

# LEARNING TO SEE A TRANSLINGUAL PAST

Consciousness is reflected in a word as the sun in a drop of water. A word relates to consciousness as a living cell relates to a whole organism, as an atom relates to the universe. A word is a microcosm of human consciousness.

L. S. Vygotsky, "Thought and Word"

L. S. VYGOTSKY AND M. NOURBESE PHILIP SUGGEST THAT words—even a single word—lie at the center of memory, like atoms to a universe. Words, it is often said, are what make the United States exceptional: it was the first modern nation to be founded by virtue of written documents rather than evolving history. These documents contain the words that Americans cling to: "truth," "happiness," "self-evident," "created equal," "We the people." They are words subject, necessarily, to both the initial and ongoing work of democracy. They are invoked, argued over, lamented, deconstructed, cried about, revered, worshiped, cursed, rejected, doubted, prayed over, and entrusted with faith. They are used to bring people in and to shut people out. But there is something about these words that has not often been considered, a fact about them so obvious that it seems strange to notice: these words are in English.

What if we imagined a United States of America not in English? What words would we discover that are also a part of the founding of the country? How would these words change our memory, our understanding, of what was going on when the country was founded, and thus our understanding of what has been since then? As Philip (1989) suggests (as she writes from the Black Caribbean experience, linking the theft of language with the theft of culture, history, and family that came with the slave trade), some words

become severed from their source, and that severing is a form of violence that is experienced as a tragic forgetting. Finding and reconnecting some of the words of people in the early national United States is the project of this book, which examines the communities of early Philadelphia to create a vibrant vision of how the United States became what it is. Challenging assumptions that English was the inevitable medium of communication for the new nation, I show how, in fact, the busy, central city of Philadelphia harbored a diverse range of languages. There was little consensus or consciousness that English would be the language to dominate all others. More significantly, the words used to debate the place of language in these new communities constitute a set of words that we can add to our lexicon of U.S. founding vocabulary; they draw from the rhetorical history of African American, Quaker, and German communities of Philadelphia.

For my methodology in this historical re-visioning, I draw on thought in the fields of applied linguistics and writing and rhetoric studies that challenge our assumptions of what language is and where its boundaries lie. These perspectives represent a “translingual approach” (Horner et al. 2011) to language, a perspective that scholars have used to describe the fluid, flexible communication practices of people in the contemporary globalized world, where contact zones (Pratt 1991, 34) and border areas (Anzaldúa 2007) abound in both material and digital realms. I adapt this translingual approach as a methodology for doing history and use it to compose a new vision of early national Philadelphia. Drawing from a variety of recovered archival sources, I show how we can read these sources in ways that go beyond their previously assumed meanings, so that as our new readings accumulate, we find we are reconstructing our understanding of how the city overall—a place of many communities—must have looked, sounded, and functioned. This new vision of the city asks us to rethink our assumptions of the U.S. past, with its centers of power and its seemingly inevitable English-only ideology, and to imagine a national origin story that includes all languages. This national origin story decenters the founding discourses—the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution—and their power brokers, the people we have called the founding fathers, and places them in the context of a myriad of translingual communication practices. My research represents a new way of doing history because it reveals how we can take the concept of translingual practices and historicize them, showing how translingual practice has always been a part of human experience. My research helps us to reimagine a model for a U.S. pluralist democracy that starts at the very beginning, in the way we tell the story of the founding city.

I write this book with several audiences in mind. First and foremost is the

general public, including the university students I know, insightful young people who have been raised in a world of pluralism and engage every day in deliberation and protest around identity, freedom, and community. I have not assumed that these readers know much about early U.S. history or about rhetorical and linguistic perspectives on culture. Therefore, I have tried to be as transparent as possible, to begin at the beginning with both the events of history and the concepts of theory. At the same time, I am aware that I write also for experts well versed in the linguistic and rhetorical perspectives that I bring to the material. My aim is to contribute much-needed historical perspective to the ongoing project of naming and recognizing translingual practice. I speak to the latter expert audience in chapter 2, where I lay out the theoretical framework of this research. I hope that both audiences have patience with my writing style as I try to speak to these differing contexts.

Thinking of my general audience, I continue this first chapter with a series of stories about what the city of Philadelphia was like at the time of the nation's founding. As you read each account, you will see that I use the *we* pronoun. I understand that *we* is a problematic term: people are different, and making statements about "our" collective experience or understanding has been a common means of erasing difference. I have chosen to use *we*, though, as a rhetorical feature of something like stage directions in a screenplay, explaining to the audience how we are expected to fill in the gaps of the scenes being crafted. When you, the reader, see *we*, then, recognize that you as an individual likely will not match up in reality with this generic, imagined audience. The *we* is intentionally invoking a generic "American" viewer, no one particular individual, but people who grew up and went to school in the United States, the collective public for the industry of textbooks, history tourism, and films and media. It is a problematic construction, of course, born of dominant master narratives about U.S. history and a multiculturalism that evades difference.<sup>1</sup> But my choice here is intended to reveal, and then challenge, mainstream perspectives on history.

I engage a translingual methodology that draws from theories of language contact. A translingual approach takes *time* as its axis, in dynamic interaction with space. Recently taken up widely in the field of rhetoric and composition, where it has been worked out largely in the context of contemporary writing classrooms, the term *translingual* has been particularly advanced by linguist Suresh Canagarajah. He writes that when communicating translingually,

people are not relying on ready-made meanings and forms (as posited by Structuralist language models) for communicative success in contact zones.

Rather than moving top down to apply predefined knowledge from their language or cognitive system, people are working ground up to collaboratively construct meaning for semiotic resources which they are borrowing from diverse languages and symbol systems. They are co-constructing meaning by adopting reciprocal and adaptive negotiation strategies in their interactions. They are also not relying on words alone for meaning. They are aligning features in their environment, such as objects, bodies, setting, and participants to give meaning to words. All these strategies point to the need for an analytical trajectory diametrically opposed to the one adopted by modernity. We have to move away from system, cognition, and form to focus on *practice* in order to explain how communication works in the contact zone. (Canagarajah 2013b, 26–27)

In other words, in a contact zone (Pratt 1991)—a place where cultures and languages are coming into contact, such as in the marketplaces in Canagarajah’s native Sri Lanka, or in cities such as Juarez and El Paso on the U.S.-Mexico border—people figure out how to communicate not by achieving native-like fluency in the so-called other language, but by bringing all their meaning-making tools together for shared use. A translingual approach examines how people *practice* communication, and how such communication *transcends* what we think of as formal, recognizable, and inevitable language boundaries. These boundaries include those of the named languages like English, Spanish, and so on, as well as language varieties and discourses like Black English and Standard American English, and even discourse varieties like “lawyerese” or “motherese.” In other words, monolingualist thinking (and by extension multilingualism) assumes it is natural to “switch” from one language to another or one variety to another, depending on the situation one finds oneself in, and when we switch, we are entering an entirely different territory, or space. Translingual thinking differs even from multilingual understandings, which turn out to be rooted in a monolingual orientation. A monolingual approach to language is fundamentally cognitive, positing that different languages exist within different spaces within the mind of any one individual, or in the space of any one community. A translingual approach, on the other hand, sees language and other forms of communications as being generated between and across individuals and communities over time and space (Canagarajah 2013a, 6–7). Translingually focused researchers seek to recognize how people are able to use many different languages and language varieties, focusing more on the broad “linguistic repertoires” (Otheguy, García, and Reid, 2015) people draw on to make meaning over, around, and within the

structures of power and segregation that demand people choose one form over another.

A translingual framework also includes those aspects of communication that transcend language, including the ways people use their own embodiment, the environment around them, and visual rhetorics to create meaning together. It works to undo logocentric models of culture. But it is important to recognize that the “lingual” part of the term is just as important as the “trans-” part of the term, because a translingual approach focuses deliberately on how people deploy language as a resource and, more importantly, how they consciously choose from among a vast library of communicative possibilities, both linguistic and nonlinguistic (that is, either using words and sentences or using other kinds of signs), to mediate meaning. To make a comparison to a term more widely discussed in mainstream culture, we can see that the term *translingual* centers language in our consciousness in the way that the term *transgender* centers gender in our consciousness, rather than keeping these aspects of social life in a kind of perpetual peripheral vision. A transgender understanding recognizes that gender is not fixed or natural (as it might appear to many people) but rather something to be performed, played with, and questioned, as Judith Butler (1999) has shown. It is not just a matter of switching from masculine to feminine or vice versa. Gender does not so much go away as it is foregrounded, and a transgender understanding changes the rules not just for those individuals who name themselves as transgendered but for everybody. Likewise, language, and its restrictive ideologies, do not go away in a translingual approach, so much as they are (as with gender) performed, played with, and questioned. It is not just a matter of switching from, say, English to Spanish or Spanish to English. The translingual approach changes the game for everyone, even—and especially—monolingual people.

Thus, “translingual practice” is something that a researcher seeks to reveal, by adopting what B. Horner and colleagues (2011, 311) call a “disposition” known as the “translingual approach.” Rather than celebrating the linguistic and rhetorical activities of people in separate spaces, the translingual approach examines the ways people come in contact through language and assumes that most of the world’s peoples, through much of the world’s history, have used language in multiple and varied ways. The translingual approach, then, posits a particular methodology, an analytical framework for discovering, reading, interpreting, and making arguments about texts and practices. It is a deliberately progressive methodology, one which assumes that people can and do use tools creatively to assert their own agency and to make change in the world.

For these reasons, a verb often associated with the translingual approach is *linguaging*, or the *producing* of language, a term “which does not carry with it the conduit metaphor,” as linguist Merrill Swain (2006, 95) puts it.<sup>2</sup> In other words, when we shift our attention to language as a resource that one uses or a performance that one performs or a production that people create dialogically, we can discard the common assumption that meaning exists someplace (in the mind, presumably, or in the universe) and that language simply shuttles that meaning to listeners to take in. Instead of being just an instrumental vehicle, language mediates our understanding and our learning. Swain (2006, 96) points out that the term *linguaging* is particularly apt in that people “language about language” and that “in fact, it is precisely when language *is* used to mediate problem solutions, whether the problem is about which word to use, or how best to structure a sentence so it means what you want it to mean, or how to explain the rules of an experiment, or how to make sense of the action of another, or . . . that linguaging occurs.” Translingual practice is thus often—if not always—*meta*: metacognitive, metalinguistic, and metadiscursive, taking place when people think about their own thinking, their own language, their own communication.

As a method of writing history, the “linguaging about language” aspect of the translingual approach is particularly salient because we cannot always know the embodied or environmental aspects of communication that surrounded the texts left to us in the archive. That is, we can’t see speech as it occurred in its first context; we can’t see the linguaging in full. But the written word leaves many traces of the linguaging about language, the meta aspects of translingual practice. With analysis, the archives do show how writers grappled with questions of language: what it is; how it functions in spheres such as civics, education, and religion; and how it ought best to be taught to the next generation. These translingual rhetorics demonstrate that the English language was not accepted uncritically as an inevitability for the American nation. More significantly, these rhetorics show how to decenter—without discounting—the discourses at the centers of power where the founding documents were formed (Trimbur 2010).

### PHILADELPHIA: A SERIES OF STORIES

First, let’s visualize the historical Philadelphia we think we know—the one between 1776 and 1800, when the Declaration of Independence was signed, and the city was known as the “Athens of America.” By this time, Philadelphia had been in existence for more than a century, since William Penn had arrived and made a treaty with the Lenni Lenape in 1682. In this early national Philadelphia, between the signing of the Declaration

of Independence and the start of the nineteenth century, we would have found neat rows of brick buildings, combining residences with workshops. William Penn's idealistic Quaker vision grounded the city, in both its tolerance for religious diversity as well as its material plan, with square blocks and straight streets (a plan that would be followed in expansion westward to the Schuylkill River to create the Center City we know today). By now, the indigenous people have been absented from the scene. By this time, the culture was commercial, extending from the busy riverfront on the east side and on to High Street, which would later be named Market Street, already lined with market stalls, about seven or eight blocks west. The State House, now called Independence Hall, had been built on Chestnut Street between Fifth and Sixth, and in this building, leaders of the colonies gathered for the Second Continental Congress to debate, write, and eventually sign the Declaration (the first Continental Congress met in Carpenter Hall, a similar building one block to the east). A block west, at Seventh Street, Thomas Jefferson labored in a handsome brick house to compose the right language that would shuttle a nation into the next several hundred years. Just north on Arch Street, Betsy Ross was busy sewing flags. On Market at Fourth, Benjamin Franklin's printing business stamped out newspapers night and day, his workers sliding the paper in and out of the press as quickly as machines. Christ Church stood at Second, just above Market, its plate glass windows, especially the large Palladian window behind the altar, letting in the light of reason to the practice of the English church—the church that would carry on the tradition of the Anglican communion, but in which the wardens boldly edited the Book of Common Prayer, striking out the king's name in the prayers. Other institutions were coming along—the bank, the tavern, many more churches, and many, many more workshops. The first lending library had been founded in 1731, and the American Philosophical Society in 1743. Franklin himself would be responsible for much of what makes a community even today: the Library of Philadelphia, the post office, the insurance company, the fire company (tied up with the insurance company), and the school, called the Academy of Philadelphia, that would become today's University of Pennsylvania.

With our cinematic minds, we can easily imagine these cobbled streets with their horse-drawn carriages, the inevitable smell of manure, the formally styled eighteenth-century rooms where these men collectively came up with the vision of a nation. We continue to admire their wisdom, even their creative imagination, their extraordinary good luck in coming together in the time and place that they did, even as their faults have come into view and changed the narrative in recent decades. Franklin may have been a scientist

and statesman, but he was also a philanderer, probably not so good to his wife, and certainly a broker of racist ideology, as we will see in his writings about the German community. Jefferson enslaved people even as he wrote that all men are created equal. Washington stayed in Philadelphia but cycled his Virginia-based slaves in and out of the city every six months, so as to circumvent the Pennsylvania laws that would have allowed them their freedom.<sup>3</sup> Depending on who we are, our personal understandings of the people of this city have grown more complicated, our responses angrier and more resistant. But the master narrative—the one that brings tourists, the one that shores up textbooks and television shows—settles on the exceptional nature of the founders in this place, and their racism, if acknowledged, is something mostly something to be atoned for, unfortunate sins at the edges of great lives.<sup>4</sup> The busy, growing city, the workshop of democracy and innovation, was what it was because of the remarkable founders of this nation, we are told. Indeed, one could argue that the movements for liberation that came after the founding would not have been possible without the mandates for freedom written into those documents—that, flawed as this time was, it created the rhetorical space for future improvements.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, those remarkable people were white, male, and native English speakers. Even if their words created the grounds for future movements for liberation (such as those for women's right to vote at the turn of the twentieth century or for civil rights for Black people in the 1960s), they would still remain at the center of the story. But suppose we shifted the camera away from the State House and to the other corners of the city. How would this story of Philadelphia play out if we watched a different set of characters, who were not white, male, and native English speakers? That narrative too is equally compelling. Let's call this narrative 2, the multicultural narrative, and imagine it also in cinematic terms.

William Penn had laid the city out in a grid with long, wide blocks, meaning for the city to grow west toward the Schuylkill River. Instead, people stayed in the first eight or nine blocks and built them up more densely, adding alleys between the main streets. In Elfreth's Alley, for instance (the oldest continually inhabited street in the nation, where a small colonial-era brick row house with three bedrooms now sells for around \$700,000), 132 people lived on a narrow street that was never intended in Penn's plan. The people who lived there were working people: tailors, mariners, schoolteachers, carpenters, and bricklayers. People often lived in the same building where they worked, or if they didn't, they had only a short walk to their places of business. Bakers could be found every few blocks, so that people could always get a loaf of bread without walking far. Just a few steps from





Figure 1.1. A map titled “A plan of the city of Philadelphia, the capital of Pennsylvania, from an actual survey” (Dury 1776).

Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

this thriving working neighborhood, the area along the waterfront north of Market Street—with Christ Church at its southern edge—was known as Helltown and was populated by poor and destitute people, with a good portion of fugitives from enslavement. For most people, middling or poor, life took place in a very small space.

Many Philadelphians were of African descent. And many of them were enslaved. Philadelphia had passed a gradual emancipation law in 1780, so that by 1790 some enslaved people still lived in the city, often in basements, stables, and attics. Of the 44,096 residents counted in the first U.S. census of 1790, about 2,000, or 5 percent, were free Blacks, some of whom had freed themselves from enslavement in the American South and others who had fled the Haitian revolution. Just ten years later, the population overall had grown rapidly to 67,811, and free Blacks made up 9 percent.<sup>6</sup> While many households headed by African Americans clustered around south Fifth Street in the southwest corner of the city, African Americans lived throughout the city; white backlash against the Black public presence, and subsequent segregation, would come later in the nineteenth century, but laws regulating the public movement of Black people had been recorded as early as 1693. In 1787,

just before the Constitutional Convention met, Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, both free Blacks, founded the Free African Society, a mutual aid society meant to encourage stability and independence in the community.

Women also played a part in making Philadelphia what it was. One in eight households was headed by a woman, many of them working as lodging and tavern keepers or as small-shop owners (Sivitz and Smith 2012).<sup>7</sup> Ten percent of these women heads of household were schoolteachers. Affluent white women from Quaker and Anglican families developed a richly collaborative literature, as can be seen in the commonplace book of Milcah Martha Moore, which collected her writings along with those of Hannah Griffitts, Susanna Wright, and Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson (Moore, Blecki, and Wulf 1997; Ousterhout 2003). And while founder William Penn and his pacifist Quaker community had lost much of their power by the Seven Years' War of 1756–1763, Quakers still made a difference to the ethos of the city, as, for instance, Quaker Anthony Benezet argued for the innate intelligence of African Americans as proof of their equality and as justification for the abolition of slavery. In many small rooms across the city, people who had escaped slavery were met and cared for.

That's the second narrative of Philadelphia, the multicultural city that harbored a range of people working and acting in civic and sometimes activist ways, especially with a Quaker tint. In this movie, our visual minds see more people of color, women along with men, and working class along with landed class. We also hear more voices contributing to the public discourse, voices that stand up for a community and others that dissent from mainstream political discourse, as Allen and Benezet did. But there is one aspect of our perception of these voices that is unnoticed by most people today: we hear these voices in English. The English language is so natural, widespread, and apparently inevitable to our understanding of U.S. history that it is hard to imagine anything else being spoken. Still, this narrative does a lot to include people and to show the full story.

But let's call that "Multicultural Philadelphia" movie version 2.1. Now, imagine also a movie 2.2, one we'll call "Multilingual Philadelphia." If we add being multilingual to being multicultural, we would begin to hear many more voices in languages that are not English. And truthfully, to capture the long-term presence of these languages other than English, we would need to take the camera a little higher above the region and sweep across a longer stretch of time. For instance, the Lenape people had lived in the area for ten thousand years, and they peacefully retained their autonomy as settlers from Finland, Sweden, and the Netherlands began to arrive, up until 1680. In 1700 the population of indigenous people spread evenly across the whole North

American continent. Only 15 percent of people overall were non-Indians, and even in the “East,” there were equal numbers of Indians and non-Indians, a quarter million each. (I am not clear on what the proportion may have been in Philadelphia, but in 1700 the city was very small, and so while Native people may not have been living in the city, the city was probably not big enough to have an effect on the overall averages.<sup>8</sup>) Given this diversity of both Native and European peoples, many more languages would have been spoken.

I offer these demographics on Native peoples to highlight the multilingualism that existed prior to, and at the start of, European migration to North America. Like many places in the world today, multiple languages would have been in use, and given the human capacity for multilingualism, people would have been multilingual. The Lenape spoke a language called Unami; from what we know of language contact, they would have found ways to communicate with the Finnish, Swedish, and Dutch speakers they encountered. The Swedes were early settlers in the Philadelphia area, first settling farther south on the Delaware River in 1638, around what is now Wilmington, Delaware, and later moving north to the area of Chester, Pennsylvania, into southern New Jersey, and to Philadelphia in what is now the Pennsport neighborhood of South Philadelphia.

What is especially significant to our story is that the Swedes seem to have been very good at practicing what linguists would call cross-language communication. Historian of Swedish American history Adolph B. Benson (1950, 41) notes, “The friendly relations the Swedes had maintained with the Indians continued to stand them in good stead after the English had taken over the colony. Thanks to these relations, the Swedes had made better progress than either the Dutch or the English in learning the Indian languages and were therefore able to serve William Penn as interpreters. Being known to the Indians as *Natappi* or ‘our friends,’ they were also able to convince them that the Quakers too were peace-loving and trustworthy. This was the foundation of Penn’s success in dealing with the aborigines of Pennsylvania.” Granted, as with other settlers, the Swedes’ impulse to learn native languages came from the desire to convert native peoples to Christianity. In fact, the first clergyman to arrive, Johan Campanius, wrote out a phonetic transcription of Luther’s Catechism in Lenapi. Peter Kalm (1750, 40) wrote that one hundred copies were in church but “only a single Indian has been converted by this means.” In the end, it seems the failure to convert came less from the language difference than from the ethos of speech in the church: “The general attitude of the natives is indicated by a remark one of them is reported to have made after attending a church service: ‘Why should one man stand up and do all the talking?’” (Benson 1950, 43).

Seen through the lens of Christian evangelism's part in imperialism, language learning and translation practices around the world have a dubious history, founded in the imposing of culture and belief on others. On the other hand, the church also has been the source of a great deal of language preservation in the United States, as religious traditions maintained the language for spiritual purposes and a connection with the past, as we will see later in the chapter on the Germans. The Swedes were similar. In Philadelphia, the oldest church building still standing is Gloria Dei or Old Swedes' Church, built in 1700 in the Pennsport neighborhood on a piece of land known by its Native name, Wecaco. The clergy were literate intellectuals who maintained ties with Sweden; Nile Collin, who arrived in 1770 and served until his death in 1831, preached in Swedish as well as English and sometimes Dutch. Collin knew Washington and Franklin and was an officer of the American Philosophical Society. The clergy were also naturalists who sent home information and specimens from the natural world. One visitor from Sweden, Peter Kalm, had been a student of the Swedish scientist Carl Linnaeus and got to know Franklin while in Pennsylvania, resulting in the book *Travels in North America, 1748–51* (Benson 1950, 51).

Finally, in another instance of Swedish-English cultural exchange, the Reverend Acrelius admired Franklin's plan for an English school (that is, a school taught in the common language rather than in Latin). Acrelius shared Franklin's plan at home in Sweden, where it influenced Sweden's educational system (Benson 1950, 51). In general, the Swedish language also maintained a presence in Pennsylvania for quite some time. The Swedish government pulled out of the settlements, which were really meant only for trading and ended when they were no longer profitable. But in 1754 around nine hundred people still spoke Swedish, despite a lot of intermarrying (Benson 1950, 40). Multilingualism was not only practiced in the prehistory of the United States, but it was multilingualism that made U.S. history possible by virtue of the many cross-language encounters in which people engaged.

The Swedes were not the only early European settlers to predate the English in Pennsylvania. In 1681 William Penn made a real estate offer to those who would settle and farm in Pennsylvania in exchange for land in the city of Philadelphia. This scheme was designed to raise funds for the development of the colony, particularly Penn's "greene country towne" with its utopian ideals. One of the first groups to accept Penn's offer were Quakers from Wales, who wanted to create their own settlement in Pennsylvania to preserve their own language and culture as well as practice their faith (Schlenker 1990). These Welsh Quakers settled in what is now known as the Main Line of Philadelphia, the towns such as Bryn Mawr and Merion, running

through Delaware, Montgomery, and Chester Counties. However, there was no legal documentation of this meeting with Penn, and as he made real estate arrangements with other groups, the Welsh idea of self-governance was forgotten. The area was broken up administratively by 1689.

The place of the Welsh language in this early beginning is unclear; even in the earliest days, the Welsh settlers wrote letters home in English, and records were kept in English (Schlenter 202–3). The speaking that took place in Quaker meetings for worship, apparently, was in Welsh—to Quakers, communion with God is unmediated by liturgy and so any language is fair game—but the minutes of the meetings for business were kept in English. Paradoxically, though, it was the other, hierarchical Protestant denominations that helped ethnic groups like the German Lutherans maintain their heritage languages. Because their hymns, liturgies, and catechisms required print technology and literacies that change more slowly than oral language, the hierarchical systems for publishing and disseminating religious materials kept the language in more active use for a longer period of time.

In fact, the Welsh presence in the Philadelphia area quickly became more a revered legend than it had ever been a reality; in the 1720s, a Welsh Society was formed around reverence for Saint David, by people who were Anglicans, not Welsh at all (the Welsh were Presbyterians who would not have honored saints). In 1729 a group of parishioners from the Anglican church of Saint David's in Radnor, Pennsylvania, marched to Christ Church, Philadelphia, where their priest preached a sermon in the “ancient British language” of Welsh. Benjamin Franklin even published a book in Welsh, a translation of a Welsh writer's text on baptism. As we will see with German and Latin in later chapters, this kind of emblematic language diversity seems to have been common, at least among the powerful like Franklin, whose thinking is widely documented. While languages used mostly for their ideological symbolism are in many ways a performative ethnicity rather than an integrated aspect of regular communication, they too are part of the matrix of “linguaging about language” that comprises a translanguing perspective on history.

Our multilingual story of Philadelphia has thus far included Welsh, Swedish, Lenape, and other Native languages in addition to English and German. To this mix we can add another little-known language, Ladino, spoken in the small Jewish community of early Philadelphia. The congregation Mikveh Israel (which still exists, like many of the other religious communities that we will examine in this book) was founded in 1745 by Ashkenazic Jews from Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands. Among English and presumably Hebrew, this community also spoke Ladino, a form of Spanish-influenced

Yiddish. Nathan Levy, one of the earliest inhabitants, established the Jewish burial ground that is now part of Mikveh Israel; David Franks, another early Jewish inhabitant, was a businessman involved in the slave trade. While New York and Charleston came to have larger Jewish communities, the early Ashkenazic association with Philadelphia suggests one more way the religious diversity encouraged by William Penn engendered linguistic diversity.

Finally, historians have documented surprising demographic statistics that challenge our assumptions on the European ethnic diversity of Philadelphia in the century before independence. The English constituted a majority only in the 1710s; otherwise, they comprised as little as 23 percent of the population in the 1750s—interestingly, when the drive for independence began to heat up—and as much as 44 percent in the first decade of the eighteenth century and again in the 1720s. In terms of obvious language diversity, the presence of Germans is astonishing. In the 1750s when English proportions of the population were lowest, Germans comprised 45 percent of the city, and as early as 1730 always made up around a third of the population, as Franklin himself had estimated (McDaniel 2014). Language difference in this case is obvious; immigrants arrived knowing little English and faced the same kinds of challenges immigrants might face today, including falling prey to exploitive contracts for labor and housing. Moreover, there was no single German language that was spoken at the time, even in Germany. In fact, there was not yet a unified German nation. That linguistic diversity, too, is worth puzzling out within the demographic makeup of the immigrants.

Yet another kind of linguistic diversity can be seen in the demographics of ethnic diversity. The Irish and Scotch Irish (Presbyterians from Ulster, Ireland) also came to the city in large numbers, sometimes staying and often quickly moving to the country for farming. The speech of these white immigrants would have differed from the English spoken by the English settlers. Given what we know of the linguistic discrimination forced on Irish and Scots people in the United Kingdom, it stands to reason that these differences would have stood out just as surely in the colony—perhaps more so, as settled English speakers would experience newcomers as speaking a language rather changed from the one they might have known in their homeland, and vice versa. From what I have been able to discover, there are few documents in the archive that tell us much about this particular form of language contact. However, plenty of evidence suggests familiar forms of discrimination, in the form of discourse that framed the Irish as undesirable arrivals who were best left to tough it out on the frontier. The language that they spoke would likely have been considered as further justification for marginalization.

Taken together, all of these examples suggest a great variety of linguistic cultures in the area around Philadelphia, changing over time but always remaining diverse. If we were to try to excavate these cultures, gleaning what we can from preserved documents and pairing them with sociolinguistic frameworks for mapping language variety, we would have a great project on our hands. In fact, many readers might think my project is to tell this Multilingual Philadelphia 2.2 story. To some extent those readers would be correct. It is critically important that we recognize that the English language as we know it was certainly not an inevitability in how the United States goes about its business today, and in this book I share evidence from the archives that this was so. But just as important, and more to my purpose as a researcher of translanguaging practice, is coming to recognize how people worked to create meaning by taking linguistic diversity into consideration in making a nation for themselves. Although the term has only been coined in the twenty-first century, we have always been translanguaging.

Narratives 2.1 and 2.2 are problematic in similar ways. Certainly, the 2.1 (multicultural) and 2.2 (multilingual) narratives are a huge improvement over narrative 1 in terms of their inclusivity. They counter the assumption that everything good and important was done by white, landed, native-English-speaking (and writing) men. Multicultural and multilingual visions have been important in helping us to rethink the place of pluralism in American democracy, past or present. But in the end, both narratives maintain the binary pairs of male and other, white and other, native-English-speaking and other. To put it another way, both these narratives are grounded in spatial metaphors, encouraging us to visually map our sense of different communities into different spaces. For example, if we speak comparatively about an imagined moment in Philadelphia when the white delegates of the Continental Congress were meeting in the State House at Sixth and Chestnut Streets, in the center of town, Richard Allen was building the church for his African American community down on Sixth at Lombard. The wealthy white women were sharing poetry in their living rooms. And Anthony Benezet was trying to teach Black children how to read in his own residence-schoolroom. Rather than envisioning a city of communities coming together, we have carved out smaller, segregated cells of activity. As long as we understand these activities as taking place within cells, we will inevitably assign greater importance to the cells where apparently more important activity took place: the State House and the meeting places of the founding fathers. This kind of hierarchical assignment of importance seems inevitable—just as English as the language of the nation seems inevitable.<sup>9</sup>

### A TRANSLINGUAL STORY IN MINIATURE

So what would a translingual story of Philadelphia look like? In this story, our translingual movie project looks and sounds far more dynamic and surprising than the familiar scenes and stereotypes we would have relied on in the first and second narratives. People are talking to each other across social boundaries; they are learning things from each other; they are creating new institutions and cultures. It is a more engaging film to watch and a more engaging history to inherit. As an example, let's look at a small piece of one of the primary texts I take up in this book: the charter for the Union School of Germantown in Philadelphia, which was founded in 1759. Today, Germantown is very much a part of the city of Philadelphia; in the eighteenth century, it was some distance away, lying several miles up the Wissahickon Creek from the main city. Germantown had been founded and populated by Germans in 1683, and by this time was a prosperous community. In the 1750s the community decided it was time to build a real schoolhouse.

Their plan begins like many a formal declaration, noting in a heading that the document contains "Agreements and Concessions" for setting up both a school and a schoolhouse. A "whereas" clause of the kind that structures so many legal and ceremonial documents to this day opens the text: "whereas, the good education of youth in reading, writing and learning of languages and useful arts and sciences, suitable to their sex, age and degree, and their instruction in the principles of morality, virtue and true religion, very much contributes to the prosperity and welfare of every community" (Germantown Academy 1760, 1). The structure is legalistic and ceremonial; the content blends the possibility for individual achievement and learning with the mandate for doing so within a clear moral framework. For the ordinary researcher of early American history, these words alone leave much to consider and even enjoy.

But it's on the second page that something interesting for the translingual researcher turns up. At this point, the document becomes a building proposal: "That the said School-House should be a plain substantial Building, properly adapted and accommodated for two School-Rooms at least on the lower Floor, together with every other Conveniency suitable and necessary to answer the aforesaid laudable Purposes; and that the two most commodious Rooms below Stairs should be and continue for the Use and Purpose of an English and High Dutch, or German, School for ever" (1-2).

Much about this text supports the imaginary of the English-speaking nation we think we know. First, it's in English. Second, it's practical and material, like any charter is likely to be. In these senses, it is drawing all of



its power from its standardized genre and its clear explanation of a material plan: “school” becomes equivalent to “building,” and the spatial organization of the classroom dominates our understanding of what it means to learn. It goes down in history as the classic American schoolhouse, inevitably and almost prophetically taking root all over the newly settled nation.

But it is not a one-room schoolhouse as our historical imagination would have it. On second look, we see in the remarkably clear plan that the school building supports schooling in two rooms and two languages. It proposes a bilingual school, right in Philadelphia, right from the very beginning. As Canagarajah (2013b, 27) reminds us, people acting translingually “are aligning features in their environment, such as objects, bodies, setting, and participants to give meaning to words.” This charter represents an extremely concrete plan to “align features in their environment” in order to make communication possible, and most profoundly to enable communication and literacy to continue across generations.

Most of the histories of this school (which became Germantown Academy, today a prestigious independent school) interpreted the charter to mean that one classroom would be designated for the German community, while the other would be designated for English-speaking children. This spatial organization alone challenges our assumptions of how schooling began in the United States: apparently, not at all classrooms, not all teaching, not all students, worked in English. That addition of the German classroom to the historical imaginary of the rise of public schooling in this nation is worth campaigning for.

But this interpretation makes assumptions based on monolingualist and subtractive approaches to language. When we shed these assumptions, we realize that we cannot know exactly how the culture of the school evolved. We don’t know how the children related to one another, what sorts of shared language they created, who their parents were; in essence, we have no idea what integration or segregation—what the *children’s* languaging—really looked like. Many people might say that Germantown was the original immigrant community that went through the same process of every immigrant community in the United States since: that the children of the immigrants learned English, abandoned their first language, and married other English-speaking Americans. Within three generations, few cultural ties remained to their original ethnicity beyond a few recipes and holiday customs. But the German community was remarkably resilient over time in the United States; many German-language schools were founded across the Northeast and into the Midwest, in places like Milwaukee and Chicago, and German was widely spoken for some time—up until World War I, in fact,

when anti-German sentiment made German ethnicity a thing to hide. So we can either interpret this document as evidence that an additive model of bilingual citizenship was present in the early republic, or as imaginative touchstone that a more fluid, translingual possibility of culture was present in the early republic. Which one we choose depends on our attitude toward the writing of history. I prefer the latter, but either way we are challenging the monolingualist assumption that English was the logical and inevitable reality for our nation.

That's one scene of translingual practice we might envision in a new seeing of the history of the American nation. If it were a movie, we could imagine the children of Germantown delightfully creating their own hybrids of language, "shuttling between languages" as Canagarajah (2010) puts it, just as they might have shuttled across the hall throughout the course of the day, chatting with one teacher and then the other in respective languages. Back in the central city, we could find other scenes of translingual practice, places where people create meaning dialogically by shuttling across languages, negotiating their uses of language, and consciously considering the ways language brings knowledge into being. For example, Quaker Anthony Benezet famously set up cottage schools for Black children. He asserted publicly the fundamental intellectual equality of Blacks. If we assume that the Black vernacular by that time exhibited the same traditions of verbal play and performance that we see today, could Benezet have realized how to appreciate the languaging of the children in his classes? Could the students and teacher have forged their own shared style of speech, their own verbal play about the lessons they learned?

Or consider Milcah Martha Moore, Susanna Wright, and Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson, the women who created their own commonplace books, collections of poetry, quotations, drawings, letters, and other snippets of text as keepsakes and repository of meaning. How were they deploying objects in their environment, as Canagarajah posits (2013b, 27), to generate their own creative and artistic practice in a language and literary culture in which they were marginal, if privileged, members? If we imagine these activities not simply as creative literacy at work—as other researchers have, and fruitfully—but as examples of how women transcend the limits placed on them by means made available by the English-language tradition, then we are refashioning our understanding of how the United States was constituted by women from the beginning.

As a third example, let's take a glimpse at the work of Richard Allen (1880), the preacher who resisted the attempts of his fellow congregants at Saint George's Methodist Church to segregate him and the other Black

community members to the balconies for worship. While Allen was kneeling in prayer one Sunday morning in 1787, an usher put his hand on Allen's shoulder and told him and his friend Absalom Jones to move. Instead of submitting to segregation—exile to the very balconies the Black laborers had built—Allen, Jones, and other worshippers left the church in the middle of the service. Both men went on to found their own parishes, Jones aligning with the Episcopal church and Allen founding his own in the Methodist tradition, which led later to the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) denomination, the only religious denomination to be founded out of a desire for independent governance, rather than doctrinal or liturgical conflict.

The story comes down to us in the form of Allen's autobiography. Like the more famous autobiographies of Frederick Douglass or Booker T. Washington, Allen's narrative traces a familiar arc from slavery in his younger years, to a relationship with an understanding master, to freedom by one means or another, to a successful and triumphant life in the public sphere. And, like similar autobiographies, Allen's is composed in standard written English. The standardization of genre and language, it would seem, help the (white) readers get at the meaning: that no one is inferior, that freedom is imperative, that individual triumph is possible and admirable, that injustice is to be fought against. Allen's church walkout even prefigures the resistance of Rosa Parks to sitting in the back of the bus. But this kind of interpretation presupposes language as a conduit for some other "true meaning" or message. Allen would be assumed to have chosen the standard styles as a smart rhetorical move to make his story known to a broader audience. But if we see through a translanguaging lens, we can begin to see Allen's choices as concessions, however smart, to the workings of powerful language ideologies. We can assume he possessed far more capacity for producing meaning than the language variety and written genre allowed for (Otheguy, García, and Reid 2015). And we can, through the absences and gaps in the archive, begin to imagine what those capacities for meaning—for agency, for liberation—must really have been.

### TRANSLINGUAL PRACTICE: BEYOND CODE-SWITCHING

Traditionally, people have understood multilingualism as the containment of two or more named languages within a single individual: person A speaks language A, then learns language B (perhaps in school, perhaps in the world, through travel or emigrating), then perhaps learns a language C. In order to count as "knowing" the language, one must speak it "fluently," or what the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages calls "advanced

high” or “superior” proficiency. Proficiency is understood to exist in several modes of communication: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. And so the ideology goes that it is most desirable to become as close to a native speaker as possible, particularly a highly educated native speaker who not only speaks in a generally educated way but also reads and writes all kinds of specialized texts that demand specialized language (Kramsch 1997).<sup>10</sup> Because of this elevation of the (educated) native speaker, even a person who might use a language quite competently may never think herself a fluent speaker because of her non-native accent, her select command of idiom, or her reliance on embodied speech—body language, intonation, prosody—from her native community.

This feeling of inadequacy is likely to derive from the student’s experience with the majority of U.S. school language curricula, which have tended to default to a “subtractive” approach to multilingualism in which the second language is acquired at the expense of the first language. At the root of these experiences, and at the root of the way most people currently understand language, usually in unconscious ways, is monolingualist ideology. As Canagarajah (2013b, 12) puts it, “The notion of bounded languages, with neatly patterned grammatical structures of their own, has been an asset for product-oriented teaching. The norms and standards that come with monolingual orientation have served as a benchmark for language assessment and social stratification for a long time.” In other words, because nearly everyone has been to school, the school-based pedagogies and assessments that surround language learning have powerfully communicated their underlying monolingualist foundations throughout the U.S. and international communities, such that most people are unaware that anything but a monolingualist paradigm exists. However, as the example of the Germantown school illustrates, it is practically impossible to isolate languages in an institution such as a school, unless the schools themselves are segregated. Students themselves mix in common areas and in certain classes where some type of translanguagual communication takes place, even if it is not a conventional “conversation” as those with a monolingual orientation would understand communication.

At the same time, given the increased visibility of cultural diversity in the United States, many people are becoming aware of language practices that fall under the translanguagual umbrella. The term *code-switching*, for instance, was first introduced by linguists but has come into the mainstream and is even the name of an NPR show. The term often refers to a speaker’s ability to “switch” in and out of language varieties depending on the situation, for example by those who can speak African American English Vernacular (AAVE), or “Black language,” as well as “Standard” American English, what

Rosina Lippi-Green (2012, 57–61) calls \*Standard American English (\*SAE) with an asterisk to denote its mythological status (no one truly speaks a single, unchanging variety; all language changes, over time and space and from person to person).<sup>11</sup> In other words, code-switching as a concept has become better known in popular culture as people have become aware that Black language is a distinct form rather than a deficient variety of English. Teachers have been trained to respect students' connections to Black language, so that rather than telling children their language is "wrong," they might teach them to code-switch instead, recognizing that they will be unfairly judged in the public world if they do not speak \*SAE. For example, in Richard Allen's autobiography, we might assume that he code-switched into \*SAE to connect with his white readers, though he himself was Black and preached before Black congregations, presumably in Black vernacular.

But *code-switching* has been used differently by different scholars, and its definition has been a source of debate, particularly when it is interpreted to invoke a conservative model of language that teaches speakers of so-called nonstandard varieties how to keep their home languages safely out of public display. Vershawn Ashanti Young (2009, 51) makes a particular case of this kind of code-switching, what he calls a "translation model" that is "steeped in a segregationist, racist logic that contradicts our best efforts and hopes for our students." He advocates instead for "code-meshing," which makes all of the language possibilities in a speaker's repertoire available for use at any given time. Young calls our attention to when president-elect Barack Obama, late in 2008, visited the restaurant Ben's Chili Bowl in Washington, D.C. After numerous interactions with people in the restaurant in \*SAE, he responded to the Black staff person, when she tried to give him change for his twenty-dollar bill, with the words "Nah, we straight" and a noticeably rising, AAVE-style intonation (49). Young sees Obama's verbal performance not so much as a kind of deliberate rhetorical signaling as simply "what happens in actual practice—because in reality the languages aren't so disparate after all" (59).

For scholar Ana Celia Zentella (1997, 84–85), however, Obama's speech in this case would have been an example of what she calls language alternation because the addressee had changed—albeit in a complicated way, because Obama knew the cameras were running and many people were in the room. By switching to AAVE, Obama signaled to the Black cashier that he literally and figuratively spoke her language. In her research on Spanglish, which blends Spanish and English, Zentella finds that speakers freely draw on all their linguistic repertoire when they are speaking with others who can do the same. Doing so, in fact, is very much a rhetorical choice of the speaker,

who has many resources to draw from in constructing meaning between herself and her interlocutor. For example, a code-switch can be used to indicate a change in topic: a girl says to a friend, “Vamo/h/ a preguntarle. It’s raining!” or to check with the listener when she says, “¿Porque estamos en huelga de gasolina, right?” (94). The significance of this mixing, as Ana Celia Zentella points out, is that the listener, and the situation, has not changed for the speaker.

For Zentella, language practices like Spanglish are real code-switching, while “language alternation” denotes the ability to change codes according to the situation (82). Her argument is that “code switching is, fundamentally, a conversational activity via which speakers negotiate meaning with each other, like *salsa* dancers responding to each other’s intricate steps and turns” (113), an activity that “accomplishes important cultural and conversational work” and *not*, as commonly assumed, a “chaotic mixture” of languages or simply a blending of languages when the speaker does not know either language fully. More to my point, many users of Spanglish have acquired a consciousness and a pride in their language that challenges traditional ideas that they are deficient speakers (82). These examples are just one relatively familiar aspect of translanguing practice.

Thus, this awareness, and even appreciation, of code-switching represents an important shift in public understanding of language.<sup>12</sup> I invoke it for readers who are new to the idea of translanguing approaches, who may want to keep code-switching in mind as a concrete example of the set of practices I investigate in this book. But I begin with code-switching for another reason, too, and that is for the ways it opens up the debate as we enter into the theoretical aspects of translanguing thought. In particular, academic debates about code-switching help us understand spatial thinking about language and why it is important to move beyond purely spatial thinking, as I suggested about the multicultural and multilingual narratives of Philadelphia. As we see in the two examples above, it is often not clear if code-switching refers to a speaker’s ability to change codes when a situation differs (for example, when a speaker of AAVE and \*SAE uses AAVE at home and \*SAE in a workplace that is predominately white), or a speaker’s ability to mix codes within a single rhetorical situation (for example, when two New York Puerto Rican children are arguing with one another, as Zentella describes), what Young calls “code-meshing.” In both cases, however, the point is that the speaker claims agency through her linguistic and rhetorical decision-making.

Otheguy, García, and Reid (2015, 282) argue that since the term *translanguaging* (or *translingual practice*) came into scholarly discourse around 2009, it has frequently been made synonymous with *code-switching*.<sup>13</sup> But because

*code-switching* describes the “close, alternating succession” of languages, it perpetuates the idea that separate language entities actually exist. “No matter how broadly and positively conceived,” they write, “the notion of code switching still constitutes the endorsement of the idea that what the bilingual manipulates, however masterfully, are two separate linguistic systems” (282). Translanguaging “helps to disrupt the socially constructed language hierarchies that are responsible for the suppression of the languages of many minoritized people. . . . Translanguaging does this by insisting on the well-known, but almost always forgotten, postulate that a named language is a social construct, not a mental or psychological one, and on the radical implications of this position for one’s theoretical conceptualization of bilingual individuals and societies” (283).

A translangual understanding of language thus transcends the structuralist assumptions of language as system and as space. Otheguy, García, and Reid assert that “translanguaging is *the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of names (and usually national and state) languages*” (281, original emphasis). These scholars’ definition alerts us to the ways that individual speakers are forced to monitor themselves for “appropriate” speech to be sure that they are conforming with their environment, always in order to be considered socially acceptable, sometimes even for their own physical safety. (Indeed, I believe this lack of “watchful adherence” is what Zentella is describing in her research on Spanglish.) Focusing on how communication is collectively created across individuals, research in translangual practices takes in a range of activities that engage language in motion, language difference, and thinking and speaking about language.

This orientation can then be applied broadly in understanding language use among all kinds of people and communities, even when they look to be monolingual at the outset. Canagarajah (2010, 175) provides the following useful chart for this orientation. (Note that his heading “multilingual” in fact expresses what we have since come to name as translangual, and that it says nothing about named language varieties.)

Monolingual Orientation	Multilingual Orientation
Focus on language/culture	Focus on rhetorical context
Language=uniform discourse/genre	Language=multiple discourses/genres

Repertoire of the language/culture	Repertoire of the writer
Texts as homogenous	Texts as hybrid
Writer as passive	Writer as agentive
Writers as linguistically/ culturally conditioned	Writer as rhetorically creative
Writer as coming with uniform identities	Writer as constructing multiple identities

B. Horner and colleagues (2011, 311) call this orientation a “disposition” and make it clear that monolingual individuals can and do adopt a translanguaging disposition. Doing so in order to inform a historical methodology is my project in this book.

Translanguaging practice thus can be observed in a range of activities that are practiced in varying degrees by different communities and individuals. Moreover, all individuals and communities are capable of such practices. Linguaging that falls under the umbrella of translanguaging practice includes:

- Code-switching, that is, using more than one language in a communicative exchange (be it language, dialect, discourse, or register).
- Code-meshing, that is, Young’s term for blending codes together synonymous to what Otheguy, García, and Reid (2015) call translanguaging. Young and others advocate that code-meshing be made available as a strategy for students in classrooms and thus replace the current, widespread policy of teaching code-switching (Young 2009; Young, Martinez, and National Council of Teachers of English 2011).
- Creating productive sentences without regard for, or even awareness of, the rules of syntax in one or both languages (“rules of syntax” being not simply rules for politeness but seemingly unchangeable rules for constructing meaningful sentences. For example, Noam Chomsky’s famous sentence “Colorless green ideas sleep furiously” is grammatical because a speaker of English can see that it is well-formed, even if semantically it makes no sense). Additional examples include Lu’s (1994) student who wrote “can able to” as an intentional play with English verb forms, and Canagarajah’s (2013b, 35–36) fruit seller Siva, who constructs the phrase



“paLam price two rupees” (the bananas cost two rupees) without regard for the syntactical rules of either English or Tamil.

- Translating: Zentella regards translation as a central rhetorical skill of bilinguals (1997, 96); Rebecca Lorimer (2012) calls translation “rhetorical because it is an act of linguistic conflict.” Thus, while a single translation might be seen as representative of monolingualist ideology, the *act* of translating demands translanguaging activity. Moreover, if translation is about constructing meaning, then translation is always happening, not only when moving across language systems (Pennycook 2008). Laura Gonzales (2018) offers a richly theorized and documented study of what she calls “translation moments.”
- Language brokering, that is, acting as a go-between to help a language user negotiate a new language setting (Jerskey 2013).
- Practicing the “let it pass principle,” in which the speakers move forward in time, working on finding common understanding, and letting go of gaps in understanding (Firth 1996).
- Having an attitude of openness to language: the translanguaging “disposition” (B. Horner et al. 2011, 311) can be adopted even by the monolingual: for example, monolingual teenagers who exhibit translanguaging flexibility in international online gaming (Williams 2009) and Khubchandani’s notions of synergy and serendipity among South Asians (qtd. in Canagarajah 2013b, 39), what he calls a “communication ethos” (Khubchandani 1997, 84).
- Practicing *multiliteracy*, literacy that moves beyond the Western focus on alphabetic literacy and incorporates a variety of visual, auditory, and tactile modes. Such multiliteracy has received a great deal of attention as a necessity in the digital age (Cope, Kalantzis, and New London Group 2000) but has also been recognized as a part of other cultures in history (Canagarajah 2013b, 49), as Damián Baca (2009a) has noted of the indigenous communities of the Oaxacan Federation in Mexico.

This list is just a beginning. It is important to realize that many of these practices blend with linguistic, rhetorical, and literary creativity more generally. The point in general, as Christiane Donahue (2013, 156) puts it, is that translanguaging research “takes as normal the heterogeneity and fluctuating character of languages and language practices within and between peoples, and the difficulties encountered and negotiated, emphasizing fluency in working within and across language differences.” It is this deliberate choice

to emphasize the “within and across” that is key. While we could choose to dwell on the ways that language gaps and losses occur in the face of powerful ideologies, I elect to focus on the significance of these translingual practices and to reveal evidence of these practices in a mainstream site central to U.S. history.

Before I move on, let me clarify a few political points to my stance. First, Otheguy, García, and Reid’s (2015, 282–83) privileging of the translingual has been challenged by some scholars who see code-switching as a practice that “works against the efforts of minoritized communities to protect and revitalize their languages and linguistic practices.” For example, Scott Richard Lyons (2009, 79), who speaks from a Native perspective as a member of the Ojibwe, advocates for “rhetorical sovereignty,” which “requires a sense of boundedness or separation that hybridity will always contest.” These challenges stem from the fact that—as with race—even when we acknowledge language separation to be culturally constructed, it is nevertheless reified: effectively made real. Indeed, individual languages have their own complex networks of ideology that define them and link them to structures of power and marginalization.

Let’s return to our stories of Philadelphia to think about what this means. It’s easy to see that language is a social construct when we see how it aligns with political history: to the place between the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers in the seventeenth century came the English, the Swedes, and the Germans, all hailing from different corners of Western Europe. Their languages aligned with the spaces they came from and the political histories that created those spaces. They entered a space where indigenous people had languages, as well, and in coming into that space, the Europeans named, translated, borrowed from, and subsequently tried to obliterate those languages. The Europeans also experienced contact among their own languages. If we were to research all the occasions in which these languages came into contact, assuming we had the ability to go back and observe language in real time (and not through archived documents as we must do, lacking time travel), we would no doubt find many instances of code-switching, and could thus celebrate the existence of translanguaging in this place and time.

But those instances would not change the outcome of the story, in which English wins. The story would simply replace the word “territory” or “space” with “language,” and the end term would be “English” rather than “United States of America” (as opposed to “German” or “Lenape” rather than “Great Britain” or “precolonial indigenous nations”). We would admire the linguistic and rhetorical creativity of individuals in the meantime, but English would still win.<sup>14</sup> It is the fact that English wins that leads Lyons and others to work

so hard to restore and enliven indigenous languages. What I am interested in doing in this book is looking at how translanguaging practice engages precisely these language ideologies that have been so powerful. In other words, I choose to dwell on the ways in which human language experience is greater than reductive ideologies, all the while recognizing that these ideologies and their material histories are never not at play. I am interested in the choices that a community makes about its language practices, whether choosing to invoke a linguistic sovereignty as Lyons (2009) argues, or choosing to blend languages, or even choosing monolingualism. It is the ways in which these choices are made that matter as we work to reconceive of difference in the U.S. past.

A second clarification has to do with the gap between observing concrete practices and using those practices to generate new theory about how language works in communities. As I mentioned, Otheguy, García, and Reid (2015) argue that translanguaging as a theory quickly became conflated with code-switching as a practice, perpetuating structuralist, spatial, and ultimately monolingualist theories of language. This conflation has also meant that it becomes easy to create arguments around language practices like code-switching that, by virtue of uncovering little-known forms of agency, glorify and idealize the language practices of minoritized people (Canagarajah 2013b, 3). These arguments, while valuable, stop short of truly thinking through alternative lenses, in which minority or marginalized perspectives are recognized to have been constructed through the oppressive social regime, just as the languages themselves have been. It also shuts out language practices that may not fit the approved list of clearly recognizable instances of translanguaging, like the ones I give above. For example, Lyons advocates for the teaching of \*Standard English in schools for American Indian children, precisely so that languages can be granted singular recognition in a colonized world that has consistently forced mixing upon them.

These varying political viewpoints, in my mind, all count as part of the translanguaging orientation. Likewise, I have aimed to embrace the possibilities of translanguaging theory without eliding difference, as Keith Gilyard (2016) warns. I make this point because historical work means that we cannot go into the archives expecting to find practices that suit our current proclivities. For example, when I enter the archives of early national Philadelphia, nearly all of the documents I find will be written in English, and a fairly \*Standard English at that. That does not mean that nearly all of the language practices that took place at the time took place in \*Standard English, nor does it mean that people were powerless to English-only ideology—in fact, I argue that it did not exist in the form in which we know it today—nor

does it mean that English was inevitable. I go into these archives in order to view them through my own translingual disposition, as well as to discover how writers then may reveal translingual dispositions, even while their texts manifest monolingual features.

Finally, reorienting ourselves to a translingual approach is central to applied work in education, and readers will see by now that this study in history is not coming from the field of history. My perspectives build on the work of scholars in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), sociolinguistics, composition, and education such as Zentella, García, Young, Canagarajah, and many more. Scholar-educators who get to know their students' lives and histories get to be very good at unearthing the broader ideologies that limit those lives. They see how material practices such as language proficiency tests lead directly from monolingualist ideologies, which endorse a single standard language as socially acceptable and necessary. My study is not directly about the history of education as such; I seek insight into pluralist democracy in general. And so when I entered the archives, I did not set out to write a history of education *per se*. I set out to find ways that people thought about language. But thinking about language and its material impact in everyday practice seems to happen most often when thinking about schooling.

One of the reasons that early national Philadelphia is such a cogent place for unearthing this thinking on language is because it lay at the center of a new nation, where questions about language power, policy, and practice were still open. Institutionalized education systems had not yet been established. But William Penn had written a mandate for an education system into the charter of the colony, and Pennsylvanians took up ways to act on that mandate, in ways that were responsive to their own communities. Each of the examples that I discuss in this book draws from these educational settings and the remarkable "teachers"—whether formally named as teachers or not—whose words have been left to us. If working from a disciplinary framework rooted in education and rhetoric means I have failed to take into account many excellent studies in history and related disciplines, I trust that readers will take my gaps as an invitation to further transdisciplinary conversation—a dialogue that might be as translingual as one could find.

To summarize, translingual research involves both recognizing and appreciating translingual practices, as well as reorienting ourselves toward poststructuralist conceptions of language as unbounded by space and created out of a speaker's full repertoire and in collaboration with others.<sup>15</sup> To that end, once we adopt this translingual disposition, we can use it to understand communication even in communities and texts that are apparently

monolingual.<sup>16</sup> And when we do so, we tend to find sites of schooling, whether formal or informal, as particularly cogent places for this kind of thinking.

In the next chapter, I examine what it means to deploy a translangual framework in the archive in order to rethink history. In chapter 3 I extend my discussion of the German-speaking community and one clergyman's efforts to establish a German-language college. In chapter 4 I reveal how the Quakers, while privileged by their status as native speakers in English, grappled with the questions of higher learning and the presence of Latin as a learned lingua franca and whether teaching it would fundamentally alter their understanding of their faith. In chapter 5 I turn to the African American community and clergyman Richard Allen, who argued for a Methodist-inflected religious practice as rhetorically aligned with the language culture of his community. We can see, then, that these practices may or may not take place in English. But in each of these cases, people were consciously thinking about language and how it works, about language diversity, and about language and its role in mediating both community and nation. The questions of schooling as well as faith and values are integral to these forms of thinking. And the writers whose work I explore exhibit agency and creativity: they are, then, translangual representatives, and they are core to the founding of the United States. I discuss these implications in the final chapter.

### CIRCUMSCRIBED BY MEMORY

In her poem "She Tries Her Tongue; Her Silence Softly Breaks" (and throughout the volume of the same name), M. NourbeSe Philip (1989, 98) meditates on the theft of language that took place as part of the slave trade. Through a series of short verses in the poem, a speaker wonders, "Might I . . . like Philomela . . . sing / continue / over / into/ . . . pure utterance." In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Philomela was raped by her brother-in-law Tereus. When she threatens to tell of his crime, he cuts out her tongue, effectively raping her a second time. Unable to speak, she tells her sister the story by weaving a tapestry; when they then work together to enact revenge on Tereus, Philomela is transformed into a nightingale before he can hurt her. Her language becomes image, then song. Philomela's story suggests something of the work of a translangual research project: one must look for forms of language that we may not recognize as language, and which tell stories that we may not know how to interpret. The song of the nightingale is language stripped of words—signs—that correspond with signifiers, a "pure utterance" that is simultaneously beautiful and poignant, yet a mystery to human ears trained in verbal language.

By aligning Philomela's story with that of a speaker who has inherited the

legacy of Caribbean slavery, colonialism, and racism, along with its hybrid language traditions, Philip tells how a crime does not occur only once but resonates through history. She digs into the question of what it means when the language that one speaks is not the language one can claim as one's heritage, at least not in full. What are the words that were forgotten, stolen, erased? What of the words we do know: how were they forced, imposed, extolled as singular truths? How can we recontextualize them, breathe new life into them? The words imprinted on American consciousness that I listed in the beginning of this chapter—"happiness," "equal," "self-evident"—have held great promise, have been engaged with great success for liberation, and yet have been put at the center of experience for some at the expense of others pushed to the margins. Each of these words "creates a center / circumscribed by memory" (Philip 1989, 96), and that circumscribing, the circling of other languages and other possibilities for meaning, is what I seek to recover in this book.