucer's version of this tale exhibits its own salient interest in "littoral" language: the type of speech that takes shape upon the shore, the liminal region where sea meets land. 40 Employing the Northumberland coastline as a contact zone ripe for literary exploration, Chaucer stages his own encounter with the linguistic uncanny. The poet returns readers to the earlier encounters with (un)familiar language that appear throughout Boccaccio's Decameron.41

Insofar as littoral encounters are concerned, Gower also demonstrates his own interests in uncanny linguistic exchanges. In Trevet's account, Constance and her recently baptized companion Hermegild "alerent un jour devers la marine" [went one day toward the sea] and "voient encoutraunt un povre Cristien Bruton enveuglés" [saw coming towards them a poor blind Christian Briton (175); in response to a heartfelt entreaty by this blind man, Hermegild makes the sign of the cross over his eyes and "lui dit en sa langage Sessoine: 'Bisne man [in] Jhesu name in [rode] yslawe, have thi siht" [said to him in her Saxon language: "Blind man, in the

^{40.} My use of "littoral" follows Sebastian Sobecki, who examines the seashore as border zone (space between land and water) in Middle English romance. "Littoral Encounters: The Shore as Cultural Interface in King Horn," Al-Masaq 18, 1 (2006): 1-8.

^{41.} T. H. McNeal maintains that the Northumberland shipwreck episode reveals that Chaucer indeed knew the Decameron; see "Chaucer and the Decameron," Modern Language Notes 53 (1938): 257-58. See also J. A. Burrow, "A Maner Latyn Corrupt," Medium Aevum 30 (1961): 33-37.

name of Jesus, slain on the cross, have thy sight"] (184–86). His sight is miraculously restored. Within Trevet's French text, this unusual citation of "langage Sessoine" [Saxon language] lends veracity to the account. When Gower recounts this seaside miracle, Hermyngeld's utterance takes a related form: "In trust of Cristes lawe,/Which don was on the crois and slawe,/Thou bysne man, behold and se" (769–71).

In Trevet's French text, code-switching into English to record the act that restores the blind man's sight thematically links Hermegild's utterance to her imminent conversion (she will soon "see the light" of Christian salvation). In Gower's Middle English poetry, however, this citation of Hermyngeld's words has a different effect: the adjective "bysne" [blind] registers as an archaic form of Anglo-Saxon English. Since Gower uses "bysne" nowhere else in his work (preferring the Middle English "blind" instead), this word stands out as a conscious attempt to stylize Hermyngeld's speech. Insofar as this archaism preserves a vestige of the French account, the word "bysne" constitutes Gower's own "secondary translation" of Trevet.⁴² Not only does Gower carry over a verbatim citation of "Saxon" English imbedded within the narrative of the French source, but the use of the word "bysne" in the context of Gower's own Middle English poetry also effects a form of cross-temporal code-switching. Gower shifts into an outmoded, stylized form of "Saxon" English to suggest the alterity of the English past: it is a world that is both unlike, and similar to, his own.

In this milieu of Constance stories, translation entails a process that exceeds a movement from one discrete cultural or linguistic context into another. Gower and Chaucer each adapted a French source, but their respective versions of the tale readily speak to one another in turn, offering potential for triangulation between two English poems and a French prose interlocutor. Moreover, Chaucer further triangulates his text along a French-English-Italian axis, since *The Man of Law's Tale* suggests the possibility of even broader networks of exchange through trade. Chaucer overlays his own poetic transformation of a proximal French source with an implicit "secondary translation" of a more distant Italian analogue. Gower, complicating things further, imbeds multiple forms of secondary translation in his Middle English poetry, subtly transforming "Saxon" utterance within his French source-text. These Constance narratives thus invite us to entertain any number of nonlinear modes of translation and

^{42.} On "secondary translation," see Rita Copeland, Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, repr. 1995), 179–220.

cross-linguistic influence. When these renditions of the Constance story are read collectively, they reveal how readily maritime networks facilitate fluid traversals of tongues and texts. A polyglot nexus of trade and travel encompassing the North Sea as well as the Mediterranean—challenges us to think beyond binary modes of textual comparison and to explore concurrent, overlapping, and circuitous networks of linguistic transformation.

Channel Crossings: Charles d'Orléans and the Limits of *Translatio*

This chapter concludes with a poet who traverses the Channel while producing a multilingual oeuvre, although this time it is a traveler of a different sort. Unlike the writers discussed above, the poet Charles d'Orléans is neither an urban professional nor a merchant but an aristocrat. A prince of the house of Valois, Charles was born in Paris during the Hundred Years' War between England and France. Taken captive at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 and transported by the English across the Channel as a prisoner of war, Charles enjoyed a degree of free movement around London and other parts of England, but was not allowed to return to France proper until 1440.⁴³ Although Charles began his career writing French poetry, he acquired knowledge of English during his captivity and started to write poetry in English as well.44

Although it may appear strange to discuss an aristocratic poet at this point, Charles's life and work—and, most importantly, his overseas travels—connect him to poets discussed earlier in this chapter. In 1433, for instance, Charles stayed in the "custody" of the Earl of Suffolk and his wife, Alice Chaucer, granddaughter of the English poet; some have suggested it was here that Charles was first introduced to the work of Geoffrey Chaucer (who, interestingly enough, was also a prisoner of war at one time and, like Charles, the subject of ransom negotiations between England and

- 43. For a chronology of major events (and locations) in the poet's life, see Fortunes Stabilnes: Charles of Orleans's English Book of Love, ed. Mary-Jo Arn (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1994), 22–27. Here I say "France proper," since Charles did cross the Channel in 1433 but only as far as Calais (at the time, an English possession).
- 44. Current critical consensus holds that Charles is indeed the author of both the English and French versions of these poems. Anne E. B. Coldiron offers a persuasive case for this approach in Canon, Period, and the Poetry of Charles of Orleans: Found in Translation (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 14–16.

France).⁴⁵ One may find, as well, noticeable affinities between Charles's French *balades* and Gower's *Cinkante Balades* (see chapter 3).⁴⁶

Charles's cross-Channel movements, and the ever-turning tides of war, can be readily traced throughout his poetry; some verses even comment directly upon the fluid and ever-shifting geopolitical landscape of his era. For instance, Balade 76 rejoices in the recovery of Guyenne and Normandy by the French, apostrophizing France while vilifying the English.⁴⁷ Other poems adopt a more personal tone. Written during his imprisonment in England, Balade 114 laments a long period of separation from France:

En regardant vers le païs de France,
Un jour m'avint, a Dovre sur la mer,
Qu'il me souvint de la doulce plaisance
Que souloye ou dit pays trouver,
Si commençay de cueur a souspirer,
Combien certes que grant bien me faisoit
De voir France que mon cueur amer doit. (1–7)

[While gazing toward the country of France, one day at Dover by the sea, I recalled the sweet pleasure I used to find in that country. And so from the heart I began to sigh, even though it certainly did me much good to look at France, which my heart should love.]⁴⁸

Gazing over the Channel toward France while standing at the cliffs of Dover, Charles effects a subtle shift in lyric convention. He mildly personifies the "pays" as his love: "France que mon cueur amer doit" (7). The hope for peace and eventual return to his homeland—and not a lady's favor—provides relief to the poet-lover's inward longing:

Alors chargay en la nef d'Esperance

- 45. See Arn, 41, and footnote 106.
- 46. See Arn, 44-45.
- 47. "Comment voy je ses Anglois esbaÿs!" [How I see the English confounded!], B76 in Arn and Fox (Champion B101, MS p. 124). My citation and numbering of the French balades follow Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle: A Critical Edition of BnF MS. Fr. 25458, Charles d'Orléans's Personal Manuscript, ed. by Mary-Jo Arn and John Fox, with English translations by R. Barton Palmer, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 383; Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance 34 (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS and Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2010). See also Charles d'Orléans: Poésies, ed. Pierre Champion, Classiques Français du Moyen Age 34, 56. 2 vols. (Paris, 1923–1927).
- 48. The English translations of Charles follow the edition by Arn and Fox, but at times I silently modify the punctuation.

Tous mes souhaitz, en leur priant d'aler Oultre la mer, sans faire demourance, Et a France de me recommander; Or nous doint Dieu bonne paix sans tarder! Adonc auray loisir, mais qu'ainsi soit, De voir France que mon cueur amer doit. (15–21)

Then I loaded all my desires into the ship of Hope, entreating them to make their way over the sea, not stopping, and recommend me to France. May God grant us a good peace without delay! Then I'll have the chance if it is so—to look at France, which my heart should love.]

Not only does this poem transmute the love object from "ma dame" into "le pays," but Charles also artfully reworks a long-standing trope of lyric poetry in the process (love as tempest).⁴⁹ Here, the poet loads his wishes ("mes souhaitz") onto the ship of Hope ("la nef d'Esperance") as if they were precious cargo for overseas transit. The envoy even characterizes the ultimate goal of his wishes, peace, as a treasure beyond all others:

Paix est tresor qu'on ne peut trop loer, Je hé guerre, point ne la doy prisier, Destourbé m'a longtemps, soit tort ou droit, De voir France que mon cueur amer doit. (22–25)

Peace is a treasure that can't be overpraised. I hate war, have no reason to esteem it. War has, rightly or wrongly, long made it difficult for me to look at France, which my heart should love!]

Charles's sea-travel allegory artfully combines ships, travel, and complex estimations of value. As the poet exploits a rich metaphorical discourse of sea travel, the poet almost inevitably portrays himself as if he were a merchant or shipman. In other ballades, ship metaphors overtly cast the poet as a sailor.⁵⁰ Openly invoking sea-travel, Balade 28 exploits shipping and cargo imagery for maximum effect:

- 49. Charles uses this tempest metaphor often, in English and in French. Compare Rondeau 49: "The wele and woo of hit doth rolle & daunce/As shippe in see for tepest that veris" (Arn p. 281, MS fol. 84v, 3849–50) and Chanson 49: "Pour les maulx qui y sont doublans,/ Pires que les perilz de mer" [For the ills they contain multiply,/Worse than the perils of the sea] (5-6) (Champion Ch49, MS p. 289).
- 50. See for instance B140, "En tirant d'Orleans a Blois" [In traveling from Orleans to Bois] (Champion B98, MS p. 231).

En la nef de Bonne Nouvelle
Espoir a chargié Reconfort
Pour l'amener de par la belle
Vers mon Cueur qui l'ayme si fort.
A joye puist venir au port
De Desir, et pour tost passer
La mer de Fortune, trouver
Un plaisant vent venant de France,
Où est a present ma maistresse,
Qui est ma doulce souvenance,
Et le tresor de ma lÿesse. (1–11)

[Onto the ship of Good News, Hope has taken Comfort on board so as to take him, in that beauty's name (i.e., in the name of my lady) to my Heart, who loves her so fiercely. May he come with joy to the port of Desire and traverse quickly Fortune's sea, come upon a pleasant wind blowing from France, where at present is my mistress, who is my sweet thought and the treasure of my happiness.]

In this poem Charles characterizes Hope as the one who imports overseas treasure. Hope loads "Reconfort" [Comfort] onto the "nef de Bonne Nouvelle" [ship of Good News], then sails by means of a "plaisant vent venant de France" [pleasant wind blowing from France] toward the poet who is apparently across the Channel in England. Only through Hope's sailing will the good news from the poet-lover's "maistresse," or his "tresor" [treasure], be transported back to the poet's "Cueur" [Heart].

Charles's maritime imagery is quite striking, and his poetic invocation of sea travel qualitatively shifts once again when Charles's poetry crosses into the English language. At some point during his captivity, Charles (for reasons unknown) began to compose poems in English, and the text known as French Balade 28 later transmutes into English Ballade 28:

Ho[ffa howe,] myn hert! the schepe off Freche Tydyng
Hope hath afresht with lusty Recomfort
To cary the fayrist borne lyvyng,
Which is myn hertis lady and cheef resort,
And if he may attayne the ioyfull port
(In self passage, y mene, to his desere),
The See of Fortune playn to his plesere,
A ioly wynd als blowyng into Fraunce

Where now abidyng is my sovl maystres Which is the swete of all my remembraunce And hool tresoure of my worldly gladnes. (1037–47)⁵¹

When this ballade is translated into Middle English, Charles achieves a shift in perspective. His new language choice squarely resituates the poetic speaker on the English "side" of the Channel. In addition, the poet reverses the trajectory of the "schepe" once his poem crosses into new linguistic territory. Whereas the English "Hert . . . may attayne the joyfull port . . . to his desere" and cross over the "See of Fortune" by means of a "ioly wind . . . blowyng into Fraunce" (1044), the French "Cueur" may arrive at the port of "Desir" by means of a wind coming from France: "Un plaisant vent venant de France" (8). In other words, the English rendition narrates Hert's outward journey (toward France), and the French version narrates Cueur's return (into England). Pairing the French and English counterparts to this poem reveals a symmetrical beauty and reciprocity, and Charles achieves nuanced shifts in perspective not only through his shift in language choice but also through his prepositions. When read as an English/French pair, the two poems reveal a speaker in a ship ambiguously positioned over the nationless waters of the Channel: a poet held, as if in suspended animation, between the lands of England and France.

This shift in wind direction marks a relatively subtle distinction between the two poems, but the English ballade also diverges from its French counterpart in other more palpable ways. First, the English poem reconfigures the relationship between the allegorical figures within the narrative. In the French, "Espoir" [Hope] loads up "Reconfort" [Comfort] and transports it to the lover's "Cueur" [Heart]. In the English, the lover gives encouragement to his "Hert," reporting that "Hope" is transporting "Recomfort" in the other direction on his Heart's behalf. Second, the movement into Middle English requires a wholesale transformation of the metrical structure of the French balade. Charles extends octosyllabic French lines into Middle English pentameter by inserting adjectives ("lusty Recomfort," "sovl maystres," "hool tresoure," "worldly gladnes"). In addition, Charles employs a colloquial expression (not present in the French) to launch the newly formed poem: "Ho[ffa howe,] myn hert!" [Heave ho, my heart!] (1037). In the English rendition, Charles aligns his speaker closely with a shipman or merchant. The "Bonne Nouvelle" [Good News] of the French balade moreover transmutes into "Freche Tydyng" (up-to-date or recent news) in English, and Charles shifts the reader's focus from the *content* of reported news to the *swiftness* of these "tidynges" themselves. In its English form, the poem represents "tidynges" as the moveable commodity that Middle English texts so readily associate with merchants.

Charles's translingual oeuvre—and his abiding interest in ships, sea travel, "tidynges," and trade—attests to the aristocratic poet's willingness to exploit available tropes of maritime trade within a courtly lyric form. It is in some respects unsurprising that this poet would adopt a stance so close to a merchant persona in this French/English ballade pair. After all, Charles does traverse the Channel in his life and work in a way that could resemble the movements of the traveling merchant-shipman Hert/Cueur. Charles begins as a writer of French lyrics in France, crosses the Channel to compose French poetry in England, translates some of his French poems into English, and then crosses back into France.⁵²

There are many times in the poetry of Charles when the imagined geospatial coordinates are relatively clear (we are on either side of the sea at Dover/Calais or England/France), but at other times the poet gives few clues to orient the reader. Complainte 4, for instance, begins: "L'autrier en ung lieu me trouvay,/Triste, pensif et doloreux" [The other day I found myself in a place, where I was sad, contemplative, and filled with pain] (1–2), and the poet offers no clear sense of what sort of "lieu" [place] he inhabits.⁵³ When the poet moves into more readily identifiable urban and domestic spaces, Charles suggests the proximity between the figure of the merchant and the poetic speaker. Balade 139, for instance, personifies Heart or "Cueur" as a personal accountant or steward who reports back to the aristocratic poet on the status of finances.⁵⁴

In this *complainte*, the poet's heart speaks to him "en secret" [in private] (2), and "en parlant lui demendoye/Se point d'espargne fait avoit/D'aucuns biens, quant Amours servoit" [while conversing I asked him if he'd laid by any savings while in Love's service] (3–5). Cueur replies that he must consult his records: "Il me dit que tresvoulentiers/La verité m'en compteroit,/Mais qu'eust visité ses papiers" (5–8) [Very willingly he affirmed he'd

^{52.} On the production and movements of Charles's major English and French manuscripts, see Mary-Jo Arn, "Two Manuscripts, One Mind: Charles d'Orléans and the Production of Manuscripts in Two Languages (Paris, BN MS fr. 25458 and London, BL MS Harley 682)," in Charles d'Orléans in England, 1415–1440, ed. Mary-Jo Arn (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 61–78. For a full analysis of the French manuscript, see Arn, The Poet's Notebook: The Personal Manuscript of Charles d'Orléans (Paris BnF fr. 25458), Texts and Translations 3 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2008).

^{53.} Arn and Fox, p. 308 (Champion CoV, MS p. 306).

^{54.} Arn and Fox, p. 300 (Champion B97, MS p. 229).

recount to me the truth, if he could first review his papers]. After opening up his "comptouer" [cabinet] (12) and "cherchant plusieurs vieulx cayers" [looking for some old notebooks] (14), Cueur brings his book to his master, makes calculations, and concludes that the lover has gained nothing (even if some profit would have been expected): "prouffit n'eust plus grant exploit" [there should be no great accruing of profit] (36).

Balade 142, written down in the manuscript containing Charles's French works after his return to France, marks another intriguing foray into non-aristocratic professional jargon.⁵⁵ Employing mixed-language French/Latin verse to assume the voice of a medical practitioner, the poet gives advice on sexual intercourse to newlyweds (Latin is italicized here):

Bon regime sanitatis Pro vobis, neuf en mariage, Ne de vouloirs effrenatis, Abusez nimis en mesnage; Sagaciter menez l'ouvrage, Ainsi fait homo sapiens, Testibus les phisiciens.

[A fine regime of good health For you who are new to marriage: Living together, do not abuse The desire you feel, now unbridled. Wisely carry out the work. The wise man does so, According to physicians. (1–7)

In breaking out of an elevated register that often characterizes courtly French formes fixes, the poet's address to newlyweds counsels them to refrain from overindulging in sex, even though the performance of the reciprocal "marriage debt" is a right that spouses may justly claim. ⁵⁶ There is a jocular quality to this use of Latin within a French form, as the Latin pops in and out unexpectedly. This fluid exchange between Latin and French rivals the deft deployment of languages of the macaronic Harley lyric that began this chapter. As this verse takes the "heigh style" of the fixed French balade form, the unpredictable shift in this poem's language builds to the punchline of the poem's envoy: "Prince, miscui en potaige/ Latinum et françois langaige,/Docens loiaulx advisemens" [Prince, I have mixed up a stew of Latin and French, giving sound advice (22–25).

^{55.} Arn and Fox, 304 (Champion B104, MS p. 233). Charles's manuscript of French works includes mixed-language poetry (French poems incorporating some Latin and a bit of Italian), and this poem bears a rubric ascribing authorship to Charles himself rather than one of his contemporaries. See Arn, Poet's Notebook, 168-69.

^{56. &}quot;Premierement, caveatis/De coitu trop a oultraige;/Car, se souvent hoc agatis,/Conjunx le vouldra par usaige/Chalenger, velud heritaige" [More important, take care not to have intercourse too much, for if you do so often, your wife will be eager to claim it as her right] (8-12).

Such moments of departure from "high" language are indeed striking, but the non-aristocratic identifications they invite are ultimately transitory and fleeting. Charles appropriates rich motifs of sea travel and he subtly transmutes merchant discourses, but the poet is also capable of mischievously deploying professional jargon to satirical ends. His collection of English ballades, steeped in courtly culture of the French tradition (on St. Valentine's Day, Youth awakens the poet who eventually vows service to the God of Love, and allegorical figures populate the narrative sequence), includes a peculiar encounter between Venus and the lover. In this exchange, Venus openly condemns mercantile thinking through an ironic deployment of the merchant's own language. She addresses the lover as a marchant:

I haue espide ye, marchaunt, at the fayre, (Ye lust not on a sympil market see!)
That cast yow to engros vp such a payre
As that yowre ladi was, this semeth me,
And now this same, which lakith no bewte.
Ye wold ben ditid sothely, were this knowe,
As for a regrater of the fayre, y trowe. (5114–20)

Venus mocks the lover's active pursuit of ladies in the marketplace of love. Sarcastically addressing him as a large-scale "marchaunt" at a trade fair (as opposed to a "sympil market"), she likens the lover to a monopolist ("regrater") who would buy up all the supplies of a commodity so he might raise prices later. As the lover-merchant pursues a "payre" of maidens, he deliberates over which one (if any) he will retain. By calling the lover a "marchaunt" in this case, Venus not only mocks the lover's own self-importance and self-interestedness, but also his fickle nature. After all, the lover enters back into the "market" of love even though he previously claimed to forswear love-pursuits: "I wend that ye wold neuyr bie nor selle/ Such litill ware, but ye it had forswore" (5121–22).

As this is a heavily ironic appellation of the lover as "marchaunt," the designation carries a consciously figurative (nonliteral) charge throughout. Like Chaucer or Gower—urban writers who readily inhabit available professional discourses—Charles shifts into vocational registers to evoke identifiable urban spaces, including the "comptouer" [cabinet or office], the "mesnage" [marital household], and the market "fayre." This being said, Charles effects a careful, nuanced detachment from non-aristocratic discourses. He experiments with a range of noncourtly registers, but he

does so only through the veil of allegory (as in the "ship of Hope" imagery), across fictive social difference (as in the interaction between the aristocrat-poet and the steward-accountant "Cueur"), or in a pointed ironic tone (e.g., the rebuke of Venus).

As skillfully as the poet moves across languages, one must be very careful not to overstate the flexibility of Charles's vernacular bilingualism. His oeuvre as a whole negotiates the languages of English and French in a lopsided, highly unequal fashion. Many of his French lyrics appear to have formed the basis for English counterparts, but it is less readily apparent how many poems in English inspired French rewritings.⁵⁷ And both versions of the English/French pair discussed above, however subtle their internal differences may be, still express one consistent geo-affective longing: a desire a return to continental France. The degree to which Charles valued his English versus French writings might very well be tracked by the trans-Channel movements of his major texts over time. Charles carried the manuscript of his French ballades with him into England and also transported it back with him when he returned to France, but he left his unfinished codex of English poetry behind in England at the time he finally traversed the Channel.⁵⁸

Charles's attitudes regarding the relative cultural status of English and French as vernacular literary languages could be read as socially conservative. Charles, high in the line of French royal succession, orchestrates the transport of his English and French texts along the lines of national and political allegiance as well as of conventional sociolinguistic perceptions: high-prestige French is portable, but humble English is not. In contrast with the mixed-language writing of poets more closely aligned with a mercantile milieu, the work of Charles, however playful, suggests a comparatively rigid view of language hierarchies. Charles effects a skilled traversal of French and English vernaculars, but—as befits an imprisoned aristocrat—the poet moves within carefully circumscribed limits.

Mobile Tongues, Oceanic Trajectories

In this chapter we have seen how maritime travel generates a range of strategies for translingual poetic creation on both sides of the Channel,

^{57.} For a complete list of the English ballades and their French counterparts, see Arn, Fortunes Stabilnes.

^{58.} See Arn, "Two Manuscripts, One Mind."

offering numerous opportunities to imagine writing in transit. Multilingual poetry in particular powerfully aligns language traversal with mobile subjectivities, and overseas trade networks can inform everything from the material circumstances of poetic production (Harley lyrics), to the transport and circulation of narratives (the Constance narratives of Chaucer, Gower, and Boccaccio), to the more imaginative projections of a captive aristocrat (Charles d'Orléans). In other words, the Harley lyricist, the English and French poetic speaker of Charles, and reincarnations of seafaring Constance (Gostanza, Couste, Custance) convey a restless sense of motion. Maritime trade provokes writers to entertain surprisingly flexible notions of affective attachment to a language or a homeland.

From a linguistic standpoint, the mixed-language narrative strategies employed by medieval writers—including interweaving Latin/French and English lines, infusing seemingly monolingual texts with multilingual puns, and narrating fictional speakers' movements across linguistic communities—challenge us to reexamine the implicitly linear models by which we often conceive of language acquisition in the first place. Such literary trajectories do not follow a clear progression from one language or culture into another; nor do they necessarily chart movement in a single direction from one "native" tongue into a second (or even third) acquired tongue. Modern terminology for discourse strategies in areas of historical language contact, such as "code-switching," "lexical borrowing," or contemporary sociolinguistic terminology like "language crossing," can take us quite far in framing our discussions of the rich traversal of tongues enacted by people around the globe. 59 By tracing the capacity of languages to shift into one another or transfer lexicon or other features from one to another and back again, such approaches—seemingly a distance removed from literary writing per se—explore the reciprocal and mutually informing interplay between languages in a wide range of social contexts.

Perhaps literary scholars, for our part, may benefit from theorizing language use as if we were medieval poets. Inhabiting the subjectivity of polyglot subjects directly, we might allow for two (or more) languages to coexist in a simultaneous, coordinated fashion rather than assuming an interpretive framework in which languages must alternate, replace, or supplant one another over time. Mixed-language poetry in particular chal-

^{59.} On "language crossing" in linguistic anthropology, see Constant Leung, Roxy Harris, and Ben Rampton, "The Idealized Native Speaker, Reified Ethnicities, and Classroom Realities," in *Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader, 2nd Edition*, ed. Alessandro Duranti (Singapore: Blackwell, 2009), 137–50, esp. 140.

lenges its readers to recognize the messy multidirectionality that informs textual creation as a whole. For translingual writers (as well as mariners), any point of arrival in a text—be it a momentary shift into another register, or even a turn to a different language—may very well serve as a future point of departure.

A sustained investigation of translingual writing in the past, most profoundly, allows us to circumvent implicit national boundaries that haunt comparatist scholarship to this day. Robert M. Stein notes that medieval literary studies and comparative literature both "[bear] the burden of . . . nationalist ghost[s]" and "[preserve] national boundaries in the act of comparison even as [they] would transgress them in theory."60 Throughout this book, I have suggested that our understanding of translingual writing is best informed by attending to not only the "roots" but also to the "routes" of medieval culture; that is, we should pay careful attention to how language use is informed by local practices as well as how languages themselves are shaped and transformed through dispersal across space. Medieval narratives that predate or otherwise unsettle modern-day national boundaries have the potential to inspire us to think beyond discrete "landlocked" cultural or linguistic perspectives, and to explore the myriad potential of transnational spaces: contact zones as boundless—and dynamic—as the sea itself. 61 In the end, translingual medieval writing challenges us to consider both the territorial "roots" and oceanic "routes" that language is capable of taking.

^{60.} Robert M. Stein, "Multilingualism," in Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature: Middle English, ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 23–37, at 35.

^{61.} On the rich potential of "oceanic studies" in literary contexts across space and time, see Margaret Cohen, "Literary Studies on the Terraqueous Globe," PMLA 125, 3 (May 2010): 657-62, and the essays following in this volume.



Translingual Identities in John Gower and William Caxton

The Poet and the Printer

Although their life spans did not overlap, the works of poet John Gower (c. 1330–1408) and his first printer, William Caxton (c. 1421–1492), intertwine through their shared self-presentation as textual creators who worked across multiple tongues. Gower's oeuvre spans French, Latin, and English, and during his lifetime the poet constructed a trilingual literary persona. Ambitious, even ostentatious, testaments to his polyglot character comprise his legacy: not only a number of illustrated, deluxe manuscripts containing his poetry, but also a tomb that features a Latin elegiac inscription on its base, a canopy with French couplets, and an effigy with the poet's head resting upon three books.¹

William Caxton's 1483 print edition of Gower's Confessio Amantis (STC 12142) carefully engages with Gower's multilingual persona, appending to the English text a Latin poem *Eneidos bucolis* (fol. CCxi recto). It notes that Gower, like Virgil, produced three major works—but his work

1. On Gower's tomb, see John Hines et al., "Iohannes Gower, Armiger, Poeta: Records and Memorials of his Life and Death," in A Companion to Gower, ed. Sîan Echard (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 23–41. On Gower's polyglot persona, see Tim William Machan, "Medieval Multilingualism and Gower's Linguistic Practice," Studies in Philology 103, 1 (Winter 2006): 1–25, esp. 4.

surpasses Virgil's, encompassing three languages: "Gallica lingua prius, Latina secunda, set ortus/Lingua tui pocius Anglica complet opus" [first in the French tongue, Latin second, then English, the language of your birth, completes the work] (11–12).² In his famous preface to his 1490 edition of Eneydos (STC 24796), Caxton adopts his own Virgilian logic of trilingual progression: he relates the epic's movement from Latin to French to its present English form. Like Gower, Caxton considers his own legacy at a late stage in his life, and his preface even asks how "diuersite & chaunge of langage" (A1v)—linguistic transformation over space and time—might affect future readers of his printed works.³

This chapter examines how Gower and Caxton conceived their own status as translingual writers. That is, it explores how the poet and the printer crafted polyglot literary personas, carefully reflecting upon their own modes of adapting—and producing—texts across many languages. Gower's trifold self-presentation retroactively characterizes his own career as a progression from one language to another, belying a messier, more dynamic modus operandi. Throughout his oeuvre, the poet experiments with a manifold voice; e.g., he composes early and late works in French even while revising works in English and in Latin; some of his works are bilingual (Latin/French or English/Latin); and some Gower manuscripts are trilingual, eschewing any tidy segregation of tongues.⁴ Caxton, the first to set Gower in print, is typically deemed the first English printer, but such a title obscures his diverse, peripatetic career. In Cologne, Caxton helped produce texts in Latin while translating texts from French to English; in Bruges, he printed works in French and in English; and in Westminster, he printed a bilingual manual for overseas travelers (his English/French Dialogues, c. 1483). Our common perception of Gower and Caxton as foundational "English" figures says much about our desire to streamline their career paths and place them along a linear—and monoglot—path of literary historiography: a narrative that culminates in the arrival of English literature upon the global stage.⁵

- 2. On the status of this poem's attribution to Gower, see Machan, 4.
- 3. On the Eneydos preface, see William Kuskin, Symbolic Caxton: Literary Culture and Print Capitalism (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 258-61 and 279-81.
- 4. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Fairfax 3 contains Confessio Amantis (English), the Traitié (French), and shorter Latin poems. London, British Library, MS Additional 59495 (formerly the Trentham MS) contains "In Praise of Peace" (English), Cinkante Balades (French), and Latin poems.
 - 5. On the "normative monolingualism" underlying Anglophone literary and linguis-

This chapter argues that Gower and Caxton both exploit merchant discourses and related aspects of urban life to construct a literary persona that is deliberately translingual, emphasizing a capacity to write and think in more than one language concurrently. My approach here is a comparative one: I trace, through a series of close readings, these writers' shared interests in the commercial and literary life of London—particularly the activities of the Mercers and major guilds. Most importantly, I offer a sustained assessment of Gower's polyglot persona and Caxton's literary ambitions. Not only does the printer resonate with Gower in articulating a literary identity crafted across many tongues, but he also shares the poet's interest in what might later be called sociolinguistic theory. Through first-person prologues and autobiographical excurses, Gower and Caxton develop innovative discourses for discussing cross-linguistic exchange and literary production, and each invests a considerable amount of thought into how his own translingualism informs an ever-shifting literary persona.

John Gower and London's Legal Languages

One of Gower's later works is a sequence of eighteen French balades, known to modern scholars as the Traitié (c. 1385–1390).⁶ It ends with an envoy sending the work off to an imagined global audience, "l'université de tout le monde" [the community of the entire world], with this qualification: "si jeo n'ai de François la faconde,/Pardonetz moi qe jeo de ceo forsvoie:/Jeo sui Englois, si quier par tiele voie/Estre excusé" [if I don't have eloquence in French, pardon me when I go astray with it; I'm English—thus I seek in such a way to be excused] (XVII.23–27). The poet imagines his lyric poems reaching a wide audience (e.g., anyone in the world, in England or the Continent, who reads French), but he tempers this ambition with a seemingly obligatory humility topos: his French isn't perfect. Accompanying this passage in the manuscripts is an authorial Latin gloss: "Hic in fine Gower, qui Anglicus est, sua verba Gallica, si que incongrua fuerint, excusat" [here in the end Gower, who is English, excuses (or apologizes for)

tic historiography, see Mary Catherine Davidson, Medievalism, Multilingualism, and Chaucer (New York: Palgrave, 2010), 1–14.

^{6.} Surviving manuscripts characterize this work as a "traitié selonc les auctours pour essampler les amantz marietz" [a treatise, following the authorities, as an example for married lovers]. On the poem's dating, see *John Gower: The French Balades*, ed. and trans. R. F. Yeager (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 2009), 9. All French citations from Gower's French *balades* follow Yeager, but I have occasionally altered some of his English translations.

his French words if any of them should appear incongrua, e.g., ill-fitting, inappropriate, or discordant]. We see in this moment a complex triangulation of languages: a rubric, in Latin, qualifies the English poet's mastery of French. Moreover, an implicit spatial metaphor undergirds this disclaimer. The English poet, who does not consider himself a native speaker of French, risks straying from a perceived straight "path" of a properly fashioned (courtly or Continental) style of French writing.

The poet's closing gambit artfully balances ambition and humility, and in its dense brevity this Latin gloss invites multiple interpretations. Anglicus, for instance, could signify national or cultural identity (or both), and incongrua could be read in many ways: e.g., suggesting a lack of "fit" between an English ethnic identity and writing in French, or implying that an anglicized variety of French is somehow ill-suited to a Continental courtly form. Most profoundly, this passage registers Gower's own awareness that French is an acquired language. The poetic speaker diplomatically preempts any criticism (by hypothetical Continental readers) of his imperfect French idiom, and the marginal rubric even hedges its bets with the Latin subjunctive mood.

In this late work, Gower exhibits a mature, nuanced way of thinking about his own poetic voice, and the deliberative tone of his writing conveys his sensitivity to the varieties of French written in his day. The poet recognizes internal varieties of French and does not conceive it as a monolithic, uniform language. That his Latin gloss expresses anxiety for his "verba Gallica . . . incongrua" [ill-fitting French words] is all the more striking since this text is one of the poet's later works. We shall soon see that an abiding concern across Gower's oeuvre is how an English writer contends with French, a vernacular that is simultaneously familiar (used on an everyday, professional basis) but also subjectively felt to be artificial: a language that is apparently experienced—even later in life—as an acquired, second tongue.

We can now go back in time to Gower's first major work (begun in the early 1360s, completed in the late 1370s), which claims a number of possible titles. Most familiar to modern scholars by its French title Mirour de l'Omme or Latin equivalent Speculum Hominis [Mirror of Mankind], it also bears an alternate Latin title Speculum Meditantis [Mirror of One Meditating]. The Mirour was composed in a non-Continental variety of

7. The French title is derived from the surviving manuscript of the work (British Library MS Additional 59495); the Latin title is inscribed on one of the books under the head of Gower's tomb effigy (St. Mary Overie, Southwark). On the poem's dating, see R. F. Yeager, "John Gower's French," in Companion to Gower, ed. Echard, 137-51, esp. 142.

French variously called Anglo-Norman, Anglo-French, or "the French of England," to name a few possible designations.⁸ However we categorize the poet's variety of French, Gower was certainly well versed in Continental formes fixes. In the Mirour, Gower finds octosyllabic verse (rather than balade stanzas) his preferred vehicle for an ambitious project.

This poem exhorts all estates of humanity to engage in ethical reform, and its treatment of London's educated working classes (members of the legal profession and "l'estat des Marchans," including merchants, artisans, and victuallers) comprises the most expanded treatment of any social grouping in the poem. In this section, Gower foregrounds the close affinity between lawyers and merchants: "qui voldroit au droit descrire/Les pledours et les advocatz/Dirroit mervailles en ce cas:/Car quique vent, ils font purchas" [whoever would correctly describe lawyers and advocates, would speak marvels in this case—for whoever sells, they make the acquisition, i.e., gain the profit (24809-12). Gower obliquely suggests the profit motive shared by lawyers and merchants (exploiting the exchange of goods and services for material gain), and the poet hints at the considerable overlap between the city's professional discourses, including "business French" and "law French." By launching his first major endeavor in a specialized register of French—the lingua franca of law courts, guilds, and business affairs—Gower crafts a social critique with the potential to resonate with an urban professional audience.

If French is not his native tongue, just where did Gower acquire it? A much-cited reference to a sleeved garment, commonly worn by men of law, suggests Gower's prior training in the legal profession: "je ne suy pas clers,/ Vestu de sanguin ne de pers,/Ainz vestu la raye mance" [I am not a cleric, arrayed in scarlet or blue cloth; rather, I am dressed in striped sleeves] (21772–74). In this first-person statement, the poetic speaker foregrounds language acquisition as part and parcel of his professional training: "Poy sai latin, poy sai romance" [I know a little Latin, a little French] (21774). Gower's thinly veiled allusion to vocational identity takes the form of a metonymic reference to clothing as well as a tongue-in-cheek acknowledgment of an imperfect acquisition (or functional, working knowledge) of two prestige languages used in legal proceedings. The sonic correspondence between "raye mance" [striped sleeves] and "romance" [Romance

^{8.} For the varying terminologies for French used in England, and Gower's French as "one French idiolect in a landscape of varying Frenches" (18), see the introduction in Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al., eds., *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England*, c. 1100–c. 1500 (Rochester, NY: York Medieval Press, 2009), 1–13 and 17–18.

language, i.e., French further aligns the phenomena of clothing and language, imbuing the poetic speaker with a learned professional habitus or fictive legal persona.9

One seldom-acknowledged moment in the Mirour warrants closer examination, as it links this phenomenon of "law French" to the poet's own command of languages. Chiding lawyers who tell clients what they want to hear (or say what they're paid to say), the poet states: "Qant nay dirra, dirront nenil/Qant dist oil, si dirront il" [When he says "no" they say "no"/When he says "yes," they say "yes" (25063-64). Lawyers can argue both sides of any issue (yes/no, pro/contra), and a lawyer's disregard for the truth is characterized thus: "Deux langes porte en un testier" [he carries two tongues in one head] (25079). In this rebuke of lawyers, Gower invokes the perception that arcane legal language—a specialized variety of French jargon—could signal (or mask) duplicity.

Such a charge against lawyers may seem conventional, but Gower's poetry exhibits a more complex feature: the poet consciously engages the bivernacular social context of legal discourse in England. In The Parliament of Fowls, Gower's contemporary Chaucer asks: "How shulde a Juge eyther party leve,/For yee or nay, with-outen any preve?" (496-67), and The Parson's Tale rebukes false oaths in similar terms: "But seyth by youre word 'ye, ye,' and 'nay, nay'; and what that is moore, it is of yvel" (589).10 In such moments Chaucer's poetry evokes parliamentary debate and pleading in English, but Gower's writing suggests that pleading could also have been conducted in French. Even if English words "yea" or "nay" were used in proceedings, the written trace (i.e., official record) of such utterances would have been set down in legal French, i.e., in the formalized equivalents "oil" and "nenil." Gower's rebuke of lawyers slyly combines two vernaculars: the English and French words for yes and no. Disrupting a tidy pairing of terms, "nay" pairs with "nenil" and "oil" accompanies "il." In other words, Gower's "yes-men" speak two tongues.

- 9. On Gower's legal persona as a Bourdieuvian habitus, see Candace Barrington, "John Gower's Legal Advocacy and 'In Praise of Peace," in John Gower, Trilingual Poet: Language, Translation, and Tradition, eds. Elisabeth Dutton, John Hines, and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), 112-25. See also the discussion of Westminster's legal world in London Lickpenny, discussed in my introduction.
- 10. Chaucer citations follow The Riverside Chaucer, 3rd Edition, gen. ed. Larry Benson, with intro. by Christopher Cannon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
- 11. See W. Mark Ormrod, "The Language of Complaint: Multilingualism and Petitioning in Later Medieval England," in French of England, eds. Wogan-Browne et al., 31-43. Note the utterance "Nenyl sieur . . . " in Chaucer's deposition (see chapter 1).

For Gower, bilingualism exceeds a mere trope for professional duplicity. This unequal pairing of English and French words evokes Gower's own lopsided vernacular bilingualism. Like the lawyer, the poet's speaking persona carries "deux langues . . . en un testier" [two tongues in one head], sustaining two languages within a single mind. As strange as it might seem to a modern reader, the professional practices of lawyers provide Gower with a ripe opportunity to explore the phenomenon of literary bilingualism. Lawyers, like poets, are shrewd translingual mediators: multiple-voiced, they convert the discourse of others into new, stylized forms. Gower's "autobiographical" excursus, pivoting into a seemingly tangential discussion of the legal profession, grants Gower permission to explore the messy contours of his own vernacular bilingualism.

Gower is carefully attuned to how English and French vernaculars coexisted within London's legal spheres. The city's guilds and craft communities—richly evoked later in the Mirour—maximized the linguistic resources they had at their disposal, strategically managing two vernaculars (alongside Latin) in the many petitions they submitted to the Crown. The Silkwomen of London, for instance, was a group of widows or wives of merchants and aldermen who conducted trade in their own right, even accepting other women as apprentices.¹² Although they were never formally recognized as a guild (nor eligible for civic office), they produced petitions that feature carefully wrought language packing considerable force. In 1368, around the time Gower began the Mirour, the Silkwomen petitioned the King to limit the competition of foreign merchants. In the surviving French document, "les poures femmes appellez Silkwymmen de Loundres" [the poor women called the Silkwomen of London] accuse Nicholas Sardouche, a Lombard trader, of conspiring with "merchauntz aliens" [foreign traders] in a scheme to "forstaller et regrater . . . toute la soie [de] la dite citee" [buy up and resell all the silk in the city] and drive up the price, "en greuous enhancement du prys ducelles" [in serious increase of the value of the said commodity]. 13 These actions cause "[grant] damage" [severe harm] to both "vous nostre seigneur le Roi" [you, our lord the

^{12.} See Sylvia Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, 1300–1500 (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1948, repr. 1989), 170; see also Marian K. Dale, "The London Silk Women of the Fifteenth Century," *Economic History Review* 4, 3 (October 1933): 324–35, esp. 325–27.

^{13.} PRO Coram Rege Roll 33, m. 19 Rex, also qtd. in Alice Beardwood, Alien Merchants in England, 1350–1377: Their Legal and Economic Position (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1930), 82–83.

King] and the "poures femmes" [poor women], who now seek a "remedie" for these wrongs.

The process of petition writing was complex, both linguistically and logistically, as complaints arising in the "common voice" were heavily mediated—transformed into French, and in other cases again into Latin, by a network of scribes, city officials, and legal professionals. 14 This collective documentary utterance, duly entered into civic records, is a largely conventional French-language petition. But its very conventionality is precisely what enables this petition to achieve an unusual goal: setting a female collective of Silkwomen on equal standing with established maledominated London guilds. This French document additionally achieves extralegal effects through rhetorical formulae. Its opening gambit, "A nostre tresredoute lige seigneur le Roi prient les poures femmes appellez Silkwymmen" [the poor women, called the Silkwomen, pray to our most renowned liege lord the Kingl, mobilizes the adjacent discourse of the literary complaint, constructing a collectively victimized body of women who beseech a high-status male to intercede on their behalf. Establishing a legal fiction veering close to feminine discourse in romances, these women humbly beseech protection from a "lige seigneur" against a malicious collectivity of "alien" men. Most importantly, the high style allows the prose to slip seamlessly into an aristocratic register. Deliberately formulaic, the petition's hyperbolic terms for the King and city officials ("notre tresredoute lige seigneur le Roi . . . maire et Aldermans . . . vous notre seigneur le Roi . . . notre dit seigneur le Roi") amplify the vertical hierarchical distance between the men in power and poor little women ("les poures femmes") who submit the petition.¹⁵

This French text thus positions the King as mediator between the Silkwomen and their Italian (male) rivals, and the Silkwomen mobilize gendered as well as ethnolinguistic difference to advance their political interests. 16 Even if the Silkwomen originally recounted grievances in

- 14. "[P]etitions were written on behalf of the plaintiffs by experts—scriveners, legal attorneys, men of law and sometimes king's clerks—who set the complainant's narrative into a more specialist discourse of remedy that was designed to prompt particular actions by the crown" (Ormrod, "The Language of Complaint," 32).
- 15. On the "use of superlatives and metaphors of vertical height" and the "sense of distance between subject and king" in high courtly style, see Ardis Butterfield, "Chaucer's French Inheritance," in the Cambridge Companion to Chaucer, 2nd Edition, eds. Piero Boitani and Jill Mann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 20–35, at 22.
- 16. Indeed, the phrase "poure femmes [de] Silkwymmen" is a curiously redundant bilingual designation (it doubly emphasizes the group's gender).

English, their plea for a "remedie" has not only been duly converted into appropriate "legalese" but it has also been transformed into an artful, stylized form of French intended to achieve maximum effect. This petition succeeded.¹⁷

Comparing this Silkwomen's petition to a later document submitted on behalf of a male collective, the Mercers, provides additional insight into the relationship between language choice and the idiosyncratic goals of London petitions. The Mercers' Petition of 1386 records the guild's grievances against Mayor Nicholas Brembre, and it too exploits language for rhetorical and political impact. Whereas the petition of the "poures femmes [de] Silkwymmen" adopts a high style of French—shifting from business to courtly registers—the petition of the powerful men "of the Mercerye" effects a less ornate vernacular style of Middle English. The guild members present themselves as the "folke of the Mercerve of London," a humble posture belying their international connections and high social standing. 18 This modest guise renders the English petition a foil to more grandiloquent proclamations by other guilds. The contrast between the Silkwomen's use of French and the Mercers' use of English marks a curious social phenomenon: the relative prestige of the language in which each petition is written is conspicuously at odds with the relative social status of the collective entities they represent.

The Silkwomen's and Mercers' petitions illustrate some of the strategic advantages a bivernacular landscape could afford urban professionals. Given the underprivileged status of the Silkwomen (an exclusively female pseudo-guild) relative to other mercantile groupings, a high style petition maximizes its efficacy in an elite circuit, and the aristocratic register of its French enables the petition to deploy courtly discourses that further advance the women's cause. The male Mercers, an increasingly prominent guild, work under a different set of expectations: they distance themselves from the political center and obscure their power, rendering their own petition in a consciously "humble" vernacular of Middle English. The Mercers' conspicuously monoglot posture is an exception to multilingual norms of legal discourse. Although the Mercers and Silkwomen certainly worked closely on a daily basis—and they must have, presumably, spoken the same language(s) to one another while conducting their affairs—they

^{17.} For a related discussion based upon a later (English) version of this petition, see Stephanie Trigg, "Ye louely ladies with youre longe fyngres': The Silkwomen of Medieval London," Studia Anglica Posnaniensa 38 (2002): 469–84.

^{18.} A transcription of this petition appears in A Book of London English, 1384–1425, eds. R. W. Chambers and Marjorie Daunt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), 33–37.

made divergent choices in linguistic utterances they had committed to writing. 19 Like the works of Gower, which exploit varieties of French as well as native capacity in English, these petitions engage in careful crosslinguistic negotiation. Both petitions and poems illustrate their makers' abilities to manage language use for strategic, artful effects.²⁰

Gower's Multilingual Merchants

Gower's Mirour inhabits the legal and mercantile milieu of London with striking detail. Not only does his literary satire imbed itself in an environment where vernaculars coexisted, but the poet also suggests the careful negotiations of language choice undertaken every day by merchant-class Londoners. The Mirour delves even further into the city's commercial life through the figure of a multilingual merchant. In the beginning of the "l'estat des Marchans" satire, Gower presents "un Marchant au jour present . . . ad noun Triche" [a Merchant nowadays by the name of Trickery, i.e., Fraud or Cheating who changes his appearance frequently: "il ne chalt par quelle guise [s]on propre lucre vait querant" [he does not care what (dis)guise he takes while seeking personal gain].²¹ This "Marchant" seeks profit in many cities: "Triche en Bourdeaux, Triche en Civile,/Triche en Paris . . . a Florence et a Venise . . . a Brugges et a Gant" and "[1]a noble Cité sur Tamise" [Trickery in Bourdeux, Trickery in Seville, Trickery in Paris . . . in Florence and in Venice . . . in Bruges and in Ghent . . . and the noble City on the Thames].²² As this trickster "Marchant" traverses nations and cultures, he exhibits great skill in language.²³

- 19. Anne Sutton speculates the Silkwomen never formally became a guild because they were already being regulated by the Mercers. Anne Sutton, The Mercery of London: Trade, Goods, and People, 1130-1578 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).
- 20. On the "[overlapping] textual worlds of poets and guilds," see Roger A. Ladd, "The London Mercers' Company, London Textual Culture, and John Gower's Mirour de l'Omme," in Medieval Clothing and Textiles, Vol. 6, eds. Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), 127–50, esp. 134–36.
- 21. All citations from Gower's poetry in this section come from The Complete Works of John Gower, ed. G. C. Macaulay (Oxford: Clarendon, 1899–1902; reprinted Grosse Pointe, MI: Scholarly Press, 1968). For other important readings of Gower's "Triche," see Robert Epstein, "London, Southwark, Westminster: Gower's Urban Contexts," Companion to Gower, ed. Echard, 43-60; Craig Bertelot, "Fraud, Division, and Lies: John Gower and London," in On John Gower: Essays at the Millennium, ed. R. F. Yeager, Studies in Medieval Culture 46 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 2007), 43-70.
 - 22. Mirour, 25237-39, 25244-45.
 - 23. This characteristic is repeated often in the text, as Triche noisily and continuously

In this passage, Gower ascribes to Triche stereotypical attributes drawn from antimercantile satire: namely, the use of disguise ("guise"), pursuit of selfish gain ("propre lucre") over the common good ("commun profuit"), and mastery of "straunge langage" (25257, 25259-60, 25303). Moreover, Triche is well adapted to commercial life in London, the "noble Cité sur Tamise." A multitasker, Triche practices many trades: "Ascune fois Triche est grossour . . . Ascune fois Triche est draper" [sometimes Trickery is a Grocer . . . sometimes Trickery is a Draper, other times a Mercer, Goldsmith, or "[r]iche espicier . . . de nostre ville" [wealthy Spicer of our city]. 24 The poet draws precise distinctions between the city's trades, guilds, and professions, stating that "les mestiers sont infinit,/Nuls puet nombrer la variance" [the trades are infinite and no one could recount them all] (25970-71). Gower's careful deployment of French business jargon transforms his satire into more than an antimercantile convention. Although mestier can connote any profession (craft or trade), this French word is one of two terms (along with compagnye) used by London guilds to identify themselves.²⁵ In launching a rebuke in the voice of an urban "insider," Gower not only aligns the multilingual "Marchant" with multitasking; the poet also signals that the *mestiers* singled out for criticism in the ensuing discussion are some of London's most prominent guilds: Mercers, Grocers, and Goldsmiths.

Gower's engagement with local mercantile practices is most evident not only on the level of narrative but also in his use of specialized vocabulary. Roger Ladd has demonstrated how Gower interweaves Francophone business jargon and courtly discourses throughout the *Mirour*'s description of the mercers. Gower's discussion of Triche-as-Mercer, for instance, reflects perceived connections between the Mercers and fair, courtly speech that potentially disguises fraud; moreover, high-style speech elsewhere in the *Mirour* suggests the Mercers' concerns with their own "courtoisie" and social standing. The excursus on Triche-as-Goldsmith likewise manipulates local guild discourses through a well-conceived vocational allegory.

At the time Gower wrote the Mirour, the Goldsmiths were already a prominent, powerful guild. Not only did they deal with precious metals

hawks his wares (25265 et passim), manipulates language (25267 et passim), and obscurely and subtly quotes prices (25333 et passim).

^{24.} Mirour, 25261-309, 25273, 25513, 25597-98.

^{25.} See Lisa Jefferson, trans. and ed., Wardens' Accounts and Court Minute Books of the Goldsmiths' Mistery of London, 1334–1446 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003). Citations from Goldsmith records (below) follow Jefferson, but I occasionally alter the English translations.

^{26.} Ladd, "Mercers' Company," 137-50.

^{27.} Ibid., 142-46.

and gemstones, but they were also charged with forging metal alloys that maintained the standard assay of minted coinage for the Crown. An oath entered into the Goldsmiths' book of ordinances in 1370 declares that "le mestier . . . estre garde a sorver ge l'en overast argent ausi bon come la monee nostre seignour le Roi" [the mistery was governed . . . and sworn to oversee that silver was worked that was as good a standard as the coinage of our Lord the King] and that "I'en asseist dreit piere en or, et nul faux" [one should set true gemstones in gold and no false ones]. 28 Although the Goldsmiths could wield power and influence, the guild, like the Mercers, felt vulnerable to accusations of fraud. Indeed, the Goldsmiths' records are obsessed with the false adulteration of metals and stones. In addition to the above oath, an ordinance on the proper assay of silver and gold maintains that "nul orfievre d'Engleterre" [no Goldsmith of England] should ever make "nul manere de vessel ne jeuaux ne autre chose d'ore ne d'argent ge ne soit et de verrei alay, c'est assavoir oor de certein touche et argent del alay del esterling" [any kind of vessel or ornamental object or any other things of gold or silver which be not of true alloy, that is to say gold of the specified quality and silver of the alloy of sterling].²⁹ Indeed, punishments were constantly meted out against counterfeiters, before and after Gower's death.30

As guild records attest, the Goldsmiths condemned the alteration of metals and using artificial colors to cast ordinary stones as valuable gems; such practices damaged the reputation of the "mestier" and kingdom as a whole. "Ore novelement" [in recent days], the Goldsmiths assert in their first charter, certain "marchantz . . . auxibien prives come estraunges" [merchants both native and alien] have brought into England "esterling contrefeit" [counterfeit sterling] and "ils mettent veirres de diverses colours countrefaitz a pierrie" [they set glass-stones of various colors counterfeiting precious stones]; in the estimation of the "mestier des orfeveres" [guild of the goldsmiths], such fraudulent "marchauntz" cause "graunt damage et decette de nouse et de nostre poeple" [great loss and deceit both of us and our people].31 Furthermore, the Goldsmiths preempt accusations of fraud with their own claims that they work only for the "commune profit de nous et nostre poeple . . . et de la communalte de nostre roialme [common

^{28.} Jefferson, 128-29.

^{29.} Ibid., 134-35.

^{30.} See the 1412-1413 case of Nicholas Barforee, who was found guilty of falsifying stones and consequently fined (qtd. and trans. Jefferson, 358–59).

^{31.} A full transcription and translation of this charter appears in Jefferson, 62-67. Jefferson's English translations are occasionally modified here.

weal of ourselves and our people]."³² By safeguarding their own "privitees" [trade secrets], they seek to prevent unauthorized practitioners from bringing "graunt discalaundre" [serious slander] upon "les gentz du dite mestier" [the men of the said profession].³³

Gower's poem effects a close mimicry of the guild's discourse. Gower claims that "[Marchant] Triche est Orfevre au plus souvent" [Trickery is most often a Goldsmith] who uses "alconomie" [a process of metallic composition] to mix "orr et le fin argent" [gold and pure silver], which he then presents to a potential buyer in the form of a vessel of substandard assay: "Si fait quider a l'autre gent/Qe sa falsine soit verraie;/Dont le vessell, ainz q'om l'essaie,/Vent et reçoit la bonne paie/De l'esterling" [Before someone can test the vessel to determine whether it is false or true, he sells it and receives a good price paid in sterling silver] (25513–21). Gower's Marchant Triche as "Orfevre" is presented as a clear antitype to the idealized Goldsmith constructed by guild documents: a diligent practitioner should make "nul manere de vessel" [no type of vessel] unless it is "de verrei alay . . . de certein touche et argent del alay del esterling" [true alloy of the specific quality of silver and alloy of sterling].

In contrast to the idealized goldsmith, ever mindful of "grant disclaundre and decette" [serious slander and deceit] that false metals and stones and "diverses colours countrefaitz" [diverse counterfeit colors] may bring to the "mestier," Gower's "Orfevre" deliberately adulterates stones to deceive: "Qant il la piere ad contrefait . . . par deceipte et par aguait/Le vent" [When he counterfeits the stone, he sells it through deception and trickery] (25568–71). In an ironic assimilation of the guild's specialized language, Gower even claims that Marchant Triche "fait . . . son pourchas" [makes his financial gain] "[d]u mestier qui l'orfevere meine" [by means of the profession that the goldsmith practices] (25559–60). Through his strategic deployment of specialized French terms used by the "mestier des orfeveres," Gower's *Mirour* mirrors guild preoccupations. The internal and "privy" language of the "mestier des orfeveres" is, in other words, transported into a new field of literary production: a poetic form that reflects back to the reader the guild's deepest anxieties: fraud, secrecy, and deceit.³⁴

^{32.} Ibid. (qtd. Jefferson, 64–65).

^{33.} These citations come from a 1386 ordinance regulating the work of apprentices; see Jefferson, 218–19. See similar concerns about "privitees" on 282, 292, 296, 340, 350, 362, 364, 366, 368, 374, 422, and 444.

^{34.} Such concern with verbal betrayal and guild discourses inform Chaucer's Canon's Yeoman's Tale; see David Wallace, Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 177–79. On slander

The richness of Gower's representation of mercantile life in the city does not end here. Gower even extends his detailed examination of specific guilds to encompass a broader discussion of London and alien merchant communities writ large, and he launches a particularly pointed critique of Italian merchants in England. Gower is most explicit in deploying antimercantile rhetoric when rebuking "[c]es Lombars" (so-called Lombards, or moneylenders and traders of Italian origin) who cheat Londoners, exchanging straw for grain: "Ces Lombars nous font mal bargain,/ Lour paile eschangont pour no [sic] grain . . . noz marchantz mettre en servage,/Et enfranchir pour le pilage/Les gens estranges trestout coy" [These Lombards cheat us; they exchange their straw for our grain . . . harshly oppressing our merchants, and making foreigners free (i.e., giving them license) to plunder everything (25441–42, 25486–88).

Although "Lombard" in Middle English or Anglo-French usage can generically designate any merchant or trader, it's clear from the use of first-person plural possessive pronouns here that Gower distinguishes between native Londoners ("noz marchantz") and alien Lombards ("les gens estranges") along the lines of some notion of cultural, or at least political, difference.³⁵ Like the Silkwomen's anti-Lombard petition, Gower's poem carefully calibrates its use of French. The first-person plural strikes an intimate tone, invoking an elite aristocratic ethos as well as a collective guild parlance. The First Charter of the Goldsmiths, for instance, refers to the guild as "noz biens amez les orfeveres de nostre citee de Loundres" [our well-beloved Goldsmiths of our City of London], and when Gower goes on to claim that "noz marchauntz" [our merchants] in "nostre ville" [our cityl are disenfranchised, the poet may very well imagine "nostre . . . noble Cité" of London as a community (or world) unto itself.³⁶

The above discussion demonstrates Gower's nuanced perspective on mercantile activity and the poet's ever-shifting alliances. The speaker condemns the actions of some merchants identified as Londoners or members of specific guilds, yet he also expresses sympathy for Londoners as a "communalté" disenfranchised by alien traders. Some passages in the Mirour are manifestly pro-commerce. Earlier in the poem, the poet states that

and guild "privitees," see Marion Turner, Chaucerian Conflict: Languages of Antagonism in Late Fourteenth-Century London (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 127–66.

^{35.} On Gower's nuanced positions toward segments of the merchant classes in the Mirour, see Roger A. Ladd, Antimercantilism in Late Medieval English Literature (New York: Palgrave, 2010), 49-75.

^{36.} This charter, dated 13 March in the year 1 Edward III [1327], is transcribed and translated in Jefferson, 62-67.

merchants are divinely ordained: God divides commodities among lands and merchants distribute resources among them (25177–97). The oft-cited "encomium on wool" a few lines later, however, has the potential to strike the reader as excessive praise:

O leine, dame de noblesce,
Tu es des marchantz la duesse . . .
O leine, ensi comme le cristin,
Einsi paien et Sarazin
Te quiert avoir et te confesse.
O leine, l'en ne doit pas tere
Que tu fais en estrange terre;
Car les marchantz des tous paiis
En temps du peas, en temps du guerre,
Par grant amour te vienot querre . . .
En Engleterre tu es née . . .
O belle, o blanche, o bien delie,
L'amour de toy tant point et lie . . .
Les cuers qui font la marchandie
De toy . . . (25369–409)

[O Wool, noble lady, you are the goddess of merchants . . . O Wool, Christians, pagans, and Saracens all seek to have you and pay their vows to you. O Wool, one should not conceal what you do in alien lands; for merchants of all countries, in times of peace and in times of war, come seeking you in great love. . . . In England you are born . . . O beautiful, white, delicate Wool, love of you pierces and binds . . . the hearts of those who trade in you.]

In a passage infused with courtly resonance, the poet praises wool as a universalizing force, born in England ("En Engleterre tu es née"), who unites merchants of all nations and religions ("les marchantz des tous paiis . . . ensi comme le cristin,/Einsi paien et Sarazin") under a commodity of common desire and worship ("amour"). This apostrophe to Lady Wool waxes patently erotic, invoking her as if an idealized female love object in Continental French poetry: "O leine, dame de noblesce . . . O belle, o blanche, o bien delie" [O Wool, noble lady . . . O beautiful, white, delicate wool] (25369–405). Compare, for instance, the opening of Eustache Deschamps's Balade CCCXVII, which invokes a courtly maiden in strikingly

similar terms: "Belle, blanche, blonde, bonne, agreable" [beautiful, white, blonde, kind, pleasing].³⁷

Although one might be tempted to take this passage at face value, Gower's tone is actually quite difficult to discern: this "wool encomium" could transmit the genuine sentiments of a speaker who shares the views of merchants who earnestly worship the wool trade, or-in its rhetorical excess—it could suggest an ironically detached speaker who satirizes such hyperbolic literary conventions. In any case, the artful use of business and courtly discourses throughout the Mirour demonstrates some of the fluidity of Gower's poetic perspectives and his contingent attachments to social groupings. At times critical of merchants and guilds, at other times pro-commerce, and other times ambiguously situated, Gower claims shifting stances toward (and various degrees of identification with) subgroups of the merchant classes.³⁸ By carefully exploiting different registers within local varieties of French, the poet expresses fluid social attachments toward professional groups within the city.

Mercantile Allegory: Transformation across Tongues

In the sections above I have examined Gower's fascination with the translingual capacities of lawyers and merchants, and this section turns to Gower's acute awareness of his status as a poet who writes across tongues. Gower's first major French work exhibits a considerable degree of flexibility in its representation of the merchant classes, but more conventionally antimercantile tropes circulate throughout Gower's work across three languages. His major poems in French, Latin, and English all localize at least some of the narrative action in the urban milieu of London and the Thames waterfront. Mirour de l'Omme offers a detailed mimesis of London trade; Vox Clamantis (c. 1377–1382) presents London as a dynamic site of civic unrest and political upheaval;³⁹ and Confessio Amantis (c. 1386–1390,

- 37. Oeuvres Complètes de Eustache Deschamps, Vol. 3, eds. Gaston Reynaud and Henri Auguste Eduard, le marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1887), 220.
 - 38. See also Epstein, 50.
- 39. Gower's account of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 in Book I of the Vox sets the action in "New Troy," as London was often called: "A dextrisque nouam me tunc vidisse putabam/ Troiam" [I believed that I saw, to my right, the new Troy] (I.879-80). The Latin rubric to Book I, chapter xiii, makes explicit that the action takes place in "nouam Troiam, id est ciuitatem Londiniarum" [New Troy, that is, the City of London]. For an excellent translation of

revised in the early 1390s) features a prologue in which Gower and King Richard meet when the poet's rowboat and the king's barge pass upon the Thames.⁴⁰ As we move beyond the *Mirour* to address Gower's trilingual oeuvre, we will see how merchants figure as key vehicles for showcasing the poet's own rhetorical skill.

In his major works in three languages—the *Mirour*, the *Vox*, and the *Confessio*—supplantation ("Supplant" in Anglo-French and Middle English) is Gower's idiosyncratic term for the usurpation of another's position or the illegal appropriation of another's property. A personification of subversion and illicit exchange, "Supplant" shares attributes with "Marchant Triche," a figure who will haunt Gower throughout his career. Supplant makes an initial appearance in the *Mirour* as a daughter of Envy:

Car quique voet bargain avoir
Du terre ou du quiconque avoir,
Et en bargain mesure tent,
Quant Supplant le porra savoir,
Tantost ferra tout son povoir
A destorber que l'autre enprent,
Et sur ce moult plus largement
Ferra son offer au paiement,
Pour l'autri faire removoir
De son bargain; car voirement
Il se damage proprement,
Dont son voisin doit meinz valoir. (3301–12)

[Indeed, whoever wishes to conduct a transaction regarding land or taking possession of whatever property, and takes moderation into consideration (e.g., makes a reasonable offer), when Supplant gains knowledge of it, she will immediately do everything in her power to obstruct what the other is undertaking, offering a much greater amount as payment in order to make the other remove his or her offer (or remove the other from his or her claim); for truly one who seeks to deprive one's neighbor personally harms oneself.]

this section of the poem, see David Carlson, ed., and A. G. Rigg, trans., *John Gower: Poems on Contemporary Events: The* Visio Anglie (1381) and Cronica tripertita (1400), Studies and Texts 174 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2011).

^{40.} The poet states he was "[u]nder the toun of newe Troye [i]n Temse whan it was flowende/As I be bote cam rowende . . . My liege lord par chaunce I mette . . . whan he me sygh,/He bad me come in to his barge" (Prologue, 37–45).

In this passage, Gower's Supplaunt engages in a series of clever transactions. Anyone entering a negotiation ("bargain") over land or other property can be thwarted by Supplant, who offers a much higher payment ("plus largement . . . son offer au paiement") to thwart other people's endeavors. The poet indicates that Supplant might profit financially from her own actions and effectively thwart a business rival's attempts to claim property, but Supplant ultimately loses on moral grounds: she causes great ethical harm ("damage") to herself in this process.

The poet recounts Supplant's actions in a detached professional register, with terms like "largement," "paiement," and "damage" marking clear poetic appropriations of Francophone merchant jargon. The term "bargain" refers to any number of possible business negotiations, and the word's repetition conveys the ever-shifting value of the property at stake in this exchange. In this passage, Supplant exceeds a mere stock figure from antimercantile satire. The poet suggests, through his nuanced deployment of business terminology, that one actually does disastrous harm ("damage") to oneself even as one tries to deprive (i.e., devalue or depreciate) one's neighbor.

A similar merchant figure performs subversive transactions in the Vox, but in this case Gower re-personifies Fraud as the daughter of Avarice and sister of Usury; like the French "Supplant," the Latin "Fraus" is curiously a transgendered reincarnation of "Triche," the Mirour's (male) merchant.

Nititur hec magnas sub claue recondere summas, Ex quibus insidias perficit ipsa suas: Ista soror dampno solum viget ex alieno, Alterius dampna dant sibi ferre lucra: Est soror ista potens, aulas que struxit in vrbe, Et tamen agrestes dissipat ipsa domos; Ista soror ciuem didat, set militis aurum Aufert et terras vendicat ipsa suas. (V.ii.711–18)

[She (Fraud) exerts her effort toward hiding huge sums of money under lock and key, and with them she (ipsa) carries out her crafty plotting. That sister (Ista soror) prospers only by the misfortune of another, for somebody else's losses bring a profit to her. It is that powerful sister (soror ista potens) who has built the houses in the city, yet the homes in the country she (ipsa) destroys. That sister (Ista soror) enriches the city man, but robs the knight of his gold and she (ipsa) lays claim to his lands as her own.l

Whereas "Triche" in the Mirour is personified as a male figure (i.e., a merchant or a goldsmith by vocation), the equivalent embodiment of trickery in the Vox, "Fraus" [Fraud], is an emphatically female personification. Although Latin does not require the use of a feminine pronoun ("she") in conjunction with verbs, Gower's text conspicuously emphasizes the feminine (i.e., grammatical) gender of this newly personified Fraus. A proliferation of grammatically inflected pronouns distances the poet from the vice: "ipsa" [she, i.e., this female one], "Ista soror" [that sister], "soror ista" [that sister]. In this passage, Gower carefully distinguishes between the female sin and male victim, the dispossessed knight [miles] with whom he implicitly identifies. Moreover, alliterative Latin doublets stress the perverse imbalance in these exchanges [dampno/dampna, dant/didat, aurum/ aufert], all of which benefit "that sister" Fraud. This Latin passage in the Vox focuses not so much on the mechanics of the transaction itself, as seen in the Mirour's use of French business vocabulary; rather it expresses the poet's disdain for subversions of hierarchy (estate, gender) and rightful possession that transpire.41

The poem with which English speakers are most familiar, the *Confessio*, once again conjoins fraud with merchants. In this text, "Supplant" is characterized as the wrongful seizure of another's longtime investment, reaping what another has sown:

Bot thei that worchen be supplaunt,
Yit wolden thei a man supplaunte,
And take a part of thilke plaunte
Which he hath for himselve set:
And so fulofte is al unknet,
That some man weneth be riht fast.
For Supplant with his slyhe cast
Fulofte happneth forto mowe
Thing which an other man hath sowe. (2.2368–76)

Gower's Middle English poetry exploits linguistic features that are not deployed in his analogous French or Latin verse. First of all, Gower repeatedly puns on the English name of the personification "Supplant" and the English word "plant," developing the conceit that to supplant is to "mowe/ Thing which an other man hath sowe." In addition, Gower enacts another

41. On legal definitions of *propria* and *purchas* and social identity in crisis in the Mirour, see Matthew Giancarlo, *Parliament and Literature in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 114.

(now familiar) shift in register, bringing an abstract concept (personification) back into economic territory. Supplant, here reincarnated as male, seeks profit from another man's loss:

He reccheth noght, be so he winne, Of that an other man schal lese. And thus ful ofte chalk for chese He changeth with ful litel cost, Wherof an other hath the lost And he the profit schal receive. (2.2344-49)

In this passage, the central transaction is expressed in the form of an alliterative and proverbial substitution: exchanging chalk for cheese ("changeth . . . chalk for chese"). 42 In this case, Gower strategically avoids a more specialized domain of French-derived business vocabulary to showcase the impact of more homely "native" English expressions. The poet's lexicon also registers the mixed heritage of English vocabulary, as the Germanic word "winne" coexists with Romance-derived "profit." In one more discursive shift, supplanting is explicitly aligned with merchants (mercers):

The Chapmen of such mercerie With fraude and with Supplantarie So manye scholden beie and selle, That he ne may for schame telle So foul a Senne in mannes Ere. (2.3059-63)

The Confessio, like the Mirour and the Vox, presents merchant transactions as exempla for supplantation, and the Confessio experiments with manifold forms of expression. At the same time, the Confessio interweaves strands of Gower's translinguistic production. By conjoining "fraude" and "Supplantarie" in this passage on mercers, Gower evokes the previous incarnations of Supplant/Fraus in two languages (Mirour and Vox). Each text conveys its exemplum in a distinct manner, exploiting unique resources each language affords the poet. The Mirour deploys Francophone business jargon, carefully outlining the mechanics of Supplant's transactions and how the central economic metaphor carries ethical value; the Vox exploits Latin grammatical gender and anaphora to convey the moralist persona's disdain

42. See Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly Before 1500, ed. Bartlett Jere Whiting and Helen Wescott Whiting (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), C134.

for Fraus; and the Middle English Confessio conveys the transaction three different ways: a plowing or plant metaphor, a homely substitution of chalk for cheese, and a wholesale rebuke of bad merchant practices.

The *Confessio*'s discourse of supplantation is quite intricate, but the poem is even more playful than either the *Mirour* or *Vox* on another level: it is a bilingual text. Throughout the *Confessio*, Latin verses precede sections of Middle English verse, and the Latin lines on supplantation exploit some of the puns concurrently employed in English:

Inuidus alterius est Supplantator honoris,
Et tua quo vertat culmina subtus arat.
Est opus occultum, quasi que latet anguis in herba,
Quod facit, et subita sorte nociuus adest.
Sic subtilis amans alium supplantat amantem,
Et capit occulte, quod nequit ipse palam;
Sepeque supplantans in plantam plantat amoris,
Quod putat in propriis alter habere bonis. (II.v, *De supplantacione*)

[The supplantor is envious of another's honor, and where he plows deeply he turns up your field. That which he performs is a secret deed, just as a snake that lies in the grass, and, by a sudden chance, the evil one is present. Thus the subtle lover supplants another lover, and he sneakily seizes that which he is not able to have openly; and often the supplanting one grafts onto the plant of love what another one believes he has among his own possessions.]

Wordplay abounds. Gower not only perpetuates puns on "plantus" with words like "herba" but he also multiplies words derived from the "plant"'s etymological root: "Supplantator . . . supplantat . . . supplantans in plantam plantat." Sonic devices feature as well, as many words begin with *sup-* and *sub-* like "subtus" [profound], "subita" [suddenly], and "subtilis" [crafty].⁴³ Moreover, repeated "s" sounds evoke the snake metaphor that subtly insinuates itself through the text.

Sîan Echard and Claire Fanger read the *Confessio*'s versions of Supplantation through an implicit hierarchy of languages: "The effect created by these Latin lines proved next to impossible to duplicate in English," and while "Gower here plays with similar ideas and even similar paranomastic

43. Sîan Echard and Claire Fanger use similar points to demonstrate how this Latin epigram "epitomizes Gower's sly humor and delight in puns and wordplay" (xliv). Latin Verses in the Confessio Amantis: An Annotated Translation (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1991).

echoes," he cannot "achieve the coherence of the developed conceit that the Latin made possible."44 Nonetheless, Gower's Middle English diction, proverbial expressions, metaphor, and alliteration have a sophistication of their own. The poet enacts linguistic exchange—a virtuoso act of Latin/ English code-switching—precisely at the moment he condemns an unethical economic exchange.

Although all these passages on fraud and illicit exchange might appear to perpetuate antimercantile tropes and figures, Gower's stylistic and aesthetic flourishes create a nuanced, manifold perspective. By showcasing the poet's own linguistic acuity precisely through moments portraying business transactions, Gower demonstrates the affinity between the merchant and the poet. In other words, his flexible poetic style achieves a close imitation of the fluid linguistic capacities of merchants themselves. Even if the recurring figure of the fraudulent merchant (Triche, Fraus, Supplaunt) may seem like a static trope, Gower's ongoing poetic exploration of the merchant's role as an agent of (illicit) exchange makes this figure an important discursive device for displaying the poet's mastery of languages.

In Gower's major works across three tongues, legal and economic transactions are encoded as linguistic transactions. Expressing a persistent concern over the illicit transfer or acquisition of goods (and fears over dispossession of property and social status), the poet inhabits the mindset of subsections of London's urban elite. On a deeper level, Gower exploits commerce to explore fraught internal processes of verbal substitution and transformation. As Matthew Giancarlo observes in a different context, the "sense of a fractured self—or of an alienated propria—comes to characterize Gower's poetry as much as its desire for resolution and unity."45 Gower's trilingual oeuvre exploits the disjunctions between tongues as much as their exchangeability. The poet illustrates how languages can resist equivalence and thwart any direct, one-to-one substitution of individual words or concepts.

Language Choice: Native and Acquired Tongues

Having examined Gower's major works across three tongues, I would like to return to an issue I addressed near the beginning of this chapter. In this

^{44.} Echard and Fanger, xlvi-xlvii.

^{45.} Giancarlo, 93.

trilingual poetic oeuvre, how exactly does Gower characterize the relationship between his "first" (native) language of English and his other, acquired tongues? The Cinkante Balades, a series of French courtly love poems likely composed late in Gower's life (c. 1391–1393), provides some intriguing insights. The surviving manuscript begins with a dedication to Henry IV in Latin meter and prose, followed by two laudatory French balade stanzas. The remaining balades exhibit a distinctly Continental flair, interweaving lines from French poets like Guillaume de Machaut, Eustache Deschamps, Jean Froissart, and Oton de Grandson. In Balade XVII, an unexpected moment of cross-linguistic communication occurs just as the lady refuses the advances of the poet-lover:

Ma dame, qui sciet langage a plentée, Rien me respont quant jeo la prierai; Et s'ensi soit q'elle ait a moi parlée, D'un mot soulein lors sa response orrai, A basse vois tantost me dirra, "nay." C'est sur toutz autres ditz qe jeo plus hee; Le mot est brief, mais qant vient a l'essay, La sentence est de grant dolour parée. (XVII.17–24)

[My lady, who has a full command of language, makes no response to me when I entreat; but thus it is, should she speak to me, then I hear her response in one word alone. A worthless voice immediately will say to me *Nay*. It's the word above all others that I hate most; the word's brief, but when it comes into use, the meaning is draped with great sadness.]⁴⁷

The traversal of languages in this balade achieves subtle effects. When the poet entreats his lady, this "dame"—who knows how to speak very well, or knows many languages—responds with just one word (mot soulein). This word is in English: "nay." This lone word nay in the middle of a French poem marks the lady's "vois" as distinct from the lover's. Given the lady's fluency in languages, this utterance also foregrounds the power of the lady's devastating choice of "language." Although she only utters a single word "nay," the greater meaning of this mot resonates far beyond this

^{46.} On the distinctly courtly and Continental flavor of the *Cinkante Balades* and its many allusions to Continental poets, see Yeager, "John Gower's French and his Readers," in *French of England*, ed. Wogan-Browne et al., 143, 147, and 148.

^{47.} English translation slightly adapted from R. F. Yeager, ed. and trans. *John Gower: The French Balades* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 2009).

word alone. 48 Within the larger narrative context of these ballades, "nay" transmits more than a refusal. The "langage" of the lady suggests a certain degree of personal familiarity with the poet-lover she addresses; that is, this non-French response marks a colloquial crack in an otherwise wellmaintained courtly façade. 49 Capitalizing on linguistic difference, the lady's English word paradoxically conveys distance (it's a denial) and intimacy (it's his vernacular).

As transient as this moment is, this episode has wide implications for our understanding of Gower's French and how Gower perceives it: French is a language that is clearly well known to the poet, but he still experiences it as distant or unfamiliar. In this and other works, we have seen Gower deftly negotiate different registers of French that map onto different social spheres, business and courtly. At the same time, the linguistic features of Gower's French places it "in between" two geographically marked varieties: Anglo-Norman (or Anglo-French, or "the French of England") and Continental French. Gower's French is thus simultaneously local and Continental; one might even say his work constructs a hybrid, trans-Channel idiolect, a literary mode of expression that alternates at will between registers: local/Continental and professional/courtly.⁵⁰

The unexpected use of Gower's "native" tongue—an English word voiced by a female interlocutor, rather than the poet himself—has an eerie, almost uncanny effect. In a later balade, the woman's "mot" [word] obliquely resurfaces when an allegorical personification of the lady's "Danger" [distance, disdain, resistance] repeats the lady's utterance "nai."51 In this balade sequence, Gower foregrounds the alterity of the lone English word spoken by a fictive French speaker, and he dramatizes this word's increasing estrangement from its original moment of utterance. Through this ensuing narrative, the poet suggests the corresponding unease an English speaker experiences when acquiring (and using) a second language like French, a tongue that is at once very close to the speaker but perpetually eluding his grasp.

- 48. For an excellent reading of the aftereffects of the woman's response, including later balades in her voice, see Holly Barbaccia, "The Woman's Response in John Gower's Cinkante Balades," in Trilingual Poet, eds. Dutton et al., 230–37.
- 49. Since the lady receiving the ballade knows French—"ceste ballade a celle envoieray" (25)—her decision to reply in another "langage" is deliberate.
- 50. On the "a mix of both insular and continental terms" in the Mirour, see Brian Merrilees and Heather Pagan, "John Barton, John Gower and Others: Variation in Late Anglo-French," in French of England, ed. Wogan-Browne et al., 118-34, at 126.
 - 51. Barbaccia, 233.

Although this discussion has focused on Gower's French works and intervernacular communication, movements across English and Latin are a salient feature of his works as well. Many such moments are well known to literary scholars: Gower's Confessio announces the poet will compose in "oure Englisshe [a] boke for Engelondes sake" (Prologue, 24–25), and a Latin epigram (discussed below) expounds upon Gower's first turn to English as a literary language. In the Vox, Gower encodes his own proper name, incorporating its English sounds, syllable by syllable, into Latin elegiac verses. Elsewhere, a passage allegorizing the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 features beasts whose English names are carefully incorporated into the poem's metrical structure (I.xi.783–98). At another point, Gower expresses an intense affective connection to England as the land of his birth [propriam terram]. Read collectively, such instances convey Gower's strong emotional ties to England, his native land, even when he is not writing in his native tongue of English.

Although Gower's orientation toward England is apparently fixed, his orientation towards its *languages* is, as we have seen, quite fluid. Gower's final major work conveys a strong attachment to the land of England, but *Confessio* manuscripts are not exclusively English: they incorporate English verse, Latin epigrams, and extratextual commentary delivered in a voice not entirely consistent with a monoglot English narrator. Drawing upon Bakhtinian literary discourses, Diane Watt has identified an "active heteroglossia" in the *Confessio* and across Gower's oeuvre. In addition to foregrounding its own heteroglossia (use of multiple languages) in its visual layout, the *Confessio* explores polyvocality—i.e., the capacity to have more than one voice—through Gower's self-consciously bilingual speaking persona. That is, the *Confessio* is heteroglossic on the level of narrative, but it is also polyvocal on the level of its first-person narration.

The poem's opening Latin epigram (set apart in the manuscript tradition by rubrication or by extension into marginal space) acclimates the

^{52. &}quot;Primos sume pedes Godefridi desque Iohanni,/Principiumque sui Wallia iungat eis:/Ter caput amittens det cetera membra, que tali/Carmine compositi nominis ordo patet" [First add *John* to the foot (first syllable) of *Godefrey*, and the start (first letter) of *Wales* and the word *ter* without its head. The compound name is clear from this verse] (Prologue, 21–24).

^{53.} See Giancarlo, 119-20.

^{54.} Indeed, he dedicates one of his works, in French, to England as well: "O gentile Engleterre, a toi j'escris" [O noble England, I write to you] (Cinkante Balades, Balade LI, line 25).

^{55.} On the "active polyglossia" across Gower's oeuvre, see Diane Watt, Amoral Gower: Language, Sex, Politics (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), ch. 1, "Gower's Babel Tower: Language Choice and the Grammar of Sex," 21–37, esp. 24.

reader to the notion of a poet speaking with a dual voice. The epigram's explication of bilingualism asks the reader to consider the very epistemological status of tongues:

Torpor, ebes sensus, scola parua labor minimusque Causant quo minimus ipse minora canam: Qua tamen Engisti lingua canit Insula Bruti Anglica Carmente metra iuuante loquar Ossibus ergo carens que conterit ossa loquelis Absit, et interpres stet procul oro malus. (Prologue, lines a-f)

[Dull wit, slight schooling, torpor, labor less, make slight the themes I, least of poets, sing. Let me, in Hengist's tongue, in Brut's isle sung, with Carmen's help, tell forth my English verse. Far hence the boneless one whose speech grinds bones, far hence be he who reads my verses ill.]⁵⁶

Like Gower's other Latin verses, these are densely packed. This epigram presents a poetic speaker who is simultaneously embodied and immaterial, singing and writing (he speaks and sings with the letters of Carmen), Latinate and English (using the language of Hengist on the Island of Brutus). Moreover, the epigram's network of allusions make it an intertextual showpiece: "Engisti lingua" [tongue of Hengist] alludes to Geoffrey of Monmouth's famous Latin account of a royal daughter's Anglo-Saxon utterance "wassail" [be well], and Carmen is known for bringing the alphabet to the Italians; with her help, the poet utters "Anglica metra" [English verses].⁵⁷ Although these verses are set out in Latin, the epigram requires readers to imagine that the poet is nonetheless speaking in English. The compact Latin syntax, moreover, intertwines allusions: the words "Carmente . . . iuuante" [aid of Carmen] alternate with "Anglica . . . metra" [English verses]. Activating simultaneous allusions, this Latin epigram gestures outward to a world of other texts and another language ("Engisti lingua") outside of itself.

Gower's affective relationship to his tongues is noticeably volatile, shifting from context to context. As we have seen, Gower often articulates his poetic identity across linguistic difference: the Mirour presents a legal persona who knows French and Latin; the Vox encodes the poet's English name in Latin meter; and the Confessio asks the reader to sustain

^{56.} Trans. Echard and Fanger, 3; punctuation slightly altered.

^{57.} For an excellent reading of this poem and its relevant textual tradition, see Davidson, Multilingualism, ch. 2, "Hengist's Tongue: A Medieval History of English," 45–75.

the fiction of the poet speaking in English even while reading in Latin. Gower most often puts two languages in play at any one moment (French/English, English/Latin, or Latin/French), but he is not exclusively interested in delineating the contours of bilingualism *per se*. Rather, he exhibits a truly polyglot mentality that renders binary linguistic oppositions provisional, and this linguistic multiplicity animates his shape-shifting literary persona. Even if the poet purports to speak in *propria persona*—for instance, when describing the translingual reincarnations of an allegorical concept (Fraus, Supplant, Supplantator, Supplantarie)—Gower never actually writes in a "single" tongue. Any one of Gower's texts provokes unexpected, even unconscious "ripple effects," activating meanings in other languages and previous literary forms, and the poet's translingualism cannot help but shape a manifold poetic subjectivity.⁵⁸

Translingual Mediation: William Caxton

William Caxton was an avid reader of Gower, and he found a clear affinity between himself and the polyglot poet. To offer one example, Caxton respected Gower's knowledge of Latin enough to employ the poet's Middle English verse as the basis for his own English prose edition of Ovid. ⁵⁹ As Gower's first printer, Caxton ushered in a technological transformation of the poet's work from manuscript into a new medium. Caxton's copytext for the Confessio has not been identified (or it does not survive), but in his printings of Gower's work Caxton adheres to the general layout of surviving Confessio manuscripts, deeming its multilingual features integral to the work itself. The printer preserves all of its Latin summary glosses and verses before each Middle English section, as well as its sustained Latin marginal commentary. ⁶⁰

Caxton most visibly takes Gower's work in new directions in what Sîan Echard has called the "pre-text" or the introductory apparatus to the

^{58.} On Gower as a "master at multiple voicing" and a "careful manipulat[or] of fictive voicing," see Russell A. Peck, *John Gower: Confessio Amantis*, Vol. 1, ed. Russell A. Peck (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 2000, repr. 2006), 14–16.

^{59.} On Caxton's use of Gower's Confessio for his Ovid translation, see J. A. W. Bennett, "Caxton and Gower," Modern Language Review 45, 2 (1950): 215–16.

^{60.} For Caxton as reader of Gower, see N. F. Blake, "Caxton's Copytext of Gower's Confessio Amantis," in William Caxton and English Literary Culture (London: Hambledon Press, 1991), ch. 13, 187–98.

printed poem. 61 Caxton's table of contents provides a detailed summary of Gower's frame narrative, the plot of each tale, and the concepts each tale represents—far surpassing the introductory tables or rubrics in existing Gower manuscripts. Moreover, Caxton's table foregrounds the diversity of narratives and sources out of which Gower's Confessio is constructed. On a broader level, the Caxtonian table of contents showcases the transformative hand (mediating role) of the printer who reshapes this source-text, offering his own incarnation of the Confessio as a compilation of "diuerse historyes & fables"—an attractive collection of tales for a new generation (and expanding market) of readers.

One of the most arresting moments in Gower's Confessio, in manuscript or in print, is Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Within this dream, a statue ("ymago" in Latin, "ymage" in Middle English) symbolizes different ages of humanity, each represented by its own element (Prologue, 595-662). In the Confessio manuscript tradition, this moment is often afforded clear visual prominence, not only through a large illustration of this "ymage," but also through marginalia, rubrics, and floriated borders. 62 As Deanne Williams has provocatively suggested, this hybrid "ymage" can serve as an emblem for Gowerian translation as a whole: the Confessio, like the statue composed of disparate parts, is a "kind of literary monster," that is, a palimpsest of languages and literary influences. 63 Gower's oeuvre, by extension, could be seen as an intricate layering of texts and tongues.

In Caxton's new medium of print, the Latin verse just before Nebuchadnezzar's dream takes on a new significance:

Prosper et adversus obliquo tramite versus Immundus mundus decipit omne genus. Mundus in euentu versatur ut alea casu, Quam celer in ludis iactat auara manus.

- 61. Siân Echard, "Pre-Texts: Tables of Contents and the Reading of John Gower's Confessio Amantis," Medium Aevum 66 (1997): 270-87.
- 62. On images of Daniel's dream in the Confessio, see Jeremy Griffiths, "Confessio Amantis: The Poem and Its Pictures," in Gower's Confessio Amantis: Responses and Reassessments, ed. A. J. Minnis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983), 163-78; Richard K. Emmerson, "Reading Gower in a Manuscript Culture: Latin and English in Illustrated Manuscripts of the Confessio Amantis," Studies in the Age of Chaucer 21 (1999): 167-70; Derek Pearsall, "The Manuscripts and Illustrations of Gower's Works," in Companion to Gower, ed. Echard, 73–98.
- 63. Deanne Williams, "Gower's Monster," in Postcolonial Approaches to the Middle Ages: Translating Cultures, eds. Ananya Jahanara Kabir and Deanne Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 127-50, esp. 142.

Sicut ymago viri variantur tempora mundi, Statque nichil firmum preter amare deum. (Prologue, verse v)

[In crooked circuit turning, good then bad, the sordid world deceives each race of men. The world is tossed and turned by chance, as dice are quickly thrown by greedy hands at play. So in man's image earthly seasons shift, and nought stands firm except the love of God.]⁶⁴

The Latin epigram develops the conceit of the "ymago," emblematic of stability as well as change. The verses suggest cyclical and linear notions of time, punning appropriately on verbs for turning ("versus," "versatur," and the adjective "adversus"), and sonically evoking cycles of history and continuity through thick anaphora ("immundus mundis," "Mundus . . . tempora mundi"). The central conceit for turning and chance—a hand rolling dice—coexists with an emblem of eternal stableness, the steady love of God. The Latin epigram beautifully articulates the paradox of Gower's transmission through Caxton's print technology: it is an instance of textual continuity amidst change. 65

These Latin verses on the "ymago" might very well resonate with Caxton's transformation of Gower: the printer preserves the source-text's integrity and coherence while also transforming it into a different medium. Even without illustrations, this "wonder strange ymage" (Prologue, 604) is obliquely suggested by the layout of Caxton's printed two-column pages. Latin rubrics like "de pectore argenteo" [concerning the silver chest], "de ventre eneo" [concerning the brass stomach], "de tibris ferreis" [concerning the iron legs] occupy the center of the "body" of a single column of text, graphically segmenting portions of the dream's central "ymage" (STC 12142, fol. 12r).

Caxton's print edition closely engages with the Latin and English features of the poem, despite a shift in medium. The printer maintains and augments Gower's careful self-construction of a polyglot literary persona, reproducing at the end of the *Confessio* some additional Latin verses, including *Eneidos bucolis* (which began this chapter). In other respects,

^{64.} Trans. Echard and Fanger, 13 (punctuation slightly altered).

^{65.} For an extended reading of the opening of Caxton's preface which curiously identifies Gower as a "squyer, borne in Walys" and the potential that Caxton sees an affinity between his own Kentish dialect and Gower's own English idiolect, see Blake, Caxton and Literary Culture, ch. 7, "Continuity and Change in Caxton's Prologues and Epilogues," 89–106, esp. 89–90.

Caxton himself resembles Gower: the printer, like the poet, creates over the course of his career a literary persona who thoughtfully reflects on the shifting status of his own multilingualism. In the "pre-texts" to his editions—including not only tables, but also first-person editorial prologues in propria persona—Caxton's oeuvre enacts a complex interplay between prose autobiography and what we might call sociolinguistic theory. Like Gower, Caxton deems facility with languages a key element of a deliberately crafted literary persona. His abiding interest in translingual practice provides one constant across a mobile career.

Caxton's Dialogues in French and English, also known as the Vocabulary in French and English or Instructions for Travelers (STC 24865), is a particularly apt nonliterary counterpoint to Gower's work (indeed, it was printed c. 1483, about the same year as Caxton's edition of the Confessio). Although the *Dialogues* are presented in the form of a practical manual, Caxton's bilingual text explores some of the creative potential of merchant languages. The title page and prologue for Caxton's text do not survive, but its opening lines present "[r]ight good lernynge/For to lerne/Shortly frensshe and englyssh" (3.13-16); by means of "this book," readers "shall mowe/Resonably vnderstande/Frenssh and englissh" (3.17-24).66 Most importantly, reading the book is a "prouffytable" endeavor: "Who this booke shall wylle lerne/May well entreprise or take on honde/Marchandises fro one lande to another" and also to "knowe many wares/Which to hym shalbe good to be bought/Or solde for rich to become./Lerne this book diligently;/Grete prouffyt lieth therin truly" (3.37-4.7). In addition to offering the names of "many wares" and household items in both English and French, the text presents (among other things) proper forms of address according to rank and gender, the vocabulary of various crafts and trades, and a series of dialogues between household servants and their masters and between merchants and prospective buyers.

Caxton repeatedly asserts the "prouffytable" qualities of this book:

Cy commence la table Hier begynneth the table De cest pruffytable doctrine, Of this prouffytable lernynge, Pour trouuer tou par ordene For to fynde all by ordre

That which men wylle lerne. (1.1-4) Ce que on vouldra aprendre

66. For ease of reference, my citations of Caxton's phrasebook come from Dialogues in French and English, ed. Henry Bradley (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1900). I cite each quotation by page and line number.

De mettre en cest table.

In this the form of "la table," the printer produces a nicely ordered text in parallel translation. Here, the text purports to rehearse "by ordre" all the English and French terms one could desire and it will hence be "prouffy-table lernynge" to the reader who wants to trade ("well enterprise . . . Marchandises"). Caxton further asserts that the words one will "fynde" in this "table" will have value in facilitating travel:

Et les parolles que chescun
Pourra apprendre pour aler
Dun pays au ville a aultre;
Et puls aultres reysons
Que seroyent trope longues

And the wordes that eueryche
May lerne for to goo
Fro one lande or toune to anothir;
And moo othir resons
That shold be over longe

It is clear that the "tables" construct an audience of merchants, for whom facility with languages is essential. Through this book, anyone desiring to "enterprise or take on honde/Marchandiese fro one lande to another," "knowe many wares," and become "rich," will gain "[g]rete prouffyt" from the text. However, Caxton extends his audience beyond merchants, as the text implies there is something innately "prouffytable" in knowing "the wordes" ("les parolles") in and of themselves. Regardless of whether the reader is actually a merchant or desires to travel for any number of "othir resons," he (or she) can still "prouffyt" from reading this book.

To sette in this table. (2.39–3.4)

As a commercial enterprise, this print endeavor pursues financial gain as well as symbolic profit, to slightly adapt the insights of Pierre Bourdieu; he contends that literary or poetic works are "purely communicative" but any use of language (regardless of its content) can nonetheless, unconsciously, pursue "symbolic profit." If one takes Caxton's work at face value as what Bourdieu would call a "distinctly instrumental use of language" (i.e., a practical, nonliterary production), then the text pursues its own "symbolic profit" in a noticeably explicit manner. When the "table" claims to be "prouffytable lernynge" to its readers and that "[g]rete proyffyt lieth therin," these sentiments bespeak Caxton's desire that the printed text will yield financial gain (for his readers, but also presumably for himself). The text also conveys a more intangible symbolic profit to

^{67.} Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson and trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 66–67.

^{68.} Ibid., 67.

its reader in the form of increased cultural capital (i.e., all "the wordes" of French and English). This knowledge, in turn, will enable the reader's further pursuit of "Marchandiese." It is important to keep in mind that "symbolic profit" is just as important as "material profit" in Caxton's endeavor. 69 As we shall see, Caxton's work asserts its symbolic power through its aesthetic and stylistic features, and these features—rather than lying outside the domains of literature and poetry, as Bourdieu might contend—are profoundly literary in function. Namely, the manner of expression and "communicative" style of this bilingual phrasebook includes identifiably literary rhetorical tropes and devices, and by shifting from pragmatic instruction into a "purely communicative" register, Caxton expresses ambitions beyond a narrowly conceived "material profit" (financial gain).

The various prologues to Caxton's other print editions attest to how deeply his English production was situated within the mercantile life of London, particularly through his connections (in England and abroad) as a member of the Mercers' Company. The Royal Book (c. 1484) is "translated or reduced out of Frensshe into Englysshe by me, Wyllyam Caxton, atte request of a worshipful marchaunt and mercer of London" (136); The Book of Good Manners (1487) is requested by "an honest man and a special frende of myn, a mercer of London named Wylliam Praat" (60); Caton (c. 1484), moreover, is dedicated to the City of London itself: "I William Caxton, cytezeyn and conjurye . . . of the fraternyte and feelauship of the mercerye . . . present [this] book [which] I have translated . . . oute of Frensshe into Englysshe [u]nto the noble, auncyent and renommed cite, the City of London in Englond" (63).70

By Caxton's time, there was a substantial increase in the use of English among the guilds in London, in comparison to Gower's day. 71 In addition, surviving late fifteenth-century letters by members of the merchant classes indicate they not only corresponded among themselves in English but could also employ French, Latin, and Flemish when necessary. 72 The fact that Caxton prints many of his later texts in English for an audience that

- 69. Any "communication" between a "sender" (producer) and a "receiver" (market) is "capable of procuring a certain material or symbolic profit" (Bourdieu, 66).
- 70. Citations from Caxton's prologues are from Caxton's Own Prose, ed. N. F. Blake (London: Deutsch, 1973).
 - 71. Chambers and Daunt, 194.
- 72. See for instance the late fifteenth-century letters of the Cely family, whose commercial and personal lives link England, Flanders, and Calais (location of the Wool Staple). Alison Hanham, The Celys and Their World: An English Merchant Family of the Fifteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); David Wallace, Premodern Places: Calais to Surinam, Chaucer to Aphra Behn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 98-102.

includes merchants does not, in other words, suggest a monolingual (or even local) target audience. Rather, a polyglot cosmopolitanism informs his production as a whole. Indeed, Caxton served as acting Governor of the English "nation" of Merchant Adventurers at Bruges (1462–1470), and other prologues attest to his connections to Flanders. Caxton's prologue to the History of Troy (c. 1473), for instance, states he has spent much time in "the contres of Braband, Flandres, Holand and Zeland" (98). As Anne Sutton has observed, the final stage in the apprenticeship of an English merchant-adventurer was frequently a journey abroad that was undertaken so that one might practice other languages, specifically French and Dutch.⁷³ A former mercer and merchant-adventurer himself, Caxton prints in English a range of texts he has "translated or reduced" out of Dutch, Latin, and French, and his printed French/English handbook draws from a preexisting French/Dutch manuscript tradition.⁷⁴ Considering that he produced French texts during his time in Bruges, Caxton could even be considered the first French, as well as the first English, printer. 75

In the manuscript tradition of these merchant phrasebooks, Dutch occupies a position as "second language" to French, but in order to make his printed dialogues viable in a London market Caxton replaces the Dutch with English. As he produced his "tables," Caxton did not translate the *Dialogues* directly from French into English; rather he employed the Dutch text as the basis for his English. Caxton claims elsewhere that he has an imperfect command of French: "in France was I never, and was born and lerned myn Englysshe in Kent" (Prologue to *History of Troy*, 98). Given his extensive experience "in the countres of Braband, Flandres, Holand, and Zeland," it would make sense that the printer would employ

^{73.} Anne Sutton, "Caxton Was a Mercer: His Social Milieu and Friends," in England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1992 Harlaxton Symposium, ed. Nicholas Rogers (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1994), 118–48, esp. 122.

^{74.} See Le livre des mestiers: dialogues français-flamands composés au XIVe siècle par un maître d'école de la ville de Bruges, ed. Henri Michelant (Paris, 1875). For an excellent reading of the English text of Caxton's Dialogues, see Lisa H. Cooper, Artisans and Narrative Craft in Late Medieval England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 32–55.

^{75. &}quot;Caxton's editions are the first vernacular printed texts in English and in French" (Kuskin, 13). For Caxton's relevant biography and phases of his career, see Kuskin, 13–16. On Caxton's cosmopolitanism, see Jennifer R. Goodman, "Caxton's Continent," in Caxton's Trace: Studies in the History of English Printing, ed. William Kuskin (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 101–23.

^{76.} Among the changes he makes in the manuscript tradition, Caxton inserts the names of commercial centers within England: "Of many tounes/Of London, of yorke/Of bristowe, of bathe" (18.26–19).

the more familiar Dutch passages in his sources in order to construct his corresponding English translations. This triangulation of French, Dutch, and English yields curious results. For instance, the French "respaulme cet hanap" [rinse the cup] is rendered in English as "spoylle the cup," a phrasing apparently influenced by the Flemish spoel den nap (26.27); the French "aual la maison" [throughout the house] appears in English as "after the house," a non-idiomatic English usage akin to the Flemish achter huse; and the English phrase "It en is not" [it is not] conspicuously recalls the Flemish het en es niet: the Middle English inserts the grammatical particle "en," which is used only in Middle Dutch verb negation (18.18).⁷⁷

The French/English text that Caxton prints does not fully suppress the influence of Dutch, as its role as the intermediary or "relay language" between French and English resurfaces through nonidiomatic expressions: moments of what Gower, a century earlier, would call "verba incongrua" [ill-fitting words]. Such incongruent, apparently non-native English constructions have invited modern editors of Caxton's text to claim that "Caxton had become more familiar with Flemish than with his native tongue" and he had, by that time, "forgotten English," his birth language.⁷⁸

Given Caxton's frequent acts of translation, as well as his stated attachments to various locations, including Kent, Westminster, London proper, and Flanders, what (really) is Caxton's "own" language? It might "properly" be some form of English, as he states he "was born and lerned myn Englysshe in Kente," yet his own Flemish idiom and expressed marginality to London-based English (as someone who originally hails from Kent) could suggest an idiolect "in between" Flemish and some dialect of English. Caxton, in any case, registers an acute awareness that he is estranged from both his native English as well as aristocratic forms of Continental French. Indeed, his prologues communicate a distinct anxiety over the status of his own idiolect of English—"I doubte not [in Kente] is spoken . . . brode and rude Englisshe"—as well as a more pervasive concern about what he dubs the "dyversite and chaunge of langage" over time (80).

In his famous preface to Encydos (c. 1490), Caxton observes that "dyversite" of English dialects and the "chaunge" that language exhibits over time create particular challenges for a professional printer. Choosing any one form of English could alienate readers who speak other varieties (since vernacular language varies across space), and it could also reduce the text's staying power (since languages constantly change, regardless of

^{77.} For more examples of Caxton's Flemish-inflected English, see Bradley, iv, vi, xi.

^{78.} Bradley, xi.

location). In an example of the confusion that linguistic variation over space can cause, Caxton tells a story of London "merchauntes . . . in a shippe in Tamyse" *en route* to Flanders ("Zelande") who make an unexpected stop on the Isle of Wight in the Channel; "one of theym named Sheffelde, a mercer," asks a woman for "egges"—but since his plural noun differs from the form used in the woman's own English dialect ("eyren"), the "goode wyf" mistakenly thinks the merchant is speaking "Frenshe."

In explaining how quickly the English vernacular changes over time, Caxton relates his own experience of reading an "olde boke" in which the "Englysshe was so rude and brood that I coude not wele understande it" and that what was "wryton in old Englysshe [was] more lyke to Dutche [than] our Englysshe now usid" (79). Caxton concludes by observing that "certaynly our langage now used varyeth ferre from that whiche was used and spoken whan I was borne," and that "we Englysshemen ben borne under the domynacyon of the mone whiche is never stedfaste . . . wexing one season, and wan[ing] another" (79). In Caxton's estimation, late fifteenth-century English is an especially fluid and mercurial vernacular (perhaps even more so than it was a generation before), and the assertion that forms of "Englysshe" can be alien and estranging—variously mistaken for "Dutche" or "Frenshe"—attests to Caxton's ability to use narrative anecdotes to demonstrate how languages change across space or time.

William Kuskin has demonstrated that Caxton constructs a deliberate, highly reflective literary persona through his first-person prologues. 80 Caxton, to extend Kuskin's insights, takes advantage of the *Eneydos* prologue to engage in a retroactive form of autobiography as much as he enacts sociolinguistic theory. On a more profound level, the "first English printer" expresses a deep sense of *dépaysement*: a disorienting, uneasy state of feeling out of place even within one's own country. Transported from Kent to Cologne to Bruges to Westminster—and even after being (re)settled in the country of his birth—this mercer-turned-printer conveys a lingering alienation from his own language across space and across time.

79. "In my dayes happened that certayn marchauntes were in a shippe in Tamyse, for to have sayled over the see to Zelande. And for lacke of wynde thai taryed atte Forlond, and went to londe for to refreshe them. And one of theym named Sheffelde, a mercer, cam into an hows and axed for mete and specyally he axyd after eggys. And the goode wyf answerde that she coude speke no Frenshe. And the marchaunt was angry for he also coude speke no Frenshe, but wolde have hadde egges and she vnderstode hym not. And thenne at laste a nother sayd that he wolde haue eyren. Then the good wyf sayd that she vnderstood hym wel [...] Loo! what sholde a man in thyse dayes now write, 'egges' or 'eyren'? Certynly it is harde to playse every man bycause of dyversite and chaunge of langage" (79–80).

80. See Kuskin, Symbolic Caxton, 260.

Amidst this disorienting linguistic landscape, Caxton tries—often unsuccessfully—to impose order upon chaos. When the "table" provides ranks of people, it rehearses "by ordre" the titles of clergy and nobility, adhering to conventions of estates literature: "prelates of holy chirche . . . the pope, cardinals, bisshops," "themperour [sic], kynges, and queens," "dukes," "princes," "barons, knyghtes, and squyers" (2.22 et passim). However, once it reaches the mixed group of the merchant classes, the "table" shifts into a new conception of "ordre." Instead of listing crafts according to any naturalized hierarchy, the "table" purports to list them alphabetically: "Les noms dhommes et des femmes/Et des mestiers, selon lordre de a b c," or in English, "The names of men and of wymmen,/And of craftes, after thordre of a b c" [sic] (22.9-10).

This claim to follow "thordre of a b c" marks a radical departure from estates satire and courtesy manuals, as the alphabetical system superimposes an arbitrary linguistic "ordre" upon a heterogeneous social grouping. Moreover, the "table" does not even arrange these mestiers by the names of individual crafts but instead by (apparently random) names of individuals who practice them. The ensuing sequence of names, crafts, and utterances is just as unorganized—and impractical—as a non-alphabetical list. Although the initial names are loosely grouped by craft or trade (for instance, under "C" are grouped workers in the cloth trade, including "Cyprien the weuar" and "Clarisse the nopster"), "its personal alphabet provides a rather bizarre and decidedly non-utilitarian form of commercial access."81 Reshuffling the professions as they appear in surviving French/ Dutch manuscripts, Caxton's idiosyncratic reordering of mestiers suggests that the merchant classes thwart ordered representation in any language. 82

Within the mestiers section, Caxton populates his "tables" with familiar merchant stereotypes: "Iohan the userer/Hath lente so moche/That he knoweth not the nombre/Of the good that he hath . . . gadred to gedyr./He leneth the pounde/For four pens" (39.23-34); "Peter the betar of wulle/Gooth alle vdle,/For his dene/Hath forboden hym his craft/ Vpon thamendes of xx. shelynges,/Till that he shall haue/Bought his franchyse" and he "shall complaine hym/Unto bourghmaistre,/And the wardeyns of the crafte/sette not therby" (44.5–15). These figures evoking condemnations of avarice, usury, and fraud in antimercantile satire have

^{81.} For a more detailed analysis of Caxton's alphabetization of the mestiers, see Cooper,

^{82.} Cooper, 46. Bradley speculates that Caxton shuffles the sequence of names so they correspond to names of actual tradesmen living and working in Bruges at the time the text was printed (viii).

their origins in the manuscript tradition from which Caxton draws. However, Caxton's "table" augments his sources by inserting some passages not attested in manuscripts. The most expanded profession is the bookseller:

George le librarier George the booke sellar
A plus des liures Hath moo bookes

Que tout ceulx de la uile. Than all they of the toune.

Il les achate touts He byeth them all Tels quils soient, Suche as they ben,

Soient embles ou enprintees, Be they stolen or enprinted, Ou aultrement pourchacies. Or othirwyse pourchaced. Il a doctrinaulx, catons,

Heures de nostre dame, Oures of our lady,

Donats, pars, accidens,
Psaultiers bien enluminees,
Loyes a fremauls dargent,
Donettis, partis, accidents,
Sawters well enlumined,
Bounded with claspes of siluer,

Liures de medicines, Books of physike

Sept psalmes, kalendiers,
Encre et parcemyn,
Pennes de signes,
Pennes dauwes,
Pennes dauwes,
Bons breuiares,
Seuen salmes, kalenders,
Ynke and perchemyn,
Pennes of swannes,
Pennes of ghees,
Good portoses,

Qui valent bon argent. Which ben worth good money. (38.31–39.9)

This bookseller passage suggests that Caxton is essentially advertising his own wares, maximizing both the material profit (financial value) of the books as commodities as well as the cultural capital (symbolic profit) that accrues to him if people buy his works.

What makes these expansions unlike other utterances within the "table" is the addition of first-person utterances: statements are not attributed to any fictional speaker within any of the dialogues. These interjections, apparently disembodied, assert Caxton's own claims to discursive authority. Some of these interruptions mark transitions between sections: "Now standeth me for to speke/Of othir thynges necessarie:/That is to saye of thinges/that ben vsed after the house,/Of whihe me may not be withoute" (6.16–20). In other passages, Caxton disclaims knowledge: "For that I am not/Spycier ne apotecarie/I can not name/All maneres of spyces;/But I shal name a partie" (19.33–37). Most strikingly, some utterances assume a highly expressive style: "I am all wery/Of so many names to name/Of so many craftes,/So many offices, so many seruises;/I wyll reste me"

(47.26-30). Invoking Gower's claim that the "mestiers" are "infinit" and no one could recount them all, the Caxtonian narrator voices weariness in a modified inexpressibility topos. 83 This "exhaustion" claim, moreover, features anaphora while invoking a longstanding ars longa, vita brevis motif. Rather than rendering Caxton invisible, this moment of first-person rhetorical indulgence in the "table" overtly acknowledges the labor of the printer-translator who creates the text.

These "authorial" utterances stray from the stated purpose of the text. Even though a French translation accompanies these passages, these moments cannot merely be construed as being part of an imperative to teach an English speaker how to speak French. As first-person utterances, these interruptions are superfluous to the purported objective of the "tables." Rather than helping the reader pursue any symbolic or material "prouffyt," the first-person utterances only demonstrate the symbolic power of the printer. Moreover, the presentation of such utterances in parallel columns of text suggests that the expressive efficacy of English might even rival that of Continental French.84 The series of expansions and interruptions, as a whole, advertise Caxton's labor as the driving force behind the bilingual production. A text presented as a practical handbook simultaneously makes a powerful assertion of Caxtonian authority. Through literary tropes and allusions, narrative interpolations, and first-person interjections, the merchant-writer creates a sophisticated text that is profoundly "prouffytable," both materially and symbolically.

Language Accumulation

The multilingual milieu of merchant classes in late medieval London facilitated many forms of urban writing, from John Gower's engagement with merchant culture in his French, Latin, and Middle English poems, to an overt assimilation of commercial discourses by William Caxton a century later. The printer, indeed, conflates the roles of merchant, translator, and literary writer. Whereas trilingual Gower delves into the commercial life of London and the close affinity between merchants and poets, Caxton produces a bilingual text that expresses some of the creative capacities

^{83.} For the similar inexpressibility topos of John of Salisbury, see Cooper, 43; on Caxton's understanding of the weariness of scribal labor, see Cooper, 52, footnote 103.

^{84.} The facing-page layout of text is unique to Caxton (i.e., a practice not followed by later English printers); see Cooper, 38, footnote 66.

of merchants. As a merchant, Caxton is uniquely suited to advertise the "prouffytable" aspects of his own textual production, both in the economic and symbolic senses of the word. The text promises to increase the reader's cultural (and financial) capital while advancing the ambitions of the printer himself. In its presentation of practical instruction as well as its more artful and creative aesthetic flourishes, Caxton's bilingual phrasebook employs a shrewd two-pronged strategy of appealing to notions of practicality and prestige, targeting an expanding marketplace of merchant class readers.

This comparative analysis, to invoke the title of this book, reveals how both Gower and Caxton trade in tongues. Gower exhibits a pervasive fascination with lawyers and merchants as figures who traffic in the city's tongues (i.e., make a living by working across languages), and Caxton fuses the roles of merchant and author, quite literally by means of trafficking in tongues (i.e., creating a bilingual trading phrasebook). Through the creation of texts depicting urban life, each cultivates a translingual literary persona, finding at times unexpected opportunities to theorize language acquisition, cross-linguistic exchange, and the question of what language(s) can be properly be considered one's own. This extended comparison of the poet and the printer highlights the creative potential available to medieval city dwellers with access to second (or third) languages.

How might this analysis of medieval translingual writers reshape our thinking about modern authors who write across tongues? In certain respects, the distinctive features of the first-person reflections of Gower and Caxton regarding their own translingualism emerge all the more sharply through cross-temporal comparison. In a postscript to his English novel Lolita (1955), Russian-born Vladimir Nabokov reflects upon his own translingual career in propria persona, articulating an acute sense of loss that a modern author feels after choosing to write in a second language. In composing Lolita in English, Nabokov laments that "I had to abandon my natural language, my natural idiom, my rich, infinitely rich and docile Russian tongue, for a second-rate brand of English."85 Jenefer Coates characterizes Nabokov (who wrote texts in Russian and English, as well as translating from French) as "tri-literary" but not trilingual per se; since Nabokov was not raised speaking English, he could not claim access to what he himself called "domestic diction," so he converted (in Coates' words) an "impediment to advantage by giving his [English] style

^{85.} Vladimir Nabokov, "On a Book Entitled Lolita" (1956), postscript to *Lolita* (New York: Putnam, 1958), 316.

a baroque, hyper-literary tone."86 The "mature Nabokovian voice," in all its stylistic complexity, emerged as "self-conscious, richly intertextual, and always a little foreign."87

The first-person musings of the so-called "tri-literary" Nabokov on language, loss, and literary creation resonate, however obliquely, with the modesty topoi of trilingual Gower and polyglot Caxton. Both these medieval writers produced highly stylized texts in a second tongue (i.e., French), even as they acknowledged a perceived lack of "native" fluency and "domestic diction" in that language. To a certain extent, Gower might even anticipate the so-called "tri-literary" status of Nabokov, as the medieval poet writes major texts across three different languages with the result that his writing (as we have seen) is highly stylized in its diction and rich in intertextual resonance.

In my comparative reading of Gower and Caxton, I have sought to show how medieval discourses on translingual writing exhibit a complexity more profound than their superficial expressions of loss, lack, or deficiency in an acquired language might otherwise imply. Close reading of the first-person reflections of Gower and Caxton reveals their underlying appreciation for the very advantages of linguistic multiplicity. In their capacity to use Latin alongside a number of vernacular languages (English, French, and in Caxton's case Dutch), these medieval translingual writers actually reap the benefits of experiencing all of their tongues (however unevenly) as living languages; as such, they position themselves as much less impoverished than Nabokov does centuries later. Rather than casting their writing in a second tongue as a process of exchanging an "infinitely rich" native tongue for one that is "second-rate," Caxton and Gower approach language acquisition as a form of "proffyt" and generative production. In other words, these medieval translingual writers script their shifting literary practices over time as a perpetual expansion of possibility, and they engage in a complex transformation of their writing personas across tongues.

When their writings are read alongside each other, Gower and Caxton both reveal that language crossings can be profoundly enriching, with each additional language offering new opportunities (literary and economic) and facilitating creative experiments in thought and expression.

^{86.} Jenefer Coates, "Vladimir Nabokov," in Translation—Theory and Practice: A Historical Reader, eds. Daniel Weissbort and Astradur Eysteinsson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), ch. 4.13, 376-392, at 378.

^{87.} Ibid., 378.

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Medieval translingual writers do not just reflect on their own accumulation of language skills or the even the desire to expand an ambitious oeuvre to encompass multiple languages; they suggest how readily languages coexist and transform one another over time, contributing to the genesis of manifold literary voices.

chapter 4

Travel and Language Contact in The Book of Margery Kempe

Margery Kempe on Land and Sea

The Book of Margery Kempe (c. 1436), the spiritual account of a merchantclass housewife and frequent Continental traveler, is a Middle English narrative that conspicuously spans both sides of the sea. The Proem opens with an "Englyschman" who comes "into Yngland" from "beyonden the see [in] Dewchland" (Proem 66–89), and a merchant's voyage from England "seylyng ovyr the see" (2.2.12) launches Book 2 of the text; the protagonist of the Book of course makes her own trips back and forth over the Channel, and the text traces her movements through a striking range of insular and Continental settings. So well-traveled is she, in fact, that the narrator proclaims the text could not possibly relate all of her experiences "as wel on yen half the see as on this halfe, on the watyr as on the lond" (2.546).

This chapter considers the geocultural ramifications of the *Book*'s curious ineffability *topos*. In this moment in the Proem, the narrator asserts that overseas travel and trans-Channel perspectives are crucial to the text's

^{1.} All citations from the text are from *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Lynn Staley (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 1996). For ease of reference across modern editions of the text, all my citations (with the exception of the Proem) include the relevant book, chapter, and line numbers.

operations—yet this claim would appear to run counter to the views of modern scholars who characterize *The Book of Margery Kempe* as idiosyncratically English or insular in its content, genre, or style. The *Book's* first modern editors, for instance, sought to ascribe distinctive features of this text to "native influences," only to acknowledge (however reluctantly) that the text incorporates Latin traditions as well as engages with Continental literary models.² Moreover, the *Book's* protagonist traverses diverse geographical spaces, languages, and nations far beyond England. In other words, the *Book's* ineffability *topos* suggests how profoundly maritime and cross-cultural contexts inform the main character's journeys, and the text asks readers to marvel at her very capacity to transcend linguistic and national boundaries.

In foregrounding the status of this English Book as a decidedly trans-Channel production, this chapter reassesses the text's narrative not only as hagiography or spiritual autobiography (as many have done so well) but also as an intricate work of travel writing. The wondrous Book transports the reader over ground and water and inhabits "many divers contres and places" beyond England (Proem 115), and the text exhibits all the while a remarkable stylistic richness.3 Through my focus on the role of travel throughout the text, I seek to decenter the Book's "Englishness" per se and trace how it explores translingual and intercultural modes of perception and understanding. Throughout the Book, Margery engages with an array of non-English speakers: Germanic scribes, Latinate and multilingual priests, and Continental (Romance-speaking) women, among others; each encounter not only sanctifies the protagonist but also provides (in many cases) an opportunity for creative literary experimentation, including artful portrayals of non-English speech patterns and modes of thought. Margery's experiences are intricately shaped by her interactions with non-

- 2. On the *Book's* status as "the first autobiography in English," see Staley, 1; see also *The Book of Margery Kempe: Annotated Edition*, ed. Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004, repr. 2006), 31. In the first critical edition of the Middle English text, Hope Emily Allen asserts the text's debt to "native influences" (Ivii). *The Book of Margery Kempe*, eds. Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen, EETS, o.s. 212 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940).
- 3. Readings of *The Book of Margery Kempe* as travel literature are surprisingly few. See Terrence Bowers, "Margery Kempe as Traveler," *Studies in Philology* 97, 1 (2000): 1–28. Curiously, the Proem's stated investment in "many divers contres and places" resonates with the Preface to the *Travels* of one John Mandeville, born in "Ingelond," who "travelide aboute in the worlde in many diverse contreis to se mervailes and customes of contreis and diversiteis of folkys and diverse shap of men and of beistis" (1–3). *The Book of John Mandeville*, ed. Tamarah Kohanski and C. David Benson (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 2007).

English speakers on both sides of the sea (as the text dutifully reminds us), and her perpetual orbit through polylingual environments challenges readers to entertain the Book as something much more than the first English autobiography in English. The Book is in my view a textual participant in a translingual network of creation that effectively disperses authority and troubles stable linguistic orientations.4

The ensuing discussion follows the lead of Lynn Staley in bifurcating the name of Margery Kempe: "Margery" refers to the fictional protagonist inside the text, "Kempe" to an authorial figure or agent outside of it.⁵ Although this splitting of Margery (character) and author (Kempe) is not universally accepted by scholars—the distinction between the two could very well be an illusory one—I adopt this practice in order to stress that the "Margery" in the text is as much a rich fictional representation as "Geffrey" in Chaucer's House of Fame (see chapter 1). Whenever I refer to Margery, I am careful to trace the character's actions on the level of narrative fiction, and I only refer to Kempe when I am specifically invoking historical social circumstances outside of the Book itself.

Throughout this book, I have stressed the idea of attending to both the "roots" and "routes" of medieval culture, and my reading of The Book of Margery Kempe as travel writing continues this investigation outside of London-based contexts. The text's narration of Margery's travels evokes its particular roots in Kempe's polyglot hometown of Lynn while also setting the reader in motion over terrestrial and oceanic routes. Staley has shown that our understanding of the Book must be informed by hometown contexts as well as travels abroad. In her influential reading, she discerns (among other things) a mobile "Englishness" in the Book, tracing the text's connections to local, insular contexts (including debates over the vernacularization of the Gospel) and observing that "Margery . . . gathers around herself a 'nation' of folk who likewise define community in terms of language, relationship, and habit of unity" when she travels abroad; during such moments "the language—English—is a medium of true communication among otherwise unlike people" (170). This reading of Margery's traveling English-language community—one that she "gathers around herself" and that defines a "habit of unity"—productively attends to Margery

^{4.} For important readings of Margery Kempe's motion through multilingual environments and across languages, see Sarah Beckwith, "Problems of Authority in Late Medieval English Mysticism: Language, Agency, and Authority in the Book of Margery Kempe," Exemplaria 4, 1 (1992): 171-99, esp. 190; Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, Medieval Identity Machines (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 175–77.

^{5.} Staley, 3.

in motion, but this idea of a "habit of unity" has the potential to diminish the richness of the protagonist's participation in translingual forms of exchange. Margery, after all, does not maintain a hermetically sealed "English" bubble as she travels—among other things, her English company abandons her during her journeys, and she readily interacts with non-English speakers on both sides of the sea. As a result, the *Book* pursues non-anglocentric, transnational, and multidirectional trajectories.

This chapter has three sections. The first situates the *Book* in a polyglot historical context, illustrating the profoundly multilingual character of Kempe's hometown of Lynn as well as the *Book*'s own accounts of travels abroad. The second section explores some of the translingual writing practices employed by others who worked in Lynn and their extended commercial network: namely, ports in East Anglia, London, and Continental urban centers linked together by members of the Hanseatic trade diaspora. This chapter's third section examines a single motif in the *Book*, seaborne prayer, in order to bridge the text's local East Anglian milieu and Continental maritime contexts. Since the *Book* asserts that events on *both* sides of the sea ("yen half the see as on this halfe") comprise equally important aspects of the story, the text invites us to attend to travels "on the watyr as on the lond"—and the text challenges us to consider how both overland and overseas networks work to set people, and languages, in transit.

Cross-Linguistic Communication at Home and Abroad

The *Book*'s idiosyncratic interest in conjoining the processes of cross-linguistic exchange on land and over sea is evident from the text's opening pages. The Proem initially situates the *Book* not in England or even in Britain *per se* but rather in a transnational, polyglot nexus of textual production. The text introduces a certain expatriated "Englyschman . . . dwellyng in Dewchlond"—that is, in present-day Germany or the Dutch-speaking Low Countries, or another Germanic region on the Continent—who sails "into Yngland wyth hys wyfe and hys goodys" to dwell in Margery's home (66–72). This Anglo-Germanic scribe records Margery's "felyngs" but produces an unintelligibly hybrid text: "neithyr good Englysch ne Dewch," as the *Book* states (74). Only after Margery takes it to another priest "preyng hym to wrytyn this booke and . . . grawntyng hym a grett summe of good

^{6.} On this use of the "trade diaspora," see Philip D. Curtin, Cross-Cultural Trade in World History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

for hys labowr" and praying God to "purchasyn hym grace to reden it and wrytyn it" is this garbled German/English text made legible (95-96). Aided by Margery's prayer, the man reads the text and renders it into proper ("good") English (95–96).

In this convoluted opening gambit, the Proem situates the reader on the English "side" of the Continent through well-chosen prepositions: this "Englyschman" returns "into Yngland . . . fro beyonden the see . . . in Dewchland" (66–84) [emphasis added]. That is, the text initially presumes a narrative orientation with England as its reference point, and the Continent is somewhere "beyonden" the sea. Nonetheless, the Proem gives the Book a restless maritime orbit, with the implicit geographical orientation of the reader fluctuating throughout the ensuing narrative. For instance, the Proem defines the first amanuensis as "a man dwelling in Dewchlond" (placing the reader on the Continent looking toward England) before the text claims him as "an Englyschman in hys byrth" (67-68). The second scribe whom Margery prays (and pays) to rewrite the hybrid German/ English text "had sum tym red letters of the other mannys wrytyng sent fro beyonden the see whyl he was in Dewchland" (86–87).

The exact referent of the masculine pronoun in the phrase "whyl he was in Dewchland" is potentially ambiguous; while most would read the text as suggesting the second scribe was in England when he received the first man's letters from overseas, it could also be the case that the second scribe was himself in "Dewchland" when he received the first man's letters from England. The Proem presents the Book—initially composed in "neithyr good Englysch ne Dewch" (75), and only later transmuted into its current form—as a piece of writing that owes its existence not to a single point of origin in England but rather to a circuit of transactions: an exchange of goods, letters, and services launched by an act of overseas travel.

The very casual way in which the Proem characterizes movements between "Dewchland" and "Yngland" and marriages between different ethnic and linguistic groups suggests how readily Kempe's hometown of Lynn incorporated Germanic visitors and intertwined their lives with those of native English inhabitants. Contemporary documents produced in Lynn, including multilingual epistolary and business correspondence, attest to frequent exchange between Lynn residents and overseas communities

^{7.} For more on Lynn's Hanseatic connections, see Kate Parker, "Lynn and the Making of a Mystic," in A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe, ed. John H. Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 55-73.

throughout the Hanseatic trade diaspora. The trilingual commonplace book (or memorandum book) of Kempe's contemporary William Asshebourne, town clerk of the town then called Bishop's Lynn, was collated between 1408-1417 and it gathers together (among other documents) letters between Lynn's mercantile community and Hanseatic traders overseas. A friendly Latin letter to Lynn's mayor from authorities in Danzig (or Gdańsk, in modern-day Poland) fondly recalls one "Edwardus Faukes noster convicinus dilectus qui nobiscum Dansik in naccione Anglico diu moratus est" [Edward Faukes, our beloved neighbor who dwelled for a long time among us within the English "nation" (merchant community) in Danzigl (fol. 56v), and an English letter sent back to England from Lynn merchants in Danzig establishes ordinances for the community while residing abroad (fols. 6v-8).8 In the broader context of such intimate English/ Hanseatic neighboring in port cities, the marriage of Margery's merchant son to a "wife in Pruce [Prussial in Dewchelond" (2.1.51-52) and her own journey to accompany her daughter-in-law ("a Dewche woman") back to "hir owyn cuntré" may very well have struck Kempe's neighbors as relatively routine, everyday occurrences (2.2.109–112).9

Just as the Proem situates the *Book* within broader networks of Anglo-Hanseatic epistolary, economic, and cultural exchange, the narrative also exploits the mixed local sociolinguistic landscape of Lynn in the service of bolstering Margery's saintly status. In order for Kempe's narrative fiction to claim a powerful rhetorical effect, readers must *believe* that the protagonist Margery is both illiterate and monolingual. By narrating the repeated and tortuous acts of cross-linguistic conversion that must transpire in order to bring the text into being (and, eventually, to transform it into legible "good Englysch"), the Proem renders the *Book* all the more authoritative—and amazing.

Despite the culturally hybrid coastal setting that the *Book* so breezily acknowledges in its Proem, Margery's linguistic "Englishness" (that is, her identity as a woman who speaks only English) is frequently asserted throughout the text. Kempe or her amanuenses often highlights Margery's purported monolingualism as a narrative device, seeking to extend the motif of the protagonist's unlikely, miraculous authority. In one famous

^{8.} King's Lynn Borough Archives, KL/C10/2. Danzig letters appear on fols. 56v and 6v–8. Transcribed in Dorothy M. Owen, *The Making of King's Lynn: A Documentary Survey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1984), documents no. 353 (p. 382) and no. 348 (pp. 278–80). For a catalogue and description of the contents of Asshebourne's book, see Dorothy M. Owen, ed., *William Asshebourne's Book*, Norfolk Record Society XLVII (1981).

^{9.} Parker, 67.

episode, the steward of Leicester addresses Margery in Latin and she responds: "Spekyth Englysch . . . for I undyrstonde not what ye sey" (1.47.2650-51). But inside York Minster, Margery responds to Latinate clerics with great aplomb, suggesting she has at least some aural facility with Latin (and, as the narrator asserts, divine inspiration). 10 Once the protagonist has crossed onto the "other" side of the sea, a complex chain of inter-vernacular and Latin/vernacular miracles ensues. In "Seynt Jonys Cherch Lateranens" in Rome, Margery delivers her confession to another German priest, who understands no English. 11 Elsewhere, Margery tells a story "in hyr owyn langage in Englysch" to the same "Duche preste" who repeats it, in "the same wordys," to a rapt audience—in Latin (1.40.2280– 99). Through "mervylows" episodes of cross-linguistic communication, the Book repeatedly affirms the protagonist's saintly status. 12

While the language miracles within the Book are compelling, we should not take at face value the text's narrative assertions about the character's limited language capacities.¹³ Elsewhere, the narrative reveals that Margery's language proficiencies extend beyond Latin to include other vernaculars. Wandering "in the strete" near Rome, an impoverished Margery encounters a wealthy lady, "Dame Margarete Florentyn," whom she first met in Assisi (1.38.2169). Neither woman speaks the other's language, so they communicate through a mixture of simplified French and assorted gestures:

[Margery] met wyth a worshepful lady, Dame Margarete Florentyn, the same lady that browt hir fro Assyse into Rome. And neithyr of hem cowd wel undirstand other but be syngnys er tokenys and in fewe comown wordys. And than the lady seyd onto hir, "Margerya in poverté?" Sche, undirstondyng what the lady ment, seyd agen, "Ya, grawnt poverté, Madam." Than the lady comawndyd hir to etyn wyth hir every Sonday and set hir at hir owen tabil abovyn hirself and leyd hir mete wyth hir owyn handys. (1.38.2177-84)

- 10. See book 1, chapter 51.
- 11. See book 1, chapter 33.
- 12. On medieval representations of female xenoglossia (the miraculous ability to speak or understand language that is previously unknown), see Christine Cooper-Rompato, The Gift of Tongues: Women's Xenoglossia in the Later Middle Ages (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Press, 2011), 103–42.
- 13. Indeed, Karma Lochrie reminds us not to underestimate the Latinity of the Book. Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 114.

In this encounter, the *Book* effects a stylized portrayal of a mundane cross-linguistic exchange. In contrast to the miraculous language encounters that occur elsewhere in the *Book* (which carry strong Pentecostal and hagiographical resonances), this encounter between English Margery and her Continental namesake Margarete foregrounds the earthbound mechanics of human communication. "Margerya in poverté?" "Ya, grawnt poverté, Madam." Here, Margery pleas for aid, and Dame Margarete responds with acts of charity. By offering direct discourse, and narrating its immediate aftereffects, the *Book* showcases the very worldly circumstances that shape Margery's speech.

This Margery/Margarete encounter is also conspicuous for another reason: it suggests the potential malleability of national and ethnic affiliations for travelers who are far from home, when conventional social codes and rules of interaction are held, as it were, in suspension. The ethnic and linguistic origin of Margarete is, after all, unspecified; "Margarete" works as a Germanic or Romanic form of the name, and "Dame Florentyn" comes not from Florence but "fro Rome." Whatever language(s) the women use at home, both the English Margery and her Continental namesake Margarete speak an improvised lingua franca on the road. Touchingly, the two women bridge a gulf of socioeconomic difference by converging upon the "comown" word poverté—which works equally well as (say) a French or a Middle English word. Moreover, the adjectival form of "grawnt" is a peculiar usage that appears nowhere else in the Book, perhaps reflecting Margery's intuitive approximation of French. In short, the "Englysch" Margery may not actually speak Latin, but she can, when push comes to shove, display a functional proficiency in at least one other vernacular language.

This transient dialogue arguably incorporates elements of three different languages (Middle English, French, and Margery's "Ya" has a certain Germanic tinge), and the *Book* depicts the fluid, dynamic sort of linguistic exchange that readily occurred along travel routes when people from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds were forced, by necessity, to interact. The *Book* may even record snippets of a Franco-Italian trade pidgin, or some other Romance-based vernacular. Although this representation of mixed language is indeed fleeting, there is a cumulative effect to such instances of interpersonal communication throughout the *Book* that evince a spoken *lingua franca* just beyond the text's reach.

^{14.} On the cultural and literary status of *franco-veneto*, "a peculiar hybrid of languages" used in late-medieval northern Italy, see Alison Cornish, "Translatio Galliae: Effects of Early Franco-Italian Literary Exchange," *Romanic Review* 97, 3–4 (2006): 309–30, esp. 320.

^{15.} A similarly hybrid vernacular exchange occurs between Margery and a housewife

This term "lingua franca" of course has its origins in maritime cultural settings, and sociolinguistic research on pidgin and creole languages has revealed the complex hybridization of languages and cultural accommodation between speakers that occurs most conspicuously in maritime contact zones around the globe. 16 Taxonomizing the reported speech in this episode as "belonging" to any particular language is admittedly problematic; Sanford Brown Meech, for instance, characterizes Margery's speech as "a mongrel Italian,"17 while Barry Windeatt discerns "attempts to recall the question and [Margery's] own response in broken Italian."18 However, the women's speech could more accurately be considered a functional adaptation rather than any attempt to replicate "one" particular language (be it French, Italian, or something along the lines of a spoken franco-veneto); as the text suggests, the women are converging upon a "comown" improvised tongue. Indeed, we can discern in this exchange many discourse features surprisingly consistent with contemporary maritime pidgins: the lack of personal pronouns, the omission of the copula, and a drastically reduced lexicon drawing from different substrate languages.¹⁹ In short, this fleeting snippet of dialogue offers a tantalizingly lifelike and artfully stylized representation of language contact.

My close reading of these lines of dialogue in the Margery/Margarete episode foregrounds the Book's interests in both pragmatic and transcendent modes of cross-linguistic communication. Christine Cooper-Rompato shows that the Book as a whole pursues parallel interests in "miraculous

earlier in Assisi. Margery asks the wife to help her find her ring signifying marriage to Christ: "Madam, my bone maryd ryng to Jhesu Crist, as ho seyth, it is away" (1.31.1822-23). The housewife retrieves the ring from under the bed and asks for forgiveness: "Bone Christian, prey pur me" (1.31.1830). The words "bone" [good] and "pur" [for] occur only in this passage of the Book, suggesting the women adopt a shared, Romance-derived speech.

- 16. On the distinction between pidgins and creoles, see Salikoko S. Mufwene, "Pidgins and Creoles," in The Handbook of World Englishes, ed. Braj B. Kachru, Yamuna Kachru, and Cecil L. Nelson (Singapore: Blackwell, 2006), 313-27. See also April McMahon, Understanding Language Change (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), esp. "Pidgins and Creoles" (253-83) and "Language Death" (284-313); Suzanne Romaine, Pidgin and Creole Languages (London: Longman, 1993).
 - 17. Meech and Allen, footnote to 93/26–27 (p. 303).
 - 18. Windeatt, footnote to line 3059 (p. 201).
- 19. See footnote 16 (above) for sociolinguistic overviews of pidgins and creoles. Mc-Mahon observes that the lexicon of a pidgin is characteristically reduced when compared to its superstrate and substrate languages (258); its words are often multifunctional, acting as nouns, verbs and adjectives; and expression of complex ideas often involves circumlocution and periphrasis (259). Romaine notes that pidgins are characterized by minimal pronominal systems (26) and often lack the copula (29).

and mundane translation," and in this respect the narrative engages with broader medieval notions of female xenoglossia (i.e., the capacity to speak or communicate in a language that is previously unknown). I agree that the *Book* exhibits a noticeable parallel interest in both "miraculous and mundane" forms of communication, but I would hesitate to characterize this particular episode as narrating a process of "translation" *per se*. If we understand "translation" as a unidirectional movement—a conversion of an alien language into one's own—then Margery and Margarete enact a mutual and bidirectional exchange, an interlinguistic process that results in a "comown" tongue that belongs to neither speaker.

This episode on the Continent marks a contrast with the language miracles that launch the *Book*, but if we read backwards to the beginning from this moment in the text we might see those earlier episodes in a new light. In the Proem, an expatriated "Englyschman in hys byrth" dwells in Margery's own home to record her dictation, producing a text that floats uneasily between his native and acquired tongues ("neithyr good Englysch ne Dewch"). In the Margery/Margarete episode, the English woman and Continental lady arrive at shared *idioma* in which is "neithyr" speaker's native tongue. In this case, neither speaker is entirely at home, yet each woman may nonetheless understand the other's speech and make herself be understood. The "comown" language these women inhabit is, paradoxically, both familiar and strange.

In the Proem's unnamed "Englyschman" and in Margery herself, we see two travelers who find themselves displaced, not quite at ease in their own language. For all its interests in miraculous and transcendent forms of communication, the *Book* reveals the dual nature of cross-linguistic exchange in medieval contact zones: such spaces can provide opportunities to forge a "comown" ground with people other than ourselves but can also create environments in which nobody feels entirely at home. In this episode, the *Book* asks us to consider not only how Margery's language use evinces a transcendent sanctity but also how our shared earthly existence and experience of the world is shaped through language itself. When speakers of different languages come together in shared spaces, they can all find themselves partially estranged from their respective native tongues, discovering in a "comown" indeterminate language a temporary space to negotiate a new sense of belonging.

Margery Kempe's Multilingual Peers

What truly makes the Margery/Margarete exchange so striking in comparison with xenoglossic "Duche preste" moments is the Book's uncharacteristic refusal to attribute any "gret mervayle" or transcendent "undirstondyng" to such exchanges. The text emphatically renders the Margery/Margarete interaction as an entirely earth-bound form of communication that relies upon functional adaptation rather than divine intervention. Consciously representing a middling speech, the text narrates a series of gestures, physical "syngyns er tokenys" produced during a reciprocal exchange. At the same time, the shared language of Margery and Margarete is the first step in bridging the gulf of social difference between the women. Through thirdperson utterances, they mutually recognize that the English "Margerya" is in "poverté," and the semiotic exchange of "syngyns er tokenys" facilitates a socioeconomic trade-off: "Dame Margarete" places the impoverished Margery "at hir owen tabil abovyn hirself and leyd hir mete wyth hir owyn handys" (1.38.2184). Ultimately, the Book goes so far as to narrate the very "goodys" that change hands from one woman to the other: Margarete "filled [Margery's] botel with good win [a]nd sumtyme sche gaf hir an eight bolendinys [Bologna coins] therto" (1.38.2188-89). Through this episode, mundane linguistic exchange—the sort that travelers (like pilgrims and merchants) undergo on an everyday basis—goes hand in hand with an exemplary act of worldly charity.²¹

Such quotidian episodes suggest Kempe's apparent desire to authorize her text in pragmatic, secular ways that augment the more transparently saintly or miraculous moments throughout the Book. Kempe's early monastic readers may very well have assimilated her text into available hagiographic templates, as the Latin and English marginalia in the surviving Kempe manuscript suggest.²² Nonetheless, Kempe's imagined contemporary audience could have conceivably included not only women and men of the cloth but also secular city dwellers of a social standing similar to her own; that is, a well-to-do, functionally multilingual audience that included members of the merchant classes.

^{21.} This phrase "linguistic exchange" [échange linguistique] follows Pierre Bourdieu, who observes that any linguistic exchange is simultaneously an economic one, and even the most mundane utterances work in the pursuit of a speaker's symbolic profit. "Price Formation and the Anticipation of Profits," in Language and Symbolic Power, ed. John B. Thompson and trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 66–89, at 66.

^{22.} Staley, 6.

In the case of "Dame Florentyn," her Continental origins, impressive "worschepful" entourage, and her admirably high social status are marked by her participation in a Frenchified if not Romance-inflected exchange. In the *Book*, Continental Margarete's elegant name, "Dame Florentyn," signals her high social standing, but we see a much less flattering take on French appellations and French language proficiency in the General Prologue to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* just a generation or so earlier. Chaucer's Prioress "peyned . . . to countrefete cheere/Of court" (139–40), is "cleped Dame Eglantyne" (121), and speaks a local, non-Continental variety of "Frenssh [a]fter the scole of Stratford-atte-Bowe,/For the Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe" (145–46). The wives of Chaucer's Guildsmen "ech [semed] a fair burgeys/To sitten in a yeldehalle on a deys" (369–70) and even if they cannot speak French *per se*, they—like the French-speaking Prioress—find it "ful fair to been ycleped madame" (376).

Curiously enough, the functionally proficient Dame Florentyn and merchant-class housewife Margery Kempe occupy social positions not altogether different from Chaucer's city women (the wealthy and pious "Dame Eglantyne" and status-obsessed burgesses who desire to be "ycleped madame" in the guildhall).²³ Early in the Book, Margery openly announces her origins among the town's urban elite: she proudly declares she is "comyn of worthy kenred . . . for hir fadyr [i.e., John Brunham] was sumtyme meyr of the town" of Lynn and "sythyn he was alderman of the hey Gylde of the Trinyté," i.e., the merchant guild or parish fraternity of the Holy Trinity (1.2.197-99). Civic records indicate that one "Margeria Kempe" was enrolled as a member of this prestigious and powerful charitable organization c. 1438 (around the time the Book was completed).24 In another episode in the Book, Margery attends Mass in St. Margaret's Church while holding "hir boke in hir honde" (1.9.484), presumably an illustrated book of hours of the sort that was mass-produced in France or the Low Countries in Kempe's day.²⁵ A wooden plank falls upon Margery, causing her to cry in pain, and a "good man" named "John of Wyreham" (invoked elsewhere in Lynn civic records as a mercer and member of the Guild of St. Giles and St. Julian) politely attends to the distressed Margery, and she thanks

^{23.} Chaucer's urban(e) Wife of Bath expresses a similar sentiment to one of her husbands, albeit with a heavy dose of irony: "Thou seist also that it displeseth me/But if that thou wolt preyse my beautee,/And but thou poure alwey upon my face,/And clepe me faire dame in every place" (*The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, 293–96).

^{24.} See also Meech and Allen, Appendix III, I (358–59) and III, II (359–62). For more on guilds, charity, and merchant culture in Kempe's day, see Ladd.

^{25.} Windeatt, footnote to line 659, p. 83.

him for "hys cher and his charyté" (9.489-91).26 In this context, Frenchderived words like "cher" [gentle expression] and "charyté" [benevolence] have distinctly courtly resonances, signaling some of the social affectations of Lynn's merchant-class elite.

Such depictions of partial or effected French proficiency may have conveyed a sense of Margery's own class pretentions to Kempe's contemporary English audience, particularly in the context of the other passages suggesting Margery's guild affiliations and relating her prideful endeavors as an entrepreneuse.²⁷ Whereas depictions of French-speaking city people could signal strong class pretensions (as they could in the case of Chaucer's readers a generation earlier), the women's use of language in the Book's episode overseas represents social difference in a subtler way. In the context of the Book's narrative of travel, this instance of language contact between Margery and Margarete (which transpires far away from Lynn) evokes a generalized urban class resonance, but it also stages an encounter between English and Continental vantage points. Kempe portrays Dame Florentyn as an identifiably Continental, high-status woman who gives charity to a poor English Margery across perceived class and ethnic differences. An exemplary matron, this "Dame" stands in marked contrast to the Book's other Continental travelers of expressly "Englysch" origin: the ones who scorn, reject, or even abandon their "owyn" Margery throughout their travels.²⁸ The remarkable quality of Dame Florentyn's kindness—that is, her capacity to recognize Margery's unique spiritual status across sociocultural boundaries—is conveyed all the more persuasively through the women's converging speech patterns. We may see the very opposite of linguistic transcendence—that is, the willful adaptation and mutual convergence of speech—as one parallel mechanism for authorizing the account of interpersonal contact.

We have seen that this Book, despite its hagiographical drive, is not solely concerned with a transcendental communication that overcomes the barriers of human speech; the text carefully manipulates earth-bound languages, including trade registers or mixed vernacular speech. If we read such moments more closely, we also gain access to a Margery Kempe whose linguistic proficiencies extend much further than most modern readers have assumed. Although the figure of Margery within the text is indeed char-

^{26.} For more on Wyreham, see Meech and Allen, Appendix VI, p. 372.

^{27.} See book 1, chapter 2.

^{28.} Throughout the Book, Margery is rebuked, scorned, and abandoned by others identified as English. In book 2, chapter 6, she is abandoned by her own "cumpany" of pilgrims.

acterized as monolingual—she claims she only speaks "hyr owyn langage [of] Englysch"—the *Book*'s intricate internal operations suggest that Kempe outside the text could have had more wide-ranging language capacities.

The degree of Margery Kempe's Latin knowledge has, so far, attracted the most attention among those who have thought in depth about her language capacities. The presence of Latin citations throughout the text despite the Book's assertion that Margery does not know the language (see 2648-53, 1875-81, and 2058-64) has invited modern critics to reach varying conclusions.²⁹ Karma Lochrie's influential assessment of Margery Kempe's Latinity, for instance, requires one to read the Latin citations in the Book as Margery Kempe's voice, but other critics read such moments in the text as interpolations by her own priest-scribe.³⁰ Even if these Latin citations have been supplied by the "Dewche preste," the instances of direct mixed-vernacular discourse as in the episodes discussed above would appear to have a more consciously literary or at least a stylized mimetic quality. As lifelike portrayals of vernacular speech, they provide an alternate form of authorization to the Book to interwoven Latin or Scriptural citations. We can perhaps best imagine the Book as a palimpsest of different narratives dictated, written, and rewritten over time: a dense text that layers any number of constitutive languages, influences, and speech patterns. Rather than linguistic hierarchies that would privilege Latin over vernacular languages, the Book superimposes a hagiographical baseline of Latin/vernacular miracles with a layer of inter-vernacular exchanges.

The *Book*'s layered polyvocality certainly enhances its narrative richness: the text, dictated by Margery Kempe to multiple interlocutors, is written out by scribes with varying linguistic skills and cultural backgrounds. Other texts produced throughout medieval Lynn's trade network help create a fuller picture of the mixed linguistic capacities of Kempe's urban peers. The busy multilingual character of Lynn is conspicuously documented through merchant-class textual collections regarding civic life and overseas trade. The *Red Register* of Lynn, for instance, records important local charters in French and Latin, and it was stored in Kempe's beloved Trinity

^{29.} Also see book 2, 367–69, in which Margery cites passages from the Psalter. For an influential reading of this and other passages in which Margery speaks Latin or directly cites Latin Scripture, see Lochrie.

^{30.} As Sue Ellen Holbrook states in a critique of Lochrie's study: "Lochrie is vague about distinguishing between the voice of the priest-scribe and that of the dictating Kempe" (225). Untitled review of Karma Lochrie, Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), Modern Philology 92, 2 (1994): 224–27.

Guildhall.³¹ William Asshebourne, the aforementioned common clerk of Lynn, occupied a social orbit that readily overlapped with Kempe's: Robert Spryngolde, named in the Book as one of Margery Kempe's own confessors and scribes, is mentioned in a French record within Asshebourne's Liber; this entry appears within the pages of his diverse collection transmitting French epistolary correspondence, documents in English and Latin regarding Anglo-Hanseatic trade, and mixed-language accounts of local political disputes.32

Elsewhere in East Anglia, Robert Revnes of Acle, a manorial administrator and guild member himself, compiled a text steeped in urban culture including devotional and hagiographical poetry (for performance in a local guild of St. Anne), and the collection exhibits pervasive interests in travel through urban networks: e.g. Latin-English verses, itineraries between cities, Latin numbers, French vocabulary for currency amounts, and numerous contracts and legal materials.³³ The Liber Lynne, a cartulary compiled around 1430 for John Lawneye, citizen and grocer who married a Lynn fishmonger's widow, records a series of deeds concerning London's relationship with the Hanseatic Steelyard in Lynn.³⁴ This manuscript collection, intended for private family use, transmits English and Latin documents along with French headings identifying the genre of each text (letter, deed, charter, power of attorney, etc.) and summarizing its contents. The fact that such textual aids would be written out in French suggests the extent to which merchant-class readers could use—or, at the very least, have the skills to navigate—an array of concurrent languages.³⁵ When the capacities

- 31. The fourteenth-century Red Register is now housed in King's Lynn Borough Archives. The Red Register of King's Lynn, transcribed by R. F. Isaacson and ed. Holcome Ingleby. 2 vols. (King's Lynn: Thew & Son, 1919–1922).
- 32. In the Book, Margery's "confessowr, parisch preste of Seynt Margaretys Cherche" (1.67.3859-60) is elsewhere identified as "Maistyr Robert Springolde" (1.57.3285-86). Asshebourne's Liber contains a French letter to the Bishop of Norwich on behalf of the same "Robert Spryngald" (fol. 49v). See also Owen, Asshebourne's Book, no. 148, p. 83.
- 33. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Tanner MS 407. See also The Commonplace Book of Robert Reynes of Acle: An Edition of Tanner MS 407, ed. Cameron Louis (New York: Garland Publishing, 1980).
- 34. London Metropolitan Archives, COL/CS/01/015, formerly Guildhall MS Cust. 15. On the relationship between John Lawneye and his wife Margaret, see Sylvia Thrupp, The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300-1500 (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1948, repr. 1989), 123–25. For a catalogue of the manuscript's contents with transcriptions of selected documents, see Stuart Jenks, "Der Liber Lynne und die Besitzgeschichte des hansischen Stalhofs zu Lynn," Zeitschrift des Vereins für Lübeckische Geschichte und Altertumskunde 68 (1988): 21–81.
- 35. The Book recounts multiple visits to London. In book 1, chapter 16, Margery and her husband John reside in the palace of Archbishop at Lambeth; in book 1, chapter 55,

of Kempe's social peers are taken into account, we gain further insight into the sociolinguistic nuances of the *Book*'s mode of representation. Keeping Kempe's social milieu in mind, we can now turn to a particularly resonant register throughout Margery's speech: her seaborne prayers.

Maritime Language and Seaborne Prayer

In rerouting this discussion of the *Book*'s protagonist via other multilingual urban contexts in Lynn and beyond, we can gain a fuller appreciation for how this text transmits verbal traces of dispersed cultural and linguistic environments on the sea and in the city. I have discussed Margery's encounters with non-English speakers, and we have witnessed the character's capacity to engage in Romance-derived and French-inflected forms of speech. This section explores how Margery's frequent prayers to Christ and the Virgin Mary—uttered immediately before, during, or after sea voyages—exploit trade discourses prevalent in the port towns through which Margery travels. When Margery departs Rome "purposyng to gon ageyn into her owyn natyf lond" (1.42.2339), she makes her way "into Inglondward . . . owte of Rome" (1.42.2359–60) to the port of "Medylborwgh" [Middelburg, in the present-day Netherlands] (1.42.2366). Fearing the "many thevys be the wey which wolde spoyl hem of her goodys," she prays to Christ:

Crist Jhesu, in whom is al my trost, as thow hast behyst me many tymes befor that there schulde no man be disesyd in my cumpany, and I was nevyr deceived ne defrawdyd in thi promysse . . . grawnt that I and myn felawschep wythowtyn hyndryng of body er of catel . . . may gon hom ageyn into owr lond lych as we come hedyr. (1.42.2340–46)

Both Sebastian Sobecki and David Wallace have elaborated upon the complex hagiographical discourses prevalent in such moments of prayer and how the holy seafaring motif links the *Book* to Chaucer's Custance and other holy seafarers.³⁶ As we have seen in chapter 2, medieval texts

they again travel to London to receive a dispensation from the new Archbishop. In book 2, chapter 9, Margery travels alone and is graciously received by some Londoners but rebuked by others.

^{36.} See Sebastian Sobecki, *The Sea and Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 137–38. See also Wallace, 6–7. For more on women seafarers, see the discussion in chapter 2 (above).

can portray seafaring women as nimble navigators who traverse linguistic and geographical boundaries on land and sea. During Margery's later sea voyages en route to Danzig "tempestys weryn so grevows and hedows that thei myth not rewlyn ne governe her schip" (2.3.208); the narrator observes that they "cowde no bettyr chefsyawns than comendyn hem self and her schip to the governawns of owr Lord; thei left her craft and her cunnyng and leet owr Lord dryvyn hem wher he wolde" (2.3.203–10). In this moment, the text puns on God as the gubernator (guide, rudder) or helmsman of the ship, activating numerous spiritual resonances at once.

Elsewhere in the text, the sea acts quite transparently as a spiritual metaphor, conjoining movements across language with movements across space. In a vernacular echo of James 1:8, the Book at one point states that "a dubbyl man in sowle is evyr unstabyl and unstedfast in al hys weys" and such a man is "evyrmor dowtyng is lyke to the flood of the see, the whech is mevyd and born abowte wyth the wynd, and that man is not lyche to receiven the gyftys of God" (1.18.969–72). In such moments, travel serves as a figure for spiritual wavering, and God's steadfast guidance stands in marked contrast to the capricious winds and tempests of the sea: "Dowtyr, for alle thes cawsys and many other cawsys and benefetys whech I have schewyd for the on this half the see and on yon half the see, thu hast gret cawse to lovyn me" (1.65.3817-19). Throughout the Book, tempests can serve a clear signifying function. The cessation of such storms often suggests the efficacy of Margery's prayers, and—as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has observed—tempests and winds in and of themselves can often register for Margery as divine communication.³⁷

In Book 2 we witness a significant shift in the sea's spiritual significance: the spiritual instability of mercantile life is projected onto the sea itself, stressing its importance for the livelihood of Lynn traders. "The seyd creatur had a sone, a tal yong man, dwellyng wyth a worschepful burgeys in Lynne, usyng marchawndyse and seylyng ovyr the see," the Book reveals, and Margery seeks to "drawyn [him] owt of the perellys of this wretchyd and unstabyl worlde yyf hir power myth a teynyd therto" (2.1.11–14). Indeed, it is "sone aftyr the same yong man passyd ovyr the see in wey of marchawndyse" that he falls "into the synne of letchery," and the discourse that the narrator employs in order to describe the merchant-son's spiritual error is unmistakably nautical. He errs "thorw evyl entisyng of other personys and foly of hys owyn governawnce," and this highly-charged term "governawnce" once again evokes the steering and guidance of God (2.1.24-27).

Margery's seaborne prayers suggest both divine guidance and spiritual allusions, yet the protagonist's prayers simultaneously deploy discourses that are much more mundane and pragmatic. Many modern readers have remarked upon the pervasive use of contractual language throughout the Book, and the pragmatic register of the agreements between Margery and Christ have been characterized either as symptoms of "a very material mysticism" or, to put it more pointedly, a "very mercantile mysticism." 38 But all of these maritime prayers slip into an identifiable linguistic register as well: Francophone business correspondence. Maryanne Kowaleski makes a case that daily "communication between English mariners" and non-English speakers "may have been eased by the use of French as the lingua franca of not only maritime law and some port-town records, but also as the basis of a common argot in the Atlantic littoral."39 Indeed, we could extend Kowaleski's insight to that most maritime of ports, Kempe's hometown of Lynn. East Anglian city folk, including the mayors, aldermen, and guild members of Margery Kempe's hometown—or, as a fourteenthcentury entry in the town's Red Register puts it, "les burgeys de la ville de Lenne" (fol. 142d)—recorded their own letters to foreign merchants and instructions for native and alien fishers and traders in this language.

French documents included in the *Red Register* of the Mayor and Commonalty of Lynn often invest in relating final bequests or dispensation of charity, or offering a written record of quotidian business transactions. ⁴⁰ In a French "lettre" within the *Register*, Paul Lomb states that he and two other men of Lynn have pooled their money to jointly purchase two houses in another town: "nous eyons jointement purchacee de nostre commun argent deux places mesones en la ville de Seynt Boltoff" (fol. 16). In another part of the *Red Register*, a French ordinance proclaims that "touz les burgeys de la ville de Lenne qui tenount ou tentrount hostes qils averount la vj^{me} partie de lour hostes de totes maners de marchandises venantz ala dite ville" [all the burgesses of the town of Lynn who take in strangers (non-native traders) shall have the sixth part from those strangers all manner of merchandise coming to the said town], with the exception of

^{38.} Sarah Beckwith, "A Very Material Mysticism: The Medieval Mysticism of Margery Kempe," in *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology and History*, ed. David Aers (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), 34–57; Roger A. Ladd, "Margery Kempe and Her Mercantile Mysticism," *Fifteenth Century Studies* 26 (2001): 121–41.

^{39.} Maryanne Kowaleski, "The French of England: A Maritime Lingua Franca?" Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England c. 1100–c. 1500, eds. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al. (Rochester, NY: York Medieval Press, 2009), 103–17.

^{40.} Transcriptions from the Red Register follow Ingleby.

various sorts of "peysshon fresch" [fresh fish] (fol. 142d). In addition, these strangers "ne concelount nule manners de marchaundises" [shall not conceal any manner of merchandise and "sil nul hoste soit trove coupable en nul des poyntz avauntditz [il] perdraient le profyst" [if any stranger be found guilty of the aforesaid matters, they should lose the profits] (fol. 142d). In this coastal context, we see once again the proximity between "naytif" English and "straunge" inhabitants, and for the burgesses of Lynn Anglo-French is both a foreign and a native language (note the hybrid, macaronic quality of the phrase "peysshon fresch").

Given its status as a trade language in major urban centers, French appears particularly useful when members of the merchant classes must communicate with people outside (or from outside) Lynn itself: e.g., a letter recording a purchase of a property in a different town, or an ordinance concerning the treatment of foreign traders in Lynn. For the burgesses and civic community of Lynn, French serves not only as a literal lingua franca with the potential to communicate with people beyond the city itself, but it also functions as an identifiable trade register, one that commonly narrates the movements of commodities, property, and people.⁴¹

In this context, Margery's pre-travel prayer to Christ—uttered just before yet another sea voyage—assumes a clear localizing resonance. When Margery prays in the port of Middelburg, she asks that Christ protect her "cumpany," reminds Him that she was "nevyr deceived ne defrawdyd in thi promysse," and requests that Christ "grawnt" her freedom of movement without "hynderawnce of body er of catel" (1.42.2340-6). The contractual terms throughout her appeal—compaignye, graunt, promyse, hinderaunce, and catel—are all, unsurprisingly, terms of French origin. From a sociolinguistic and historical standpoint, we can readily see that Margery's prayers mobilize a great deal of business vocabulary, and the fact that French was the dominant mode for recording everyday transactions goes far in explaining why the Book would code-switch into a conspicuously French-inflected register in order to record such utterances.

41. In Asshebourne's Liber, letters concerning diplomacy, maritime trade, or international conflicts are recorded in French, although some letters on behalf of Lynn's Mayor and merchant community are written down in English (see footnote 8, above). French documents to and from Lynn's Mayor and burgesses concern Exchequer documents, "chev[is] aunce" (a loan request), and the confiscation of certain vessels arriving in Lynn (see fols. 20v, 21v, and 22v); French letters between the Mayor and burgesses of Lynn and Admiral Thomas Beaufort appear on fols. 26v and 50. For letters in English, see fols. 6v-8, 51v, and 52 (these folios include letters from Lynn merchants to authorities in Wismar, Rostock, and Stralsund).

Practical considerations notwithstanding, I would like to foreground the literary resonances of such code-switching moments in the text, and consider how such language use is functioning within the fictive narrative context of travel. It is precisely when Margery moves across the sea, or stands on the verge of embarking onto the water, that the *Book* breaks into its clearest Francophone register. Insofar as the *Book* is a literary text, the French-inflected language in Margery's maritime prayers resonates with other fictional representations of merchant-class characters across medieval genres, particularly in East Anglian coastal settings. William Langland's "Covetyse," for example, whose speech abounds with Francophone merchant jargon, speaks "no Frenssh, but of the fertheste ende of Norfolk" (*Piers Plowman*, B.V.235); that is, he claims mastery only over the professional variety of French used in Norfolk ports (like Lynn) and other areas where he must conduct trade, with the "fertheste ende" (the sea itself) as Norfolk's outer limit.⁴²

The Digby Mary Magdalen, written down in East Anglia around 1500, is a "littoral [play] . . . where much of the narrative consists of boarding ships and disembarking, with stage directions frequently referring to coasts." In one scene, "Galaunt" and "Coryosite" approach Mary, speaking in overtly Frenchified discourse. Galaunt, who identifies himself as a "frysch new . . . marchant" by vocation, suddenly appears (presumably "frysch" off the boat) and Coryosite marvels at his "ressplendant" clothing (500–503). Not only does their discourse employ a great deal of Francophone vocabulary, but the rhyme patterns that give form to their speeches consistently stress French-derived word endings: "galaunt," "marchant," "peneawnt," "constant," "ressplendant" (500–508).

This general Francophone tenor of Margery's prayers strongly evokes the worldview of merchants and practical considerations of everyday life in Lynn. In Book 2, mundane considerations over maritime travel serve to further authenticate the account. This section opens with an unchar-

- 42. William Langland, The Vision of Piers Plowman: A Critical Edition of the B-Text based on Trinity College Cambridge MS B.15.17, ed. A. V. C. Schmidt. 2nd Edition (London: Dent, 2000).
 - 43. Sobecki, Sea and Medieval, 109.
- 44. See [The Digby] Mary Magdalen, in The Late Medieval Religious Plays of Bodleian MSS Digby 133 and E Museo 160, eds. Donald C. Baker et al. (London: Oxford University Press, 1982), 24–95.
- 45. For an excellent reading of the French tenor of Galaunt's performance, see Deanne Williams, *The French Fetish from Chaucer to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 116.

acteristically detailed description of the logistics of sea travel, drawing the Book's resonance even closer to the style and tone of epistolary and business correspondence of Margery's hometown burgesses. Margery writes "letterys" to her merchant son on the Continent, "seving that whedyr he come be londe er be watyr" he should be "certifiid of hys moderys cownsel," and the narrative states the son dutifully

hiryd a schip er ellys a part of a schip in whech he putt hys good, hys wife, hys childe, and hys owyn self, purposyng alle to comyn into Inglond togedyr. Whan thei weryn in the schip, ther resyn swech tempestys that thei durstyn not takyn the see, and so thei comyn on lond ageyn, bothyn he, hys wife, and her childe. (2.2.90-96)

The intricate prose style evokes French epistolary conventions and business parlance. Exploiting stylized repetition ("hys good, hys wife, hys childe, and hys owyn self . . . he, hys wife, and her childe"), this passage mimics the reckoning of merchandise and transport of people and goods that so often concerns Francophone maritime writing. Indeed, Margery's prayers to cease this tempest at sea closely resemble Francophone contractual agreements: "thu hast oftyn tyme behite me that I schulde nevyr perischyn neithyr on londe ne in watyr ne wyth no tempest" (2.3.213–14); "I, unworthy wretche, am deceyvyd and defrawdyd of the promys that thu hast mad many tyme onto me . . . wythdrawe thes tempestys and schewe us mercy" (2.3.217–20).

These seaborne prayers to Christ and the Virgin Mary strategically adopt the French-inflected register of business correspondence, and these anaphora-laden, formulaic requests and responses throughout the Book nicely echo the rhetorical devices in contemporaneous mercantile documents. Compare, for example, the letter of Lynn ambassadors to the Queen of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway concerning negotiations between Hanseatic and Lynn merchants (c. 1416), one of many texts transmitted in Asshebourne's Liber. Lynn merchants pray that the Queen excuse their delayed arrival, and the letter, recorded in Middle English, evokes highstatus French epistolary models:

oure merchauntes being here ate Lenne for nedefull causes hadden non er understondyng of this matere because that schippes of oure merchauntes for divers tempests and contrarious wyndes hav ben in comyng and seilling from your cite of Northberne [i.e., Bergen] to Lenne . . . these same procuratours in her viage at this tyme be tarved by tempests contrarious wyndes or ellis be swich other cause reasonable they mighten be yowre godly and gracious mediacion ben fully had [sic] excused. (fol. 94v)⁴⁶

Although this letter serves a practical purpose, it deploys some rhetorical flourishes. The capricious whims of the sea ("divers tempests and contrarious wyndes") are a justifiable excuse for a delayed arrival, and a formulaic repetition of phrases ("tempests and contrarious wyndes . . . tempests contrarious wyndes or ellis") evokes the ebb and flow of sea-travel and the uneven turning of waves. In the French-inflected Middle English of the *Book*, earnest prayers amid "tempests" recall such pragmatic discursive rhythms, and at one point the Virgin Mary's response, "I telle the trewly thes wyndys and tempestys schal sone sesyn" (2.3.239) echoes Christ's own formulaic language regarding winds and "tempestys."

The *Book* code-switches into an identifiably French-inflected register at key moments in its narrative, evoking the very sounds of home even as the protagonist sails far afield in foreign waters. The bureaucratic language of the civic scribe, merchant, or burgess "outre mere" or "beyonden the see" in Lynn is still readily heard and preserved through the text's intricate style of narration. It is precisely during such moments across the sea—or even physically upon the sea itself—that Margery's speech registers as most homely, most local, *and* most Francophone. By evoking the ways business varieties of French were used across different urban centers, the *Book* provides yet another secular mechanism for authorizing Kempe's account.

Margery Kempe's Language-Worlds

This chapter ends with the most self-consciously "mervylows" section of the *Book*: the account of the protagonist's overseas journey to Hanseatic ports in Book 2. In this narrative section, which concludes the *Book* as a whole, the major cultural phenomena discussed above ultimately converge. The *Book* makes a final detour into another (Germanic) language context, transporting its protagonist through a varied itinerary of towns: Danzig, Stralsund, Calais, Dover, Canterbury, London, and Lynn.

As we have seen, the *Book*'s account of Margery's overseas travel codeswitches into an identifiably Francophone register at key moments in the text. Margery fears the potential "hynderawnce of body er of catel" while traveling over land, and her anxieties over sea travel are even more pronounced. When "sche come fro Seynt Jamys" [Santiago de Campostela in modern-day Spain (1.45.2385-86), she utters a similarly contractual prayer for protection: "Befor that sche entryd the schip, sche mad hir preyerys that God schulde kepe hem and preserve hem fro venjawns, tempestys, and perellys in the se" (1.45.2587-88). Fears over loss of life or goods while traversing these North Atlantic sea routes preoccupied medieval merchants and shipmen alike, as Chaucer states slightly earlier.⁴⁷ In a convergence of travel, trade, and tale-telling, Margery arrives on land post-tempest and tells "good talys" in order to earn some money:

And, whan thei wer in the lityl schip, it began to waxin gret tempestys and dyrke wedyr. [. . .] And, whan thei wer on the londe, the forseyd creatur fel downe on hir knes kyssyng the grownde, hyly thankyng God that had browt hem hom in safté. Than had this creatur neithyr peny ne halfpeny in hir purse. And so thei happyd to meten wyth other pilgrimys whech govyn hir three halfpenys, inasmeche as sche had in comownyng telde hem good talys. (1.43.2396-2404)

In this moment, the heavy use of parataxis employs not so much the lexicon but the bureaucratic syntax of French business documents. If we read the prose stylings as a deliberate rhetorical or stylistic strategy, then this passage resonates with the Book's wider aesthetic and mimetic qualities. 48 The anaphora-laden prose ("And, whan thei wer. . . . And, whan thei wer. . . . And so thei happyd . . . ") has a lulling, rhythmic effect; its narrative flow conveys the ups and downs of movement over sea and land. Moreover, the loss of goods that begins this passage ("neithyr peny ne halfpeny in hir purse") leads to the generation of narrative (the "good talys") that the reader consumes.

The Book's resonance as travel writing becomes most apparent in the spectacular collision of hagiographical, mercantile, and maritime motifs in Book 2: "tempestys," "perellys," "merveyls," and seaborne prayers, all nar-

- 47. Chaucer states: "Us moste putte oure good in aventure./A marchant, pardee, may nat ay endure . . . Somtyme his good is drowned in the see,/And somtyme comth it sauf unto the londe" (The Canon's Yeoman's Tale, 946-50). In The General Prologue, the Merchant fears sea piracy along the same Middelburg trajectory that Margery follows: "He wolde the see were kept for any thing/Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle" (276-77). The Shipman draws "many a draughte of wyn . . . whil that the chapman sleep" during his own journeys "[f]ro Burdeux-ward" (396–97), tracing much the same route that Margery takes "fro Seynt Jamys ageyn" (1.45.2585-86) and "hom ageyn to Bristowe" (1.45.2600). For Lynn documents concerning Middelburg-Lynn trade matters, see KL/C10/2, fols. 87v and 124.
- 48. For an informative initial reading of the stylistic features of the Book's prose, see A. C. Spearing, "Margery Kempe," in A Companion to Middle English Prose, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), 83-97, esp. 93.

rated along the way to the Hanseatic port of "Danske in Duchelond," or Danzig (2.4.259). Margery arrives safely at this port in 1433, but when it is time for her to depart she is not granted leave: "sche han no leve to gon owt of that lond, for sche was an Englisch woman, and so had sche gret vexacyon and meche lettyng er sche myth getyn leve of on of the heerys of Pruce for to gon thens" (2.4.283–85). As Staley and others have noted, 1433 was a time of rocky relations between England and the Hanseatic League, and Margery's status as "an Englisch woman" leaves her movements at the discretion of "the heerys of Pruce," or the Teutonic Knights in Prussia.⁴⁹ Wallace has observed that the honorific title "heerys"—a term conferred upon Teutonic Knights—marks the sole occurrence of this Germanic loan word in the *Book*.⁵⁰ The unexpected slippage into Germanic honorifics signals Margery's submission to the authority of those who can permit or restrict her motion.

Eventually, Margery's itinerary takes her through other port towns (Calais, Dover, London), and the *Book* wends its way to a conclusion. After travels in "divers contres and places" and encounters with speakers of "divers" languages, Margery at last returns to her hometown of Lynn. In a lengthy prayer to God and a final appeal to the audience, the *Book*'s narrator proclaims that "this world . . . wolde merveylyn and wonderyn" at what the text relates (2.3.234–35). If, as Staley has suggested, "Kempe uses the prayer to establish Margery's singular position," then "she also uses it to compose a world" (182). The *Book*'s intricately rendered prayers transmit aspects of the discrete language-worlds through which Margery has journeyed.

The Book of Margery Kempe employs fictional geography to depict scenes of cross-linguistic communication both at home and overseas, and it highlights the many ways that languages converge and disperse across maritime settings. Unlike other tales of sea-tossed protagonists, some of the Book's most fluid linguistic exchanges occur, strangely enough, on land. Diverging from common "generic crossroads" in romance and hagiography (see my discussion of the complexity of overseas and littoral encounters in chapter 2), the Book employs roadways, homes, and urban domestic spaces as settings for narrating geographically disparate moments of language contact.

^{49.} Staley, 216. For a contemporaneous Middle English poem expressing great hostility toward powerful Hanseatic traders, see *The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye: A Poem on the Use of Sea-Power*, 1436, ed. George Warner (Oxford: Clarendon, 1926).

^{50.} Wallace, 21.

These many instances of translinguistic slippage in the narrative and the layered verbal texture of the Book's prose augment Margery's wideranging travels. Just as the Book slides into a hybrid Romance-inflected vernacular when narrating encounters in northern Italy and code-switches into an identifiably Francophone contractual register when transmitting seaborne prayers, so does the text drift toward Germanic speech (however subtly) as Margery sails through Hanseatic ports. Narrative episodes like these legitimize the Book—giving the text a veneer of authenticity or imbuing the text with some "local color"—and their rhetorical flourishes, all the while, enhance the story stylistically. In its capacity as travel writing, the Book evokes some of the varied linguistic features of cultural environments at home and abroad.

Throughout my reading of The Book of Margery Kempe, I have attended to the ways particular shifts in language and register convey movements into different social spheres. Extending Staley's suggestion that Kempe "uses [prayer] to compose a world," I see the French-inflected register of Margery's maritime prayers effectively creating what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls a language-world [Sprachwelt] within the text.⁵¹ Rather than suggesting the *habitus* (linguistic and social practice) of a particular merchant-class woman, such instances of French-inflected contractual speech show how language itself can transmit a worldview shared by a larger community. Code-switching into a Francophone business register readily evokes a pragmatic language-world that would have been not only familiar to merchantclass Margery but also readily recognizable to Kempe's own urban peers.

When English Margery and Continental Margarete meet on the road and forge a "comown" tongue between them, the Book breaks new ground, suggesting the potential permeability of language-worlds for people in transit. Neither woman is speaking her "own" language in this episode, yet they each manage to stumble into a "comown" language-world that can, however provisionally, sustain them both. While Gadamer believes that "our experience of the world is bound to language," this does not "imply exclusiveness of perspectives," and when we "[enter] foreign languageworlds . . . this does not mean that we leave and negate our own world."52 By representing travels through such nuanced forms of language, the Book suggests the possibility that Margery accumulates the resonance of multiple language-worlds over time, and that she can transport these disparate

^{51.} Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, Second Revised Edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2004).

^{52.} Ibid., 448.

language-worlds (northern Italy, Hanseatic ports, her own hometown of Lynn) wherever she may go. Ultimately, the *Book* offers more than a stylized narrative that traverses land and sea: it suggests how profoundly our perceptions of our homes and our orientations toward our native tongues can shift through the social dynamics of travel.



Merchant Compilations and Translingual Creation

Merchant-Compilers in London

Across the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, a number of London merchants compiled handwritten collections of prose and verse texts in English, Latin, and French. Robert Fabyan, a draper (d. 1513), filled his self-titled *Concordance of Storyes* with prose narratives from the time of Brutus to the Tudor era, incorporating Latin verse (metrical and rhymed), French-derived *balade* stanzas, and English poetic forms into its chapters. Richard Hill, a grocer (fl. 1503–1536), recorded personal and historical notes in his account book while copying out English and French letters and mixed-language poetry. John Colyns, a mercer (fl. 1517–1539), gathered into his personal manuscript multilingual poems, London ordinances, and treatises on bookmaking.¹

1. For a recent overview of London book production that addresses collections discussed in this chapter, see Julia Boffey, "London Books and London Readers," in *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, eds. Brian Cummings and James Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 420–40. See also Ian W. Archer, "John Stow, Citizen and Historian," in *John Stow* (1525–1605) and the Making of the English Past, eds. Ian A. Gadd and Alexandra Gillespie (London: British Library, 2004), 16, and notes. For an important overview of compilation in London, see Sheila Lindenbaum, "London Texts and Literate Practice," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 284–309.

Mary-Rose McLaren has grouped some of these collections together as "London Chronicles," suggesting that the manuscripts compiled by Hill (Oxford, Balliol College MS 354), Colyns (London, British Library, Harley MS 2252), and haberdasher Robert Arnold (commonly known as *Arnold's Chronicle* or *The Customs of London*, first printed in Antwerp in 1503) share common sources in French and Latin that have since been lost.² Although discussing such manuscripts as "London chronicles" usefully draws attention to these merchants' shared investments in the city and in history writing, such a category has the potential to obscure the profound generic diversity of the texts that each collection incorporates—including literary, legal, and instructional materials.³

Rather than attempting to address these compilations under a single category of textual practice—e.g., as literary anthologies, manuscript miscellanies, commonplace books, or examples of vernacular chronicle writing, as others have done—I would like to stress how their internal generic and linguistic heterogeneity shapes their manifold functions.⁴ Even a cursory look through any one of these books suggests that each one fulfilled a number of purposes for its multitasking merchant-compiler. An individual book could serve as a chronicle, account register, lyric anthology, *and* repository for practical documents and notes. In other words, these merchants' collections were not only multilingual but also multifunctional.⁵

This chapter maintains that each of these collections is best examined on its own terms as an idiosyncratic textual and linguistic universe. As Mark Amsler remarks in a different context: "multilingual writing [in many cases] goes beyond simply juxtaposing languages to imaginatively and performatively creating and enacting textual spaces as contact zones."

- 2. Mary-Rose McLaren, The London Chronicles of the Fifteenth Century: A Revolution in English Writing (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), 35–37; see also 116.
- 3. Alexandra Gillespie identifies a more diffuse phenomenon of "citizens' notes" that would include figures like Hill. "Stow's 'Owlde' Manuscripts," in *John Stow: English Past*, eds. Gadd and Gillespie (2004), 63, see also footnote 44.
- 4. On "commonplace book," see David Reed Parker, The Commonplace Book in Tudor London: An Examination of BL MSS Egerton 1995, Harley 2252, Landsdowne 762, and Oxford Balliol College MS 354 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998); on "compilation," see Carol Meale, "The Compiler at Work: John Colyns and BL MS Harley 2252," in Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth Century England, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), 82–103; on "anthologies," see Boffey, "London Books."
- 5. On the "multifunctionality and organic growth" of Colyns' collection, see Herbert Wäckerlin, "A Manuscript Collector's 'Commonplace Books': Árni Magnússon (1664–1730) and the Transmission of Conscious Fragmentation," *Variants* 2/3 (2003/2004), eds. Dirk van Hulle and Wim van Mierlo (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 221–245, at 245.
 - 6. Mark Amsler, "Creole Grammar and Multilingual Poetics," in Christopher Klein-

In this respect, we can explore each collection as its own dynamic contact zone, a textual space where languages meet, inform, and transform each other. My readings attend most closely to acts of code-switching (i.e., instances of movement across different languages) throughout these collections. By focusing on such moments, I reveal how these merchants engage in what we would now call translation theory and comparative literary analysis. Throughout this chapter, I trace how these merchants characterized their own acts of multilingual compilation and created spaces for theorizing their divergent modes of translingual writing. These merchantcompilers exhibit a range of literacies and different linguistic capacities, yet they all illustrate the creative potential inherent in translingual writing practices.

Robert Fabyan (Draper): Compilatio as Craft

The work of the London draper Robert Fabyan is perhaps as good a point as any for discussing translingual compilation. Fabyan conceived of his project, which he entitled the Concordance of Storyes, as a coherent whole, and Fabyan is methodical and wide-ranging in his chronological sweep across history. The two-volume Concordance, which survives across a few manuscripts and early print editions, provides a combined history of England and France spanning from Brutus to the Tudors, with the later chapters offering a London-centered perspective on historical events.8 What is most intriguing about the Concordance is the degree to which Fabyan interjects first-person reflections upon his poetic craft and the cultural status of

henz and Keith Busby, eds., Medieval Multilingualism: The Francophone World and Its Neighbors (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 1-28, at 15-16.

- 7. For medieval understandings of compilatio as process, see Alistair J. Minnis, Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 194–200; on the "horticultural analogy" of compilatio in Gower's Confessio Amantis, see J. Allan Mitchell, Ethics and Exemplary Narrative in Chaucer and Gower (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), 61, and footnote 1.
- 8. Fabyan's Concordance of Storyes survives across two different manuscripts and a few early print editions, including those of Richard Pynson in 1516 (STC 10659), William Rastell in 1533 (STC 10660), and others. The surviving manuscripts are Holkham MS 671 (containing volume 1) and London, British Library MS Cotton Nero C.xi (containing volume 2). These manuscripts feature a shared decorative pattern of large paste-down woodcut initial letters, as well as a common hand sometimes identified as the autograph hand of Fabyan, although this hypothesis has been questioned by McLaren (see p. 26 and following). On the "interpenetration" of manuscript and print features "in the form of hybrid books," see Boffey, "London Books," 436-37.

compilation itself. As I shall discuss, Fabyan develops a clear literary persona throughout his project, and he exploits poetry to think through his role as a literary artisan (or, at the very least, textual mediator). His pervasive metaphors of cross-fertilization and organic growth offer dynamic alternatives to linear, developmental models of history, and Fabyan thoughtfully explores the difficulty of synthesizing materials across different languages in order to fashion a new textual assemblage.

Before examining Fabyan's verse, it is worth noting that an intricate textual apparatus lends coherence to the collection as a collection. Fabyan's project spans two volumes. The first extends from Brutus to William the Conqueror, providing a macro-level view of the reigns of England and France; the second spans the reign of Richard I to Henry VII, adopting a more local orientation. The shift to a London-centered perspective in the second volume is explained in the preface. Fabyan announces that this volume's chapters will not proceed in order of regnal years but in sequence by the tenure of London mayors; i.e., each chapter bears a heading that lists the names of London's mayor and other officials (bailiffs, and sheriffs) in the given year. Surviving early copies of this work—one of which might bear Fabyan's handwriting—begin each volume with a concordance to orient the reader as well. This paratext highlights, in tabular form, the differences between the first and second volumes. The table before the first volume lists names of rulers in chronological order, foregrounding the organizational scheme of subsequent chapters. 10 At the start of the second volume, a concordance arranges its entries alphabetically according to more thematic topic headings. All in all, this textual apparatus suggests that Fabyan—or someone close to him—perceived the Concordance as a resource for future readers, presenting it as more than a sequence of "storves."11

- 9. "Now, for as moche as we be comyn to the tyme that offycers were chosen and chargyd with the rule of the cytie of London, it is necessary that here we do shewe what offycers they were, and of the name that to them was admitted and gyuen. . . . Wherefore nowe I shall . . . contynewe the names of all offycers, as wele baylyues, mayres, and shryues," and each is listed according to their terms in office (Ellis, 293, fol. 1). For ease of reference, my quotations follow the 1811 edition by Ellis, and I have silently expanded abbreviations in the text. Henry Ellis, ed., *The New Chronicles of England and France, in Two Parts, by Robert Fabyan. Named by himself the* Concordance of Histories (London: for F. C. and J. Rivington et al., 1811).
- This table in the Holkham manuscript is in Latin (see Ellis, vii), but Pynson's 1516 edition reproduces it in English instead.
- 11. It is possible that Fabyan, a draper, exploited his connections to the Guildhall. See the introduction to the facsimile of Guildhall MS 3133 by A. H. Thomas and I. D. Thornley,

The first appearance of verse in this work appears in the prologue to the first volume, when Fabyan employs poetry to launch his ambitious undertaking. Surpassing the scope of the chronological table of contents for the first volume (which extends from Brutus to William the Conqueror), the prologue versifies the span of the entire book's contents; i.e., the two volumes of the work will proceed from Brutus all the way through Henry VII. Drawing from "olde Auctours . . . in latyn and Frenche" who with "theyr dytes swoot . . . haue so compendiously/Sette the ole Storyes in ordre" (Ellis, 6), this collection relates "the revgne of euery kynge," including "howe long the Brytons ruled," and "howe by Saxons they lastly were put oute,/Than of Danes," and then "how the Normannes, by Wyllyam Conquerour,/Entryde this lande, and helde the Sygnory" (Ellis, 4). The poet foregrounds this project's sustained interest in London governance as well: "London, that auncyent Cyte, euer parseueryd in virtuous noblesse" in spite of large-scale waves of invasions (Ellis, 4). In these prefatory verses, the first-person narrator presents the organizational principles of the two volumes as deliberate choices.

In its careful arrangement of source materials, this project employs a noteworthy methodology: it *intertwines* the histories of England and France, culling from disparate sources to produce an organic whole: "in this boke, may you here and se/Of both landes the Cronycles entyere,/With other matyrs which Regystred be" (Ellis, 5). Fabyan proclaims a fitting title for his work of synthesis: "this boke . . . [t]herefore this name . . . shall now purchase/Concordaunce of Storyes, by me prouyded" (Ellis, 5). Although the verses in the Concordance differ (in form and style) from the textual apparatus, their content is mutually enforcing. Both the tables and the prefatory verses outline the scope of the project, highlight its conceptual framework, and present the "boke" as a synthetic whole.

Although this chronicle of rulers moves along a linear trajectory, a significant amount of "channel surfing" characterizes the chapters, particularly after part 5 of volume 1. In what might be considered a geopolitical equivalent of linguistic code-switching, Fabyan oscillates between chapter sequences bearing the heading Anglia [England] and Francia [France], and at the start of individual chapters, Fabyan often reminds readers of the simultaneity of English and French histories. 12 The first chapter on Charles

eds., The Great Chronicle of London (London: G. W. Jones, 1938). For more on Fabyan and these related manuscripts, see Boffey, "London Books," 426-28.

^{12.} The Francia/Anglia headings appear in the earliest printed editions of the text (Pynson 1516, Rastell 1533), and these rubrics are likewise preserved as marginal glosses in the edition by Ellis (1811).

IX of France, for instance, states that he "began hys reygne ouer the realme of Fraunce" in 1484, in the "seconde yere of [Richard III] of Englande" (Ellis, 673); and the chapter on Henry VII of England states that he "began hys dominyon ouer the realme of Englande" in 1485, the "seconde yere of [Charles VIII] then kynge of France" (Ellis, 678). In other words, Fabyan's chronological history requires cross-referencing and backtracking, imagining a reader who traces events in England and France concurrently. On this note, the prefatory verses encourage discontinuous reading, inviting traversals across *Anglia* and *Francia*: "Into .vii. partes I haue this booke deuyded,/So that the Reader may chose where he wyll" (Ellis, 5).

Since Fabyan's manipulation of historical sources has been much examined by other scholars, this discussion turns to an under-appreciated aspect of his *magnum opus*: its literary aspirations. Fabyan presents his project as a collection of historical narratives ("storyes"), but the enterprise simultaneously serves, often self-consciously, as a poetic anthology. As much as the *Concordance* comprises a synthetic historical chronicle, the "boke" experiments with diverse internal strategies for verse translation. As chapters progress, Fabyan develops a literary persona that positions the compiler not only as a historian but also as a poet, a writer who is keenly aware of the challenges inherent in verse translation and compositional practice. Exploiting myriad discourses for theorizing poetry making, Fabyan expresses deep appreciation for aesthetic and stylistic matters, including meter and literary form.

The first instance of verses within the chronicle proper occur in the first volume's second chapter, which derives from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. Brutus, legendary founder of Britain, flees Troy, arrives on the coast of Africa, and prays to Diana for guidance. The goddess then appears to him in his sleep:

Brute fyll in a slepe; in tyme of whiche slepe apperyd to hym the sayd Goddesse and sayd to hym in maner and forme as foloweth.

Brute sub ocasu solis trans gallica Regna Insula in oceano est vndique clausa Mari: Insula in oceano est habitata gigantibus olim,

13. For Fabyan as chronicle writer, see McLaren, 26–28. On the alternate recounting of Jewish and Trojan histories giving way to a linear narrative of *translatio imperii* in the *Flores historianum* of Matthew Paris (one of Fabyan's stated sources), see Suzanne Conklin Akbari, "Between Diaspora and Conquest," *Cultural Diversity in the British Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 17–38, esp. 21.

Nunc deserta quidem, gentibus apta tuis. Hic de prole tua reges nascentur, & ipsis Totius terre subditus orbis erit. Hanc pete namque; tibi sedes erit et illa perhennis. Hic fiet natis altera Troja tuis.14

The which versis maye be Englysshed as hereafter followeth.

Brute farre by West, ouer the lande of Fraunce, An ile in ocean there is, all closed with the see; An Ile w[ith] Geaunts whylom inhabyt by chaunce, Nowe beynge deserte as apte for thy people & the. In this of thy body kynges borne shall be, And of this Ile thou shalt be lorde and kynge. Serche this, for here a perpetuell See [i.e., "seat"] to the, And here to thy childer a new Troy shal sprynge. (Ellis, 9–10)

In an abrupt break in the chronicle's prose, the narrator code-switches from English to Latin by means of a verse citation. Fabyan adheres to the "maner and forme" of the Latin verses that he transcribes, in the original language, from his source text; such respect for the original form of poetry from Latin or French sources is a feature that persists throughout the other chapters.

In this moment in the text, Fabyan finds an appropriate vernacular register to convey the "maner and forme" of an eight-line Latin utterance: a modified French-derived rhyme royale stanza (ababbcbc). As appropriate as this form is, the English verses do not correspond "line for line" with the Latin. For instance, the English converts the figurative phrase sub ocasu solis [under the setting of the sun] to a simple cardinal direction, "farre by West." Despite metrical differences between the Latin and the English, the equivalent line numbers across both versions visually registers Fabyan's respect for the formal aspects ("maner and forme") of the original. Moreover, this "Englysshed" reiteration of Diana's utterance re-creates at least some of the Latin's rhetorical effects.¹⁵

- 14. Brutus, there lies toward the setting sun (in the West), beyond the realm of Gaul, an island surrounded by the waters of the ocean; an island in the ocean once inhabited by giants, but it is now deserted, ready for your people. From your offspring kings will be born, so seek out this place; it will be a proper seat for you and your people. In this place there shall be created for your children another Troy.
- 15. The anaphora of two lines beginning "Insula in oceano est" (Latin lines 2–3) has an echo in "An Ile . . . An Ile . . . And of this Ile . . . " (English lines 2, 3, and 6).

These roughly equivalent English and Latin verses foreground the linguistic challenges inherent in verse translation, and this episode additionally evokes another valence of the Latin etymology of translatio: movement across space. Diana's words to Brutus famously predict the foundation of an altera Troia or "a new Troy" in the West that will resemble—but cannot replicate—the original in Asia. Indeed, the final words of Fabyan's next chapter showcase the connection between his own act of poetic translation and the toponymic "crossing over" that occurs in his source narrative: "when Brute had deuyded this Ile of Brytayne . . . after most concordaunce of wryters, he dyed; and was enteryd or buryed at Troynouant or London" (Ellis, 11). The "concordaunce of wryters"—that is, the collective authority of past historians—establishes a movement from Troy to his final internment at "Troynouant or London." Fabyan's invocation of a "concordaunce of wryters"—and his choice to name his city with two concurrent toponyms, the native English place-name and a French one—prepares his audience for the many acts of language crossing that will transpire in the rest of his own Concordance.

The narrative context of this foundational chapter nicely anticipates subsequent acts of code-switching in Fabyan's work. Elsewhere in the Concordance, poems punctuate the transport or internment of bodies. The explication of translatio takes multiple forms in the Brutus section, including an emphasis on somatic motion and crossing over from this life into the next (Diana says to Brutus that "kynges [shall be] borne . . . of thy body" and "Brute . . . was interyd or buryed at Troynouant or London"), and the intertwined resonance of linguistic and somatic translatio infuses subsequent chapters. Throughout the Concordance, many chapters that mark the end of a king's reign provide commemorative verses: most often, an epitaph or other memorial inscription ("superscrypcyon") upon a tomb or commemorative object. For example, Richard I of England is buried at "Fount Ebrade [Fontevraud Abbey in France] with this epytaphy vpon his tombe," which Fabyan transmits as ten lines of elegiac verse; he then specifies that the "whiche verses are thus moche to meane in sentence," with an English approximation of the Latin in the form of two balade stanzas (Ellis, 281). In some cases, the description of the tomb itself is highly elaborate. Louis VIII of France, for instance, is interred in Saint-Denis within a "sepulture [adourned] in the moost rychest maner with golde, syluer, & precious gemmys; vpon whose toumbe was grauen theyse .ii. [Latin] verses folowynge," and here too Fabyan provides a corresponding English verse in balade form (Ellis, 272).

In these chapters with commemorative verses, Fabyan's strategies of

translation are flexible, shifting idiosyncratically from chapter to chapter. Most often such Latin verses (many, but not all, in elegiac meter) find a vernacular equivalent in English balade (rhyme royale) stanzas, which was evidently Fabyan's preferred mode for conveying the "maner and forme" of elevated Latin verses.¹⁶ At times, more ad hoc verse improvisation occurs, with Latin and English verses varying in length, meter, or form. In verses for Edward I of England, for instance, every two Latin couplets (in a 24-line verse) comprise a single balade stanza in the corresponding English sequence.¹⁷ Throughout the Concordance, the narrator's terms for translingual mediation are noticeably flexible as well. Fabyan never claims his English verses as final, authoritative "translations" of Latin (or French) source texts; rather, he insists that the non-English verses he transcribes are provisionally or inexactly "expownded," "Englysshed," or "vnderstonded" in the "maner and forme" in which the text presents them. In other words, Fabyan takes pains to present two languages concurrently, allowing the original and provisionally "Englysshed" verses to coexist and occupy the same space.18

When Fabyan's narrator interjects first-person commentary on his poetic style, he expressly encourages the reader to think across two languages concurrently. In addition to his stated respect for the "maner and forme" (variously connoting style, tone, or formal integrity) of non-English verses, Fabyan acknowledges the aesthetic quality of his poetic translations and suggests their very stylistic qualities might inspire a deeper reading across languages. At the end of the Edward I verses, for example, he renders rhyming Latin couplets as English stanzas "[set] out in baladde royall" with the explicit goal that the "reder myght haue the more desyre to ouer rede theym" (Ellis, 405–7). Here, the "Englysshed" iteration of a poem in rhyme royale stanzas does not supplant but converses with the Latin, and Fabyan invites the reader to view the English and non-English renditions afresh.

^{16.} For instances of Latin verses (in most cases elegiac meter) rendered in English as balade stanzas, see volume 1, chapters 195, 212, 235, 237, and 238; volume 2, years 1199-1200, 1203-1294, 1246-1247, 1272-1273, 1282-1283, 1293-1294, 1325-1326, 1399-1400, 1409-1410, 1484-1485, and 1485.

^{17.} Volume 2, part 7, year 1306–1307 (Ellis, 405–7).

^{18.} This principle holds true when English coexists with languages other than Latin. In volume 2, part 7, Scots perform songs in "derysyon" of the English (years 1296-1297, 1313-1314, and 1372-1373); Welsh and English "metricyans" trade verses in Latin (year 1282-1283); Flemish city dwellers unfurl a banner bearing verses taunting the French (year 1376-1377); French verses at a banquet include "soteltyes" inscribed on food (year 1419-1420); Latin masses are performed in honor of Henry V (year 1421-1422); and actors in a procession welcoming Henry VI to London recite verses (year 1431–1432).

How does Fabyan theorize his translingual poetic practice? His thinking about poetic craft emerges most visibly in the form of first-person transitional passages like prologues and envoys. In instances where he is not deriving material directly from non-English sources, Fabyan positions himself as an agent of poetic transformation. His surprisingly innovative metaphors conceive poetry as a craft or trade as well as a perpetually shifting, transformative art.

The verses in the preface to the entire *Concordance* set the stage for this process of poetic cultivation. The prologue opens with Creation—reckoning "the accomptynge of the years of the world, from the Creacion of Adam" (Ellis, 1)—but soon shifts into verse:

Whan I advertise in my remembraunce,
The manyfolde storyes, in ordre duely sette,
Of kyngs & prynces that whylum had governaunce,
Of Rome and Italye, and other further fette
As of Iewes and Grekes, the which haue no[t] lette,
But that men maye se in order ceryously,
Howe long they reygned, and how successyuely.

Of Fraunce and other I might lyke wyse report
To theyr great honour, as of them doth appere,
But to Englande, if I shall resorte,
Ryght mysty storyes, doughtfull and vnclere,
Of names of tymes, and of the duraunt yere
That kynges or prynces ruled that famous yle,
Almoste vncertayne howe I shulde gyde my style.

And for of cunnynge I am full destytute,
To bring to frame so great a mysterye:
I nyll presume, without other refute,
To ioyne suche a werke or it to rectyfye,
To me it semyth so ferre sette a wrye
In tyme of years, to other discordaunt,
That to my dull wytte it is nat atteynaunt. (Ellis, 2)

These lines deserve careful unpacking. First of all, the stanzas establish a distinct literary persona for Fabyan, presenting him as a diligent compiler who arranges source materials ("manyfolde storyes, in ordre duely sette"), yet all the while claiming uncertainty with his poetic skill ("vncertayne

howe I shulde gyde my style"). That is, the first-person poetic persona claims he is still working out the manner in which he will compose this text-in-progress. The phrase "gyde my style" refers to the physical act of writing, e.g., "direct my pen" (stylus, or writing instrument); but more figuratively, the poet wonders what style, or linguistic register, is most appropriate for him to adopt.

In addition to foregrounding the physical act of writing, Fabyan's stanzas exploit evocative metaphors for poetic creation, including verbs derived from trade professions: architecture, including carpentry or stonemasonry ("bring to frame so great a mysterye"); textile crafts, which entail measuring and joining materials ("ioyne suche a werke or it to rectyfye"); and metaphors for polishing raw stone (i.e., his "dull wytte" struggles to clarify "mysty storyes, doughtfull and vnclere"). Moreover, Fabyan invokes multiple sensory metaphors for his composition process. The poet-historian must take "mysty storyes . . . vnclere" and clarify (polish) them, and other times he must, like a musical composer, harmonize disparate historical accounts whose details (years and dates) appear "discordaunt." Most strikingly, Fabyan tackles some of the difficulties inherent in the historian's project by adjusting received models of temporality itself. He invokes the linear telos of translatio imperii in which power is transferred from one civilization to another ("Howe long they revgned, and how successfuely"), but he also foregrounds cultural continuity: Greek and Jewish cultures have not "lette" (i.e., they endure in the present). Through complex conceits drawn from craft discourses, this draper turned poet-historian ponders his fashioning of a transnational, synthetic account of history.

In the next few stanzas Fabyan further develops intertwined metaphorical conceits to cast poetry-making as a generative process:

And I lyke the Prentyse that hewyth the rough stone, And bryngeth it to square, with harde strokes and many, That the mayster after may it ouer gone, And print therein his figures and his story; And so to werke it after his proporcynary, That it may appere to all that shall it se, A thing ryght parfyte and well in eche degree.

And haue I nowe sette out this rude werke, As rough as the stone nat comen to the square, That the lerned and the studied clerke May ouer polysshe and clene do it pare;

Flowrysshe it with Eloquence, wherof it is bare, And frame it in ordre that yet is out of ioynt, That it with olde Auctours may gree in euery poynt. (Ellis, 3)

In these stanzas, Fabyan brilliantly reshapes fifteenth-century English discourses of literary "dullness." Earlier, the poet applies his "dull wytte" to polish "mysty storyes . . . vnclere," and here Fabyan further reanimates craft parlance. Not only does his project comprise an artful shaping of raw source material, but his own work can be subject to refinement just as artisans polish, clean, and measure ("frame . . . in ordre" what is "out of ioynt") in order to create a "thing ryght parfyte and well in eche degree." Most strikingly, Fabyan positions himself as a laboring "Prentyse" who subjects his output to correction or improvement by a master. ²⁰

Just as Fabyan exhibits interests in how humans shape inert raw materials, other passages in the prefatory verses suggest more vital, organic processes. This work is written in "honor of this Fertyle Ile" and the poet asks future readers to spread the flowers of what it transmits ("Flowrysshe it with Eloquence"); moreover, Fabyan grafts together two related plants, conjoining the "storyes of Englande and Fraunce so dere,/That to the reder it may well be sayne,/What kings togyder ruled these lands twayne" (Ellis, 3). In Fabyan's poetry, artisanal craft discourses foregrounding human labor coexist with implicitly organic metaphors to convey a synthetic compositional practice.

One of Fabyan's most self-consciously literary moments occurs at the beginning of part 7, which explores the consequences of the Norman Conquest:

Nowe shaketh my hande, my pen waxeth dulle,
For weryd and tyred; seynge this werke so longe:
The auctours so rawe, and so ferre to culle;
Dymme and derke, and straunge to vnderstonde:
And ferre out of tune, to make trewe songe.
The storyes and years to make accordaunt,
That it to the reder might shewe true and pleasaunt. (Ellis, 239)

19. David Lawton, "Dullness and the Fifteenth Century," English Literary History 54, 4 (Winter 1987): 761–99.

20. On the rich resonance of craft discourses in medieval literary texts, see Lisa H. Cooper, Artisans and Narrative Craft in Late-Medieval England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); for fifteenth-century examples of this motif, see the discussion of Lydgate's craft discourses on 165 and 171.

This balade makes explicit the physical labors of the poet-craftsman (or translator-compiler), and its invocation of a "werke so longe" and sources "so ferre to culle" recalls a longstanding ars longa, vita brevis motif. Fabyan casts poetic composition as well as his method of historical and literary compilation as a craft. He foregrounds the physical labor involved in writing out the manuscript as well its attendant intellectual labors: assembling, calculating, and "mak[ing] accordant" the dates and regnal years.

As I have demonstrated, Fabyan's poetry is thick with a number of different craft discourses, and his work consequently exhibits a pervasive poetic synaesthesia: a rich simultaneity of sensory modes of perception (vision, sound, and touch). For instance, Fabyan evokes "dullness" in senses that are once visual ("mysty [and] vnclere," "dymme and derke") and tactile ("rowgth stone," "harde strokes"). Likewise, Fabyan's notion of synthesizing "discourdaunt" sources into a form that is "accordaunt" and "plesaunt" suggests visual cohesiveness as well as musical harmony; indeed. the rhyme pattern here conveys a pleasing sonic concordance. By densely packing his verse with transmuted sensory modalities, Fabyan mobilizes the powerful aesthetic effects that poetic "style" can have upon his reading or listening audience.

Insofar as poetic craft is concerned, Fabyan's rhyme does exhibit some imperfections. This particular stanza almost corresponds to an idiosyncratic abacbcc rhyme pattern—but only if we perceive the native English word "vnderstonde" as somehow rhyming with French-derived words "accordant" and "pleasant." Moreover, the sound of the verses effects an imperfect concord between English and French, suggesting the intertwining of histories that underlies Fabyan's project. Later editors have been troubled by the rhymes in this stanza. Like a master correcting an apprentice's imperfect work, one 1559 editor perfects Fabyan's writing, amending the word "vnderstonde" to "vndersonge" to make the rhyme conform to a regular pattern. In this case, one must read the original "vnderstonde" as rhyming with the word "songe"—and if this is so, then the poet has created a rhyme pair that sounds discordant, deliberately "out of tune." Through his poetic synaesthesia, Fabyan aligns concurrent modes of perception and linguistic simultaneity. This very notion of "concord" obliges the reader to think in English and in French at the same time.

As strange as it may seem, the merchant-compiler's interests in artistic and literary creation inform another code-switching text that we can ascribe to Fabyan: his final will and testament. Fabyan's will directs executors in the dispersal of his household goods (as one would expect), but the text also exhibits an extraordinary feature: a series of prolix tomb descriptions with accompanying verses in Latin and in English. The original copy of the will does not survive, but the Registry of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury transcribed the will that went into probate in 1513 (Kew, National Archives, E PROB 11/17, fols. 90v–93r). It opens with a conventional bilingual invocation:

In Dei nomine. Amen. Undecimo die mensis Iulii, anno dominice incarnationis millessimo quingentesimo undecimo / ac anno ilustrissimi principis, ac regis nostri Anglie Henrici octavi, tertio.²¹ I ROBERT FABYAN, Citizein & draper of London thanke and lawde be thereof giuen to God and to his blessed moder our Lady seynt Mary hole of body and mynde ordeyne and make this my present Will and Testament / in maner and forme as folowith. . . . (fol. 90v, qtd. Ellis, iii)

This Latin/English opening is formulaic and consistent with surviving wills of contemporary London citizens, which include prayers for one's soul and relatives, with specific instructions for future acts of commemoration.²² A catalogue of possessions and monetary amounts bequeathed to friends and relations follows as well.²³ Where Fabyan's will stands out from contemporary wills is the elaborate specificity in the tomb commemoration it envisions. Fabyan not only transmits tomb inscriptions in Latin and English but also describes a complex accompanying iconographical program:

And also I will that if I decease within the Citie of London / that w[ith] in three years following myn executors doo make in the walle nere unto my grave a little tumbe of freestone / vpon the which I will be spent liij s. iii d. att the most / And in the face of this tumbe I will be made in / two platis of laton / ij. figures of a man and of a woman, w[ith] x. men children and. vi. women children / and over or above the said figurys I will be made a figure of the fader of heaven enclosed in a sonne / And from the man figure I will be made a rolle toward the said figure of the fader / and in hit to be graven. O Pater in celis / And from the figure of the woman another lyke rolle / wherein to be graven . Nos mecum pascere velis / and

- 21. In the name of God, Amen. On the eleventh day of July, in the Year of Our Lord 1511 and the third year of our illustrious prince and King of England Henry VIII.
- 22. Fabyan describes in excruciating detail the masses to be performed on his behalf, as well as the timing and the trajectory of his own funeral procession and other commemorative acts throughout city (Ellis, vi).
- 23. Many of these include household goods and precious items, like jewelry, bequeathed to his children and other relatives (Ellis, vii).

at the feete of the said figures I will be graven these ix verses following / Preterit ista dies / oritur origo secundi / An labor an requies / sic transit gloria mundi. (fol. 92v, qtd. Ellis, x)

Much of this iconography is consistent with surviving memorial brasses of members of the merchant classes and citizens of his social rank; these can depict a husband and wife along with children (including deceased ones), often segregated by gender, accompanied by pious inscriptions above or below in Latin (or, in other cases, French).²⁴ Immediately after this description, an English stanza expounds upon the Latin couplet:

Lyke as the day / his course doeth consume And the new morrow / spryngith again as fast So man and woman / by natures custume This life doo passe / and last in earth ar cast I ioye and sorrow / which here their time dide wast Never in oon state / but in [course] transitory Soo full off chaunge / is of this worulde the glory. (fol. 92v, qtd. Ellis, x)

Attesting to Fabyan's interest in poetic synaesthesia, this document's verbal imagery is manifold. This description conveys the image and dimensions of a brass artifact along with its iconography and Latin banderole inscriptions. Moreover, the commemorative Latin couplet is followed by a corresponding English balade stanza, and both of these verses emphasize the consumption (waste, spending) of time and transformation of animate, organic matter.

Interestingly, Fabyan's will offers a series of contingency plans, envisioning the commemorative and decorative program for an alternate site should his preferred London resting place be unavailable. 25 Atop this struc-

- 24. Fabyan's tomb does not survive. For a canopied tomb with iconography and Latin scrolls similar to the kind described in Fabyan's will, see the monumental brass of John Croke, citizen and skinner of London (d. 1477) and his wife and children; Survey of London, Vol. XV: The Parish of All Hallows Barking, Part II, gen. eds. G. H. Gater and Walter H. Godfrey (London: Country Life Ltd., for the London City Council, 1934), 71-72, with plates 81, 84, and 85. For an excellent overview of secular memorial brasses, see Nigel Saul, "Bold as Brass: Secular Display in English Medieval Brasses," in Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England, eds. Peter Coss and Maurice Keen (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2002), 169-94. See also the discussion of John Gower's multilingual tomb and related verses in chapter 3.
- 25. "And if I be buried in the churche of Theydon Garnon forsaid, than I will that w[ith]in a yere following myn executors doo purvey a stone of marbill to laye upon my grave, about the borders thereof I will be fastyned a plate of laton, and w[ith]in that plate graven

ture, Fabyan outlines a program of arms and other devices: ".iii. skochens of armies following, that is to say, at the hede the armes of the citie of London, & the Drapers armes, and at the fett myn owne armes, and my merchaunt mark" (qtd. Ellis, x). This detailed verbal depiction is again consistent with features of surviving merchant memorials in London and elsewhere, but the multiplicity of symbolic systems here is intriguing. Other merchants include only the most prestigious heraldic form available to them (e.g., family arms, especially if they married into armigerous families), but Fabyan activates multiple social networks simultaneously. He includes the arms of the City of London (of which he is a citizen), but also signals his guild membership (Drapers), displays his familial arms (indicating his lineage), and claims his own professional identity (merchant mark).²⁶ Latin and English verses coexist in Fabyan's imagination, and the symbolism emerging in these verbal descriptions is manifold. Only rarely are so many forms of signification (civic and familial arms and merchant marks) deployed on merchant-class tombs. 27 Even in an apparently quotidian and pragmatic document, Fabyan exploits his creative capacity to synthesize language, verses, and imagery. He exploits an intimate relationship between poetry and allied arts (e.g., song and music, sculpture or carving) and he expresses a deep appreciation for artisanal craft through forms of social display.

The stylistic features in these passages of Fabyan's will vividly recall episodes in the Concordance. Fabyan describes the tomb of French king

thies words folowing: 'Hic jacet Robertus Fabyan, durum ciuis et parnnarius London, ac vice-comes et aldermanis.' . . . And in the upper part of that grave stone I will be sett a plate and thereyn graven a figur of our lady with her child sittyng in a sterr, and under that. ij. figurys w[ith] the children before specified; and either of the said ij. figures holding a rolle, whereyn upon the mannys part I will be graven 'Stella Maria maris.' And upon the womannys rolle 'Succurre pijssima nobis'" (qtd. Ellis, x).

26. Robert Fabyan's manifold signification strategy also characterizes the frontispiece of his copy of Hartmann Schedel's *Nuremburg Chronicle* or *Liber Chronicarum* (Nuremburg: Anton Koberger, 1493). London Metropolitan Archives CLC/270/MS03789 (formerly Guildhall MS 3789) bears the arms of Fabyan, the City of London, the Worshipful Company of Drapers, and Fabyan's merchant mark. M. T. W. Payne, "Robert Fabyan and the Nuremburg Chronicle," *The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 12, 2 (June 2011): 164–69, esp. 165–66.

27. Another example of such manifold self-display is the memorial brass of John Benett of Norton Bravant in Wiltshire (d. 1461); this includes three shields, one bearing a crossed pair of shears, one bearing a coat of arms, and the other bearing his merchant mark. See a detail of this image in F. A. Girling, English Merchants' Marks: A Field Survey of Marks made by Merchants and Tradesmen in England between 1400 and 1700 (London: Lion and Unicorn Press, 1962), 32.

Louis VIII as a "sepulture [adourned] in the moost rychest maner with golde, syluer, & precious gemmys; vpon whose toumbe was grauen theyse .ii. [Latin] verses followinge," followed by a corresponding English verse in balade form (Ellis, 272). In his own will, a single Latin rhyming couplet is expounded by a corresponding English balade stanza. Fabyan's will constitutes a narrative form of self-commemoration that resembles the end of so many of his own Concordance chapters. Moreover, the statement that his testament will proceed "in maner and forme as folowith" (fol. 90v) recalls a phrase often repeated near the end of Concordance chapters when the narrator offers an English version of a Latin verse.

Fabyan's interests in concurrent modes of communication and multiple symbolic codes shape how he imagines the construction of his own tomb, which employs rich Latin and English inscriptions as well as mutually informing semiotic systems: London arms, guild iconography, his arms, and merchant mark. This concurrent use of multiple symbolic codes resonates most strongly with his linguistic capacities. We have seen, throughout the Concordance, Fabyan's capacity for linguistic code-switching and sustaining more than one mode of communication simultaneously. The citizendraper's will exhibits similar interests in code-switching, verse form, and artisanal craft that resonate with his own first-person poetry and historical compilation.

In these collected textual materials associated with Fabyan, we gain a deep appreciation for how one London citizen-draper and merchant-compiler experiments with simultaneous modes of artistic and literary expression. In his Concordance of Storyes, Fabyan transmutes a fifteenth-century discourse of the drab or "dull" poet or chronicler, emerging as vibrant and masterful in his own translingual craft. He interweaves, polishes, adorns, and adapts poetic form organically to suit the subject matter at hand.

Some of my assessments of Fabyan's literary craftsmanship could grant him a little too much credit. More than one editor has supported the view that his verses are "not of a superior cast." Indeed, Fabyan's uneven poetic output exhibits imperfect rhyme and meter, clumsy syntax, and inelegant neologisms which could be seen as symptoms of an unpolished "roughness." This discussion demonstrates that Fabyan's poetry is actually much more sophisticated than his face-value claims to "dullness" would allow. Fabyan might also prompt us to think a bit more carefully about the value of "rough translation" in premodern English poetics more generally. In the overt provisionality of Fabyan's English verse translations, and his call to

future readers to "frame it in ordre that yet is out of ioynt" (Ellis, 3), the poet anticipates a form of "subaltern disjointedness" that Dipesh Chakrabarty discerns in postcolonial "rough translations."²⁹ In these imperfect, uneven, and deliberately provisional verse translations, Fabyan allows the rough edges of his *Concordance* to show, foregrounding an aesthetics of unpolished writing. Fabyan invests in the order and sequence of his materials, but is not so much concerned about its apparent "messiness" *per se*. The compiler does not want to smooth over the rough spots in his work but (to offer a cloth-making metaphor) to allow the stitches and junctures to remain apparent.³⁰ Fabyan's *Concordance* thus showcases the process and craft of the translator-compiler, asking the reader to sustain concurrent modes of thinking.

Regardless of how we seek to value Fabyan's compositions aesthetically, we can nonetheless appreciate his long-abiding interest in using poetry as a tool for theorizing translation. Conceiving translingual writing as a dynamic, never-complete process, Fabyan presents each of his verse translations not as a fully "perfected" composition but rather a performative act that bears repetition: each rendition is deliberately provisional, inexact, and open to future modification or alternate iterations. Fabyan admits he faces numerous challenges as he confronts his Latin and French sources, characterizing his "auctours" as "so rawe, and so ferre to culle;/Dymme and derke, and straunge to vnderstonde:/And ferre out of tune" (Ellis, 229). But as Lawrence Venuti has observed, every translator faces a choice in determining how far to "domesticate" foreign source material. 31 Fabyan always includes his non-English verses in their original "straunge [and] ferre" forms, in conjunction with their English counterparts. Compilation ultimately grants Fabyan a platform for theorizing the complex and dynamic processes of translation and translingual writing. The compiler makes efforts to preserve the "straunge" quality or alterity of his disparate textual sources, even as he sets them alongside the provisionally "expownded" or "Englyshed" verses he creates. The code-switching Fabyan allows English and non-English texts to coexist within the physical space of his pages, inviting his readers to sustain concurrent modes of thought.

- 29. Ardis Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy: Chaucer, Language, and Nation in the Hundred Years War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 296 and 307.
- 30. To adopt yet another metaphor, he can work to harmonize his sources yet still allow some of their "discordant" qualities to remain.
- 31. Any translator, literary or nonliterary, faces the "choice of whether to domesticate or foreignize a foreign text" (41). Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (New York: Routledge, 1994). Fabyan, of course, renders himself quite visible as translator—through first-person commentary in prose as well as his prefatory verses.

Richard Hill (Grocer): Narrative Reckoning

As discussed in the previous section, Fabyan's collection of lists, historical narratives, and verses across languages and forms comes together as a harmonious "concordance," a synthetic composition that provides an intertwined history of England and France along with an attention to local London matters. Fabyan's poetry reveals that he conceives of compilation as a craft or generative activity, and his own will attests to his abiding interests in concurrent forms of signification and versification. Around the time Fabyan completed his Concordance (c. 1503), Richard Hill, a London citizen and grocer, began to assemble his own mixed collection within a private manuscript (c. 1503–1536). As I shall demonstrate in this section, Hill records in his business register items that he calls diverse "reconyngs," including lists of wards, taxes, goods, weights, and measures, but he also provides brief narrative entries that calculate and record the passage of time, and other texts in prose and verse (or, as he calls them, "tales"). By combining these materials, Hill finds ways to self-consciously enter himself into narrative—although he uses techniques that diverge from those of his contemporary Fabyan.

Hill's collection would initially appear unrelated to Fabyan's, both in its form and its contents. Hill's collection survives only in a single manuscript (Oxford, Balliol College MS 354), and it is often characterized as a personal "commonplace book."32 Unlike Fabyan's collection, which was prepared with an eye to its audience and a reader-friendly textual apparatus, Hill's collection did not seem to be prepared with a large audience in mind. First-person inscriptions throughout the text suggest that the entire manuscript was written out in Hill's hand. He identifies himself as a London merchant and grocer through first-person inscriptions: e.g., "I Richard Hill was made fre among the merchants aventurers of Ynglond in Barow [i.e., in Flanders] anno 1508" (fol. 107r), and "I was sworn at grocers hall [in Londonl in anno 1511" (fol. 107r). As one might expect, contents throughout the collection reflect quintessentially mercantile preoccupations and the polyglot aspects of urban life. Hill includes, for instance, a French/English conversation manual with vocabulary for conducting overseas trade (fol. 141r) and a courtesy manual in parallel English and French translation

^{32.} Hill's collection has been discussed in numerous ways: as commonplace book, see Parker (above); as pedagogical anthology, see Janine Rogers, "Courtesy Books, Comedy, and the Merchant Masculinity of Oxford Balliol College MS 354." Medieval Forum 1 (2002). For relevant bibliography, see Boffey, "London Books," 420. On the possible identification of this Richard Hill, see Parker, 49-50.

(fol. 142v). In addition, he includes a table of weights, wine prices, and Bordeaux coinage (fol. 182r) and "the reconyng of wollis in Ynglond" (fol. 183r), a reckoning table for Calais customs (fol. 183v), a perpetual calendrical chart (fol. 192v), pen drawings of merchant marks (fol. 185v), a business letter with English and French phrases (fol. 143v), and secular and devotional verses exhibiting diverse combinations of English, French, and Latin.³³

Like Fabyan, Hill exploits paratext to lend some coherence to his collection. In a table of contents (fols. 3r–4v), Hill characterizes his "boke" as inherently diverse: "The table of the contents within this bok whiche is a boke of dyuers tales & baletts & dyuers reconyngs, &c." (fol. 3r). Hill announces that his compilation includes narratives and "baletts" (in this case, not "ballades" *per se*, but more generally verses or songs), as well as practical "reconyngs" (numerical accounts, lists, tables, and related texts). Dispersed among such "reconyngs" are narratives ("dyuers tales") seemingly devoid of context. For instance, Hill includes verse narratives extracted from Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, but each tale is removed from the poem's original frame narrative establishing the ethical import or allegorical significance of each story.³⁴

So how do we, as modern readers, reckon with Hill's disparate materials? Unlike Fabyan's deliberately ordered collection, Hill's *ad hoc* contents largely resist any linear, chronological reading. Complicating the haphazard quality of the collection is its range of literary texts, which likewise resist categorization: they are not grouped according to genre or any apparent temporal logic. Hill's quintessentially "medieval" contents—like selections from Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Marian devotional lyrics, and Lydgate poems—coexist alongside texts that might otherwise strike us as "early modern," such as prose texts culled from print sources. The miscellany thus has the effect of juxtaposing texts we would retroactively perceive as "belonging" to different periods. Its overtly historical material bridges Lancastrian and post-Reformation London in a chronological fashion, but, unlike Fabyan, Hill makes no attempt to lend a grand order or sequence to the "boke" as a whole.

- 33. Mixed-language verses include an English-Latin treatise on wine (fol. 101r), Latin-English poem with refrain "Terribilis mors conturbat me" (fol. 229r), English-Latin lyric "Of all creatures women be best/Cuius contrarium verum est" (fol. 250r), French-English lyric "Bon jowre bon jowre a vous/I am cum vnto this hous" (fol. 251v).
- 34. Gowerian tales include the stories of Apollonius of Tyre (fol. 55r), Philip of Macedon and his two sons (fol. 79r), Adryan and Bardus (fol. 81v), Pirithous (fol. 83v), Lazarus (fol. 84v), Constantine the Great (fol. 86v), Alexander and Diogenes (fol. 91v), Pyramus and Thisbe (fol. 93v), and Midas (fol. 94r).

It is perhaps most productive to approach Hill's "boke" as a polychronic assemblage, or a collection that code-switches across different moments in time.³⁵ Many temporalities coexist throughout Hill's collection and its "dyvers tales [and] reconvngs" collectively hold in suspension concurrent modes of conceiving the present and the past. Near the beginning of the collection, we have an example of what Adam Smyth in his work on early modern almanacs and account registers entries characterizes as "life-writing." Hill provides, through a series of inscriptions over time, an apparently improvised chronology of major events in his life.³⁶ This life account follows contemporary bookkeeping practices, listing the births of each of Hill's children, often with financial transactions accompanying each event. It begins:

The birth of children of me / Richard hill that was born on hillend / in Langley in the / parishe of huchyn in the shire of harttford. . . . Memorandum that John hill my first child was borne / the 17 day of novembre anno 1518 at hillend afforesayd on the day of seynt / hewe. . . . (fol. 17r)

Later on this folio, Hill records an entry regarding his third child:

William hill my third child was / born in briggestrete In the parish of seint margrettis . . . godfaders / William whalpot fishemonger & he gave 20 d. / nycholas cosyn merchaunt taylor he gave 20 d. / Margret preston my syster & she gave 1 docat 4 s. 6 d. . . . (fol. 17r)

Such narrative entries comprise "reconyngs" in multiple senses of the word: not only do Hill's records render narrative accounts of major events (in this case, children's births), but he also painstakingly takes note of the time, date, and economic transactions associated with each one.

This section of the "boke" simultaneously functions as a recursive register of deaths. Hill enters each child into the account, but he also makes sure to go back, at a later point in time, to cross out the names of children when deaths occur. When his sixth child Symond dies, the nonlinearity of Hill's writing practice is registered by a change in the appearance of his

^{35.} On polychronicity in the context of another premodern manuscript, see the discussion of the Archimedes palimpsest in Jonathan Gil Harris, Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 1–26.

^{36.} Adam Smyth describes a "dense network of life-writing texts" (2); see Autobiography in Early Modern England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), ch. 3, "Commonplace book lives: 'a very applicative story," 123-28.

hand (in darker ink, with narrower letters, and written at a slightly different angle). He also code-switches from English into Latin: "mortuus et sepultus [est] in parochia sancta marie at the hill juxta bilyngisgate in London" [he died and was buried in the parish of St. Mary at the Hill next to Billingsgate in London] (fol. 17r). (See Figure 3.) The unexpected shift into Latin can be read as an *ad hoc* commemorative act. Crossing out the narrative entry bearing the child's name marks the death and comprises, in a sense, an erasure of the entry; nonetheless, the Latin inscription written below the original entry renders the record for the now-departed child all the more conspicuous upon the page.³⁷ Put another way, linguistic codeswitching in Hill's register of births and deaths marks acts of writing across different points in time.

This bilingual mode of writing both exploits and transmutes conventional merchant bookkeeping practices, as Hill records gains and losses (as it were) while also generating the skeletal outline of an autobiographical narrative across time. The material form of this manuscript collection supports this reading of transformative bookkeeping quite nicely. The pages of this book are narrow and slender in shape, each resembling the size of what would ordinarily be a single column of text; this column format would indeed be appropriate for bookkeeping. In this respect, Hill's manuscript has been identified as a repurposed "holster book," a prepurchased bound book with empty pages whose size and portability made it ideally suited for a business ledger.³⁸

Other code-switching moments in Hill's book do not so much engage in bookkeeping practices, but nonetheless register as conspicuous movements across time. One present-tense devotional poem instructs the reader on the worshiper's proper responses when hearing the Mass, and it switches between English and Latin for practical ends. It uses English to describe actions performed by the priest, but adopts Latin to transmit the words to be uttered by the worshiper. It concludes in this manner:

Now I cownsaill thee man do after my rede, What the priste goth to messe yf you may com, & but sekeness lett thee site bare with thyn hede, & knok on thi brest & say cor mundum

- 37. The color, angle, and shape of the letters (which all differ from the English entry transcribed above) seem to imply that the Latin lines must have been added at a later date, after the fact.
- 38. Parker, 38. For more on "holster book" collections, see Boffey and Thompson, 298, footnote 182.

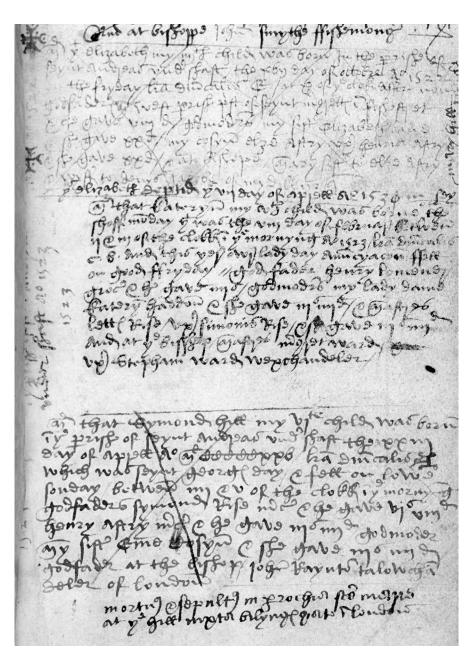


Figure 3. Miscellany of Richard Hill (bottom half of one folio). In this section, Hill records the births and deaths of his children (births in English, deaths in Latin). Oxford, Balliol College MS 354, fol. 17r.

Crea in me Deus & spiritum

Her it forth to the end with meke entent

Wher God in fowrm of bred his body doth present. (fol. 205v)

This poem on transubstantiation ends with the following: "Explicit, quod Hill" (fol. 205v). The internal movements across English and Latin in this poem can be easily explained, and Hill's Latin "Explicit" [it ends] at the end of the poem is a conventional scribal tag.³⁹ In the context of this discussion, Hill's act of writing "Explicit" imbues the poem with a layered temporality. This word—along with the past-tense English verb "quod"—suggests the possibility that Hill has actually followed the poem's instructions, and that he has finished *speaking* the Latin responses it endorses.

As a conclusion to a didactic verse on the Mass, this scribal tag retroactively characterizes Hill's completed act of writing out the text as if it were a speech act or performance. Insofar as this poem gives instructions to the worshiper during Mass, Hill would have repeated its recorded responses with the ever-returning "present" that arrives when bread becomes the body of Christ ("in fowrm of bred his body doth present"). Moreover, the poem's English narration of the priest's actions assumes the reader's capacity to recognize that the priest would actually be uttering words in Latin—"Hoc est corpus meum" [This is my body]—at the very moment in the Mass when bread becomes Christ's body. Latin/English code-switching in Hill's compilation can be explained in terms of pragmatic functions, but such moments—which require the reader to mobilize knowledge of more than one language concurrently—invite complex meditations on temporality and devotional practice.

In gathering together first-person narrative entries and devotional poems, this combined register/miscellany accrues manifold functions, and the "boke" as a whole attests to the grocer's considerable linguistic facility. Hill shows competence in deploying Latin as he composes autobiographical entries and copies out verses, and other items in his "boke" (beyond the scope of this discussion) suggest interests in French as well: e.g., vocabulary lists, courtesy manuals, and letters. In the examples I have discussed, Hill's acts of translingual writing can be read as transtemporal. A register of births and deaths uses Latin and English to mark different types of

^{39.} The "quod" explicit is a common practice among fifteenth- and sixteenth-century copyists; see for instance "quod Rate" throughout Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole MS 61. See Boffey and Thompson, 298. See also George Shuffleton, ed., Codex Ashmole 61: A Compilation of Popular Middle English Verse (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 2008); this edition is also online: http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/sgas.htm.

events (births and deaths) and also signals disparate moments of writing. A mixed-language poem on the Mass invites the reader to reflect on the ways that reading, writing, and devotional practices can enfold the past and the ever-returning present. Hill's "boke" reveals a desire to engage with the past while also reckoning with a shifting present, and sustained acts of linguistic code-switching—textualized motion across tongues—inform Hill's modes of life-writing.

John Colyns (Mercer): Materiality and Marking

Richard Hill is not the only London citizen to compile a collection of texts in the form of a mixed-language "boke." His contemporary, mercer and bookseller John Colyns, gathered his own materials into a book during an overlapping time frame (c. 1517–1539). As in the case of Hill's "boke," Colyns' manuscript survives in only one copy (London, British Library, Harley MS 2252), and it too features the compiler's own handwriting. Colyns' choice of materials is in many ways analogous to Hill's: both merchants include chronicles, treatises, lyrics, and practical manuals, among other items. Colyns, like Fabyan, provides his own chronicle of London, but Colyns pares his down to the barest essentials: he only lists the "Namys of the mayres of London" from the "Rayne of Kyng Richard the Second" to 1539, with just the briefest of historical notes.⁴⁰

Although the similarities between Colyns and Hill are numerous, their collections capture slightly different linguistic aspects of London's merchant milieu. Hill's collection attests quite openly to the polyglot texture of mercantile life through English/French phrasebooks, bilingual poems, texts in parallel translation, and English/Latin narrative entries, but Colyns' collection is oriented more toward texts in English, with less Latin, and surprisingly little French. In many respects, the range of Englishlanguage items included in Colyns' collection most strongly suggests his wider cultural horizons and professional endeavors.⁴¹ In addition to con-

^{40.} John Colyns dated the book in 1517 but was clearly updating it well into 1530s, adding topical material regarding Henry VIII, Cardinal Wolsey, and conflicts between England and Scotland. The final entry is for 1539, and Colyns apparently died between then and early 1541, when his will went into probate (Meale, "Compiler at Work," 96). The chronicle begins on fol. 3v, but after the year 1486 (fol. 6v), the arrangement of text shifts, suggesting he was no longer following an exemplar for the years entered at this point onward (Meale, "Compiler at Work," 93-94).

^{41.} In comparison to Hill, Colyns draws from a "comparatively wider range of material"

taining an important surviving copy of *Ipomydon* and the only extant copy of the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, his book preserves one of the earliest copies of John Skelton's *Speke Parrot* (c. 1521), a dizzyingly polyglot poem that includes Latin paratext and some glosses that are preserved only in Colyns' manuscript. In the pages containing *Speke Parrot* as well as *Collyn Cloute* (c. 1522), the compiler Colyns actively engages with the linguistic richness of these poems.

Carol Meale has uncovered much of Colyns' activities as a bookseller and an avid collector of books through the mercer's trade, even positing that his copy text of *Ipomydon* served as the exemplar for the edition printed by Wynken de Worde (an anglicization of Jan van Wynkyn, who was born in Woerth in the Alsace region of present-day France).⁴² Admitted into the Company of Mercers in 1492, Colyns was evidently quite a professional multitasker, and his pursuits had shifted so much toward bookselling that one record in the Acts of the Court of the Mercers Company (dated 1520) claimed "John Colleyns . . . occupieth no feat of Secrettes of the mercery but in Sellyng of Prynted bokes and other small tryfylles."43 This collection under discussion was apparently assembled "around a core of two commercially-produced booklets" with Colyns filling blank pages over time. 44 It would appear that this compilation served more than a private preoccupation: it was quite possibly a repository for future commercial undertakings. An avid consumer of source materials, Colyns found numerous opportunities to showcase his own creativity within the material text: drawing in his own merchant mark in several places, adding ownership inscriptions, decorating letters in lists and verse texts, and (as will be discussed below) experimenting with letter-forms while transcribing a Skelton poem.

Indeed, there are clear signs that Colyns sustained a number of interests in book production as well as bookselling. For instance, among the contents of his "boke" are treatises on "lymming" or bookmaking (fols. 142r–146v). Colyns' merchant mark comprises a decorative motif throughout the text as well, quite literally marking the "boke" as his possession and a valued commodity, or—in the traditions of masons' marks and printers'

although Meale does not deem Colyns as having as sophisticated a "literary taste" as Hill. Meale, "Compiler at Work," 100–101.

^{42.} Carol Meale, "Wynkyn de Worde's Setting-Copy for *Ipomydon*," Studies in Bibliography 35 (1982): 156–71.

^{43.} Acts of the Court of the Mercers' Company, 1453–1527, ed. with intro. by Laetitia Lyell, assisted by F. D. Watney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), 509.

^{44.} Meale, "Compiler at Work," 93.

marks—claiming the physical object of the book as Colvns' artistic creation.45 Colyns includes ownership inscriptions at the top of fol. 1 and the bottom of fol. 116r, which also bears his hand-drawn merchant mark. 46 His mark also appears alone on the top right corner of fol. 2r, but Colyns' most elaborate trace of ownership combines text and symbol. At the end of a quire containing the Stanzaic Morte Darthur, an inscription is written out his own hand with large script, decorative flourishes, and red ornamentation: "Thys Boke belongythe to John Colyns mercer of london dwellyng in the parysshe of our lady of wolchyrche have Anexid the Stockes in be pultre yn Anno domini 1517" (fol. 133r).47

Material circumstances allow Colyns to arrange text differently than Hill does in his "Boke." Colyns, first of all, employs large folios rather than a "holster book," so he can exhibit more creativity and experimentation in his use of writing space, and we shall see that Colvns readily manipulates both the content and visual layout of the texts he transmits. From a linguistic standpoint, I find one poem in this collection most compelling: John Skelton's Speke Parrot (c. 1521), which is copied out in Colyns' hand on fols. 133v*-140r.⁴⁸ Skelton's poem is highly allusive and its polyvocality offers significant challenges to its readers, but the work is largely understood to comprise a satire of Cardinal Wolsey and members of court, among other matters. 49 David Reed Parker notes that the poem is "viciously macaronic, incorporating Latin, Greek, French, Dutch, and even Welsh in snippets of various lengths"; but given "Skelton's often obscure references," Parker doubts that Colyns would have "had a full grasp of the baffling text" and its dense, learned allusions; he even maintains that the poem's anti-Wolsev sentiment is what Colyns would most likely "understand and relish" in the text.⁵⁰ In her study of Skelton and his literary reception, Jane Griffiths offers a similar assessment of Colyns' linguistic capacities,

- 45. On the social function of the printers' mark and origins in the merchant marks used by Mercers and other traders, see William Kuskin, Symbolic Caxton: Literary Culture and Print Capitalism (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), ch. 1, "Affixing Value: The Bibliography of Material Culture," 29-80, esp. 76-80.
- 46. "Iohn Colyns boke ys thys late of London mercer and dwellyng in Wolchyrche Parysshe" (fol. 1v).
 - 47. I silently expand abbreviations in my transcriptions.
- 48. Two subsequent pages in the manuscript erroneously bear the number 133. The asterisk indicates the second page bearing the number 133.
- 49. F. W. Brownlow, "The Boke Compiled by Maister Skelton, Poet Laureate, Called Speake Parrot," English Literary Renaissance 1, 1 (Winter 1971): 3-26. Brownlow maintains that Colyns worked from Skelton's autograph manuscript.
 - 50. Parker, 113.

observing that "the garbled way in which he copied the Latin" suggests his "knowledge of the language was poor."51

I would like to entertain an alternate approach to Colyns' "garbled" writing here, suggesting the compiler actively transforms his source text to emerge as the poem's "final authority" (as Griffiths has asserted in a different context). Skelton's poem opens with a speaker, Parrot, who claims to know every language—and rather than a mere literary persona for Skelton to voice his satirical commentary, Parrot the fictive speaker is perhaps "alchemical in origin . . . a poetic version of the lapis philosophorum which transforms all it touches [and is] both the case and effect of a transformation." In his own transformation and mutation of the tongues within this poem, Colyns enacts some of the very processes that the poem itself satirizes.

In transcribing Speke Parrot, Colyns manipulates Skelton's text in crafty ways. When codicological considerations are taken into account, the deliberate efforts Colyns takes in writing out this poem become especially clear. As Meale establishes, the pages containing Speke Parrot mark a strong visual contrast with crowded pages elsewhere in the collection. Most "notable for the spaciousness of its lay-out," the section containing this poem likely represents the "earliest stages of [Colyns'] work, and "Colyns evidently took some trouble over the presentation of this poem [including] different types of verse-form distinctively set out" and even "an elementary form of rubrication." That is, the opening pages of Speke Parrot exhibit distinct ornamental flourishes within the loops of individual letter-forms, especially in the first line or initial letter of each stanza. (See Figure 4.) Glosses on the first page of the poem, for instance, are distinguished from the main text by the relative size of the text and its placement inside a marginal rectangular shape. At least in the initial pages of Speke Parrot, Colyns takes pains to render the page an aesthetically pleasing artifact.

In his edition of *Speke Parrot* which collates early print witnesses with Latin marginal glosses and other apparatus derived from Colyns' copy, one editor has proclaimed that the "Latin portions of the manuscript are generally of ludicrous incorrectness, the transcriber evidently not having under-

^{51.} Jane Griffiths, John Skelton and Poetic Authority: Defining the Liberty to Speak (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 107. On Colyns' manuscript, see 79 and 107–8.

^{52.} Jane Griffiths, "What's in a Name? The Transmission of 'John Skelton, Laureate' in Manuscript and Print," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 67, 2 (2004): 215–35, esp. 218 and 219.

^{53.} Brownlow, 14-15.

^{54.} Meale, "Compiler at Work," 95.

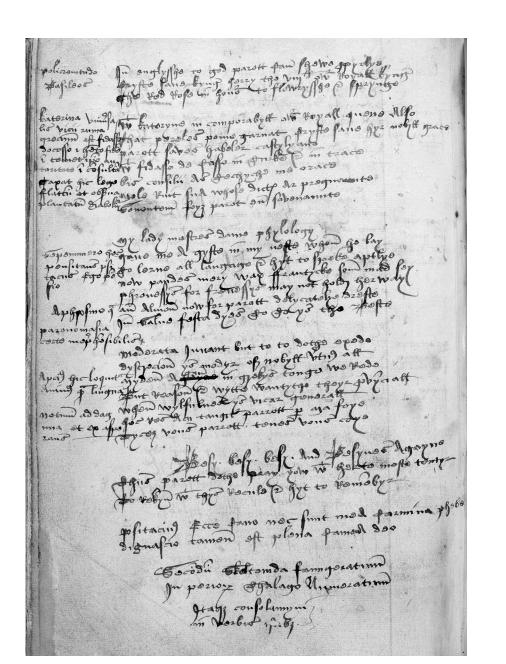


Figure 4. A page from John Skelton's *Speke Parrot*, with Latin glosses and John Colyns' decorative flourishes. London, British Library, Harley MS 2252, fol. 134r.

stood that language."⁵⁵ It is true that the text begins with a Latin epigram that is difficult to translate: "Crescet in immensum me vivo pagina praesens;/Hinc mea dicetur Skeltonidis aurea fama" [This present page will grow greatly while I am alive; thence the golden reputation of Skelton be proclaimed]. ⁵⁶ The speaker announces his name: "My name is Parrot, a byrd of paradyse,/By nature deuysed of a wonderous kynde" (1–2), and the poem reveals Parrot's fluency in different languages: "Hagh, ha, ha, Parrot, ye can laugh pretyly! [. . .] Parrot can mute and cry/In Lattyn, in Ebrue and in Caldeye;/In Greke tong Parrot can bothe speke and say" (24–28). It is the next full stanza that comprises one of the manuscript's most intricate passages:

Dowche Frenshce of Paris Parot can lerne, Pronownsynge my purpose after my properte With Parlez byen Parott ow parles ryen With Dowche, with Spanysche, my tonge can agree In Englysshe to God Parott can shewe propyrlye Cryste saue Kyng Herry the viij th our royall kyng, The red rose in honour to flowrysshe and sprynge!⁵⁷

This passage describes the linguistic skills of the Parrot speaker, who is familiar with Parisian French, Spanish (i.e., Castilian), English, and "Dowche" (i.e., German or Flemish), and Latin glosses next to this stanza aptly summarize the contents: "Docibilem se pandit in omni idiomate" [He reveals that he can be taught (i.e., is capable of instruction in) all languages] (31–33). A hybrid Latin–Greek gloss accompanies the end of this stanza: "Policronitudo Basileos" [on the beauty of the King] (36–37).⁵⁸

This stanza offers multiple challenges to the reader, beginning with the curious French orthography in the command "Parlez byen Parott ow parles ryen" [Speak well, Parrot, or say nothing] (33). Alexander Dyce identifies such passages as "ludicrous" errors on the part of Colyns. The editor corrects "Dowche Frensche" (31) to read "Dowse French of Parryse" [sweet

- 55. Alexander Dyce, ed., *The Poetical Works of John Skelton*, *Vol. 2* (London: Thomas Rodd, 1842), 1. Unless otherwise indicated, line numbers, spelling, and punctuation for Skelton's poetry follow Dyce.
- 56. Translation follows V. John Scattergood, John Skelton: The Complete Poems (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 454.
- 57. My orthography here follows the manuscript spelling, with all abbreviations expanded; for clarity's sake, I have retained the capitalization and punctuation in Dyce (fols. 134r–134v, see Dyce lines 31–37).
 - 58. These glosses appear on the bottom of fol. 134r and top of fol. 134v, respectively.

French of Parisl, and later in the next stanza Dyce observes that the phrase "saves habler Castiliano" [Do you speak Castilian Spanish?] (40) should properly read "sauies hablar." Nonetheless, Dyce opts not to correct this latter manuscript reading, viewing the transcription as a deliberate transformation of Spanish on the part of the poet Skelton; i.e., the spelling is not interpreted as an error on the part of the copyist Colyns.⁵⁹

If Colyns is committing a scribal error in this stanza, then he might be guilty of an eye slippage: the seemingly nonsensical "Dowche Frenshe" (31) anticipates the appearance of the word "Dowche" in a similar location a few lines down (34). But Colyns' own "ludicrous" spellings (of French and of Latin) could be approached in a more generous manner. Colyns' "ludicrous" orthography could, quite literally, be a playful move. If one imagines the original source-text reading "douce French" [sweet French] and Colyns converts this to a hybridized phrase "Dowche French," then Colyns' unique copy could actually be seen as enhancing the linguistic texture of this passage.

The fluid play between languages in Colyns' transcriptions, in other words, takes Skelton's poetic art to another level, activating further possibilities for interpretation. A phrase like "douce French of Paris" evokes both Francophone and Anglophone literary conventions that maintain the "sweetness" or refinement of Parisian French compared to other languages, or even other varieties of French. Skelton alludes to Chaucer's Prioress, for instance, who speaks a local (and presumably anglicized) "Frenssh [a]fter the scole of Stratford atte Bowe," since the "Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe."60 Closer to Colyns' time, French instruction manuals like the Manière de Langage praise the sweetness of Parisian French in comparison to other tongues.⁶¹ The phrase "shew properlye" (32) is unique to Colyns' copy of this poem, and this adjective "properlye" nicely recalls the heavy alliteration a few lines above ("Pronownsynge my purpose after my properte"). In this case, English consonant clusters mark a distinct contrast with the sweet, mellifluous sounds of Parisian French.

Rather than dismissing Colyns' unique transcriptions as errors or eye-

^{59.} Dyce, 3, footnote 5.

^{60.} Geoffrey Chaucer, General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales (124-25). Citation follows Larry Benson, gen. ed., The Riverside Chaucer, Third Edition, with new introduction by Christopher Cannon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

^{61.} For French instruction manuals referring to "douce francés, qu'est la plus beale et la plus gracious langage . . . en monde" [sweet French, which is the most beautiful and graceful language in the world] after scholastic Latin, see Manières de langage (1396, 1399, 1415), ed. Andres Max Kristol, Anglo-Norman Text Society 53 (London: Birbeck College, 1995), esp.

skips, we can entertain such textual moments as artful emendations to the text. For instance, we could discern an additional translingual pun on "Dowche" (i.e., Germanic language); that is, the poet suggests that the speaker uses a very Germanicized or Flemish variety of French. This reading of "Dowche" is perhaps obscure, but it would make some sense given the speaker's claim that his own tongue agrees equally well with Castilian Spanish as it does with "Dowche" (i.e., German or Flemish).

The linguistic variety of this poem is indeed pervasive and a full discussion lies beyond this chapter's scope. 62 But there is such fluidity of languages in Skelton's poem that, at one point, Latin glosses intermingle with the main text.⁶³ Colyns' marginal glosses and tags amplify the text's polyglossia, creating a dynamic commingling of voices. Some of this linguistic play occurs in rubrics that conclude each section. At the end of the "Laucture de Parott," Colvns provides this tag: "Dixit [he said], quod parrot, the royall popagay" (fol. 138r). The previous folio, which featuring several speakers, concludes with this French statement: "Maledite soyte bouche malheurewse" [cursed be the wicked mouth] (fol. 137v). The final rubrics of the poem layer the speaking voices even more: "Dixit, quod Parrot" and, afterwards, two lines of Latin, ending "quod Skelton Lawryat" (fol. 140r). Colyns' copy conveys an abiding interest in polyvocality and the layering of speech acts. Even if (as others have observed) Colyns omits the section about the Grammarians' War, his customization of this poem registers one of its major themes: its call for collaboration with a reader who actively engages with the text.64

The poem's final stanzas further register Colyns' profound engagement with Skelton's text, but this time through a distinct change in visual (graphic) form. The final page of the poem begins as follows:

- 62. Other non-English passages include the snippets of Flemish, "Howst the, lyuer god van hemrik, ic seg [be quiet, dear God in heaven, I say]/In Popering grew peres, whan Parrot was an eg" (71–72); the German-language royal motto of Henry VIII, "Ic dien [I serve] serueth for the erstrych fether,/Ic dien is the language of the land of Beme" (80–81); an English pun on a purportedly Punic word, "In Affryc tongue byrsa is a thonge of lether" (82); and Parrot cites a Welsh proverb: "Euery man after his maner of wayes,/Pawbe un aruer [each one his manner] so the Welche man sayes" (93–94). Indeed, "Thus dyuers of language by lernyng I grow" (205). See also Brownlow, 17–22.
 - 63. See for instance the Latin/Greek doublet (Dyce, 13, footnotes 8 and 11).
- 64. Colyns' manuscript transmits a fitting Latin epigraph at the beginning of Skelton's text: "Lectoribus auctor recipit opusculy huius auxesim" [By his readers an author receives an amplification of his short poem] (trans. Scattergood, 454). "Of all Skelton's works, *Speke Parrot* (1521) most urgently proposes a poetics of collaboration with the reader" (Griffiths, *Liberty to Speak*, 79).

So many many morall maters, and so lytell vsyd So myche newe makyng / & so madd tyme spente So mych translacion in to Englyshe confused So myche nobyll prechyng / & so lytell amendment So myche consultacion / almoste to none entente So muche provision & so lytell wytte at nede Syns Dewcalyons flodde there can no clerkes rede. (fol. 139r)

These anaphora-laden stanzas fill the entire folio, front and back (fol. 139r– v). Here, Colyns' scribal response to the "flodde" of Skeltonic anaphora is to enact his own graphic experimentation. That is, Colyns plays with the forms of letters just as much as Skelton plays with language. On this folio, Colyns' use of "S" letter-forms far exceeds the diversity of such letter-forms elsewhere in the manuscript. On the front of the page, Colyns produces forms of the letter "S" that resemble the dollar sign \$ (several varieties, top of fol. 139r), a numeral 5 (third stanza, fol. 139r), an elongated "S" with hook and descender (fourth stanza, fol. 139r), and the numeral 6 (fifth stanza, fol. 139r). (See Figure 5.) On the back of this page, he employs a rubricated swan-shaped "S" (first stanza, fol. 139v) and a double closed loop "S" resembling a "B" or sideways heart (third stanza, fol. 139v).65 Elsewhere in the manuscript, Colyns segregates different "S" shapes across units of text (e.g., confines a single S-form to a single stanza or poem) but Colyns' transcript of Skelton's Speke Parrot features the conspicuous coexistence of multiple letter-forms, even within a single stanza.66

For Colyns, compilation comprises a complex form of textual consumption. Not only does it encompass the act of collecting and amassing texts, but it also requires that one work through the material, transform it, mark it, and quite literally make it one's own. Colyns takes up Skelton's call for "myche newe makyng" (443), and his handwritten changes to the text emending non-English spellings to create translingual puns and experimenting with letter shapes—transform the text in unpredictable ways. In signaling his aesthetic response to a text or source material, Colyns not

^{65.} For more on the handwriting in Harley MS 2252, see the catalogue by Ulrich Frost, Das Commonplace-Book von John Colyns: Untersuchung und Teiledition der Handschrift Harley 2252 der British Library in London (Frankfurt-am-Main and New York: Peter Lang, 1988). See also Meale, "Compiler at Work," 98-99.

^{66.} The handwriting here can be fruitfully compared to the list of churches, cloisters, and hospitals in London where the initial "S." in "St." varies by each ward (e.g., fol. 10r). Colyns writes out fol. 10r through the first 13 lines of fol. 11v, and his collaborator "Schreiber D" writes the final 15 lines of fol. 11v (Frost, 170).

wytte at node

Figure 5. John Colyns' experiments with diverse letter-forms (varieties of the initial S) near the ending of *Speke Parrot*. London, British Library, Harley MS 2252, fol. 139r.

only employs graphic flourishes to claim ownership over the text but also customizes it. Given this mercer's interests in the processes of bookmaking, we might discern an attempt to craft this material text into an aesthetically pleasing artifact in its own right.

Translingual Writing and the Manifold Book

This discussion has traced the wide-ranging interests of a few London merchants while also demonstrating their diverse linguistic capacities. The project of textual compilation across tongues takes each merchant in a different direction: Robert Fabyan's Concordance interweaves French and English sources and inspires first-person reflections on poetic composition and translation; Richard Hill's "holster book" is a translingual venue for life-writing; John Colyns' assemblage of booklets records his aesthetic responses to the mixed-language poetry he reads and transmits. For these merchant-compilers, linguistic code-switching is a complex literate practice that energizes many types of writing: life accounts, mixed-language lyrics, verses imbedded in prose narratives (with shifts in register or form to suit the content at hand), parallel translation, translingual punning, and other acts of verbal transformation.

The manifold possibilities of translingual writing are theorized most deliberately in Fabyan's Concordance. Fabyan's undertaking seeks not to delineate discrete national or linguistic histories but rather to illustrate a perpetual cross-fertilization of peoples and cultures. Intertwining "storyes of Englande . . . this Fertyle Ile" with "Fraunce so dere," his composition stresses the concurrent histories of "these landes twayne," and Fabyan's close engagement with the formal aspects of his poetic materials across tongues enacts transnational literary criticism avant la lettre. Rather than drawing upon any "objective" scholastic theory of authorship (e.g., translatio or even compilatio), Fabyan intersperses historical matter with editorial verses, perpetually redefining his generative process through craft metaphors: hewing raw material ("hew[yng] rowgth stone . . . with harde strokes"), polishing dull surfaces ("mysty storyes . . . vnclere"), and composing music (harmonizing "discordaunt" French and English narratives). Cross-linguistic textual engagement produces an ever-shifting articulation of Fabyan's craft.

All these merchant-compilers offer more than intriguing insights into late-medieval or early modern code-switching practices or even the general phenomena of translingual writing. These collections, in my view, have profound implications for "the history of the book" and its future trajectories. The "book" is, as William Kuskin reminds us, a "symbolic object," and the meanings we attribute to any given book (literary, social, cultural) have as much to do with "what it says" as "what it is." ⁶⁷ Each of these merchant-compilers conceives of his own book in multiple, concurrent ways: as a material object (i.e., a physical text housing smaller constituent texts), as well as a vehicle for more "imaginative production." 68 Indeed, we can differentiate between the ways these compilers use the term "book" in reference to their own imaginative endeavors. In Fabayn's verses, "this boke [named] Concordaunce of Storyes" (Ellis, 5) comprises a deliberately organized collection of historical narratives as well as a space for poetic composition, and Fabyan pervasively aligns its creation with forms of artisanal craft. For Hill, a "boke of dyuers tales & baletts & dyuers reconvngs" (fol. 3r) serves a dual function in its material form, enabling Hill to record different types of "reconyngs," economic, literary, and spiritual. For Colyns, "Thys Boke" (fol. 113r) is marked as an aesthetic object imbued with cultural prestige. It is a prized item that a merchant can customize and claim as his own: not only by affixing his ownership mark, but also by copying and transforming poetry, embellishing it with decorative letter-forms.

This comparative analysis reveals each merchant-compiler's manifold understanding of the "book" as a symbolic "object" as well as a signifying (sign-producing) agent. If we attend to the broader "life cycle" of any given book (or, we might add, any account register, or collection, bookin-progress), we can more effectively acknowledge any book's function within a dynamic "communications circuit" that encompasses humans as co-participants in a creative process along with texts. ⁶⁹ Fabyan, Hill, and Colyns compel us to expand the "sociology of texts" to include *both* human and nonhuman agents: to move towards a reciprocity or symbiosis between text(s) and their so-called creator(s). ⁷⁰ Examining these multilingual books not only lends insight into the material writing practices of individual merchants or even their creativity as compilers; these books suggest a rich, reciprocal process of transformation, a mutual "creative regeneration" transpiring between humans and textual agents. ⁷¹

- 67. Kuskin, 1 and 2.
- 68. Ibid., 2.
- 69. Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?" The Book History Reader, ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (New York: Routledge, 2002), 9–26, esp. 11.
- 70. On the "sociology of texts," see Donald Francis McKenzie, Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 12.
 - 71. Alexandra Gillespie, Print Culture and the Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate, and

In approaching these merchant collections as textual contact zones, I have emphasized how each book creates an idiosyncratic material space where languages can coexist and transform one another. Fabyan offers poetic texts in parallel translation, allowing two languages to occupy the same space and inviting his readers to sustain a concurrent view of the renditions: not prioritizing one form over the other, but entertaining how different forms of a poem might speak to one another. Hill constitutes narrative through his acts of English/Latin code-switching, inviting the reader to see language traversals as marking movements across time. Colyns engages with his sources by enacting interlinguistic puns as well as forms of nonlinguistic graphic play. Ultimately, the translingual character of these collections is not just an incidental aspect of their contents but actively constitutes their manifold functions. In shaping these books into dynamic textual contact zones, these merchant-compilers ask us to entertain our own modes of thinking concurrently across different languages, but also across distant places, and across discrete moments in time.

Their Books, 1473-1557 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 10. On compilation as a creative, organic process involving a "reciprocal relationship" between (male) auctor and (female) compiler, see Jennifer Summit, "Women and Authorship," in Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing, eds. Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 99-102, at 100.

chapter 6

Coda

CONTACT LITERATURES, MEDIEVAL / POSTCOLONIAL

Charles d'Orléans: Exilic Imagination

The chapters in *Trading Tongues* have examined translingual writing across many contexts, including Chaucer's portrayals of polyglot urban life (chapter 1), poetic explorations of maritime trade (chapter 2), first-person reflections on language use by Gower and Caxton (chapter 3), Kempe's intricate narratives of travel (chapter 4), and heterogeneous collections of texts compiled by late medieval merchants (chapter 5). My discussion of Charles d'Orléans in chapter 2 traced some of the movements—literary, linguistic, and geospatial—of a remarkable aristocratic poet who resided in London for years as a prisoner of war. As seen in that discussion, Charles's acts of self-translation—including the composition of two versions of a Channel-crossing poem, one in French and one in English—suggest the fluid deterritorialization of language that often underlies translingual writing. The French rendition recounts motion toward England, and the English version sails toward France, but neither places the speaker (or reader) on solid ground.

Since Charles left his collection of English works behind in England when he finally crossed over to the Continent (and possibly abandoned all efforts to compose new material in English altogether upon his return to France), the poet appears to have retroactively deemed English a lit-

erary language of little consequence. Nonetheless, the poet's decision to produce such a massive poetic sequence in English during his time abroad complicates our understanding of the relative status of the two vernaculars for this poet. Rather than reinforcing conventional notions of linguistic difference, Charles explores the possibility for an inverse relationship between the cultural prestige of any given language and the power (cultural or political) that such a language affords. That is, his work reveals that a high-ranking aristocrat trained in the arts of courtly composition in French *formes fixes* could—under conditions of exile—find himself subject to the will of foreign guardians and keepers, and end up writing in a comparatively low-prestige literary language.

Ardis Butterfield, for one, has invoked Dipesh Chakrabarty and Gaytari Spivak in identifying medieval English as "subaltern" and "culturally subordinate to French" a generation or so before Charles, and we just might see in the poet's English writings some affinities between the medieval poet and postcolonial writers who may or may not be able to speak from vantage points outside of hegemonic discourses. In composing a rich cross-linguistic oeuvre that incorporates his native and an acquired tongue, Charles navigates a low-prestige language of English while simultaneously (in his status as a courtly lyric poet) claiming membership within an aristocratic Francophone hegemony. Charles might be said to inhabit, as Susan Crane provocatively posits, "an early, elite version of post-colonial hybridity." Insofar as his two tongues reach across a body of water, Charles might embody not so much a hybridization (combination or mixture) of two cultures but rather a strange form of self-dispersal.

One of Charles's most self-referential poems directly confronts the troubled status of his own speech, inviting his audience to contemplate his peculiar existence between and across tongues. Ballade 72 and its French counterpart both provide a catalogue of *formes fixes* that structure many of the poet's previous compositions: "Balades, chançons, et complaintes/ Sont pour moy mises en oublye" [Ballades, songs, and complaints: I have neglected them all] (1–2); or, in Middle English, "Baladis, songis, and

^{1.} Ardis Butterfield, "Chaucerian Vernaculars," Studies in the Age of Chaucer 31 (2009): 25–51, esp. 49. Butterfield writes of Chaucer (and not Charles) here, but her characterization of a poet struggling to write in Middle English is apt: "[at] times he seems to stutter, to find the experience of writing a subaltern language overwhelming" (49–50).

^{2.} Susan Crane, "Charles of Orleans: Self-Translation," in *The Medieval Translator/Traduire au Moyen Âge, Vol. 8*, eds. Rosalynn Voaden, René Trixier, Teresa Sanchez Roura, and Jenny Rebecca Rytting (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2003), 169–77, at 169.

complayntis—/God wot they are forgote in my party" (3071–72).³ In this poem, the speaker describes his words as profoundly unordered and disjointed, and in the English rendition of this poem his tongue (i.e., organ of speech) evades the speaker's command: "All plesaunt wordis in me disyoentis" (3082), "I wold hit mende but what my tonge ne may" (3091); and "[m]y tunge hem wrestith fer out of aray" [my tongue wrests them (i.e., words) entirely out of order] (3103).⁴

Such English lyric moments certainly resonate with arguments that Charles "exemplif[ies] a kind of 'subaltern disjointedness" in his own acts of self-translation. We might extend this insight to note that the speaker's awkward or even recalcitrant tongue only manages to produce, in English, "wordis... disyoentis," and Charles's poetry as a whole embodies an uneasy subversion of sociolinguistic power dynamics. His circumstances have rendered him a high-status French speaker who is uneasily confounded by the oppressive force of a low-prestige English vernacular: a language that he perpetually struggles, through writing and (presumably) speaking, to master.

This English poem, in foregrounding the subjective experience of stifled speech and the struggle to establish an intelligible ordering of words, evokes some of the challenges of second-language expression. Not only does it portray a disobedient tongue unable (or unwilling) to wrest words into order, but it also explores an affective response to the incapacity to speak in a profoundly altered social environment. Both versions of this poem decouple the physical capacity to speak from the subjective experience of speaking itself. The phrase in the French *balade*, "mon langage" [my speech or language] (10) is rendered in the corresponding English poem as "my tonge" (3080), and the French "cueur" [heart] (38) has its counterpart in the English phrase "my tonge" as well (3108). Thus two French words, *language* and *cueur*, are collapsed into a shared English word "tonge"—eliding the notions of the tongue as language (culturally marked system of speech)

- 3. Arn and Fox, 172 (Champion B72, MS p. 119). Citation of English poetry by Charles follows Mary-Jo Arn and John Fox, eds., Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle: A Critical Edition of BnF MS. Fr. 25458, Charles d'Orléans's Personal Manuscript, with English trans. by R. Barton Palmer (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS and Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2010). Citation of French poetry by Charles follows Pierre Champion, ed., Charles d'Orléans: Poésies, 2 vols. (Paris, 1923–1927).
- 4. On the resonance of Chaucerian "disyonte" and *desjoindre* in a Continental French and postcolonial context, see Butterfield, "Chaucerian Vernaculars," 47.
- 5. See Ardis Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy: Chaucer, Language, and Nation in the Hundred Years War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 307. Butterfield again invokes Chakrabarty throughout this reading of Charles.

and tongue as organ (bodily instrument of speech). Notably, the English version of this poem—when read aloud—forces the speaker's tongue to trill the "r" so distinctive to Middle English; that is, the poet's "tonge [is] rollid" in the last two lines, emphasizing the tongue's very status as a physical organ. If this ballade pair is read along the lines of Charles's movement from French into English, we witness the collapse of distinctions between language and tongue, but if we imagine the poet moving from English to French we discern instead a complex splintering of these connotations.

I provisionally speak *as if* the French came "first" and the English "second," but I am not invested in establishing a definitive sequence of composition here. Crane reminds us of the "bidirectionality" of Charles's work as a whole, demonstrating that the poet could have composed some works in English and *then* created French counterparts.⁷ Like the bivernacular English poet John Gower, who examines the capacity to carry "deux langues . . . dans un testier" [two tongues in one head], Charles explores the complexity of simultaneous processing of tongues.⁸ Both the poetry of Gower and Charles exhibit the creative potential of a translingual, tonguetied craft. Whether in English or in French, even superficially monolingual texts demand we read bilingually, sustaining a linguistic (if not cultural) double consciousness.

Written after Charles had returned to France, Rondel 179 expresses the poet's profound sense of alienation from his own tongue—even when it speaks in French:

Le trucheman de mon pensee Qui parle maint divers langaige, M'a rapporté chose sauvaige Que je n'ay point acoustumee. En françoys la m'a translatee . . .

[The interpreter of my thought, who speaks multiple languages, brought back to me some wild thing to which I was not at all unaccustomed. He translated it into French for me \dots] 9

- 6. A fifteenth-century Middle English treatise on phonetics states that "if be tunge be more bowed, and in maner with a tremelyng folowyng afterward, than is 'r' gendred." David Burnley, *The History of the English Language: A Source Book, 2nd Edition* (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2000), 181–84, at 182. I have slightly altered Burnley's punctuation.
 - 7. Crane, 170-71.
 - 8. See discussion of Gower in chapter 3.
- 9. Arn and Fox, 560 (Champion R211, MS p. 399). My English translation of this particular poem deliberately diverges from Arn and Fox.

The "trucheman" [interpreter or translator] of the poet's thoughts—possibly the speaker's own tongue, i.e., his organ of speech—cannot articulate a particular word, and instead of providing the correct expression it brings back to the speaker a certain "chose sauvaige" [wild or untamed thing]—perhaps a vulgar expression unsuitable for courtly speech, or even (in the context of Charles's prior travels) an unexpected English word instead of a proper French one. The poet's estrangement from his own tongue is made most clear in his heart's response to this "chose sauvaige" [wild thing]: "Venez vous d'estrange contree,/Le trucheman de ma pensee?" [Do you come from a foreign land, O interpreter of my thought?] (11–12). Even after Charles has crossed back into France, the poet struggles to tame the ghost of a now geographically and temporally distant English linguistic existence. When Charles elsewhere rebukes the English and "leur mauvais langaige" [their ugly tongue], the repatriated French poet eschews his prior attempts to "go native" overseas.¹⁰

The language- and Channel-crossing Charles exhibits a powerful exilic imagination. His poetry vividly evokes movements across space while expressing ongoing displacement from (and longing for) an imagined home that is always geographically or temporally "elsewhere." In envisioning a poetic speaker perpetually in transit—and even in a form of self-dispersal—Charles does more than traverse tongues: he comes close to unmooring notions of native land and native tongue entirely.

Wild Tongues, Across Time

What are the consequences of bringing the translingual poetics of a medieval writer like Charles d'Orléans into conversation with postcolonial contexts? *Trading Tongues* has discussed the local contexts of particular medieval writers, but these readings have also suggested broader vistas, charting possible new trajectories for comparative literary study. The translingual oeuvre of Charles, most conspicuously, invites us to think beyond

^{10.} Arn and Fox, B76, "Comment voy je ses Anglois esbaÿs!" [How I see the English confounded!] (Champion B101, MS p. 124), line 28.

^{11.} The affective power of the captivity writing of Charles d'Orléans was poignantly acknowledged centuries after his death: Charles is included among other French figures in *Grands captifs français* (1943), a collection of medieval texts printed in Occupied France by a repatriated French POW. See Roy Rosenstein, "Resistance Literature and the Exilic Imagination: Wartime Readings in Medieval Poetry for Occupied Europe," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27, 3 (Fall 1997): 521–57.

functional and pragmatic analyses of code-switching to more imaginative understandings, and his poetry allows us to more deeply explore how writers express the subjective experience of linguistic disorientation.

As we have seen, Charles powerfully illustrates the awkward, internally fraught process of training a tongue to speak, or not to speak, as social circumstances shift. For modern translingual writers, the unruly tongue can attract intense focus and anxiety, becoming a highly charged locus for theorizing identities across changing environments. In pursuing some of the connections between medieval and modern writers, I am most interested in exploring translinguistic expressions of identity outside the purview of any particular social dynamic. In this discussion, I examine how cross-temporal comparative literary analysis can help us think more carefully about how we describe the processes of language contact and understand the literary effects of linguistic disorientation.

In her evocative essay "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," Gloria Anzaldúa writes of her life across the borderlands between Mexico and the United States, adopting a mixed-language posture that is "neither español ni inglés, but both," a deliberately hybrid style that resists what Mary Catherine Davidson has called "normative monolingualism." ¹² Anzaldúa asserts a hybrid tongue in resistance to Spanish- and English-speaking purists on either "side" of the border. Her mother, "mortified that I spoke English like a Mexican," chides her to speak English properly: "Qué vale toda su educación si todavía hablas inglés con un 'accent'" [What is all your education worth if you still speak English with an "accent" [? (76). When she infuses her Chicano Spanish with English words, "various Latinos and Latinas" rebuke her for speaking an impure Spanish: "Pocho, cultural traitor, you're speaking the oppressor's language by speaking English, you're ruining the Spanish language" (77). When she is seated in a dentist's chair, she is told: "We're going to have to do something about your tongue. . . . I've never seen one so strong or as stubborn," prompting Anzaldúa to ask the reader: "How do you train a wild tongue?" (75). Since Anzaldúa is one of many "who cannot entirely identify with either standard (formal, Castilian) Spanish nor standard English," she decides not to subdue her tongue nor to make it conform to either language. Her mode of expression takes the form of a defiantly hybrid tongue, "neither español ni inglés, but both . . . a forked tongue, a variation of two languages" (77).

^{12.} Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza, 3rd Edition (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007, orig. pub. 1987), 77. Mary Catherine Davidson, Medievalism, Multilingualism, and Chaucer (New York: Palgrave, 2010), 5.

Anzaldúa employs the motif of a "forked tongue" to characterize her resistant hybridization of U.S. English and Chicano Spanish. In *Out of Place:* A *Memoir* (1999), Edward Said interrogates his own unruly tongue, but he does so through a narrative strategy that conveys a pervasive sense of subjective unease. Composing his text entirely in English, Said nonetheless describes the perceived wildness of his tongue across two domains of linguistic understanding. He writes of his "already overdeveloped embarrassment about myself" as a child, listing "my face and tongue" among the features criticized most (63).¹³ He adds these remarks on his tongue:

The moral and physical shaded into each other most imperceptibly of all when it came to my tongue, which was the object of a dense series of metaphorical associations in Arabic, most of which were negative and, in my particular case, recurred with great frequency. In English one hears mainly of a "biting" or "sharp" tongue, in contrast with a "smooth" one. Whenever I blurted out something that seemed untoward, it was my "long" tongue to blame: aggressive, unpleasant, uncontrolled. (68)

Said employs two sets of metaphors—"sharp" (English) and "long" (Arabic)—to effect in his readers a bilingual, cross-cultural understanding of his own tongue. Although modes of thinking about his tongue differ in each language, both work to assert its untamed quality. When Said enters an American-administered Arabic class in Cairo, he subdues this troublesome tongue into near-silence:

Somehow I had to conceal my perfect command of what was my mother tongue in order to fit in better with the inane formulas given out to American youngsters for what passed for spoken (but was really kitchen) Arabic. I never volunteered, rarely spoke, often crouched near the back of the room. (82–83)

Rebuked for his unruly tongue—"sharp" or "long," depending on whether one thinks in English or in Arabic—the young Said works to constrain his own "native tongue" within the space of a classroom that purports to teach him how he should speak it. Whereas Anzaldúa's narrative establishes a resistant hybrid voice that confidently speaks across tongues, Said's tongue finds itself domesticated, stifled.

Throughout this book, I have stressed the role that close readings of literary texts can play in shaping our understandings of, and our critical narratives for, the phenomena of linguistic contact and traversal. What we can discern in all these writers—medieval and postcolonial alike—is a pervasive desire to address both the phenomenological and affective aspects of speaking across shifting sociolinguistic realms. For Said, the classroom scenario allows him to explore how his body and his language are disciplined and constrained, and his reflective meditation on his awkward, stifled tongue recalls how Charles writes about his own ambivalent relationship to "my tonge" and "mon langage." For Anzaldúa, the experience of life across tongues takes a different trajectory, granting her the platform for an intellectual justification for her mixed style of writing. She characterizes "Chicano Spanish" as a "border tongue" that is "not incorrect" but rather a vibrant "living language" (77). Adopting the academic tone of sociolinguistic discourse, she continues: "Change, evolucion, enriquecimiento de palabras nuevas por invencíon o adopcíon [evolution, new words enriched by invention or adaption] have created variants of Chicano Spanish, un nuevo lenguaje" [a new language] (77). By evoking the borderlands as a dynamic zone of linguistic exchange, Anzaldúa establishes a compelling narrative of language contact that asserts the expressive power of a mixed voice.

Much of what makes Anzaldúa's writing so intensely resonant is the particular sociopolitical circumstances against which she writes. Her mixed-language posture conspicuously bridges two tongues, challenging the significant power differential between the status of *de facto* official and institutional forms of U.S. English (on one hand) and culturally marginalized varieties of immigrant Chicano Spanish (on the other). For the medieval poet Charles, code-switching bivernacularity is quite another matter, as his language crossing transpires under a very different set of social and historical circumstances. The poet is, first of all, a high-ranking aristocrat, and we have seen throughout this book that there was a considerable degree of fluidity between Middle English and French vernaculars through trans-Channel commerce and travel.¹⁴

14. Moreover, the linguistic movements of Charles and others in his elite circuit were often subject to volatile and shifting geopolitical power dynamics. Charles wrote poems in English during his time as a prisoner of war, and Charles's own English captor, the Duke of Suffolk, began to compose lyrics in French while he was under the captivity of Charles's half-brother Dunois. Susan Crane, "Anglo-Norman Cultures in England, 1066–1460." In *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, repr. 2002), 35–60, at 59.

Since the sociopolitical implications of writers like Charles and Anzaldúa are so disparate, I find it most productive to concentrate on how crosstemporal literary comparisons can help us think more creatively about the ways writers seek to express their affective attachments to languages and how they conceive the motion of languages across space. In the case of Said, the institutionalized space of the classroom provides a setting for exploring an uneasy disciplining of the body and the tongue. Anzaldúa's mixed-language writing most readily invites comparison with the work of Charles through her exploration of a more capacious sort of place: the U.S./Mexico border, which she presents as an unsteady marker of linguistic difference and a constant site of affective longing. Acknowledging the border as an imaginative construct, Anzaldúa describes the borderlands as a "vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (25), and the text offers a flowing mixedlanguage passage that contrasts the dynamic qualities of the open sea with the unnatural stability of a land border. "Oigo el llorido del mar, el respire del aire [I hear the cry of the sea, the breath of the wind], / my heart surges to the beat of the sea," she writes, adding: "The sea cannot be fenced, / el mar does not stop at borders" (24, 25).

Moving back across time to Charles, we can appreciate more clearly that the poet's linguistic crossings transpire across a literally fluid border: the Channel/la manche. Although this body of water might appear to mark an entirely natural geographical boundary between the two landmasses of England and France, Charles's poetry constructs it as a space only contingently associated with any linguistic or political entity. As we have seen, English and French renditions of the same poem place the speaker in transit over the water of the Channel but moving in opposite directions. Even when the poet sets foot on solid ground, the illusory status of the sea as a border still lingers. In Balade 114 (discussed in chapter 2), Charles stands "a Dovre sur la mer" [at Dover by the sea] gazing toward "le païs de France . . . que mon cueur amer doit" [the land of France, which my heart should love] (1–7); yet even when he arrived across the water at Calais in 1433, he was still standing on English territory.

Charles's crossings back and forth over a fluid border have the potential to invite a closer interrogation of Anzaldúa's writing style. Her writing, "neither *español ni inglés*, but both . . . a forked tongue, a variation of two languages," traverses Spanish and English to evoke life throughout the contact zone, but this sense of linguistic hybridity still preserves at its core a binary system of thought, as Cyrus Patell has demonstrated. ¹⁵ Although

Anzaldúa certainly exhibits a nuanced understanding of the contours of both U.S. English and Chicano Spanish, foregrounding some of the varieties within each language, her rhetorical invocation of a "forked tongue" has the potential to reinscribe a conceptual binary between languages just as she seeks to transcend dualistic thinking. Charles, by contrast, transports us beyond duality or hybridity per se to a conspicuous form of simultaneity. Insofar as a distinctive poetic voice is concerned, the pervasive allegorical psychomachia throughout his work evinces a multiplicity of selves, a prospect more elusive than a hybrid voice that primarily finds its articulation across two tongues. Indeed, the poet's remarkable corpus across English and French can overshadow the ways Charles explores concurrent hybridities and modes of difference over his lifetime. The son of a French father (Louis I, Duke of Orléans) and Italian mother (Valentina Visconti of Milan) as well as a Channel-surfer between England and France, Charles creates a varied oeuvre that exhibits the capacity to work across any number of overlapping domains of linguistic difference. Among his mixed-language poems are French/Italian, English/French, and French/ Latin rondeaux, and his late-life compilation of his own French work presents it in parallel translation with Latin counterparts. 16

In this context, Charles's poem about the "trucheman" [interpreter or translator] gains a conspicuously manifold resonance. Rather than claiming a hybrid identity or forging a "forked tongue" that combines two languages, Charles imagines a realm beyond the two vernaculars in which he writes, and he does so by drawing upon his own particular political circumstances. As I have suggested, the "trucheman" in his poem designates the tongue or organ of speech, but the word can also refer to a diplomatic or cultural envoy. This ambassadorial or emissary sense of "trucheman" is strongly reinforced by the perfect participle "rapporté" [retrieved, relayed, reported], suggesting not so much the idea of the "trucheman" as an extension of one's self but rather a third party who mediates between self and

Literary History 11, 1 (Spring 1999): 166–86, esp. 177. For a lucid analysis that engages Anzaldúa with medieval Britain, see Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Hybrids, Monsters, Borderlands: The Bodies of Gerard of Wales," *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. Cohen (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 85–104, esp. 96.

^{16.} For a sustained reading of the poet's French-Latin manuscript, see Anne E. B. Coldiron, Canon, Period, and the Poetry of Charles of Orleans: Found in Translation (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 112–44. On his "macaronic" poems that each code-switch between two languages, see John Fox, "Glanures," in Mary-Jo Arn, ed., Charles of Orleans in England, 1415–1440 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 89–108.

^{17.} On the "trucheman" not only as interpreter but also potentially a trickster, see Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy*, 307.

other. Through this evocative figure, the poet indirectly suggests some of the geopolitical circumstances that underlie his translingual writing in captivity. During his time as a prisoner of war, Charles often sent envoys to negotiate with foreign parties on his behalf in the hopes that his freedom might be secured. ¹⁸

Taking the poet's sociopolitical circumstances into account, we see that Charles registers an acute estrangement from his own tongue. He characterizes it as a multilingual "trucheman" who hails from an unspecified foreign land ("d'estrange contree") and whose point of origin can *never* be discerned. Extending the resonance of Charles's personification allegory even further, we could say this mysterious emissary occupies what Homi Bhabha calls "the Third Space of enunciation" outside of hegemonic systems of thought. Charles obliquely expresses the possibility that one's thought ("pensee") might travel through manifold and potentially endless realms *beyond* binary conceptions of language, nation, or culture. Whatever this "chose sauvaige" [wild thing] is that the "trucheman" transports, we don't know whence it came nor where it might go next.

Peregrine Historiography

In this comparative analysis of Charles and postcolonial writers, I have not only traversed languages (French and Middle English; modern English and Spanish) but also distant spans of time and space. This cross-temporal analysis of translingual writing has added a third dimension (time) to a comparative framework that implicitly traverses different languages and places. My analysis here could be brought into line with what Jacques Lezra has provisionally called a "peregrine historiography"—a nonlinear, peripatetic mode of thinking about contact linguistics and literary exchange.²⁰ Rather than presenting a linear narrative that assumes the progressive unfolding of time—a framework that would identify foundational points of origin and trace the development of distinctly national languages and

^{18.} Charles's Balade 131, written in England and dispatched to the Duke of Burgundy, is one of many such appeals; in this poem, Charles asks the addressee to help him "pourchasser/La paix, aussi ma raençon" [work for peace, and my ransom as well] (9–10). I discuss the manuscript illustration to this poem below.

^{19.} Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994), 37.

^{20.} Jacques Lezra, "'Puta vieja, old whore': Matter in Translation." Early Modern Translation: Theory, History, Practice [Conference]. Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC, 4 March 2011.

literatures—we might instead adopt a more circuitous outlook, an orientation that attends to the perpetual flow and exchange between languages, literatures, and peoples across time.

My appropriation of the term "peregrine" is a deliberate one, denoting the notion of "peregrine" as a noun (i.e., pilgrim) but more broadly evincing the notion of a pilgrimage as a voyage or process, and not simply a round-trip journey to a given destination. Moreover, the term "peregrine" (as an adjective) transports deeply embedded etymological resonances that denote the strange, foreign, or unfamiliar. This word, first recorded in Middle English as "peregryn," derives from Latin *peregrinus* (as adjective, "foreign, exotic," or as noun, "foreigner") with cognates in Anglo-Norman (*peregrin*, "migratory, foreign") and other languages. ²¹ This attestation of "peregryn" comes from a text that thematizes peregrination quite well: Chaucer's *Squire's Tale*, a romance that explores the fantasy of mutual comprehension between a "faucon peregryn [of] fremde land" (428) and a Tartar princess, also features the Middle English equivalent of a speech delivered by an emissary in an alien, unspecified language (89–109).

A truly peregrine historiography would characterize a critical mode of inquiry and close reading that is itself peripatetic and wandering: a transhistorical and cross-linguistic outlook that results in moments of wondrous estrangement from conventional disciplinary frameworks undergirded by implicit developmental master narratives. One forthcoming collection of essays, edited by David Wallace and featuring a polyglot assemblage of contributors, is such an endeavor: it restricts itself to a particular time period (the decades following the Black Death), but it nonetheless enacts a peripatetic mode of inquiry in its approach to space. Rather than organizing itself around discrete national languages and literatures, this project "considers literary activity in transnational sequences of interconnected spaces," positing a set of city-focused itineraries that are not circumscribed by national or linguistic boundaries (medieval or modern).²² Peripatetic literary and linguistic historiography, in other words, has the potential to expand our thinking about literature on three concurrent fronts: across space, language, and time.

^{21.} See "peregrine, adj. and n." OED Online. December 2012. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxygw.wrlc.org/view/Entry/140669?redirectedFrom=peregrine (accessed 20 January 2013).

^{22.} David Wallace, ed., *Europe: A Literary History*, 1348–1418 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). See also the collaborative project website, which features an interactive map interface: http://www.english.upenn.edu/~dwallace/europe/index.html>.

The translingual circulation of Charles, as I have argued, demands that we rethink implicitly linear models of translation in theory and in practice. *Translatio*, movement from one language (or place) to another, is hardly ever "straight," as Sara Ahmed suggests; born in England to an English mother and Pakistani father and raised in Australia, Ahmed writes of a queer phenomenology that urges us to "rethink the work [of the] 'straight line" in our orientation towards the world to generate "alternative lines" of thought, "which cross the ground"—and, I would add, the sea—"in unexpected ways" (83, 20).²³ I posit, in other words, an avowedly peripatetic literary *and linguistic* historiography: a nonlinear mode of traveling with texts and with languages that embraces Ahmed's conceptual interrogation of the straight line.

My reading of Charles in conjunction with modern postcolonial contexts stresses how cross-temporal analysis can nuance and advance our understanding of seemingly universal social phenomena like code-switching and translingual writing. Comparative literary analysis across different points in time achieves something much more than a bridging (or effacement) of historical distance: such an approach helps us to more effectively clarify the distinctive features of any given writer in her or his own time and to unpack the implicit metaphors that underlie our own critical modes of thought. In my analysis above, I have shown how Anzaldúa's terrestrial zone of the borderlands / la frontera across the U.S. and Mexico resonates, however surprisingly, with the fluidity of la manche / the Channel between England and France in the writing of Charles. Upon closer examination, we see that the medieval poet and modern writer do not conceive the connections between their border crossings and their social identities in quite the same way. Charles imagines a "trucheman de mon pensee" [interpreter of my thoughts] who moves among many languages and cultures (not merely two), and the poet's mode of thinking maintains a multiplicity that exposes the comparatively binary structure that underlies much of Anzaldúa's thinking. Modern literature and critical theory certainly provide informative frameworks for engaging with texts composed in the distant past, but medieval translingual writing can expose potential limitations to modern structures of thought as well, even in writing that is so fluid and so richly evocative as Anzaldúa's.

I end the peregrinations of this book with a return to familiar territory. Recalling the introduction's theme, I turn to a visual representation of

^{23.} Sara Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006). On Ahmed's ancestry and peregrinations, see for instance 147.

medieval London. British Library MS Royal 16 F. ii (c. 1500), a luxurious copy of French poems by Charles d'Orléans with a few English *rondeaux* dispersed among its contents, contains a famous illustration of Charles at work in the city: the lyric poet, in exile from France, writes in captivity in the Tower of London (fol. 73r).²⁴ (See Figure 6.) On the right hand side of the frame, Charles sits at a desk within the White Tower (with each turret bearing a flag with England's coat of arms and a golden crown). In the center of the image, he peers out of a window, and on the left-hand side of the illustration, he stands just outside in the courtyard, dispatching the poem to a messenger. In the foreground of this image, four boats float by Traitor's Gate; in the distance—beyond the Tower of London itself—four more boats arrive at Billingsgate, and beyond that, London Bridge (with shops, residences, chapel) traverses the Thames. In the horizon, we discern the barest outlines of London's topography: a hint of steeples, including St. Paul's.

This image lends prominence to domestic spaces, urban commerce, and water transport. In its portrayal of crowded living spaces, the illustration situates the poet in a bustling city with ready access to networks of trade and travel. Within this visual frenzy of activity, Charles appears not once, but three times: seated in the Tower composing a text indoors, looking out a Tower window with his body half-extended out of the building, and standing outside dispatching the text.²⁵ Through this tripling of Charles, the image implies a narrative (he composes a poem, awaits a messenger, and dispatches it), but I am most interested in the overall effect of this figurative multiplication. Depicting Charles in three types of spaces—interior, liminal, and exterior—it presents the poet in perpetual motion. This illustration not only evokes Charles's busy writing environment, but it also exemplifies the critical approach to his work that I have advocated: an understanding that sustains his multiplicity and foregrounds his transit through networks of exchange.

Anne E. B. Coldiron has suggested that Charles, due to his motion back and forth between England and France, could be considered a type of "cultural amphibian."²⁶ If we take this designation literally, then this

^{24.} Derek Pearsall, "The Literary Milieu of Charles of Orléans and the Duke of Suffolk, and Authorship of the Fairfax Sequence," in *Charles in England*, ed. Arn, 145–56, at 152.

^{25.} The lines of text just below the image confirm an emissary reading. Charles reports "nouvelles d'Albion" [news from Albion, i.e., England] (1) from "deça la mer" [this side of the sea] to the Duke of Burgundy, and the *envoi* suggests the *balade*'s intended transit over the water. Arn and Fox, B131 (Champion B89, MS p. 219).

^{26.} Coldiron, 10. Although Coldiron does not make the attribution, this phrase also



Figure 6. Charles d'Orléans in the Tower of London. Detail of a page in a manuscript containing a selection of his French poems with some of his English works. London, British Library, MS Royal 16 F. ii, fol. 73r.

illustration—with its remarkable portrayal of land and river transport—evinces the poet's parallel existence on solid ground and water: his capacity to think across terrestrial and fluid domains of linguistic difference. To recall a phrase from this book's introduction, *Trading Tongues* has attended to the "roots" and "routes" of medieval culture, or—in reference to the world evoked in this illustration—it has concurrently traced the features of languages in contact (on land) and in dispersal (over sea). Poised at the juncture of land and water, this medieval translingual writer and "cultural amphibian" invites the prospect of conversations with other such figures across time: past and present polyglots negotiating life across linguistic habitats.

By ending my study of medieval translingual writing through cross-temporal comparisons, I have sought to place contemporary and past perspectives in dialogue and ask how historically disparate modes of thinking can come into contact with and inform one another. Modern theory can readily be invoked as a strategy for looking back to medieval texts in fresh ways, but I encourage us to think more carefully in terms of facilitating exchange between writing in the past and reading in our present. Medieval writing, in other words, can show as much potential to transform our own modes of thought as modern perspectives are equipped to change our views of medieval writing. It is my hope that this book will encourage more of us to adopt critical modes that can allow for simultaneous forms of orientation toward our respective objects. Through this book's journeys across language, space, and time, I invite readers to experiment with manifold, inter-temporal perspectives: to adopt interpretive approaches that might unleash the full potential of peripatetic modes of thought and perception.

appears in reference to Shakespeare's Othello in Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 71. For a lucid and careful unpacking of Coldiron's "cultural amphibian" metaphor (originally made in reference to Caxton), see Michelle R. Warren, "Translating English Literary History," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 110, 4 (October 2011): 489–515, at 493–94.



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