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“Victor Victus”

Bilingualism, Biculturalism, and the Medieval Frontier

In 851, the monk Isaac of Tábarnos left his monastery in Cordoba and walked to the marketplace, where a Muslim qadi was holding court. There, under pretense of wishing to be instructed in Islam, he proceeded to disparage the qadi’s religion. Unsurprisingly, Isaac was killed for blasphemy, becoming the first of the martyrs of Cordoba. Though much has been written on this subject, I wish to draw attention to one small fact: That a Christian, “extraordinarily learned in Arabic letters” (*apprime literis arabicis imbutus*) to such a degree that he had served as a government official, addressed a Muslim in the language of the Qu’ran.¹ How, and why, did Isaac become *imbutus* with the Arabic language?

Numerous scholars, beginning with Bernhard Bischoff in his 1961 article on the study of foreign languages in the Middle Ages, have examined the subject of medieval multilingualism, though mostly in the context of academic fluency in both the vernacular and in Latin, learned translations (especially those conducted by liminal figures such as Jews), literary usage of ‘code switching’ by educated elites, or formally acquired languages.² This mirrors the experience of first-world academics, who, by and large, are a self-selecting group of people who have excelled at learning in formal settings. But the majority of real-world language learning does not occur in lecture halls: To cite my own experience, I studied French in school, but, like Chaucer’s Prioress who spoke French “after the scole of Stratford-atte-Bowe,”³ never “knew” the language until I had actually to use it while conducting dissertation research in Paris. Similarly, my Italian was entirely picked up through travel in that country and self-directed translation.

1 *Acta Sanctorum* vol. 1, June (Paris: Victorem Palmé, 1867), 318. On Isaac as a government official, see Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 14.

2 Bernhard Bischoff, “The Study of Foreign Languages in the Middle Ages,” *Speculum* 36 (1961): 209–24. See also Arno Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel: Geschichte der Meinungen über Ursprung und Vielfalt der Sprachen und Völker*. 4 vols. (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1957–1963); for a good recent work, see Albrecht Classen, “Multilingualism in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age: The Literary-Historical Evidence,” *Neophilologus* 97 (2013): 131–45.

3 *Riverside Chaucer*, e. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 25, ll. 124–26.

Compare my entirely voluntary learning experiences as a culturally privileged traveler and speaker of a dominant language to those of an immigrant to the United States struggling to learn English or the bilingualism of her American-born child, who must mediate between two worlds; of Afghans in Kabul, for whom a smattering of English can be a key to survival; or of Indians and Senegalese, for whom the use of English or French as administrative and academic languages is part of what the novelist Kiran Desai called “the inheritance of loss,” both a doorway to a wider world and the legacy of colonial imposition; or of my students from Argentina, Ethiopia, or Japan, who have learned English as a means of participating in the soft imperialism of globalization. Language learning, more than a tool of scholarship or signifier of *habitus*, can also be a survival mechanism or a tool of advancement in an unequal linguistic playing field. It makes eminent sense for a Christian in al-Andalus such as Isaac of Tâbarnos to be able to speak the language of his conquerors—and, like Gandhi, to turn it against them.

Very few writers have addressed medieval multilingualism in the context of such colonial situations, where learning a language is a means of negotiating between two different and unequal polities. Yet, in light of Robert Bartlett’s assertion that European culture was made by the expansion of frontiers—and thus, the intermeshing of linguistic zones—such a study is well overdue.⁴ The aim of this paper is to look at how medieval multilingualism and multiculturalism came about in a largely oral culture in the context of conquest, colonization, and cultural exchange.⁵

I will propose several models of language learning, from adult learners acquiring a smattering of a language as a survival mechanism or by formal study; those who acquired language through deliberate programs of childhood exposure; and those who are the products of bicultural and bilingual marriage. This last category, that of marriage across cultural lines, carries special weight, since it was the medieval model carried to the New World and which informed the creation of the Mestizo people.

⁴ Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950–1350* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994). Bartlett does briefly treat with the subject on pp. 199–204.

⁵ The Westphalian cleric Ludolph von Sudheim reported that such existed in fourteenth-century Cyprus in *Ludolphi de Sudheim de itinere Terre Sancte et descriptionem Terre Sancte in Archives de l’Orient Latin* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1884), 305–77. See also Jean Richard, “L’enseignement des langues orientales en Occident au Moyen Âge,” *Revue des études islamiques* 44.1 (1976): 149–64.

Travelers Between Worlds

The main theaters for medieval expansion were eastwards, into the area around the Baltic sea and eastern Europe, colonized mainly by German-speaking lords and military orders; southwards into the Muslim and Greek Orthodox Mediterranean, spearheaded by the Normans in Sicily and then the polyglot armies of the Crusades; westwards in the form of the Reconquista in Spain, as well as the Anglo-Norman venture first into Wales and then into Ireland; and, to a lesser extent, Scandinavian expansion into the North Atlantic and the Western Hemisphere. Bartlett describes this process as beginning with forays by merchants and missionaries. Such forays need not have been intentionally expansionistic in nature: Adam of Bremen notes the ninth-century bishop and missionary Anskar’s “longing for the Swedish people” in the midst of Viking raids; presumably, Christianizing the invaders would end the violence.⁶ Other explorers may simply have been engaging in subsistence-level fishing or hunting or low-level trade.

The wheels of society-wide colonization might be set in motion by a variety of motivations: Lust for profit, the desire to avenge the killing of God’s messengers or the merchant adventurers of one’s own land (as in Livonia), interference with pilgrims (as in southern Italy), or even the invitation of a local ruler (such as the Emperor Alexius’s plea to Urban II for military aid, or Diarmait Mac Murchad’s seeking Anglo-Norman aid to recover Leinster). The reoccurrence of such *casus belli* in the sources harmonizes quite well with D. K. Fieldhouse’s observation (for nineteenth-century imperialism) that “the “metropolitan dog [was] wagged by its colonial tail”—though, of course, for the Middle Ages, we must speak of magnates rather than metropolises.⁷ The end result of this process, however, is the same no matter what the age: The invaded land (and its resources) are thus enfolded into the invader’s socioeconomic organization.

As Bartlett observes, medieval Latin Christendom may be envisioned as a “network of bishoprics” expanding outwards from the core lands of the Frankish empire, northern Spain, and Great Britain, and supported by the economic structure of the medieval economy—that is, tithes and rents based on intensive cereal agriculture.⁸ This economic organization also informs the justification of the conquest by the dominant ideology of the time, the establishment of the enemy as

⁶ Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, trans. Francis J. Tschan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 30.

⁷ David Kenneth Fieldhouse, *Economics and Empire, 1830–1914* (New York: Macmillan, 1984), 80–81.

⁸ Bartlett, *Making of Europe* (see note 3), 7.

the Other, and the generation of mass enthusiasm for the venture. This same tendency informs medieval explorers' tropes of foreign cultures: It is toward the edges of the map—on marginal lands, or other places where the manorial-intensive grain agricultural economy and the concomitant social structure of marriage-property relations do not hold—that the ordinary order breaks down and one begins to find monsters. Gerald of Wales (1146–1223), for instance, details both the improper ecclesiastical organization of the Welsh and Irish (with monasteries relying on lay patrons, rather than holding land on their own) and these peoples' penchant for marriage within the forbidden degrees of separation—both of which customs grew out of the Celtic people's pastoral economy and social organization in clans, but which (in the case of Ireland) gave Henry II an ostensible justification for invasion (via the papal bull *Laudabiliter*).⁹ For instance, Gerald describes (II.19–27) Irish monsters engendered by unnatural intercourse and magic, such as werewolves, bearded women, and a creature that was half-man/half ox. He then talks about miracles and the particular character of religion in Ireland (II.28–55). Later, paralleling this, he talks about the poor quality and ignorance of Irish faith, including sexual relations that would have been considered incest in other lands (III.19–26), the neglect of the clergy (III.27–32), and the oddities of Irish relics (III.33–34). It is in III.35 that he ties the two themes together: So many Irish are deformed or handicapped in some way, states Gerald, because of incest, neglected faith, and improper marriage.

Likewise, though the fantastical images of the Other in Marco Polo's book may be explained by Rustichello's understanding of what the audience *expected*, the more sober accounts of Franciscan friars such as John of Monte Corvino and John of Plano Carpini, who traveled amongst the Mongols, nonetheless never fail to mention their marriage customs and property division. Such fundamental details of social organization remain a primary concern of anthropological inquiry today.¹⁰

⁹ On Irish monstrosity, see Robert Bartlett's chapters on "Ethnography," id., *Gerald of Wales: A Voice of the Middle Ages* (Stroud: Tempus, 2006); Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Hybrids, Monsters, Borderlands: The Bodies of Gerald of Wales," *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen. The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Joseph T. Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael: Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality. Its Development and Literary Expression Prior to the Nineteenth Century*. Critical Conditions, 3 (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996); and James Muldoon, *Identity on the Medieval Irish Frontier: Degenerate Englishmen, Wild Irishmen, Middle Nations* (Gainesville, Tallahassee, et al.: University Press of Florida, 2003).

¹⁰ The standard English translation of Marco Polo is Ronald Latham, *Travels of Marco Polo* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2004). For English translations of John of Monte Corvino, see the "Letter of John Monte Corvino" in *Cathay and the Way Thither*, trans. and ed. by Sir Henry Yule, sec. ed. rev. by Henri Cordier (London: Hakluyt Society, 1914), Vol. III, Second Series,

Differences in language, as Isidore of Seville observed in the beginning of the ninth book of the *Etymologies*, came about after the tower of Babel, and it was language that divided peoples.¹¹ Hugo of Trimberg mentions in his early fourteenth-century Middle High German didactic poem *Der Renner* those who need to learn foreign languages to fill purse and stomach.¹² A number of phrase-books existed for the use of not only those pilgrims and merchants who traveled between European countries, but those who had to bridge the gaps between Europe and the rest of the world. To cite three instances, Charles V of France (1338–1380) apparently possessed a book entitled *Les pélerinages d’outremer et á savoir demander en langaige sarrazin ses nécessités pour vivre*, Bernhard von Breydenbach (ca. 1440–1497) gives a list of almost two hundred common Arabic words in his 1483 *Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam*, and Arnold von Harff (1471–1505) includes numerous lists of foreign phrases in his late fifteenth-century memoirs (1498) on how to say select phrases such as “how much does this cost?” and “Lady, will you sleep with me?” in nine languages including Arabic, Turkish, Greek, and Hebrew.¹³

Interpreters were a possibility, particularly if one had access to Latin Christian communities in the East, which were, for obvious reasons, multilingual. In this vein Louis of Rochechouart, bishop of Saintes, describes each pilgrim traveling with him being welcomed at Rhodes in their own language on his 1461 pilgrimage.¹⁴ Other linguistic go-betweens could include such ordinarily unsavo-

Vol. 37, 45–55. On John of Plano Carpini, see Yule, *Cathay*, vol. I, 197–221. On marriage and social organization, see especially Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1949).

11 *Etymologiarum* 9.1.1: *Initio autem quot gentes, tot linguae fuerunt, deinde plures gentes quam linguae; quia ex una lingua multae sunt gentes exortae*. http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Isidore/9*.html (last accessed on Nov, 19, 2014).

12 Hugo of Trimberg *Der Renner*, ed. Gustav Ehrismann. Bibliothek des Literarischen Vereins, 247 (Tübingen: Literarischer Verein, 1908), 149; discussed by Bischoff, “The Study of Foreign Languages” (see note 2) on p. 216.

13 Bischoff, “The Study of Foreign Languages” (see note 2), 218–20. See also Albrecht Classen, “Travel Space as Constructed Space: Arnold von Harff Observes the Arabic Space,” *German Studies Review* 33.2 (2010): 375–88; id., “Traveler, Linguist, Pilgrim, Observer, and Scientist: Arnold von Harff Explores the Near East and Finds Himself Among Fascinating Foreigners,” *Ain güet geboren edel man: A Festschrift for Winder McConnell on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Gary C. Shockey with Gail E. Finney and Clifford A. Bernd. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 757 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 2011), 195–248.

14 Louis de Rochechouart, “Voyage a Jérusalem,” ed. C. Couderc. *Revue de l’Orient Latin* 18 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1893), 168–274; here 235.

ry characters as Jews and heretics.¹⁵ Some voyagers tried, and failed, to learn the local tongue. For instance, the fifteenth-century Burgundian traveler Bertrandon de la Broquière learned a smattering of Turkish, but did not speak it well.¹⁶ The *lingua franca* of Mediterranean trade could also function as a bridge language, as when the late fifteenth century Flemish nobleman Anselmo Adorno apparently had to have Arabic translated for him through this intermediary.¹⁷ (Lingala and Swahili serve similar purposes as trade languages in modern Africa.)

Italian merchants were found throughout Eurasia during the *pax mongolica*; for them, a familiarity with languages, as well as the *lingua franca* of Mediterranean trade, was a necessity. The multilingual *Codex Cumanicus* preserved in Venice, which has sections translating both Italo-Latin and German into Kipchak and Persian, is not only a documentary testimony to the colonies of Italian merchants on the Black Sea, but also evidence that some attempt at language-teaching was made.¹⁸ Venetians seemed to have a particular aptitude for languages, as the merchant-adventurers Marco Polo, Nicolò de' Conti, and Emmanuel Piloti show. Polo apparently became adept in four Asian languages—Uighur, Mongol, Arabic, and Persian—in this journey to the East. Later, in the early fifteenth century, de' Conti successfully passed as a Muslim and studied Arabic and Persian in the East.¹⁹ Piloti, his near contemporary, lived in Egypt and the Middle East for over two decades and became fluent in Arabic.²⁰ However, the greatest example of this sort of traveler was not Venetian, but Bolognese: In the early sixteenth century, Ludovico of Varthema learned Arabic in Damascus, enlisted as a Mamluk, travelled to Mecca (?), returned home by traveling first to India and sailing around the Cape of Good Hope, and published his account of his adventures in

15 Jean-Claude Faucon, “Voyager et communiquer: Les problèmes d’intercompréhension chez les voyageurs occidentaux dans l’Orient médiéval,” *Revue des Langues Romanes* 111:1 (2007): 1–29; here, 8, 11.

16 “Le Voyage d’Outremer de Bertrandon de la Broquière premier écuyer tranchant et conseiller de Philippe le Bon, duc de Bourgogne (1432–1433),” ed. Charles Schefer. *Recueil de voyages et de documents pour servir à l’histoire de la géographie depuis le XIII^e siècle jusqu’à la fin du XVI^e siècle*, ed. Charles Schefer, vol. 12 (Paris: E. Leroux, 1892), 59, 70, 128.

17 Faucon, “Voyager et communiquer,” (see note 14), 9. On Adorno, see *Itinéraire d’Anselmo Adorno en terre sainte (1470–1471)*, ed. Jacques Heers and Georgette de Groer (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1978).

18 Cod. Mar. Lat. DXLIX, published by Vladimir Drimba as *Codex Comanicus: Édition diplomatique avec fac-similés* (Bucarest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2000).

19 *Le voyage aux Indes de Nicolò de’ Conti* ed. Geneviève Bouchon et Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary (Paris: Chandeigne, 2004), 9.

20 *Traité d’Emmanuel Piloti sur le passage en Terre Sainte 1420*, ed. Pierre-Herman Dopp (Louvain and Paris: Publications de l’université Louvanium de Léopoldville, 1958).

1510.²¹ His account inspired Richard Francis Burton’s own nineteenth-century voyage to Mecca.

Knowing a few words of another language could also be a military advantage on the frontier. Henry of Livonia records the Germans’ Lettish allies being taught to “seize, ravage, and kill” in their language to make it seem as if an attacking force contained more (better-armed) German soldiers.²² Similarly, the southern Italians who joined Robert Guiscard attempted to learn French.²³ These sorts of situations are not too dissimilar from an Afghan soldier learning a few American military terms to better coordinate with his advisors/trainers.

Advanced language skills were even more useful: In 1085, Robert of Calabria sent Phillip, son of a Greek aristocrat, to conduct a night reconnaissance of the Muslim fleet, for he and his men were fluent in Arabic as well as Greek.²⁴ Similarly, Usamah Ibn-Munqidh’s (1095–1188) anecdote about a greenhorn Frank trying to turn him away from praying in the direction of the qiblah in the small chapel next to the Aqsa mosque is well-known; what is less remarked upon is that he seemed to be able to communicate easily with his friends the Templars, who had cleared out the chapel so he could pray in the Muslim manner.²⁵ Joinville likewise met Armenians and Arabs who spoke French. Ethnic conflict could also be conceived of in linguistic terms. The conflict between the English and Welsh provides us with two examples: A letter of the Count of Northumbria to Henry IV (in Anglo-Norman French!) claims Owain Glendower’s intent is to “destroy the English tongue.”²⁶ Similarly, Adam of Usk talks about the “destruction of the Welsh tongue.”²⁷ To destroy a language is to destroy a people.

21 *Itinerario de Ludouico de Varthema Bolognese* (Rome: Guillireti de Loreno and Hercule de Nani, 1510). See also Albrecht Classen, “Introduction,” *East Meets West: Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin De Gruyter, 2013), 1–222; for a more detailed discussion, see Albrecht Classen, “India Perceived Through the Eyes of Sixteenth-Century Readers: Ludovico de Varthema’s Bestseller on the Early Modern Book Markets—A Narrative Landmark of the Emerging Positive Evaluation of *curiositas*,” *Mediaevalia et Humanistica* 40 (2015): 1–24.

22 *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, trans. James Brundage (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), 202.

23 William of Apulia, *La geste de Robert Guiscard*, ed. Marguerite Mathieu (Palermo: Istituto siciliano di studi bizantini e neellenici, 1961), 108.

24 Geoffrey Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi ducis fratris eius*, ed. Ernesto Pontieri (Bologna: N. Zanichelli, 1928), 86.

25 *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades: Memoirs of Usamah Ibn-Munqidh*, trans. Philip K. Hitti (1929; New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 163.

26 *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England* ed. Harris Nicolas, vol. 2 (London: Printed by G. Eyre and A. Spottiswoode, 1834), 60.

Much like the merchants they followed missionaries to the Baltic such as Meinhard would have needed at least a smattering of language to communicate with the peoples there. Familiarity with languages would be a necessary part of the mission of the preaching orders, who frequently served in this role: Rochechouart used a Franciscan interpreter, Father Laurence the Sicilian, as an interpreter; John of Montecorvino, who also learned Mongol, belonged to the order; and another Franciscan, Pascal of Vittoria, killed in 1339, spoke Cuman and Uighur.²⁸ Jean de Joinville mentions a Dominican, Yves the Breton, who spoke Arabic well, and the Dominican apologist and writer Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, who traveled and lived throughout the Near East in the late thirteenth century, used an interpreter at first, but became fluent enough in Arabic to preach in that language and write learned analyses of the Qur'an.²⁹ William of Rubruck's account of his journey to the East from 1253–1255 is full of travails with interpreters, begging people to help him with the language, and his inability to preach because of linguistic barriers, but he was nonetheless a keen observer of the speech of the peoples he meets along his route. William and Riccoldo's fellow Dominican William of Tripoli was more fortunate in this regard, having been born in the Levant.³⁰ We can see the same concerns in the contrast between the two great Jesuit missionaries of the sixteenth century, Francis Xavier, whose missionary activity was limited by his lack of mastery of languages; and Matteo Ricci, who became fluent in Chinese. The need for fluency in languages to spread the Word of God was one reason why the fourteenth-century Catalan mystic Ramon Llull developed his universal logical language/analog computational device, the *Ars Magna*. On the ground, though, functional Latin bilingualism and a comprehensive knowledge of grammar were no doubt a great advantage that clerics who had to learn new languages enjoyed over laymen. In any case, religion can be a great spur to learning languages; the latter-day counterparts of these medieval missionaries, the Mormon Church, has a quite effective system

²⁷ Adam of Usk, *Chronicon Ade de Usk*, ed. Edward Maunde Thompson (London: Henry Frowde, 1904), 71

²⁸ Rochechouart, "Voyage a Jérusalem," (see note 13), 170; for Pascal de Vittoria, see his *Epistle of 1338* in *Annales Minorum*, ed. Luke Wadding, vol. 7 (Rome: Bernarbo, 1733), 356–67.

²⁹ Jean de Joinville, *Mémoires de Jean, Sire de Joinville* (Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1881), 134. Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, *Liber Peregrinationis in Peregrinatores Medii Aevi Quattuor*, ed. J. C. M. Laurent (Leipzig: C. P. Melzeri, 1864), 119, 131.

³⁰ Thomas F. O'Meara, "The Theology and Times of William of Tripoli, O.P.: A Different View of Islam," *Theological Studies* 69 (2008): 80–98. William's writings on Islam are published as *Notitia de Machometo: De statu Sarracenorum*, ed. Peter Engels (Würzburg: Echter, 1992).

of language-teaching to facilitate their missions to non-English-speaking countries.

Preachers and priests were, if not the shock troops spearheading conquest, those who followed after to order the world according to the new norms. But a priest still had to serve his congregation. Thus, liturgical texts giving Mozarabic and Greek liturgies in Roman characters were made for priests serving communities in Iberia and the Greek-speaking communities of southern Italy. For one example, Roger Reynolds has published on a Greek liturgy of St. John Chrysostom written in Beneventan script.³¹

Many preachers, including Gerald of Wales, likewise had to make use of interpreters in their attempts to bring the proper order of the world into new lands. Gerald himself was somewhat linguistically handicapped: Ad Putter argues that, though partially of Welsh descent, Gerald spoke French as his mother tongue and Latin as an acquired second language, and at least understood English, but only had a smattering of Welsh.³² Thus, he and his fellow preachers were forced to make use of interpreters such as Alexander, the archdeacon of Bangor.³³

Reliance on interpreters was certainly not unusual in the Britain of Gerald's time, which was only a few generations removed from the Norman conquest: Putter points out that Gerald himself performs such duties, generally translating the English of various speakers (including the educated, such as priests) for his readers, who we can assume were Anglo-Norman-speaking elites.³⁴ Gerald further recounts how Henry II required a knight, Philip of Marcross, to translate the warning of a wandering preacher from English to French,³⁵ and another interpreter to interpret a furious Welshwoman.³⁶ One could even hold land on the Welsh frontier in return for service as an interpreter.³⁷ But where and how did Gerald, Alexander, Philip, and the other linguistic go-betweens acquire their multilingualism?

31 Roger Reynolds, “The Greek Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom in Beneventan Script: An Early Manuscript Fragment.” *Mediaeval Studies* 52 (1990): 296–302.

32 Ad Putter, “Multilingualism in England and Wales c. 1200: The Testimony of Gerald of Wales,” *Medieval Multilingualism: The Francophone World and Its Neighbours*, ed. Christopher Kleinhenz and Keith Busby. *Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe*, 20 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 83–106.

33 Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales and the Description of Wales*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (New York: Penguin, 1978), 29, n. 104.

34 Putter, “Multilingualism” (see note 29), 93–96.

35 *Journey*, trans. Thorpe (see note 30), 124.

36 *Journey*, trans. Thorpe (see note 30), 167.

37 Bartlett, *Making of Europe* (see note 3), 200.

“Mother Tongues”

According to the “critical period” hypothesis, children are best able to learn language at an early age—the age at which they tend to be under maternal care.³⁸ Many scholars have extended this to the learning of second languages. Though there is some disagreement, and certainly motivated and talented adult learners in the right environment can sometimes achieve native-like proficiency, the consensus is that second-language learners become most fluent if exposed at an early age.³⁹ This is certainly the model in multilingual societies in modern Africa, where there is a great deal of importance placed on fluent oral communication in different language modalities.

Medieval people were aware of children’s advantage in learning language, and it was common to rear children deliberately in a multilingual, multicultural environment by employing nurses or tutors proficient in the target language, or by fostering them in households where the target language was spoken. Renate Haas points out the connection between foreign language teaching and early childhood in her examination of Walter de Bibbesworth’s *Tretiz de Language*, the first known example of a didactic work dedicated to instructing Anglophones in French.⁴⁰ This handbook was written ca. 1235 for the children of the English noblewoman Dionysia de Munchensi, and Haas makes a strong argument that this book was intended for use by a woman charged with the care of young children.⁴¹ Ranulph Higden, in his *Polychronicon* (ca. 1350), tells us that the children of the English nobility were taught to speak French “ab ipsis cunabulorum crepundiis” (roughly “from the time they shake a rattle in their cradles”), but that when up-jumped countryfolk try to learn, “francigenare satagunt omni nisu” (“they all speak French pushing themselves with great effort”).⁴² His near-contemporary Froissart likewise tells us that the well-born Jehan de

38 The idea of the “critical period” was first expressed in *Wilder Penfield and Lamar Roberts, Speech and Brain Mechanisms* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959).

39 See, for instance, *The Age Factor in Second Language Acquisition*, ed. David Singleton and Zsolt Lengyel (Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 1995).

40 BnF Nouv. Acq. Lat. 669. See also Karen K. Jambeck, “The ‘Tretiz’ of Walter of Bibbesworth: Cultivating the Vernacular,” *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 159–84.

41 Renate Haas, “Female Roots of ‘Foreign’ Language Teaching and the Rise of Mother-Tongue Ideologies,” *Exemplaria* 19.1 (2007): 139–62.

42 *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden*, ed. Churchill Babington, vol. 2 (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1869), 158.

Blois, who had been raised (*nourry*) in Holland and Zeeland, spoke those languages as a consequence.⁴³

Certainly, the idea of women as reproducers of culture, critical in shaping a child’s early character and passing on national language and culture, has a long history in Enlightenment-era liberal thought—Rousseau’s Sophie or the Grimm Brothers’ idea of *Volksggeist* being passed down through *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (“children’s and home tales”) being two prominent examples—but it was true of pre-Enlightenment Europe as well, as Barbara Hanawalt has demonstrated in her several works.⁴⁴ Even the term “mother tongue” implies the role of women in linguistic and cultural transmission, though J. R. R. Tolkien, in his 1955 O’Donnell lecture “English and Welsh,” gives the perhaps more accurate (though equally gendered) term “cradle tongue” as opposed to “the native tongue”—the language of early childhood versus the language of predilection.⁴⁵

If imparting language in early childhood was the domain of women, acquisition of language in later childhood seems to have been a male domain. Lupus Servatus (ca. 805–862), Abbot of Ferrières and himself son of a Bavarian father and a Frankish mother, wrote to Abbot Marcwardus, abbot of Prüm, in July of 844 asking to send his nephew and two other young boys (*puerulos*) to be instructed in German.⁴⁶ Albrecht Classen points to the protagonist of Gottfried von Strassburg’s *Tristan* (ca. 1210) as a linguistic marvel who has been educated in multiple vernaculars.⁴⁷ The poet specifies that this training took place in later childhood: From the age of seven, Tristan’s tutor took him to foreign lands to learn the language.⁴⁸ Though Tristan’s linguistic abilities border on the preternatural, this was not merely a literary conceit: Arnold of Lübeck, in his early thirteenth-century continuation of Helmold’s *Chronica Slavorum*, tells us that Danish noblemen sent their children to Paris not only for (Latin) book-learning, but to be

43 Getty Museum MS Ludwig XIII 7, f. 264r: *qui tousjours avoit esté nourry ens es parties de Hollandes et de Zeellande car il y tenoit bel hiretage et qui en avoit la langue aussi.*

44 See especially Barbara Hanawalt’s *Growing Up in Medieval London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). On women as reproducers of national culture, see especially *Woman-Nation-State*, Nara Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias (London: Macmillan, 1989), and Ann Laura Stoler, “Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power in Colonial Asia,” *Feminism and History*, ed. Joan Wallach Scott (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

45 John Ronald Ruel Tolkien, “English and Welsh,” *The Monsters and the Critics*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983), 191.

46 *Lettres de Servat Loup*, ed. Georges Desdevises du Dezert (Paris: F. Viewig, 1888), 98.

47 Vol. 1, vv. 3690–3709. See Classen, “Multilingualism” (see note 2), 137. Cf. also his remarks in the introduction to this volume.

48 Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan und Isolde*, ed. Friedrich Ranke (Berlin: Weidmann, 1930), 26, lines 2060–64.

“imbued” with the language of the land (*ubi litteratura simul et idiomate lingue terre illius imbuti*).⁴⁹

This may be how Isaac of Tábarnos, who originated from a prominent family, came to learn his Arabic. The choice of the verb *imbuere* (“to wet, soak, give initial instruction in”) gives an interesting possibility that this linguistic “sponge” learned it through childhood experience: as part of his education, he was immersed in the Arabic language. Certainly, this model functioned in other times and places where Muslims and Christians coexisted. Joinville remarks that Nicholas of Acre and Baldwin of Ibelin spoke Arabic well.⁵⁰ Nicholas and Baldwin were both raised in the Crusader states, and Arabic would have certainly been part of their upbringing. Similarly, in *El Cantar de Mio Cid* (ca. 1200), Christians and Muslims are able to understand one another without interpreters. While this may be poetic license, it was apparently not considered unusual for Iberian elites to speak one another’s language. (To be sure, Spain remained bilingual for quite some time after Arabic ceased to be used as an official government language: in fourteenth-century Christian Valencia, there were even official translators.⁵¹)

Immersing children in a second language was not only an element of elite education on the Muslim-Christian frontier, but also in Eastern Europe. German emperors such as Otto I, Frederick II, and Charles IV were masters of several languages, and the thirty-first chapter of the Golden Bull (1356) specifies that, in light of the multilingual nature of the Holy Roman Empire, children of electors, who are assumed to have German as a mother-tongue, were to be trained in Italian and Slavic languages, as well. What is interesting is that the possible means of acquiring the language are discussed, but left up to the parents: They may be fostered out, or taught at home by the procurement of tutors and target-language fluent companions.⁵²

The common element in such early immersion, whether of infants or of older children, was that it took place in a milieu where mastery of multiple languages was a useful and valued skill. While one side has established dominance by force of arms, this is not an absolute dominance, and cultural and linguistic borders

⁴⁹ *Arnoldi Chronica Slavorum* (Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1868), 77

⁵⁰ Jean de Joinville, *Mémoires de Jean, Sire de Joinville* (Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1881), 107, 109.

⁵¹ John Boswell, *The Royal Treasure: Muslim Communities under the Crown of Aragon in the Fourteenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 74 n. 41, 384; Bartlett, *Making of Europe* (see note 3), 204–205.

⁵² *Bulla aurea*, see online at:

http://www.hs-augsburg.de/~Harsch/Chronologia/Lspost14/CarolusIV/car_bu00.html (last accessed on Oct. 4, 2014).

between old and new elites must be negotiated. Conversely, where the political situation was different, fear of assimilation reared its head and boundaries were maintained by forbidding the language of those of lower status to those of higher status. For instance, in a decree of 1359 or 1360, Edward III forbade those of the “English race” (*de genere Anglicano*), for fear of acculturation, to learn Irish, to speak Irish amongst themselves, or, most tellingly, to give their children out amongst the Irish to be fostered.⁵³ The unequal playing field, once established, must be preserved. We see similar politics play out with the phenomenon of intermarriage.

Intermarriage

While R. I. Moore has traced the tendency to try to create a hermetic barrier between the community and the Other back to the Middle Ages, discussing how “the fear of pollution protects boundaries, and the fear of social pollution, sexual boundaries especially,” not all scholars agree with this assessment.⁵⁴ Certainly, nineteenth-century imperialists saw intermarriage and acculturation with a mixture of Orientalist fascination and racial-supremacist horror. However, in the premodern world, such unions were a tool of conquest.⁵⁵ Laura Ann Stoler, for instance, has discussed the comparative novelty of strict hygienic barriers between peoples, and in the liminal territory of the medieval frontier, things were even more fluid.⁵⁶

Marriages between different groups, even ones crossing lines of religion, were not uncommon in the interconnected society of early Islamic Spain, as Jes-

53 “...*et nichilominus homines de genere Anglicano in dicta terra idioma Hibernicum erudiunt et loquuntur et infantes suos inter Hibernicos nutriendos, et lingua Hibernica utantur, emittunt et locantur, ita quod per huius idioma populous noster campestris de genere Anglicano pro majori parte Hibernicus devenit...*” *Great Britain Historical Manuscripts Commission 10th Report* (London: Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, 1885), Appendix V, pp. 260–61. One fourteenth-century Anglo-Norman noble, Gerald fitz Maurice fitzGerald, Earl of Desmond, even wrote poetry in Irish. See Gearóid MacNiocaill, “Duanaire Ghearóid Iarla,” *Studia Hibernica* 3 (1963): 7–59.

54 Robert Ian Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 100.

55 For the latter, see, for instance, Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1901).

56 Ann Laura Stoler, “Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in Twentieth-Century Colonial Cultures,” *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives* ed. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 344–73.

sica A. Coope discusses in her short but thorough *Martyrs of Córdoba*.⁵⁷ Islamic law allowed a Muslim man to marry a *dhimmi* woman; Muslim women, however, could not marry outside the faith. Such alliances were problematic, but they were not unheard of, especially since it conveyed certain advantages. As Coope says, “It seems possible that as life in Córdoba came to center more and more around economic activity and the amir’s court, Arab and Berber families would be willing to welcome a daughter-in-law from a wealthy or well-connected Iberian family, even though they might continue to trace their genealogy exclusively though the male line.”⁵⁸

Though Coope deals with Christian and Muslim society in the ninth century, mixed marriages were a common feature through the period of *convivencia*. However, as time went on such practices grew increasingly restricted and politicized against. This was reflected in canon law as discussed by Brundage,⁵⁹ and in popular and legal discourse discouraging intermarriage as discussed by Nirenberg, Meyerson and others—discourses that frequently invoked, as the fifteenth century went on, the idea of taint of blood.⁶⁰

Yet, even as these practices were being condemned in the rapidly consolidating metropole, they continued to be practiced on the frontier—for instance, in the Canary Islands. Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo observed that intermarriage with indigenous ruling families, a policy derived from contact with Islam and medieval Spanish Jewry, was a critical element of the Spanish conquest and settlement of the Canaries.⁶¹ The sons of native chiefs who cooperated with the conquerors were taught the Spanish language and religion by Franciscan monks, and “European settlers frequently sought to link their claims to land with such native prerogatives, and intermarriage with these noble families was not unusual.”⁶²

Similarly, Filipe Fernández-Armesto comments that “[t]he Spaniards were generally more sensitive to differences of class than those of race or culture,

57 Jessica A. Coope, *The Martyrs of Cordova: Community and Family Conflict in an Age of Mass Conversion* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

58 Coope, *Martyrs* (see note 57), 13.

59 James A. Brundage, “Intermarriage between Christians and Jews in Medieval Canon Law,” *Jewish History* 3 (1988): 25–40.

60 David Nirenberg, “Enmity and Assimilation: Jews, Christians, and Converts in Medieval Spain.” *Common Knowledge* 9.1 (2003): 137–55; Mark Meyerson, *Jews in an Iberian Frontier Kingdom: Society, Economy, and Politics in Morvedre* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004).

61 Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo, “The Inter-Atlantic Paradigm: The Failure of Spanish Medieval Colonization of the Canary and Caribbean Islands,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35.3 (July, 1993): 515–43; here 534.

62 Stevens-Arroyo, “The Inter-Atlantic Paradigm” (see note 60), 534.

and the cream of the old indigenous society found protection and even welcome in early colonial society. Much of the Canarian nobility was integrated by marriage into the Castilian ...”⁶³ It was the marriage bed as much as the sword and the bacterium that ended the Guanches as a separate culture. This extended to other peoples on the frontier as well: as late as 1514, Diego Afonso, a Portuguese *estante* (resident) of Tenerife, split his property after his death between his stepdaughter and his daughter by an enslaved African woman.

This policy of taking native wives continued in the New World, at least at first. The legend of *La Malinche*, who was baptized as *Doña Marina*, serves as an exemplar: She was a multilingual Mayan/Nahuatl/Spanish interpreter given to Cortés as a slave, but who, as her name indicates, came to be regarded by the Spanish as having high status. She had two children, one with Cortés and one with Juan Jaramillo—the first mestizos, who were not only bilingual, but bicultural, able to interpret between the majority Indian population and their new Spanish-speaking rulers. This sort of cultural intermeshing did not happen in regions where the Spanish greatly outnumbered Native Americans. For instance, those who had married the daughters of Taino chiefs were not given *encomiendas* because they were seen as having dropped in status.⁶⁴ However, it did take place, albeit on a smaller scale, in French colonies, where French fur-traders built social networks by intermarrying with Native Americans.⁶⁵

We see this pattern at least as far back as the Carolingian era. Louis the Pious’s mother Hildegard, for instance, was an Alemannic princess. His daughter-in-law, Ermengarde of Hesbaye, wife of Louis the German, was daughter of a Frank and a Bavarian. The same thing happened in Norman Italy: Robert Guiscard and three of his brothers married into the ruling family of Salerno. Joanna H. Drell and G. A. Loud argue that intermarriage and cultural syncretism was a deliberate strategy in Norman Italy.⁶⁶ We see a similar pattern in the conquest of Ireland. John de Courcy, an ambitious knight who had mounted his own expedition to northern Ireland without the permission of Henry II, married Affreca, the daughter of Guthred, King of Mann, to cement his gains. (A prosopographical

⁶³ Felipe Fernández-Armesto. *The Canary Islands After the Conquest: The Making of a Colonial Society in the Early Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 127.

⁶⁴ Stevens-Arroyo, “The Inter-Atlantic Paradigm” (see note 60), 532.

⁶⁵ Susan Sleeper-Smith, “Women, Kin, and Catholicism: New Perspectives on the Fur Trade.” *Ethnohistory* 47.2 (2000): 423–52.

⁶⁶ Joanna H. Drell, “Cultural Syncretism and Ethnic Identity: The Norman ‘Conquest’ of Southern Italy and Sicily,” *Journal of Medieval History* 25.3 (1999): 187–202. See also Graham A. Loud “Continuity and Change in Norman Italy: The Campania During the Eleventh and the Twelfth Centuries,” *Journal of Medieval History* 22 (1996): 313–43.

study of lineages and languages in the Frankish nobility would be a worthwhile study and means of quantifying this tendency.)

Intermarriage also took place in the Crusader kingdoms, though not at an elite level. Despite the fact that Usamah Ibn-Munqidh mentions that the Franks never voluntarily intermarry, the anecdote he relates to prove the point shows that such mingling nonetheless took place: A Frankish woman taken forcibly as wife by a Muslim noble; their (bicultural and, we can assume, bilingual) son inherits his lands after his death, but she prefers to remarry a Frankish cobbler.⁶⁷ In another instance, Usamah comments that he encountered a blind Muslim whose mother had been married to a Frank, but who had murdered her husband and turned her son toward banditry.⁶⁸ Women were also taken as spoils of war in the Baltic crusades.

Such bicultural children had numerous advantages in a situation where a foreign ruling elite had replaced a native elite. Besides being seen as legitimate heirs of both lineages, they would speak both languages. In fact, the early fourteenth-century rhyming Czech *Dalimil Chronicle* uses this as a counterargument against intermarriage: One reason why the eleventh-century Duke Udalrich (999–1034) might have wanted to marry a Czech peasant girl instead of a German princess was that the latter “would teach my children German / and change their customs.”⁶⁹ Similarly, Geoffrey Malaterra complains of the Lombards who handed over a castle that Duke Roger had trusted them with since he was of their kin on his mother’s side (*quia ex partae matris ex eorum gente erat*), which nonetheless underscores the fact that he *did* trust these “conquered” people with a castle.⁷⁰

67 *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades* (see note 24), 159–60.

68 *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman* (see note 24), 168–69.

69 *Dalimil Chronicle* ed. Josef Jiřiček in *Fontes rerum Bohemicarum* 3 (Prague: Nákladem Musea království českého, 1882), 83–84. Translated by Bartlett, *Making of Europe* (see note 3), 231. This is now available online in its Middle High German version, ed. by Venceslas Hanka (1859) at: http://de.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=Seite:1859_Dalimils_Chronik_von_B%C3%B6hmen.djvu/1&action=edit&redlink=1 (last accessed on Oct. 4, 2014); see a discussion of this remarkable passage by Albrecht Classen, “Introduction,” *Rural Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: The Spatial Turn in Premodern Studies*, ed. Albrecht Classen, with the collaboration of Christopher R. Clason. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 9 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2012), 95.

70 Geoffrey Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardii ducis fratris eius*, ed. Ernesto Pontieri (Bologna: N. Zanichelli, 1928), 102.

Conclusions

To speak another language is to transcend both political and personal boundaries and to show respect for another culture. However, to learn to speak another language fluently, even in a primarily oral society, is no easy task. Medieval frontier communities were distinguished by a recognition of the utility of bilingualism, and had cultural practices geared towards early language-learning and intended to impart these competencies to children. In the same way, marriage unions between peoples were seen as advantageous, not only for conveying political legitimacy to the next generation of rulers of peoples unified by conquest, but also because such children could serve as linguistic and cultural go-betweens. These practices were seen as early as during the Carolingian empire, and persisted into the Spanish conquest of the New World.

However, such programs only existed in situations where speakers of the non-dominant language were comparatively enfranchised, whether by virtue of outnumbering their erstwhile conquerors, or, as with the Welsh, because they proudly maintained their own linguistic traditions. Conversely, where one group was placed in a clear subordinate role, their language was similarly denigrated and even forbidden to the dominant group. We also see language attrition and even death, as when Arabic became the dominant language in the Dar al-Islam or in the formation of European national vernaculars.⁷¹

This pattern continued into the early modern and modern periods. In the early phases of Spanish conquest, intermarriage was a viable strategy; as Iberian rule became more firmly entrenched, this was replaced with a hierarchy of color and an obsession with *raza* and *limpieza de sangre*. Conversely, the French *voyageurs* were never numerous, and France was never very interested in direct rule of her North American territories; we thus see intermarriage and integration into Native American communities. As Stoler and others have demonstrated, the nineteenth century was interested in erecting walls between colonizer and colonized as an overall strategy of national self-definition. Today, in our multinational and multilingual society, the pendulum seems to be swinging back the other way.

⁷¹ This is seriously discussed among contemporary Arabic linguists who are worried about the well-being of Arabic today.