

Henricus Hondius, *New Geographic and Hydrographic Map of the Entire Earth*, 1630. This flamboyant Dutch map shows the skill with which early modern mapmakers could plot the world, thanks to detailed travelers' reports and the "Mercator projection" developed by the Hondius family's friend Gerhardus Mercator. This scientific map is framed in classical imagery, including symbols of the four elements: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. In the upper corners, Julius Caesar and the ancient astronomer and geographer Ptolemy look on, inspiring the viewer to new efforts of imperial mapmaking, while the lower corners show Mercator across from Hondius's own mapmaker father, Jodocus. (*Hemispheres Antiquae Maps and Prints*.)

The Longman Anthology of World Literature



VOLUME C

THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

❖ CROSSCURRENTS ❖

The Vernacular Revolution

For a thousand years or more, from late antiquity until around 1200 C.E., almost all the world's literature was composed in elite languages, employing literary modes far removed from the speech of common people. Literacy was confined to a small number of people—almost always men—in court and temple circles, and writers usually strove to preserve and elaborate older literary traditions rather than to adapt their work to the changes of everyday language. Sanskrit in India, classical Chinese in Japan and in China itself, and Latin in Europe were for a millennium the dominant literary languages in their regions, even as people spoke ever more widely divergent dialects and languages in daily life.

This situation began to change between around 1000 and 1300 in many parts of the world. These changes took different forms in different cultures and occurred on varying timetables, yet collectively it is appropriate to speak of a worldwide "vernacular revolution" during these years and the centuries that followed. The works in this section show the varied purposes that common or vernacular language came to serve in several different cultures. In some cases, the older, elite literary language was still used as well, sometimes for privileged genres: thus in Japan, Chinese was often still used for poetry, even after prose writers like Murasaki Shikibu pioneered the use of Japanese for writing their prose romances. In China itself, the literary language and techniques perfected by the Tang dynasty poets of the seventh through ninth centuries continued to dominate upper-class poetry for another thousand years, but by the 1500s prose writers were coming to favor a "vernacular" style much closer to everyday speech. This shift in style went along with a shift in emphasis as well, toward more realistic portrayals in prose fiction of life in society, often with more attention to lower classes—"vernacular" itself comes from a Latin word, *verna*, meaning a household slave, and by extension "home-grown" or "native."

In India, Sanskrit began to give way to writing in many of the different languages spoken around the Indian subcontinent, such as Tamil and Telugu. Writers in these vernacular languages often came from artisan or merchant classes, and at times openly rejected the caste hierarchy that had put the Brahmins, and the Sanskrit language, above them. Sometimes these vernacular writings were secular in emphasis, with religious writing still favoring Sanskrit, but over time an increasing amount of religious and devotional writing came to be composed in the vernacular as well.

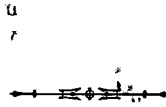
In Europe, German and Icelandic writers on the margins of the Latin tradition began to write in their local Germanic languages, and Anglo-Saxon, Irish, and Welsh literatures flourished in the British Isles. By 1300, even in the strongholds of the Latin tradition, Dante in Italy and Provençal poets in France were using the vernacular to write great poetry. In a letter to his patron Can Grande della Scala, Dante defended writing his *Commedia* in Italian rather than Latin, saying that he wanted to reach as many of his countrymen—and women—as possible. The trade-off was that vernacular work would be less read abroad, and Dante and many others continued to use Latin when they wanted to reach an international audience directly. The great sixteenth-century scholar Erasmus of Rotterdam wrote and lectured in Latin all his life, communicating in this way with scholars across Europe as he worked in Holland, England, France, Italy, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland.

As vernacular writing spread, translation began to play a prominent role in the circulation of literary texts, and Erasmus himself strongly promoted the translation of the Bible into vernacular languages. The Church had long favored the exclusive use of Latin for theological writing and for the Bible, so that all Christians could understand it in common and also so that Church authorities could control the text's form and the doctrines they derived from it. With the rise of Protestantism, however, reformers like Luther and Erasmus began to emphasize the

individual's direct encounter with Scripture, and they sought to make the Bible accessible to all Christians, whatever their social class and whatever their language. As Erasmus declared—in Latin—in a preface to an edition of the Greek New Testament:

Perhaps the state secrets of kings have to be concealed, but Christ wanted his mysteries to be disseminated as widely as possible. I should prefer that all women, even of the lowest rank, should read the evangelists and the epistles of Paul, and I wish these writings were translated into all the languages of the human race, so that they could be read and studied, not just by the Irish and the Scots; but by the Turks as well, and the Saracens. . . . I would hope that the farmer might chant a holy text at his plow, the spinner sing it as she sits at her wheel, the traveler ease the tedium of his journey with tales from Scripture.

In this passage, Erasmus allows that Latin, long the language of European diplomacy, may still have value for keeping "state secrets" out of general circulation; but the spread of the vernacular tended as well to lessen the control over information formerly held closely by royal courts. The rise of the different vernaculars also stimulated the consolidation of nation-states around a dominant language or dialect, and gave the means for a growing number of people in those states to express themselves and to seek direct participation in public life. Even as it opened up a greatly expanded and varied literary landscape, the vernacular revolution ultimately paved the way for the middle-class and then working-class revolutions that have shaped our modern world.



Vernacular Writing in South Asia

For nearly a thousand years beginning in the last centuries B.C.E., the entire literary landscape of South Asia was occupied by Sanskrit (and to a far less extent, by the two languages related to Sanskrit—Prakrit and Apabhramsha—that had been used especially for literature meant to suggest the world of rural life in contrast to the court). We have no evidence that the regional languages of South Asia, with the important exception of Tamil, were ever used for the creation of written expressive texts during this period. But this situation changed dramatically near the end of the first millennium C.E., when writers in southern India first began to experiment with courtly registers of local dialects. Over the course of the next 500 years, local-language writing began to appear everywhere in South Asia. Scholars don't fully understand the conditions that made this vernacular revolution possible, and the fact that a remarkably similar transformation occurred in western Europe around the same period complicates explanation even more. But a revolution did occur, and it powerfully challenged the dominance of Sanskrit, and indeed other dimensions of Sanskrit culture and society as well.

In most regions of South Asia, the earliest vernacular writers were court poets who imitated Sanskrit literature in idiom, metrics, and themes. The religious dimension of their work, where present at all, was typically muted. However, this inaugural vernacular movement was followed by a second wave prominently marked by religious sentiment, especially by the idea of direct access to the divine sometimes termed *bhakti* (devotion). Unlike the vernacular transformation in Europe, which was hastened by translations of the Bible into regional languages (page 115), no attempt was ever made in South Asia before the modern period to translate Sanskrit scriptures. Instead, altogether new bodies of religious writing were created, some that would eventually attain canonical scriptural status. The devotional poets, often low-caste artists or ascetics, rejected the high style of Sanskrit and the social values of caste hierarchy imputed (sometimes unjustly) to Sanskrit culture as a whole. In south India, the *Virashaivas*—Militant Devotees of the god Shiva—invented what they called the *vacana* (plain talking), an

unversified, unadorned, and for the most part, it seems, unwritten form. In fact, this seems to have been meant as a kind of anti-literature, as radically anomalous in its aesthetic as was the Virashaivas' social critique, especially their rejection of the caste system and their denunciation of the wealthy and the grand temples that were the concrete manifestation of their power (and which low-caste people were prohibited from entering). Both men and women composed in the *vacana* form; among the latter, Mahadeviyakka produced *vacanas* that represent some of the earliest and most powerful expressions of erotic devotionism in South Asia, and bear close comparison to the poems of Mahadevi's European contemporaries, Hildegard von Bingen and Mechthild von Magdeburg (see Volume B). Somewhat later in northern India, the weaver-poet Kabir (1400-1450) composed verses in Old Hindi whose idiom and style were as innovative as the criticism he expressed through them of Hindu and Muslim exclusivity. Like those of many of the vernacular devotional poets, the compositions of Kabir remain alive to this day on the lips of people across northern India.

Tukaram, who lived in western India in the early seventeenth century and wrote in the Marathi language, gave voice to the 'literary' aspirations of many of these poets when he exclaimed, in one of his many confessional poems:

I have no
Personal skill.
It is
The Cosmic One
Making me speak.

Yet the artistry and aesthetic long associated with Sanskrit did maintain themselves in many vernacular literary cultures. Especially instructive is the case of Telugu, the language of today's Andhra Pradesh in southeastern India. Court poets continued for centuries to write marvelously sophisticated literature in Telugu in the high style even as poets associated with one or another of the great temples in the region sought a simpler, more common idiom. But the division between the court and temple traditions is not always hard and fast; moreover, creative innovation continued in both spheres, in content as well as form. The songs (called *padam*) of the mid-seventeenth-century poet Kshetrappa illustrate these trends particularly well. Like many devotional poets before him, Kshetrappa adopts a female voice, of various kinds: that of the confused love-sick ingénue ("Those women, they deceived me"), for example, or the jilted mistress ("Your body is my body"), but most often the courtesan ("Pour gold as high as I stand"). He uses these different voices to evoke powerful, complex emotions of spiritual longing for the divine (called here Muvva Gopala, the name of Kshetrappa's village god), and all the feelings accompanying that longing: from despair at God's apparent indifference, to a readiness to negotiate with Him (as if he were a prostitute's customer), to the self-negating ecstasy of union. Although the language and form of these songs are simple and entirely local, the categories of eroticism and much of the imagery borrow creatively from the high tradition (as seen, for example, in "Love in a Courtly Language," Volume A). The wit and wisdom and passion, however, are Kshetrappa's alone, as is the transformation of the very subject matter itself. Sometimes it seems impossible to decide whether the vision of sex, with God as customer, is an expression of the ecstasy of religious union in the manner of the older mystical traditions mentioned above, or whether—in the new early-modern economy of southern India that was fluid, commercial, and dynamic and where old traditions were crumbling—the customer himself is viewed as God; and sex is nothing more, or less, than sex.

PRONUNCIATIONS:

bhakti: BHUK-tee

Virashaiva: VEER-uh-SHAH-vuh

Go find a root or something

10 I have set myself up for blame.
 What's the use of blaming you?
 I've even lost my taste for food.
 What can I do now?
 Go to the midwives and get me a drug
 15 before the women begin to talk.

Go find a root or something

As if he fell from the ceiling,
 my husband is suddenly home.
 He made love to me last night.
 20 Now I fear no scandal.
 All my wishes, Muvva Gopāla,
 have reached their end,
 so, in your image,
 I'll bear you a son.

25 *Go find a root or something*

[END OF VERNACULAR WRITING IN SOUTH ASIA]



Wu Cheng'en

c. 1500–1582

Journey to the West (Xi you ji) is one of four vernacular language novels produced during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) that came to be identified by traditional critics as masterworks of Chinese fiction. Like the others, it is rooted in historical fact, in this case the expedition of a Tang dynasty monk named Xuanzang (596–664) to India to bring Buddhist scriptures back to China. It shares with other fictional works an indebtedness to the conventions of oral storytelling, evident in its reliance on sequences of events whose resolution is always suspended, with formulaic predictability, until the following chapter. Equally common to contemporary vernacular works is its use of both prose and verse to carry the narrative forward, a tradition established centuries before in didactic texts for popular consumption that elaborated imaginatively on stories about the lives of Buddhist saints. In *Journey to the West*, the passages of poetry are of higher quality and more central to the narrative than in other novels, but the most distinctive feature of the work is its development of the tradition's most captivating character, a wily, brash, and comic swashbuckler who happens to be a monkey.

Born into a family of high officials and schooled in the Confucian classics by his father, the historical Xuanzang renounced a political career and joined a Buddhist monastery at the age of thirteen. Inspired by lively doctrinal debates swirling about during the Tang dynasty, he determined that understanding and resolution would be impossible without resort to key scriptures currently unavailable in China. When the emperor refused to authorize an official journey to fetch them, Xuanzang embarked on his mission to India in secret with a merchant caravan, late in 627. He returned to the capital of Chang'an in early 645, laden with over 650 items and, equally important, an imperial pardon. Supported by the throne, he then spent the rest of his

life studying and translating the texts and also wrote an account of his harrowing travels to secure them.

By the early thirteenth century Xuanzang's pilgrimage had become rich material for legends, story cycles, and dramas about a band of increasingly colorful characters whose perils and exploits across fantastic landscapes captured the popular imagination. These culminated in the 100-chapter novel, *Journey to the West*, of which the earliest preserved edition dates to 1592. Its supposed author was a late Ming dynasty writer and official, Wu Cheng'en, who, after passing the first level of the civil service examination, held minor government posts and traveled widely between the capital and the provinces. An accomplished poet, he circulated freely in elite literary society. He was known both for his wit and his keen interest in the supernatural and is said to have composed the novel toward the end of his life. Although the attribution of authorship to Wu is relatively recent and based on rather scant evidence, none of its many challengers has offered a more compelling alternative.

A twelve-chapter prologue introduces Xuanzang's most fascinating and resourceful companion, Sun Wukong ("The Monkey Enlightened to Emptiness"), also called Pilgrim. The monk's journey then consumes all but three chapters of *Journey to the West* and takes him through a preordained series of eighty-one ordeals presented by assorted fiends, monsters, and deities in disguise. The monk is usually referred to as Tripitaka—"Three Baskets," a name for the body of Buddhist scriptures, thereby identifying the seeker and his goal. Scholars have pointed to the formulaic nature of each adventure, in which the monk and his companions typically find their initially carefree travels disturbed, first by some natural discomfort (such as cold or hunger) and then by some variety of demon, who usually succeeds in capturing Xuanzang. Sun Wukong, who is generally not among the captives, almost always proves instrumental in rescuing the monk from each trap, thanks to a formula or weapon or, sometimes, divine intervention; this dispels the thrall of the demon, who then reveals its true form. All the while the monkey's mischievous inclinations require constant discipline from his master as well. The remarkably hapless Xuanzang also relies on assistance from three other companions with supernatural features: Zhu Bajie ("The Pig of Eight Prohibitions"), a Daoist deity banished from the pantheon for drunkenness and transformed into a pig/human figure of grossly but amusingly sensual appetites; Sha Wujing ("Sand Awakened to Purity"), an erstwhile cannibalistic monster converted to a morose but dutiful Buddhist; and a faithful white horse who was once a dragon prince.

Previous fictional and dramatic accounts of Xuanzang's trek had already introduced the intriguing figure of a "monkey novice-monk" as guide and protector. He bears striking similarities to other tricksters, among them the character of Hanuman in the *Ramayana*, as can be seen in the Resonance following the selections given here. Legends about Hanuman are known to have reached China by way of the trade route known as the Silk Road. While no definitive connection has been established, some scholars have suggested that a common stock of motifs was probably available to the author of *Journey to the West*. New to the novel, compared with earlier versions of the pilgrimage, is the elaborate history of the monkey's origins and magical powers provided in the prologue, and his talents and exploits subsequently engendered an independent legacy of spin-offs in opera, puppet theater, film, and comic books. Another innovation is the novel's underlying framework of multiple allegories. Much discussed by traditional commentators, these were discounted by influential modern Chinese scholars at the beginning of the twentieth century in favor of a focus on its more popular and comic appeal, but they have recently been reevaluated as an essential aspect of the text's meaning.

Direct references to Buddhism are surprisingly rare in the novel, despite the centrality to the story of a search for its sacred texts. The pilgrims' interactions can best be understood, however, within the religion's framework of karmic redemption. "Karma" is the Hindu and Buddhist term for one's destiny as determined by the pattern of actions as one progresses through a series of lives, deaths, and rebirth, ideally toward enlightenment and eventual liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth. Xuanzang would be helpless without the assistance of



*Xuanzang with his disciples. Drawing by Chao Hung-pen and Chien Hsiao-tai in *Monkey Subdues the White-Bone Demon* (Beijing, 1973).*

his unusual companions, but they in turn must provide it to him in order to atone for previous misdeeds and earn valuable merit on a karmic balance sheet. Moreover, scholars have noted that the pilgrims may be regarded not only as a group working collectively toward a shared goal, but also as the various components—mental, corporeal and spiritual—of a single character. And, as is often the case in pilgrimage narratives elsewhere, what takes place on other levels is as intriguing as the physical quest itself.

About the precise nature of those allegorical dimensions considerable scholarly ink has been spilled. Given the Buddhist framework, we might expect the story to represent a journey toward spiritual enlightenment. The repetitiveness of the episodes makes it difficult to discern any significant progress, but commentators have speculated that this reflects a commitment to Chan (Zen) Buddhist beliefs that enlightenment is always already there as a state to be realized once one's mind is properly illuminated. Repeated references to Sun Wukong as the "monkey of the mind" support such a reading, and Xuanzang's attainment of the scriptures at the end of the novel is almost anticlimactic in this context. Commentators have also discerned an overlay of Daoist alchemical metaphors for self-refinement and immortality in a process attuned to

phases of cosmic change, as well as allusions to terms drawn from a Confucian vocabulary of self-cultivation. It is important to note that such syncretic or mixed views were very much at the heart of sixteenth-century intellectual debates in China, which argued for a unity of the three main philosophical and religious teachings. But it is probably even more important to remember that what has captivated generations of readers of *Journey to the West* are its fantasy, humor, and satire, conveyed most vividly in the figure of Sun Wukong.

PRONUNCIATIONS:

- Boddhisattva*: boh-dee-SAHT'vah
Hsüan-tsang / Xuanzang: shwēn-dzahng
Pa-chieh / Bajie: bah GEE-eh
Sun Wu-k'ung / Wukong: swūn'wōō-kōōng
T'ai-tsung: tie-dzōōng
Wu Cheng'en: wōō CHENG-eh

from *Journey to the West*
 from Chapter I

The divine root being conceived, the origin emerges;
 The moral nature once cultivated, the Great Tao is born.

Beyond the ocean there was a country named Ao-lai. It was near a great ocean, in the midst of which was located the famous Flower-Fruit Mountain. This mountain, which constituted the chief range of the Ten Islets and formed the origin of the Three-Islands,² came into being after the creation of the world. As a testimonial to its magnificence, there is the following *fu* poem:

Its majesty commands the wide ocean;
 Its splendor rules the jasper sea;
 Its majesty commands the wide ocean
 When, like silver mountains, the tide sweeps fishes into caves;
 Its splendor rules the jasper sea
 When snowlike billows send forth serpents from the deep.
 Plateaus are tall on the southwest side;
 Soaring peaks arise from the Sea of the East.
 There are crimson ridges and portentous rocks,
 Precipitous cliffs and prodigious peaks.
 Atop the crimson ridges
 Phoenixes sing in pairs,
 Before precipitous cliffs
 The unicorn singly rests.
 At the summit is heard the cry of golden pheasants;
 In and out of stony caves are seen the strides of dragons;
 In the forest are long-lived deer and immortal foxes.
 On the trees are divine fowls and black cranes.
 Strange grass and flowers never wither;
 Green pines and cypresses keep eternal their spring.
 Immortal peaches are always fruit-bearing;
 Lofty bamboos often detain the clouds.

1. Translated by Anthony C. Yu.

2. Regions where the immortals dwell.

Wise Hanumān scanned Lañkā. Marked everywhere by brightly blazing flames of fire, the eater of oblations, its *rākṣasas* in a state of terror, agitation, and despair, the city resembled the earth overwhelmed by the wrath of the self-existent Lord.



The Rise of the Vernacular in Europe

In 1200, Latin was still the undisputed language of the elite, and in most parts of Europe it was the only language for which there existed any sizable body of written texts. By 1600, virtually every country in what is now western Europe—and many in eastern Europe—not only had come close to standardizing a national written language, but had produced a major body of literary works in that vernacular. The enormous changes that took place in late medieval and Renaissance Europe included religious, political, artistic, and technological upheavals. Yet the first real revolution of early modernity was a linguistic one, and it undergirded all subsequent revolutions.

"Latin loosed the tongue of French," wrote the great scholar Ernst Robert Curtius. Not only does he call attention to the first modern European vernacular to assert itself, but he identifies the relationship between the new vernaculars and the monolithic language of the Roman empire as organic rather than antagonistic. Eventually, to be sure, there would be plenty of antagonism involved, particularly since Latin was also the language of the Catholic Church, target of the Protestant Reformation. Yet during the formative years of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, there was a new concern with studying the Latin language as a living, dynamic entity, an interest that became more emphatic with the growth of humanistic education. If Latin had developed over time, then surely the many oral dialects then flourishing in medieval Europe might also have their golden ages; as the Roman poet Horace had put it, "As the forests change their foliage in the headlong flight of years, as the first leaves fall, so does the old crop of words pass away, and the newly born, like men in the bloom of their youth, come then to the prime of their vigor." Simultaneously, a growing entrepreneurial middle class untrained in Latin was a demanding new audience for vernacular texts, while sophisticated courts such as those of Frederick II in Sicily and Alfonso X of Castile were providing fertile ground for poetic experimentation in Provençal, Galician, and other regional languages.

Yet the swift rise of vernacular literatures after 1300 often depended on charismatic figures bold enough to jettison Latin and forge a new idiom on which they would leave a highly personal stamp: Florence's Dante, Germany's Luther, Poland's Kochanowski. In Portugal, on the other hand, the powerful monarch King Denis (1279–1325) ordered that Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin texts be translated into Portuguese, which he designated as his country's new official language; two centuries later, King Christian III of Denmark commissioned a Danish translation of the Bible. Such individual efforts would be aided considerably by an invention that left its innovative creator broke and threatened with lawsuits: the movable-type printing press. Johann Gutenberg's groundbreaking invention in the early 1450s gave the highly oral world of late medieval Europe a degree of permanence and stability it had never enjoyed. What had once been the privilege of clerics and the elite—the ability to possess painstakingly made copies of precious manuscripts—was now within reach of the common man, and even woman, eager and able to buy, like the rustics in Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*, things such as ballads "in print, a-life, for then we are sure they are true."



Colantonio, *St. Jerome in His Study* (1443). One of the early Fathers of the Church, Jerome was known during the Middle Ages chiefly as the inspired translator of the Hebrew and Greek Bible into Latin, as well as a staunch defender of celibacy. During the early Renaissance, he acquired new importance for scholars who sought to emulate his encyclopedic knowledge of the classic works of pagan antiquity. Here he is seen in his cluttered study, his cardinal's hat draped over a table, as he calmly removes a thorn from the paw of the lion who was said to have been his companion during his years in the desert.



Biblical Translations

Who should be able to read the Bible—still the world's best-selling book today, as it was 500 years ago, when the printing press was still a new-fangled invention? The answer 500 years ago was far less clear than it is today. The industrious scholar Erasmus, the first to make available to the Western world the New Testament in the original Greek, argued passionately for translations on behalf of the masses. He was attacked for this by Church authorities who wished to maintain their control over Scripture and its interpretation. The irony of the attacks against Erasmus and others like him was that for over a thousand years the Bible had *always* been read in translation in the West: largely in the Vulgate, a Latin version of the original Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic texts, produced by Saint Jerome in the late fourth century. Concern with the corrupt manuscripts of Jerome's text over the centuries led to efforts throughout the Middle Ages

to produce a more "authentic" text, and as early as the thirteenth century, vernacular portions of the Old and New Testaments alike began appearing in translation. But with the dawn of the Reformation, a second, more immediate factor led to a burst of translations, especially in the north: the conviction that Christian faith was based on Scripture alone, particularly on one's own personal interpretation of Scripture, unencumbered by the weight of 1,500 years of church tradition.

To meet this need, precise versions of the original Greek and Hebrew texts had to be produced—thus demanding a different Bible from Jerome's corrupt Vulgate—and translations had to be made into the new European vernaculars that common people might read. Latin, moreover, was the hateful language of the Papacy, as well as of the clerical and intellectual elite. Translating Bibles into the vernacular was equivalent to shaking off a foreign tongue. Moreover, translating the Bible into the various languages of Renaissance Europe both accompanied and accelerated the rise of the vernacular, even—in the case of Luther's German and of Jan Kochanowski's patient biblical work in Polish—creating a literary vernacular that would help to propel the emergence of national literatures. Finally, for those who traveled to the far-off lands of the Americas, the translation of biblical materials into indigenous tongues such as Nahuatl and Natick-Algonquian, both represented here, was felt to be an absolute necessity so as to facilitate, as the early colonist John Eliot would have it, "this Good Work of Propagating Religion to these Natives."

Two biblical passages are reproduced here. The first is Psalm 23 ("The Lord is my Shepherd"), given in the Vulgate version and in several vernacular versions (French, Polish, American English), along with an English verse rendering for purposes of comparison. The second is Gabriel's address to Mary from the Gospel of Luke, as translated by an Italian poet, Martin Luther, and William Tyndale. Finally, the "New World Psalms" of Bernardino de Sahagún's *Psalmodia Christiana* are not literal—or even loose—translations of the psalms into the Nahuatl of Sahagún's Mexican converts. They are completely original poems that attempt to contextualize Christian feast days within Mexican culture, and hence to lure the people away from singing their own songs of pagan, "idoltrous" content.

COMPARATIVE VERSIONS OF PSALM 23 ("THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD")¹
from The Vulgate²

Psalmus David

Dominus regit me, et nihil mihi
deerit:
In loco pascuae ibi me collocavit.
Super aquam refectiois educavit
me:

Animam meam convertit.
5 Deduxit me super semitas justitiae,
propter nomen suum.

*A Psalm of David*³

The Lord guideth me, and nothing
is wanting to me,
In the pasture He lets me rest.
To refreshing waters He leadeth
me;

5 He quickeneth my soul,
He guideth me on the right path
for His name's sake.

1. The Book of Psalms has always occupied a special status in the Old Testament, in large part because its authorship has traditionally been credited to David, slayer of Goliath and second king of Israel. In medieval households, the Psalter was a common item, and the manuscripts were frequently adorned with decorations; many paintings of the Annunciation show Mary with a psalter in her lap. Above all, the psalms are poems, and in an era in which lyric poetry was becoming more diffuse, they were often turned to for inspiration. They were particularly in-

strumental in helping to shape the poetic vernacular: Petrarch, Queen Elizabeth I, Sir Philip Sidney, and many others tried their hand at translating the Psalms.

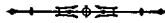
2. The Latin Bible was originally the work of Jerome, although efforts in medieval France to produce a streamlined version of the many flawed manuscripts then in circulation of Jerome's translation led to the production of what was called the Vulgate.

3. Translated by Patrick Boylan.

Psal. XXIII

UKKETOOH HOMÁONK DAVID

1. Jehovah a nullohkommõnukoowaeneum, wanne reag woh nukquenaahikõo.
2. Nusseepsum wahik ashkoskuhkontu nutassoowunuk ahtou pagodtut.
3. Wonk omohkiñau nukketeahogkounoh nutussoowunuk wunnomwauseseongane mayut newutche õweseonk.
4. Nux, pomusháon wutonkauhtõmut õnáunkõse nuppõonk, b matta woh nukquehtamõ woskehittõonk: newutche kõweetomeh, kuppogkomunk, kah kutanwõhhou nõnenehukquog.
5. Koonchõhkah ut, anaquabeh, anaquabhetrit: nutmatwomog: kullisséqunum nuppuhkuh.nashpè pummee; nõtattámwáitch pomponeeupõh shau.
6. Wunnamuhkut conáyeuonk, kah monaneteaonk pish nutásukkonkqúnash tohsohkepõmantam: kah pish nuttaih weekit Jehovah⁵ micheme.



Attacking and Defending the Vernacular Bible

The sixteenth century was unprecedented in its many "official" and unofficial translations of the Old and New Testaments, ranging from the famous Bibles of Tyndale and Luther, to translations in Czech, Danish, and Dutch, to an Arabic version printed in Rome in 1590. Bibles often had to be published outside Catholic countries where the Inquisition was especially forceful. A Portuguese New Testament appeared in Amsterdam, a Spanish Bible was printed in Basel. Translators suffered for daring to pursue their craft in Catholic countries. There the vernacular was often outlawed by authorities who saw translations as a challenge to the church's traditions and control of doctrine. Fra Luis de León, who translated the provocative Song of Songs into Spanish, spent considerable time in jail; Erasmus's Greek New Testament—and eventually all his published work—were put on the Index (the official list of banned books); Robert Estienne, a printer who worked for King Francis I, was censored by the Sorbonne and had to escape to Geneva.

Yet earnest scholars had been prevented from disseminating their work long before the Catholic Church began its campaign against Protestantism, and long before the Protestant Reformation officially began. John Wyclif, a teacher at Oxford, had been an outspoken critic of the church in England before his death in 1384. A translation of the New Testament Vulgate into English that was attributed to him and his circle provoked severe attacks by the Crown and the Church. Twenty years after his death, the so-called Constitutions of Oxford, issued by Archbishop Arundel, forbade future translations of Scripture into English: "We resolve therefore and ordain that no one henceforth on his own authority translate any text of Holy Scripture into the English or any other language. . . . and that no book, pamphlet or tract of this kind . . . be read in part or in whole, publicly or privately." Those who refused to comply were excommunicated. Over two centuries later, when the Protestant victory in England was a foregone conclusion, King James insisted on maintaining the spirit of Arundel's Constitutions by keeping a close eye on the process of translating and circulating a new English Bible: the Bible should "be set out and printed without any marginal notes and only to be used in all Churches of England in time of Divine Service." Despite royal supervision, the fifty-four scholars who

5. Note the repetition of "Jehovah" at the beginning and end of the psalm; otherwise, Eliot has found corresponding words in the Natick-Algonquian tongue, which he here transliterates. See page 116 for Psalm 23 in English.

assembled for two years to translate the Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic texts into "the King's English" came up with a masterpiece, as well as an elegant account of their project. As they said in their prefatory letter to the readers, translation "it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel." This formulation might be compared with Martin Luther's guiding principle of his own frequently attacked translations. True to his mother tongue and hostile to the Church that would impose its interpretations from without, he claimed to always ask himself when sitting down to translate, "How does a German speak in such a case?"

Henry Knighton: from *Chronicle*¹

This master John Wyclif translated the gospel, which Christ had entrusted to clerks and to the doctors of this church so that they might minister it conveniently to the laity and to meaner people according to the needs of the time and the requirement of the listeners in their hunger of mind; he translated it from Latin into the English, not the angelic, idiom [in *Anglicam linguam non angelicam*],² so that by this means that which was formerly familiar to learned clerks and to those of good understanding has become common and open to the laity, and even to those women who know how to read. As a result the pearls of the gospel are scattered and spread before swine,³ and that which had been precious to religious and to lay persons has become a matter of sport to ordinary people of both.

Martin Luther: from *On Translating: An Open Letter*¹ *To the honorable and worthy N., my esteemed lord and friend.*²

Grace and peace in Christ, honorable, worthy, and dear lord and friend. I have received your letter with the two questions, or inquiries, to which you ask my reply. First you ask why in translating the words of Paul in Romans 3[28], *Arbitramur hominem justificari ex fide absque operibus*, I rendered them thus: "We hold that a man is justified without the works of the law, by faith alone."³ You tell me, besides, that the papists⁴ are making a tremendous fuss, because the word *sola* (alone) is not in Paul's text, and this addition of mine to the words of God is not to be tolerated. Second you ask whether the departed saints too intercede for us, since we read that angels indeed do intercede for us? With

1. Translated by Anne Hudson. Henry Knighton was an obscure 14th-century English chronicler who like many of his contemporaries had nothing but suspicion for the project announced by the radical John Wyclif: the first complete translation of the Latin Bible into the English vernacular. The early 1380s, when Wyclif's project was underway, were a time of great social unrest for England, marked by peasant rebellions and attacks on the Church by followers of Wyclif such as one Nicholas Hereford, who criticized clerical wealth and corruption. Whether Wyclif himself actually did the translation that began appearing in manuscript in the 1380s is unclear. The importance of his venture is that it promised to put into the hands of the laity the "tool" that it had been the clergy's alone to wield.

2. Knighton sarcastically revises a famous pun recorded by the medieval historian Bede, in which a visiting missionary marvels that the English (Angles) look like angels.

3. A reference to Matthew 7:6.

1. Translated by Charles Michael Jacobs, revised by

E. Theodore Bachmann. Martin Luther had followed his attack on the Church in 1517 with a number of treatises, as well as a German translation of the New Testament in 1522; he swiftly followed with a translation of the Old Testament, which would be published in installments. As his editor Wenceslas Link says in his preface to the letter, he hopes that now "the slander of the godless will be stopped, and the scruples of the devout removed." For a fuller treatment of Luther's life, see page 307.

2. The identity of "N." is unknown; editors have suggested that Luther was using a literary device in order to have occasion to explore some issues related to his translation.

3. The Latin Vulgate text, the primary text for Catholics, is actually different, and there is, for example, no word for "alone." The reason for the dispute was the nature of "operibus" or "works," since Luther believed that nothing that man did could save him, while the Catholic Church insisted that man could perform deeds worthy of salvation.

4. Catholics.

We cannot follow a better patterne for elocution then God himselfe; therefore hee using divers words, in his holy writ, and indifferently for one thing in nature: we, if wee will not be superstitious, may use the same libertie in our English versions out of *Hebrew* and *Greece*, for that copie or store that he hath given us. Lastly, wee have on the one side avoided the scrupulositie of the Puritanes, who leave the olde Ecclesiasticall words, and betake them to other, as when they put *washing* for *Baptisme*, and *Congregation* in stead of *Church*; as also on the other side we have shunned the obscuritie of the Papists, in their *Azimes*, *Tunike*, *Rational*, *Holocausts*, *Præpuce*, *Pasche*, and a number of such like, whereof their late Translation is full, and that of purpose to darken the sense, that since they must needs translate the Bible, yet by the language thereof, it may be kept from being understood.¹ But we desire that the Scripture may speak like itselfe, as in the language of *Canaan*, that it may be understood even of the very vulgar.

It remaineth, that we commend thee to God, and to the Spirit of his grace, which is able to build further then we can aske or thinke. Hee removeth the scales from our eyes, the vaile from our hearts, opening our wits that wee may understand his word, enlarging our hearts, yea correcting our affections, that we may love it above gold and silver, yea that we may love it to the end. Ye are brought unto fountaines of living water which yee digged not; doe not cast earth into them with the Philistines, neither preferre broken pits before them with the wicked Jewes.² Others have laboured, and you may enter into their labours; O receive not so great things in vaine, O despise not so great salvation!

Women and the Vernacular

The phrase "mother tongue" is not an idle one. Children first hear language in the womb, in the cradle, and at the breast. In medieval and early modern Europe, that language was rarely (if ever) the Latin of clerics and the learned. When Dante's character reaches the final circle of Hell, he calls his Tuscan language the "the tongue that cries, 'mama,' 'daddy'"—one, in short, unsuited in its childlike innocence to describe the fearful punishments awaiting the world's worst sinners. While a few medieval women such as the abbess Hildegard of Bingen wrote extensively in Latin, the vast majority of those who set pen on paper did so using the oral, vernacular languages with which they were familiar. In some cases, such as that of Hadewijch of Brabant, they were the first to use a given vernacular for writing, and so helped to launch the linguistic revolution that would shape the face of modern Europe.

It is notable that Hadewijch, a Beguine or religious woman unconstrained by strict convent rules, used her native Flemish to write letters and mystical poetry. Unlike most women of the thirteenth century, Hadewijch was versed in Latin. As one critic has suggested, the "mother tongue" is the language not only of childhood, but of intimacy, and Hadewijch chose Flemish to express her thoughts to those to whom she felt closest, namely God and other Beguines. The Renaissance as commonly understood—a profound engagement with the literature and philosophy of classical antiquity, and as a result of that engagement, an assertion of the secular individual—was somewhat peripheral to women writers like Hadewijch. Particularly in northern

1. Puritans in England read the Geneva Bible, published in 1560 by English exiles who were associated with John Calvin. An English translation of the New Testament by a group of Roman Catholic scholars who had been exiled from England during the reign of Elizabeth I was known as the Rheims-Douai Bible and was published in 1582;

the Old Testament would appear in 1609–1610.

2. A reference to the prophet Jeremiah's complaints about the Hebrews: "Two evils have my people done: they have forsaken me, the source of living waters; they have dug themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that hold no water."

Italy in the fifteenth century, a number of women did benefit from an extraordinary education and were fluent in the Latin writings of antiquity. Laura Cereta (page 208) was an early advocate of women's education, and the accomplished Isotta Nogarola wrote a Latin disputation on Adam's and Eve's "equal or unequal sin." For the most part, however, women's writing before the fifteenth century centered on spiritual issues: Marguerite Porete's *Mirror for Simple Souls*, for which she was burned at the stake; Catherine of Siena's dialogue with God and almost 400 extant letters; the anchoress Julian of Norwich's *Showings*. The Reformation led to considerable soul-searching among women, in manuscript and in print. Marguerite de Navarre wrote a meditative treatise on her faith in addition to her far better-known imitation of Boccaccio, the *Heptameron* (page 189), and Queen Elizabeth I was as acclaimed for her paraphrases of the psalms as she was for her public orations. Many a militant woman during England's Puritan Revolution published her visions, such as Anna Trapnel, a radical Puritan who successfully defended herself against charges of witchcraft.

The feminist historian Joan Kelley has asked "Did women have a Renaissance?" With respect to women's cultural achievements, the answer is a definitive yes. Early modernity produced Teresa of Avila, the Countess of Pembroke, Elizabeth Carey, Veronica Franco, the painter Artemesia Gentileschi. The Ursulines, an order of nuns that chose to defy newly enforced rules of enclosure in the wake of the Counter-Reformation, took as their mission the creation of schools for girls in France, Italy, and the French settlements in Canada, and many noblewomen founded private girls' schools in their own homes. At the same time, women's Renaissances followed a path very different from that of most Renaissance men. As in the case of Marguerite, the emergence of women as secular writers was later than that of men (with the exception of the indefatigable Christine de Pizan, probably the first modern woman to make her living as a writer—of romances, compilations, and biographies of famous women, among other things—and the author of sayings as pungent as "Just as women's bodies are softer than men's, so their understanding is sharper"). A number of women contributed to the sixteenth-century vogue of the sonnet sequence, just as they would be formative in the rise of the modern, psychological novel.

Not surprisingly, however, as the rate of women's literacy gradually rose and mothers became increasingly central to their children's education, there was a backlash against their newfound talents. In one of his *Colloquies*, the open-minded humanist Erasmus finds himself forced to defend the intelligent middle-class "Lady" against an ignorant monk who complains that women surround themselves with too many books. Even as late as the close of the seventeenth century, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, probably the most erudite woman of colonial Mexico, would need to justify her considerable intellectual talents, relying on her cultivated Spanish prose and a wealth of Latin quotations to do so. Yet perhaps paradoxically, the very necessity of defense is what compelled Sor Juana and a number of her contemporaries to write at all. The excerpts below take us from Dante to Sor Juana, revealing the extent to which the "tongue that cries mama" was a tremendously enabling vehicle for women's entrance into the world of early modern letters.

Dante Alighieri: *from Letter to Can Grande Della Scala*¹

The title of the work is, "Here begins the Comedy of Dante Alighieri, a Florentine by birth but not in character." To understand the title, it must be known that comedy is derived from *comos*, "a village," and from *oða*, "a song," so that a comedy is, so to speak, "a rustic song." Comedy, then, is a certain genre of poetic narrative differing from all others. For it differs from tragedy in its matter, in that tragedy is tranquil and

1. Translated by Robert S. Haller. The dedicatory letter to Can Grande della Scala, one of Dante's most generous patrons while he lived in exile from Florence, was written upon the completion of *Paradiso*, the third and final part of *The Divine Comedy*. Written in the Tuscan dialect, the

Comedy was one of the first major literary works of medieval Europe to be both composed in a vernacular and based on texts of classical antiquity; see Volume B for selections.