The Female Tongue as Translator in Thomas Tomkis's *Lingua, or The Combat of the Tongue and the Five Senses for Superiority*

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*Les universités du début des temps modernes étaient des bastions de la langue latine : longtemps après que l'anglais ait été établi comme « langue maternelle » de l'Angleterre, le savoir était publié et enseigné en latin. La langue latine était donc associée avec la formation de l'élite masculine, et contribuait à la séparation des classes instruites des profanes. Cet article examine le rôle de la traductrice dans la pièce de théâtre de Thomas Tomkis, *Lingua, or The Combat of the Tongue and the Five Senses for Superiority* (1607), présentée comme une comédie savante en langue vernaculaire. Le personnage éponyme représente la langue et le discours. « *Lingua* » est une oratrice puissante et une traductrice hors-pair de textes académiques. Elle est donc dans la pièce l'ennemi de la société savante. « *Lingua* » est ainsi représentée comme une force menaçante de changement culturel et social : elle est capable à la fois de participer aux échanges savants et de communiquer le savoir aux profanes, détruisant ainsi le clivage entre les instruits et les ignorants. La pièce de théâtre présente donc la langue féminine en tant qu'acteur associé à la dissémination de la connaissance.*

Soleil qui luisarne au matin,
Femme qui parle latin,
Et enfant nourri de vin,
Ne viennent jamais à bonne fin.
—Seventeenth-century French proverb¹

In the third act of Thomas Tomkis's *Lingua, or the Combat of the Tongue and the Five Senses for Superiority* (1607), a vernacular academic comedy written and performed at the University of Cambridge, *Lingua* (a character who represents the tongue and speech) appears in court to sue for the right to be considered the sixth bodily sense.² Refusing the help of “Reticoricians, Logitians, Lawyers and ... so many Women” who might assist her, she chooses to plead her case herself, laying it “vppon the tippe of [her] owne tongue.”³ Her statement is a linguistic medley:

My lord, though the *Imbecillitas* of my feeble sexe might drawe me backe from this Tribunall, with the *habenis*, to wit *Timoris* and the *Catenis Pudoris*, notwithstanding being so fairely led on with the gracious [*epieikeia*] of your *iustissime* [*dikaiones*]. Especially so aspremente spurd' con gli sproni di necessita mia pungente, I will without the helpe of Orators, commit the *totam salutem* of my action to the *Volutabilitati* [ton gynaikion logov] which (*avec vostre bonne plaiseur*), I will finish with more than *Laconicâ brevitatē*. (sig. F2)

The other characters respond to Lingua's macaronic statement by urging her to control her speech and to adapt it to the requirements necessary for the creation of an "ingenious *Oratio*," or oration (sig. F2). This oration, they inform her, "must neyther swell aboue the Bankes with insolent words, nor creepe too shallow in the ford, with vulger termes, but run equally, smooth, & cheerefull, through the cleane current of a pure stile" (sig. F2). Phantastes (a character who represents the imagination) compares Lingua's "lumpē" of languages to mismatched clothes drawn from a variety of national costumes, describing it as "wearing a Spanish Felt, a French Doble, a Granado Stocking, a Dutch Slop, an Italian Cloake, with a Welch frise Ierkin" (sig. F2). Lingua's uninhibited mixture of many tongues, it seems, offends the court in which she appears.

In an important discussion of *Lingua*, Carla Mazzio understands this moment as a comment on language as the site of cultural representation in the formation of an English nation-state.⁴ Lingua is "boldly and shamelessly appropriative," Mazzio contends, and the "spectacle[] of cultural fusion" that she performs replicates the project of creating a national vernacular.⁵ Lingua's synthesis of different languages does indeed address the play's fascination with the vernacular, but I would like to suggest that it also underscores the early modern academic community's anxieties about access to learning and the practice of translation. The verbal gymnastics that Lingua performs worries the play's other characters because it marks her as linguistically dexterous and as a potential translator of many vernacular and scholarly languages, which role is soon confirmed when she is charged before the court with revealing "the hard misteries of vnknowne Languages to the prophane eares of the vulgar" (sig. F3). Granting the common people access to information that is typically only available to those who know "vnknowne" or learned languages such as Latin and Greek, she acts as translator and destroys the sense of exclusivity that comes with learning. With the exception of Lingua, all of the play's characters are male and most are clearly modeled on academics. Lingua's verbal agility and her role as a female translator establish her as a menace to the play's orderly, patriarchal, and scholarly society: she threatens the academy with language.

Lingua is one of the few characters in the drama of the early modern period who is a translator. When translation occurs on the stage in the period, it typically involves one character translating, or attempting to translate, the speech of another character who does not speak English. Savorwit in Thomas Middleton's *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's* (1611), for instance, pretends to translate the Dutch boy's speech for Sir Oliver.⁶ Similarly, the prostitute Doll in Thomas Dekker's and John Webster's *Northward Ho!* (1607) claims that she is an "apt scholler" and can translate her suitor Hans van Belch's Dutch speech.⁷ In most instances, characters who translate do so in order to facilitate or confuse communication between foreigners and English-speaking characters. Translation adds to the comic effect of the plays, providing playwrights an opportunity to present certain characters as gullible or to mock foreign languages. In contrast, *Lingua* depicts a character who is accused of producing translations for public consumption: Lingua deliberately generates translations of texts written in scholarly languages for distribution to the masses, "profiting the people with translations" (sig. F3). She does not translate in order to assist the play's characters to understand one another, but instead does so in order to make recondite knowledge available to the unlearned. As a result, Tomkis's play offers insights into early modern academic attitudes toward the practice of vernacular translation.

Many critics have argued that translation in the early modern period was considered a limited and passive genre of literature, and was therefore deemed appropriate for women. Mary Ellen Lamb, for instance, suggests that translation was often viewed as a "degraded activity."⁸ She notes that by engaging in this form of literary production rather than composing original works, "women did not threaten perceptions of male superiority; any competence they displayed could be dismissed by denigrating the task of translation itself."⁹ This maligned, feminized view of translation could well have inspired John Florio in 1603 to call his translation of Montaigne's essays a "defective edition ... since all translations are reputed femalls" and are "delivered at second hand."¹⁰ Micheline White, however, contends that Florio's notion of translation as a female genre is idiosyncratic and she demonstrates that translators in fact exerted a great degree of cultural influence.¹¹ Translation was not viewed as an innocuous activity, White asserts, but rather one that could involve an engagement with the current political and social climate. Early modern translators of both sexes "saw themselves as powerful cultural agents engaged in the difficult and invaluable task of importing foreign works or making domestic Latin works available to English readers."¹²

Building on White's contention that translators thought of themselves as influential "cultural agents" and the fact that, despite its feminine connotations, translation was in actuality only occasionally undertaken by women, I will suggest that *Lingua* depicts the female translator of academic texts as a dangerous instrument of social and cultural change. The play expresses anxiety not solely about the practice of translation, however, but also about the existence of a learned woman who is able to participate in academic discourse. The female tongue and feminine language function as sites of concern associated with learning, the vernacular, and the dissemination of academic knowledge. *Lingua*'s ability to operate in the lexicons of both the academy and the laity positions her as a powerful and versatile intermediary; it is through her translations that the play envisions the devaluation of academic knowledge by its becoming common and demystified.

Lingua combines its narrative preoccupation with academic exclusivity with an apparently intentional positioning of its audience: the play is seemingly written in such a way as to marginalize females and the unlearned deliberately. Yet little consideration has been given to *Lingua* as a university play written by and for an academic community, nor has its possible inclusion of a lay audience been explored.¹³ Laypeople watching the play are taught that they are not privy to the inner workings of the academy at the same time as they are shown the eventual defeat of *Lingua*, the combative female translator who might circulate knowledge beyond the university. A contribution to the academy's politicization of the vernacular, the play warns the laity that scholarship is inaccessible, held firmly in place by linguistic and gender barriers.

EARLY MODERN UNIVERSITIES were concerned with maintaining Latin as their official language, reserving its use for their canonical works. Françoise Waquet observes that Latin was the language of expression for scholarly knowledge across Europe and that the primary reason for its use in universities was its ability to serve as a means of international exchange among scholars.¹⁴ In her study of the cultural history of the language, however, Waquet suggests that Latin was not only practical for the transmission of ideas but was also "a sign invested with other meanings," meanings that were constructed out of "its quasi-institutional weight" and the authority that "it possessed in the imaginations of those who did not know it."¹⁵ Because of its association with education, Latin held an elite status; it was a language removed from the everyday, one that eventually became archaic and therefore still more prestigious. As "the language of those on the 'inside,'" Walter Ong observes, "Latin [learned]

at even an infra-university level was the first step toward initiation into [a] closed world."¹⁶ Latin's exclusivity granted it the ability to demarcate social class and its association with male learning allowed it to convey patriarchal authority. Even after the church released its grip on Latin in the face of Protestant opposition in the early sixteenth century and began to allow translations of religious texts, universities continued to be strongholds of the language, both teaching and publishing in Latin.¹⁷ Latin, as Peter Sager notes in his history of Oxford and Cambridge, was "the lingua franca of scholars."¹⁸ University learning was therefore constrained by language: both old and new academic knowledge was enshrined in Latin. Other scholarly languages, such as Greek and Arabic, were even more exclusive and were mastered by only a fraction of those scholars who knew Latin.

Vernacular languages, by comparison, were anything but select, although they did possess a power of their own: the ability to spread knowledge among the relatively uneducated. Associated with communication rather than authority, the vernacular was, as Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson maintain, connected to a "generally nonelite group ... sometimes more specifically with a social underclass, or with women."¹⁹ Margaret Ferguson, describing the ways in which vernacular languages were linked to feminine language uses and genres, asserts that "the vernacular, and sites of vernacular education, were associated with ideas of the female, while Latin, taught by men whether in aristocratic households or Church or grammar schools, was associated with ideas of the male."²⁰ Vernacular languages were thought to be unstable and were connected to change, ephemerality, and femininity instead of permanence, authority, and masculinity.²¹ The link between the vernacular and the learned languages was always necessarily tied to social hierarchy; the term "vernacular" describes, as Somerset and Watson suggest, not so much a language as a social position, "a relation between one language situation and another" in which one language is valued less than another.²² The vernacular therefore failed to possess what Pierre Bourdieu terms "linguistic capital": because it was a common, popular, and feminized language, it did not signal the speaker's authority in the same way that scholarly languages could.²³ Ordinary as opposed to exclusive, corporeal instead of elevated, the vernacular was the language of the public.

Early modern academics who chose to publish in the vernacular likely did so because of a conviction of the importance of spreading knowledge to the laity.²⁴ Richard Foster Jones observes that "in general, vernacular writers during the first three quarters of the [sixteenth] century pursue an undeviating course toward an educational goal."²⁵ In the epistle to his English edition of Cicero (1556), for example, Nicholas Grimald claims that he has "laied to [his] helping hand: endeavouring, by

translation,” to “wax comon to a great meany” and provide his countrymen with “a treasure” that will aide them in “fashioning” their lives.²⁶ Publishing scholarly knowledge in the vernacular, however, was not always easy: many academics resented the notion of providing the public with access to advanced learning. Sir Thomas Elyot supplies proof of the anxiety associated with scholarship in the vernacular in *The Castel of Helth* (1541), in which he worries that physicians will be angry that he has “wryten phisike in englyshe.”²⁷ Elyot is outraged that although the Greeks and Romans wrote about medicine in their respective tongues, the English choose to preserve their knowledge in foreign, scholarly languages. He suggests that had Greek and Roman physicians been so full of “envy and couatise as some nowe seeme to be, they wolde haue deuysed somme particular language with a strange syphre or fourme of letters, wherein they wold have written their science, which language or letters no man shoulde haue knowen that hadde not professyd and practised phisycke.”²⁸ English physicians as Elyot describes them as greedy: they aim to separate themselves from the public through language in order to protect their learning. By the end of the sixteenth century such covetousness had not abated: universities had yet to come to terms with the prospect of disseminating academic knowledge in the vernacular. A key to the “misteries” of the academy, the vernacular could effectively destroy the sense of secrecy and security surrounding scholarship; the universities depended on its exclusion for the very definition of their own identities.

University plays, however, were occasionally written and performed in the vernacular. Why, then, did universities that so often distanced themselves from the English language produce vernacular drama? In his seminal study of Tudor university drama, Frederick Boas contends that disagreements between town and gown—the ill-will between scholars and the people of the town of Cambridge that had existed since the university’s inception in the thirteenth century and that had recently resurfaced with particular intensity—brought about the creation of a “unique group of English comedies” at the University of Cambridge in the 1590s.²⁹ Academics sought to produce plays in English that would address the townspeople. These plays, as Thomas Fuller notes in *The History of the University of Cambridge since the conquest* (1655), were designed “for the capacities of such, whom they intended *spectatours* thereof.”³⁰ In other words, the plays were intended openly to insult the townspeople and thus they had to be performed in a language that the townspeople could comprehend. Alan Nelson suggests that when the students of Cambridge composed a play in English, rather than Latin, and invited townspeople to watch it, “the visiting townfolk might discover that instead of being treated as respected guests, they were the targets of bitter satire.”³¹ The partially lost *Club Law*

(c. 1599–1600), for instance, was performed in English to deride the civic authorities who resented the special privileges afforded to the university.³² Although the University of Cambridge did not necessarily wish to associate itself with the English language, it produced vernacular drama in order to attract an unlearned audience. By inviting the people of the town to the university to watch a play in English, not in Latin or Greek, the university created the illusion of inclusivity—a breaking down of the academic barrier between town and gown—only to use this inclusivity as an opportunity to cause offense. It is this divide between the university and the laity, and this prospect of inclusivity, that I will investigate in relation to *Lingua* and early modern academic translation.

SET IN MICROCOSMOS, or within the body and mind, *Lingua* allegorizes the senses and the faculties of the mind.³³ *Communis Sensus* (common sense) is positioned as the head councilor to *Psyche* (the self), queen of the body. Determined to prove her worth and to gain a place as a sense, *Lingua* takes her suit to trial before the court over which *Communis Sensus* presides. Although she puts on a long, elaborate performance that demonstrates her powers alongside those of the five senses, *Lingua* is finally denied the status of sensibility and is instead relegated to the position of “halfe a Sense”; she is named the “feminine sense” of speaking, which belongs to women (sig. I3). Vexed by the verdict and further damned by the accusation that she provides common people with translations, *Lingua* schemes to set the senses at odds with one another by giving them poisoned wine, thereby disrupting the working order of the body and throwing it into chaos. Eventually restrained by *Somnus* (sleep), she is sentenced to serve a long prison term.

Lingua appears to speak two languages: that is, the play is written in the vernacular but is clearly directed toward those who know the specialized idiom of the academy. Given Boas’s and Nelson’s assertions that vernacular university drama became popular as a means by which academics could communicate their displeasure with the townspeople to the townspeople, it is likely that *Lingua* was written in the vernacular because Tomkis wanted to address a lay audience as well as an academic one. It is significant, however, that such an obviously academically oriented play as *Lingua* was produced in English. Other university plays performed in English did not necessarily take up academic subjects. *Gammer Gurton’s Needle*, for instance, is a vernacular university comedy that investigates the non-academic subject of a housewife and her domestic activities.³⁴ Unlike vernacular academic dramas that satirized the town and took its follies as their primary subjects, *Lingua*

concentrates on academics and academic subjects, establishing the impression that its audience is permitted a glimpse of academic life. Because it covers a broad range of academic topics, from philosophy and astronomy to medicine and mathematics, however, *Lingua*, in order to be understood, demands that its audience have some knowledge of these subjects—which knowledge a lay audience would presumably not have shared. *Lingua* is, therefore, a scholarly play that simultaneously makes itself available to an uneducated audience and insists that it cannot be understood in full without a university education. The use of English creates a connection between scholars and their lay audience; this connection is established, however, in order to distinguish academics from the public, to demonstrate to the laity just how out of place they are in the academic world.

From the beginning of the play, it is obvious that Tomkis intends to mock the academy and its concerns. This ridicule of scholarly habits, however, actually promotes exclusivity. *Lingua* creates a kind of elite parlance, one full of humour accessible primarily to people who are affiliated with the university. After presenting a list of characters typically found in the plays performed on the public stage (a “wretched Father,” an “unthriftie Sonne,” a “stubborne Clowne”) and noting that this play will not include them, the Prologue assures the audience that “we are not wanton or Satyricall” (sig. A2). The scholars who perform the play have in fact put aside “sad houres, and serious studies” and “taught seuer *Phylosophy* to smile” (sig. A2). The play features, the Prologue warns us, not bawdy comedy but instead high-brow humour; as the play continues, Tomkis proceeds to make academic jokes at every available opportunity. Memory, *Lingua*’s eldest character, provides the most obvious comical jab at scholarly life by insisting on the mundane nature of academia. Complaining that he can no longer keep track of everything that goes on in the world, Memory blames scholars for his troubles. They are, he contends, his largest body of customers because they bring him “such paltry things to lay vp for them, that [he] can hardly finde them againe” (sig. D3). Things have gotten so bad, Memory insists, that a dog can no longer urinate on a nobleman’s shoe without the information having to be recorded in the chronicles (sig. D3). Scholars “must know of [Memory] ... how euerie idle word is written in all the mustie moath-eaten *Manuscripts*, kept in all the old Libraries in euerie Cittie betwixt *England* and *Peru*” (sig. D3). Dull bores that they are, academics are compelled to pursue and record every mere hint of knowledge. Such moments in the play do not, of course, require enrollment in the University of Cambridge in order to be deciphered and appreciated, but they do cater to an audience of knowing academics and, to a degree, exclude those who do not find themselves within this circle.

The play's humour also draws upon a learned understanding of scientific thought for its full effect: as an allegory for the body, the entire play invokes an intimate scientific and medical knowledge of the human anatomy. Olfactus (smell), for instance, happens upon Tactus (touch), who is pretending to believe that he has been turned into a glass urinal. Mocking Tactus in his supposedly see-through state, Olfactus quips that Tactus would "make a passing liue *Anatomie* / And decide the Question much disputed: / Betwixt the *Galenists* and *Aristotle*" (sig. D3). Tomkis here uses a reference to medical debate as a joke, implying that Tactus's delusions of bodily transparency might present the opportunity to prove which of the period's two prevailing theories on the inner workings of the body is correct. Similarly, later in the play, Phantastes interrupts Heuresis (invention) just as he is about to solve the mysteries of "the quadrature of a circle, the Philosophers stone and the next way to the Indies" (sig. D2). Heuresis' frustration at being distracted from these three topics would be particularly humorous to academics who may have been working on similar problems themselves. An academic audience, then, is privileged by the play over an uneducated one, despite the fact that the play is written in English.

It is possible to speculate that Tomkis depended not only upon the men of both the town and the university for his audience, but also on women. As Nelson and J.W. Binns have both noted, women occasionally attended performances of vernacular academic plays.³⁵ Because *Lingua* attacks its primary female character and her bid to become the equal of her male counterparts, it may have been written both to marginalize the laity and to teach female audience members the dangers of interfering with scholarship. Attacking women without their being present is, of course, a staple of misogynist discourse, and anti-female rhetoric does not necessarily imply a female audience. Tomkis had a pattern, however, of associating the use of the vernacular with the presence of women. The Prologue of *Albumazar* (1615), Tomkis's second vernacular academic play, directly addresses women in the audience and states that they are the reason that the play is composed in English:

Ladies, whose beauties glad the whole Assembly,
Vpon your fauours I impose my busnesse.
If't be a fault to speake this forraigne language,
(For Latine is our mother tongue) I must intreate you
To frame excuses for vs; for whose sake
Wee now speake English.³⁶

English is, according to the Prologue, a foreign language spoken only for the sake of women, while Latin is identified as the "mother tongue" of the academy. Given the misogynist tone of *Lingua* and the attention that Tomkis devotes to a female audi-

ence in *Albumazar*, the possibility exists that *Lingua* was composed with a mixed audience—academic, lay, male, and female—in mind. With such an audience in attendance, the play could do the cultural work of putting the laity and women in their places, ultimately reminding them of the inaccessibility of the university.

To many academics in early modern England, the notion of a learned woman who could engage male scholars was distressing. Although he promoted lower-level female education, Richard Mulcaster, master of the Merchant Taylors School, was opposed to female university education, for instance, asserting that women should be denied access to scholarly knowledge. He believed that girls should only “learn enough to permit them to govern and direct a household; lacking knowledge of geometry, law, and bodily functions, and, suitably, without pulpits to preach in, they are to remain ‘empty caske[s].’”³⁷ Women were not only forbidden from attending the universities, however, but also from violating their secluded, exclusively male environments. As Wendy Wall observes, Queen Elizabeth issued a proclamation in 1561 that declared that the “society of learned men professing study and prayer for the edification of the church of God and so consequently to serve the commonwealth” is interrupted when “prebendaries, students and members thereof [i.e., of the university] being married do keep particular household with their wives, children and nurses.”³⁸ Because women disturbed the “quiet and orderly profession of study and learning,” they were not allowed to “abide and dwell in the same, or haunt any lodging within the college” where their husbands might live.³⁹ Their very presence was thought to disrupt the closed, male world of the university.

Despite the insistence on the exclusion of women from the university, there were nonetheless learned women in early modern England. Women occasionally undertook private learning, although this avenue was typically only available to women of high rank; education was provided to women whose families supported their endeavours and who could afford the time required for study.⁴⁰ A privileged few Englishwomen were sufficiently educated to compose verse in Latin or to make translations of Latin works, although such translations were usually intended for private rather than public circulation.⁴¹ Editors of translations published by women were overly careful to state that the works were not written with the intention of being published.⁴² The capacity to translate indicated the potential for a woman to be considered among the learned and allowed her to enter into the world of literary production, a potentially threatening and progressive prospect.⁴³ While it did not involve the composition of original literary works, translation did allow women to display their own literary styles and to offer their own interpretations of the texts that they translated. The unease associated with the possibility of female

participation in public scholarly and literary life is evident in Sir Thomas More's communications with his daughter Margaret. More encouraged the women of his household to become educated and to translate classical works. It is clear, however, that even he did not see his daughter's education as an opportunity for her to participate in the wider world of scholarly exchange. Writing to Margaret after her marriage, More counsels that her writing should be for the audience of "your husband and myself—as a sufficiently large circle of readers."⁴⁴ Even in the More family's supportive sphere, the dissemination of the results of female learning was limited to an immediate inner circle.

THE UPWARDLY MOBILE *Lingua* is determined to join the pentarchy of the senses. Fittingly, she wages her fight using language, thereby ascertaining her linguistic authority. From the first act of the play onwards, *Lingua*'s primary strategy to achieve equality within *Microcosmos* is to try to establish for herself a powerful speaking position, thus forcing others to listen. Upon meeting *Auditus* (hearing) she implores him, "doe but *heare* me speake" (sig. A3); later she says of the five senses and *Comunis Sensus* "let them but *heare* and iudge" (sig. A3, my emphasis). She relies on her ability to set the senses "all at variance, / And so *obteine to speake*" (sig. A3, my emphasis). *Auditus*, however, immediately underscores the fact that *Lingua* is not one of the senses and tries to devalue her speech. Attempting to establish that her language is dependent on the sense that his character represents, hearing, *Auditus* informs *Lingua* that her "words are [her] Children but of [his] begetting" (sig. A3). *Lingua* assures *Auditus*, however, that he in fact depends on her linguistic skills in order to comprehend any speech that he hears. With her abilities, she insists, he understands many languages and "conceiust as many tongues, / As *Neptune* clos-eth lands betwixt his armes" (sig. A4). *Lingua* provides *Auditus* with a list of those languages in which she is learned: "The ancient *Hebrew* clad with misteries, / The learned *Greeke* rich in fit Epithites ... The *Caldy* wise, the *Arabian* Physicall, / The *Romaine* Eloquent, and *Tuscane* graue, / The Brauing *Spanish* and the smooth-tongd *French*" (sig. A4). These languages are the "pretious Iewells that adorne [*Auditus*'] eares," *Lingua* observes, but they are taken from her mouth (sig. A4). Although *Auditus* argues with *Lingua*, it is clear that he fears her skill with language: anxious that "her words sharpe vinigar, / Will fret [him] through" (sig. A4), he endows her speech with the power to harm. The play then presents *Lingua* as a powerful and learned orator; its characters dread her ability to obtain an audience, as well as her

aptitude for interpreting many languages. *Lingua* threatens to assert a particular form of power that consists in speech, one that typically belongs to male academics.

Lingua's power is tied not only to her ability to make other characters listen and to set the terms by which she is understood, but also to her skill with disguise and trickery. Language and clothing are linked throughout Tomkis's play, emphasizing both literal and linguistic masquerade and reflecting the early modern convention of connecting femininity with concealment. *Lingua* is first associated with elaborate dress through the unusually detailed stage directions that Tomkis provides. Entering "apparelled in a Crimson Satten gowne, a Dressing of white Roses, a little Skeane tyed in a purple Skarfe, a paire of red Buskins drawne with white Ribband, silke garters gloves, &c." (sig. A3), *Lingua* is richly costumed. *Phantastes* and *Heuresis* discuss the duplicitous nature of women's clothing at length in the second act, reaching the conclusion that although a woman might in truth look unpleasant, she can deceive a man into accepting her if her "phantastical and odde apparrell, would perchance draw some body to looke on her" (sig. D2). Clothing, in other words, can distract a man's gaze from a woman's flaws. The connection between *Phantastes*'s and *Heuresis*'s comments and *Lingua*'s extravagant dress cannot be missed: *Lingua*, as a woman, is potentially deceptive. The play also depicts *Lingua*'s feminine language as a kind of dishonest garb, a linguistic equivalent of her fancy clothing. Planning to outsmart *Tactus* with her rhetorical flourishes, *Lingua* imagines dressing herself in touchable speech, "clad ... in Silken Eloquence" (sig. A3). She likewise boasts of her skill "with sugred words, to delude *Gustus* taste" and of her ability to defraud the senses of smell and sight by disguising her language "with smelling flowres of vernant Rhetorique, / Limming and flashing it with various Dyes" (sig. A3). Tomkis here portrays feminine speech in much the same way that George Puttenham does in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589). Puttenham imagines rhetorical devices as a form of feminine clothing: just as women "do then thinke themselves more amiable in every man's eye" when they wear their finest silks and embroideries, he suggests, speech benefits from rhetorical embellishment.⁴⁵ Although he generally favors figurative language, however, Puttenham also fears the disingenuous quality of ornamented speech: it can draw language "from plainness and simplicitie to a certaine doublenesse," rendering it "guilefull & abusing."⁴⁶ He links figurative, ornate speech, which teeters between beauty and dishonesty, to femininity. In the same way that Puttenham envisions "double" female speech, Tomkis depicts *Lingua* as capable of cloaking her dangerous words in unreliable rhetoric, using language to swindle the senses.

While the play betrays a fear of Lingua's feminization and ornamentation of language, it presents her undressing of language as a greater danger still. In reaction to Lingua's suit to become a sense, the five senses present the court with a list of "articles they allege against her" (sig. F3). Although she is charged with many offenses—performing exorcisms, making rhetoric "wanton," being a "Tel-tale"—the first and most notable charge leveled against Lingua is that she is a translator: she commits high treason and sacrilege against "the most honorable Common-welth of letters, for vnder pretence of profiting the people with translations, shee hath most vilye prostituted the hard misteries of vnknowne Languages to the prophane eares of the vulgar" (sig. F3). In the process of translating for the people, Lingua unveils the secrets of the academy, secrets otherwise preserved by scholarly language. Theo Hermans observes that translators in the early modern period often characterize their work according to certain metaphors: "providing access, unlocking, uncovering, removing obstacles, bringing into view."⁴⁷ By virtue of the fact that she is a translator of academic texts, Lingua reveals scholarly knowledge and reiterates it in the vernacular. Phantastes reacts to Lingua's role as translator by noting that she opens up the scholarly world and turns it into a non-exclusive "hell in the vpper world": "for in Hell they say *Alexander* is no better than a Cobler, and nowe by these translations euery Cobler is as familiar with *Alexander* as he that wrote his life" (sig. F3). Lingua makes common the knowledge that was formerly the exclusive property of the learned senses and the faculties of the mind. Although the senses accuse Lingua of many offenses, none is perceived to be so bold as translation; it is the only offense on the list that is remarked upon by anyone present at the court. The senses do note, however, that the tenth article on the list, charging that Lingua is "a Woman in euery respect," is "the last and worst" offense (sig. F4). Her femininity amplifies her other crimes.

The play implies that Lingua's penchant for imparting knowledge to the laity is a result of her being female: she is hopelessly verbose and is therefore likely to divulge restricted information. Verbosity is, *Lingua* tells us, a woman's and not a man's sixth sense; women are naturally talkative (sig. I3). Lingua's inclination to talk is shown to be so innate that it is involuntary. In a scene similar to Lady Macbeth's confession of murder while sleepwalking, Lingua talks in her sleep and admits her guilt in disrupting the world of Microcosmos.⁴⁸ Revealing that she received a potion from Acrasia (intemperance) which she "gaue ... to the Senses, and made them ... madde" (sig. M3), she betrays her secrets. Memory notes that the habit of talking while asleep is characteristic of women: "women are troubled especially with this talking disease, many of them haue I heard answer in their dreames, and tell what they did

all day awake" (sig. M3). Similarly, Phantastes advises Lingua that she "should seale vp [her] lippes, when [she goes] to bed, these Feminine tongues be so glibbe" (sig. M3), emphasizing the unsealed nature of women's speech that *Lingua* promotes. The play implies that the combination of Lingua's ability with learned languages and her feminine inability to control her speech signals disaster for the academy. If a woman is educated and can participate in academic exchange, the play suggests, she will necessarily permit that learning to be transmitted to the masses. Lingua is not only a menace to the patriarchal nature of the university, but also, as a verbose female, a threat to destroy the divide between learned and unlearned.

Although the play presents Lingua as a dangerous translator, it simultaneously devalues her translations by ensuring that they exist solely in oral form. Lingua is distanced from the written word: she possesses the ability to create verbal translations but not textual ones. Gretchen V. Angelo observes that the differentiation of language by gender is one of the common motifs of French misogynist academic texts in which a male scribal figure is often present to demonstrate the dominance of masculine, written language over feminine, spoken language.⁴⁹ A similar strategy is at work in *Lingua*. While Memory writes everything in his books and Phantastes produces printed sonnets because he pities "the poore multitude of Printers" who need work (sig. D2), Lingua is marked by her uninhibited oral verbosity. Although she is accused of "sacredge against the most honorable Common-welth of *letters*" when she is found to be a translator, implying perhaps an involvement with print, Lingua delivers her translations to the "*cares*" of the vulgar, suggesting that she provides them with verbal rather than written translations (sig. F3, my emphasis). *Lingua* demarcates masculine language from feminine language: the senses and the faculties of the mind claim the permanent, written word while the impermanent, spoken word is left to Lingua. The play thus suggests that while Lingua's translations are a threat to scholarship, they will not endure because they are not recorded.⁵⁰

The play is, however, ultimately unwilling to allow Lingua any means of communication, whether written or verbal. Once she is caught for having poisoned the senses, Lingua is sent to "prison in Gustus his house" (the mouth). Gustus (taste) must keep her "vnder the custody of two strong doores"—locked behind the lips—for 80 years (sig. M3). Trapped in the mouth, Lingua "shall by no meanes wagge abroad" and will no longer be capable of reaching the outside world (sig. M3). Like Mowbray in Shakespeare's *Richard II*, who imagines that Richard has locked his tongue within his mouth, "doubly portcullis'd with [his] teeth and lips," Lingua's capacity for speech is restrained by the body.⁵¹ As it describes Lingua's imprisonment

in the mouth, the play figuratively incarcerates the fear of the vernacular, creating a fantastic image of the female tongue's suppression by a natural barrier.

Tomkis would himself appear to be aligned with *Lingua*. Writing for the oral medium of theatrical performance and translating, in a sense, by composing an academic play in the vernacular, the playwright cannot but be associated with the translating tongue. Yet by ensuring that *Lingua* is imprisoned at the play's close, Tomkis reclaims control of orality and the use of the vernacular for his own purposes. *Lingua*, as a female translator, translates in the vernacular in order to educate the laity; she is, as a consequence, denied the ability to speak. Tomkis, as playwright and representative of the University of Cambridge, ultimately refuses truly to translate the workings of the academy. He writes vernacular drama in order to teach women and the laity their proper places. Tomkis therefore finally usurps *Lingua*'s role as translator, reinscribing the practice of translation as a masculine, academic activity. Female and non-academic spectators of *Lingua* are taught the futility of attempting to acquire academic knowledge, while academics are reassured of the exclusivity of their learning. Although it is written in the vernacular, *Lingua* suggests to its audience that the university is a closed world. By revoking *Lingua*'s linguistic privileges, the play recaptures a masculine, authoritative, and scholarly voice.

Notes

1. M. Le Roux de Lincy, ed., *Le livre des proverbes français*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1859), vol. 1, p. 131. Translation: "The sun that shines in the morning, the woman who speaks Latin, and the child nourished on wine, never come to a good end." Translated by Paul Cohen, personal communication.
2. Tomkis matriculated at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1597, earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1600, and received his Master of Arts degree in 1604. In 1602 he became a minor fellow of the college, and in 1604 he became a major fellow. Tomkis remained at Trinity College until 1610, when he left to begin a successful legal practice. For further information about Tomkis, see Sidney Lee, ed., *The Dictionary of National Biography* (London: 1899), vol. 57, p. 13.
3. Thomas Tomkis, *Lingua, or The Combat of the Tongue and the Five Senses for Superiority* (London: 1607). All citations of the play are from this edition and further references appear in the text parenthetically by signature number. *Lingua* was popular and editions of the play were published in 1607, 1610, 1617, 1622, 1632, and 1657. The 1657 edition claims that Oliver Cromwell once played the part of Tactus.
4. Carla Mazzio, "Staging the Vernacular: Language and Nation in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900*, 38 (1998), p. 210–11. Mazzio's article focuses primarily on *The Spanish Tragedy*, but uses *Lingua* as an example of the

unease associated with linguistic hybridization. She notes the influx of thousands of new words into the English language during the early modern period and suggests that the “increasingly heterogeneous linguistic textures and forms of early modern English became a site for the articulation of anxieties about local and national forms of self-representation.” Mazzio, p. 208.

5. Mazzio, “Staging the Vernacular,” p. 211.
6. Thomas Middleton, *No Wit, No Help Like a Womans* (London: 1657), pp. 28–33.
7. Thomas Dekker and John Webster, *North-ward hoe* (London: 1607), sig. D.
8. Mary Ellen Lamb, “The Cooke Sisters: Attitudes toward Learned Women in the Renaissance,” *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, ed. Margaret P. Hannay (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1985), p. 116.
9. Lamb, p. 116.
10. John Florio, *The essayes or morall, politike and millitarie discourses of Lo: Michaelle de Montaigne* (London: 1603), sig. A2. Patricia Demers suggests that the notion of translation as a “safe,” feminine, and inconsequential genre continues to affect our responses to early modern translations today. See Demers, *Women’s Writing in English: Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 64.
11. Micheline White, “Renaissance Englishwomen and Religious Translations: The Case of Anne Lock’s *Of the Markes of the Children of God* (1590),” *English Literary Renaissance* 29 (1999), pp. 376–80.
12. White, p. 377. White examines religious translations in particular, noting the ways in which women sought to influence religious life through translation and to provide “the unlearned with the material necessary for individual salvation.” See White, p. 378.
13. Scholarship on *Lingua* to date has focused primarily on the text’s references to contemporary plays and on the fetishization of the tongue in early modern culture. See Frederick Boas, “Macbeth and Lingua,” *The Modern Language Review* 4 (1909), pp. 517–20, and Mazzio, “Sins of the Tongue,” *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern England*, ed. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 52–79. For a discussion of the gendering of rhetoric in the play, see Patricia Parker, “On the Tongue: Cross Gendering, Effeminacy, and the Art of Words,” *Style* 23 (1989), pp. 445–65.
14. Françoise Waquet, *Latin, or, The Empire of a Sign*, trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 2001), p. 91.
15. Waquet, pp. 3, 231.
16. Walter Ong, “Latin Language Study as a Renaissance Puberty Rite,” *Studies in Philology* 56 (1959), p. 109. Wendy Wall uses this observation of Ong’s to make the related point that Latin “enabled the production of the ‘closed male environment’ of academia.” Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 61.

17. J.W. Binns notes that in the period 1530–1640, Latin was used for teaching everything from science to law in English universities. Indeed, the use of Latin for scholarship was standard throughout Europe since the time of the Roman Empire. Binns observes that although only ten percent of all published works in England appeared in Latin between 1530–1640, the “most brilliant minds” published their works in Latin. See Binns, *Intellectual Culture in Elizabethan and Jacobean England: The Latin Writings of the Age* (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1990), pp. 1–10.
18. Peter Sager, *Oxford and Cambridge: An Uncommon History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005), p. 207.
19. Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson, Preface, in *The Vulgar Tongue*, ed. Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), p. ix.
20. Margaret Ferguson, *Dido's Daughters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 107. Ferguson also notes that the variable nature of the vernacular often appears to emasculate it. See Ferguson, p. 89.
21. Jane Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 21.
22. Somerset and Watson, p. x.
23. In “The Economics of Linguistic Exchange,” *Social Science Information* 16 (1977), pp. 645–68, Bourdieu explains the importance of the conditions of production of linguistic exchanges: “To give an account of discourse, we need to know the conditions governing the constitution of the group within which it functions” (p. 650). In Bourdieu’s concept of linguistic and symbolic capital there is a “legitimate language,” a language of authority that is endowed with competence and with the ability to impose reception, and competence is defined as “the condition and sign of the right to speech, the right to power through speech” (p. 649). The degree to which various speakers involved in a conversation command authority, he notes, determines the structure of linguistic production. Language becomes “an instrument of power” and “a person speaks not only to be understood, but also to be believed, obeyed, respected, [and] distinguished” (p. 648). Lynne Magnusson has adapted Bourdieu’s model of linguistic exchange to Shakespearean drama, especially in “‘Voice Potential’: Language and Symbolic Capital in *Othello*,” in *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 163–82.
24. David Lowenstein, ed., *The Cambridge History of Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 155.
25. Richard Foster Jones, *The Triumph of the English Language* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953), p. 36. Foster Jones posits three primary reasons for the success of the vernacular: “One was the invention of printing, which required for its justification a larger reading public, and which promoted the desire of publishers for profit. Another was the deeply felt and loudly proclaimed duty of educating the people, an obsession which breaks through all conventional statements. The third, closely allied to the preceding, was the Reformation, the main tenets of which required a knowledge of religious truth on the part of the people. In translations of the Scriptures, in

- commentaries upon them, and in controversial treatises against the Catholics, writers sought to educate the people to the new responsibilities and demands of religion which had been placed upon them, and necessarily the mother tongue was used." See Foster Jones, pp. 66–7.
26. Nicholas Grimald, *Marcus Tullius Ciceroes thre bokes of duties* (London: 1556), Sig. C iii.
 27. Thomas Elyot, Preface, *The Castel of Helth* (London: 1541), p. 6.
 28. Elyot, p. 6.
 29. Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1914), p. 323. Vernacular drama was performed before the 1590s at Cambridge, although it was staged far less frequently than during the 1590s and in subsequent decades. *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (1559), *Ezechias* (1564), and *Wylie Beguylie* (1566/67) are notable examples of early vernacular academic plays.
 30. Quoted in Boas, *University Drama*, p. 330.
 31. Alan Nelson, "Town and Gown," in *Cambridge. Records of Early English Drama*, ed. Alan Nelson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), p. 709.
 32. Boas notes that through a series of royal charters and parliamentary enactments, the university was given privileges such as the ability to search the houses of the town's citizens and the power to interfere with the town's trade. Upon accession to office, each mayor of Cambridge had to swear that he would uphold the university's right to these privileges. Gradually, from the mid 1580s onward, newly elected mayors became increasingly defiant of the university and were unwilling to swear under oath that they would grant these rights. See Boas, *University Drama*, pp. 322–31, for a full account of the town and gown controversy and the *Club Law* performance.
 33. G. C. Moore Smith notes a vogue for plays similar to *Lingua* in his account of early modern Cambridge drama: "In the first twenty years of the seventeenth century there was a curious revival of the morality-type of play, in which the characters were abstract conceptions." Moore Smith, *College Plays Performed in the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), p. 8.
 34. See Wendy Wall, "'Household Stuff': The Sexual Politics of Domesticity and the Advent of English Comedy," *English Literary History* 65 (1998), pp. 1–45.
 35. Binns attributes the presence of women at vernacular academic plays to the allure of the music, spectacle, and dance that could likewise be found in the public theatres. See Binns, p. 139. Nelson contends that female spectators at Cambridge plays were "a significant although not a dominant factor in dramatic performances." Nelson, "Women in the Audiences of Cambridge Plays," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41 (1990), pp. 336. Moore Smith also observes that while "most plays ... seem to address themselves to men," the epilogues of both *Clytophon* and *Leander* address women. Moore Smith, p. 26.
 36. Thomas Tomkis, *Albumazar* (London: 1615), sig. A2. Performed at Trinity College on the night of March 9, 1615, *Albumazar* was commissioned for the visit of James I and

- Prince Charles, as well as many courtiers. A satire on astrology, the play, like *Lingua*, uses scholarly subject matter.
37. Quoted in Demers, p. 32.
 38. Quoted in Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, p. 61–2.
 39. Quoted in Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, p. 62.
 40. Demers, p. 24.
 41. For detailed accounts of several early modern Englishwomen who were learned enough to compose Latin verse, see Stevenson, p. 261.
 42. Lamb, p. 117. As Lamb observes, publishing was seen as a somewhat “plebeian” activity in which for either sex to engage. Women, however, were particularly discouraged from publishing.
 43. See Demers, p. 65 for more on the potentially transgressive nature of translation.
 44. Quoted in Demers, p. 28.
 45. George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London: 1589), p. 114.
 46. Puttenham, p. 128.
 47. Theo Hermans, “Images of Translation: Metaphor and Imagery in the Renaissance Discourse on Translation,” *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*, ed. Theo Hermans (New York: St. Martin’s, 1985), p. 118.
 48. For a discussion of the similarities between the sleepwalking scenes in *Lingua* and *Macbeth*, see Boas, “*Macbeth* and *Lingua*,” pp. 518–20.
 49. Gretchen V. Angelo, “Creating a Masculine Vernacular: The Strategy of Misogyny in Late Medieval French Texts,” *The Vulgar Tongue*, ed. Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), pp. 85–86.
 50. Mazzio suggests that *Lingua* “critiques the notion that, in a world marked by the circulation of written and printed words, the tongue is still the primary agent of representation” (Mazzio, “Sins of the Tongue,” p. 69).
 51. William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, ed. Andrew Gurr (1597; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.3.167. Mazzio observes that “Tomkis is by no means alone in imagining the mouth as a literal prison-house of language. In early modern anatomical texts, philosophical treatises, and conduct books alike, the mouth is positioned as a war zone, with tongue and teeth locked in perennial combat” (“Sins of the Tongue,” p. 67).