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Chapter 11. 'Why speak you this broken French when y'are a whole Englishman?': French, Travelling, Self-Satire, and Cultural Mediation in London City Comedy

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Introduction: travelling and city comedies

Writing on London city comedies when discussing early modern travel narratives and encounters with faraway lands seems paradoxical, given how localized these comedies are. But reality may be less paradoxical than it appears: early modern England, after all, was expanding, and contacts with the wider world especially developed in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The results of this were not only felt in the increasing number of travel narratives and drama, but also in the everyday life of the growing, multilingual and multicultural London with its ever-growing number of immigrants or foreign merchants, and in its literary production.[1] John

[1] On the links between overseas travel and English literary multilingualism, see for instance Hsy, *Trading Tongues*, esp. chapter 2. The spike in migration both from English provinces and from outside of England in sixteenth-century London is discussed at length in Yungblut, *Strangers Settled Here Amongst Us*, chapter 1. See also Kermode, *Aliens and Englishness in Elizabethan Drama*, pp. 60-63.

Webster and Thomas Middleton's 1621 play *Anything for a Quiet Life* (1621), a typical example of commercial city comedy set in London, deals extensively with the domestic results of cloth imports; and Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and John Marston's *Eastward Ho!* (1605) stages a mock trip to Virginia ending in a shipwreck down the Thames, illustrating the imaginary power held by travelling in early modern London. Whereas these plays do not belong to the category of travel drama *per se*, they do correspond to what Claire Jowitt and David McInnis call 'journeying plays', i.e. plays on the fringe of fictional travel narratives, which are 'concerned with the motivation and consequences of travel'.[2]

The discussion of both *Eastward Ho!* and *Anything for a Quiet Life* (henceforth *AQL*) in terms of their links with travelling, including through their use of languages, is not new. Brian Gibbons and Andrew Gordon have addressed the issues of mobility and voyaging in *Eastward Ho!*; and, although *AQL* has received relatively little critical attention in comparison, Marianne Montgomery has recently offered a compelling analysis of multilingualism and travelling in Webster and Middleton's play.[3] But, perhaps because the two plays are generally analysed separately, studies have tended to overlook the similarities in their staging of polyglot encounters. In both cases, the French language is specifically used by English characters most closely in connection to travelling. In *Eastward Ho!*, French is spoken by newly appointed knight Sir Petronel Flash, who plans to set off for Virginia with his companion Quicksilver, in an attempt to enrich himself and to get away from his creditors. In *AQL*, the bilingual sea captain

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[2] Jowitt and McInnis, 'Introduction', pp. 3-4; McManus, '"Constant Changelings", Theatrical Form, and Migration', p. 210.

[3] Gibbons, 'Wrong End of the Telescope', pp. 141-59; Gordon, 'Traffic of the Stage', pp. 92-110. Apart from early debates surrounding the authorship of the play, usefully summarized in Murray, *Study of John Webster*, pp. 261-63, and Montgomery, 'Language and Seafaring', pp. 111-27, the play is mentioned in Hoenselaars, *Images of Englishmen and Foreigners*, pp. 140-43, and discussed at greater length in Coleman, 'Purchasing Purgatory', pp. 87-103.

and former pirate Young Franklin served in Sir Walter Raleigh's 'ill-starred' Guiana voyage (1.1.168), following which he was planning to assist 'The Duke of Florence' with 'some small service 'gainst the Turks' (1.1.170; 172),[4] but changed his plan upon being called to London to participate in an expedition to the East Indies.[5] Whereas previous studies have acknowledged both characters' French-speaking, the French language has been treated as a general stand-in for foreign languages spoken by Englishmen, and the specific representation of Frenchness in the plays has been overlooked. This echoes Marjorie Rubright's argument that studies of city plays tend to conflate European foreigners and languages 'into the larger category of the continental "Other"'.[6]

This chapter sets out to bridge this gap by analysing the specific links between French and travelling in both comedies, studying more specifically how French plays into the characterization of the English gentlemen speaking it, and how it interacts with the focus on distant travelling in both plays. In order to offer an analysis which is as comprehensive as possible, the first part of the chapter studies the roles and functions of travelling and distant lands in both plays, before concentrating on the use of French as both a stand-in for the distant other and a means of ethnocentric analysis. The last section of this chapter will suggest that French in

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[4] Montgomery argues that this probably refers to the Tuscan Order of St Stephen and its raids on Mediterranean and Aegean coastal towns, and to the death of Cosimo II de Medici in February 1621. 'Language and Seafaring', p. 113.
[5] Probably an allusion to missions organized by the East India Company, founded in 1600. In 1621, the company had 'just concluded payment on its first joint-stock', making it a central actor of London long-distance travelling in the seventeenth century. Through his involvement in contemporary ventures presumably well-known enough to be identifiable by the 1621 audience, Franklin is thus 'squarely identified with long-range English overseas projects of the period'. Montgomery, 'Language and Seafaring', p. 113.
[6] Rubright, 'Going Dutch in London City Comedy', p. 89.

both plays can be seen as a cultural mediator, helping to make sense of an expanding London which may have felt as foreign to its inhabitants as the wide, dangerous seas.

***Eastward Ho!* and *AQL* as journeying plays**

The very title of *Eastward Ho!* already points to the central role of mobility in the play. In the spring of 1605, the cry of the Thames watermen was probably associated with the court of James I; and the play openly illustrates the double social and geographical implications of this association.[7] Quicksilver's explicit aim is to gain favour at court through the wealth gained in his American voyage; and Petronel and Quicksilver's seafaring enterprise, associated with their wish for wealth and success, requires them to travel east down the Thames. Parallel to that, Gertrude, a merchant's daughter craving to elevate her social status and Sir Petronel's new wife, wants to go east to reach the castle that her husband promised – although she never finds it, Petronel admitting that it is only 'built with air' (2.3.8-9). The trip to Virginia, from this perspective, is part of a play's focus on mobility, both physical and metaphorical.[8] But the journey, just like Quicksilver's ascension to court, is more perilous than Petronel and the sea captain Seagull's Utopian colonial fantasies of a Virginia in which rich materials are so plentiful that natives' 'chamber-pots are pure gold' (3.3.26).[9] Quicksilver's mistress Sindefy is quick to point it out when she warns her lover that his free-spiritedness would be ill-suited at court:

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[7] Petter, 'Introduction', p. xxiii.
[8] Gordon, 'Traffic of the Stage', pp. 92-110.
[9] Seagull considerably simplifies *Utopia*'s rhetoric, ignoring its point about the relativity of money's worth and the absurdities of basing human value on it: '[T]hey eat and drink in earthen and glass vessels […], of gold and silver they make commonly chamber-pots and other vessels that serve for most vile uses […] Furthermore, of the same metals they make great chains, fetters […] wherein they tie their bondmen. Finally whosoever for any offence be infamed, by their ears

> The seas, you say, are uncertain: but he that sails in your court seas shall find 'em ten times fuller of hazard; wherein to see what is to be seen is torment more than a free spirit can endure.[10]
>
> (2.2.65-68)

Just as planned by Sindefy, all of the characters' attempts at social climbing end in disaster, culminating in the would-be adventurers' shipwreck, casting Petronel on the Isle of Dogs, a place hosting debtors keen to avoid their creditors, and Quicksilver at Wapping Gallows, where pirates were executed – making merchant Touchstone's warning that 'Eastward Ho will make you go Westward Ho' (1.1.112; meaning, to Tyburn gallows) practically prophetic.[11] Although a pleasant escapist dream from Quicksilver's 'silly City' (2.2.55), the aspirations to social and geographical mobility, epitomized in the Virginia trip, end up being little more than Thomas More's *Utopia*, whose rhetoric the would-be sailors blatantly misunderstood: a non-place,

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hang rings of gold […] Thus by all means possible they procure to have gold and silver among them in reproach and infamy'. More, 'Utopia', p. 71. Hillary Eklund suggests that Seagull's naïve recuperation of More's words is probably a satire of the positive rhetoric of abundance found in Seagull's second source besides Thomas More, namely Richard Hakluyt's *The Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation*, and its optimistic notion that the colonies are the best solution to England's scarcity, overpopulation, and pauperization problems. Eklund, *Literature and Moral Economy*, p. 63. On the wealth of the colonies, Hakluyt states for instance that 'we saw many plates of wrought copper, which they esteeme more then [*sic*] golde'. Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, p. 433. See C. G. Petter's note on Seagull's description of Virginia, *Eastward Ho!*, p. 61; the parallels with Hakluyt were noted as early as 1918 in Gilbert, 'Virginia in *Eastward Ho*', pp. 183-84.

[10] Ironically, Sindefy seems to be somewhat more aware of the dangers of seafaring highlighted in Hakluyt than the travellers themselves. On the simplifications of *Eastward Ho!*'s travellers' interpretation of travel literature and the play's ironical insistence on the differences between actual travelling and consumption of travel writing, see also Gordon, 'Traffic of the Stage', pp. 93-94.

[11] On this, see also Howard, *Theatre of a City*, p. 100.

existing only in the travellers' fantasies.[12] In the end, the reality of London city catches up with the wayward gentlemen, leading them to the Counter, a prison for debtors.

Similar escapist fantasies can be found in *AQL*. The merchant Camlet is shown pining for exile upon the Bermudas, described as a 'fine peaceable island' (5.2.89), and Lady Cressingham, the young and ambitious wife of alchemist Sir Francis Cressingham, aspires to buy an estate in Ireland, evoking the rhetoric of colonial riches associated with the Irish plantation of Ulster.[13] Just as in *Eastward Ho!*, however, these trips do not materialize: Camlet renounces his fantasies when he is reconciled with his wife; Lady Cressingham's plan is eventually revealed to be a ruse designed to test her husband; and Young Franklin's promised expedition to the East Indies does not take place because of financial setbacks.

But the main link with travel found in *AQL* may be its insistence on cloth and clothing items, highlighted in Leslie Thomson's introduction to her edition.[14] Given the importance and the changing face of the cloth trade in early modern England, such a focus is unsurprising in a play concentrating on London life.[15] Sartorial considerations, in this case, effectively remind the audience of the prevalence of foreign imports in Middleton's London, establishing a diffuse, but constant, link between London and travelling throughout the play.[16] The French prostitute

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[12] Eklund, *Literature and Moral Economy*, p. 63. Seagull's inability to distinguish More's text from Hakluyt's, and his trust of both texts as reliable sources, is also commented on in Jowitt, 'Hakluyt's Legacy', pp. 298-99.
[13] Coleman, 'Purchasing Purgatory', p. 92. The colonial rhetoric is similar to that of Hakluyt highlighted in Eklund, *Literature and Moral Economy*, p. 63. Lady Cressingham's colonial aspirations, like Petronel's naïve version of Virginia, are suggested to be unrealistic: she names places too remote from one another for her plan to buy them all as part a single estate to be possible. See Leslie Thomson's note on 4.1.188 in her edition, p. 1619.
[14] Thomson, 'Introduction', p. 1593.
[15] On the cloth trade and the growing role of fashion in early modern European luxury cloth imports, see among others Lemire and Riello, 'East & West', pp. 891-95.
[16] On the role of imports and overseas trade in early modern England, see among others Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, chapter 1, esp. pp. 4; 24-25.

Margarita is recognized by her 'French hood', Camlet sells foreign luxury cloth, and Cressingham's unruly wife dresses in foreign clothes before more modestly re-fashioning herself in 'civil habit', presumably English wool, when she reveals herself to be a proper, submissive wife who was merely testing her new husband.[17] Despite this, imports are mainly treated as an everyday part of life, and the play neither dwells on the issue of foreign clothing, nor treats it as inherently problematic.[18] Camlet, for instance, praises the quality of his merchandise by stating how the 'King of Naples wears no better silk' (2.2.83-84) and the 'great Turk has worse satin at's elbow than this' (106-07); and his wife asserts her proper English status while wearing foreign 'pantofles' (5.2.50).[19]

Travelling thus seems to fulfil a double function in both *Eastward Ho!* and *AQL*. On the one hand, it is a means of escapism from a London perceived either as too complicated and noisy – in the case of Camlet, who desperately aspires to a peaceful and silent life – or as too small and limiting one's ambitions – in the case of Quicksilver and Petronel. But these fantasies, in both cases, are shown to be unrealistic, eventually leading to a more grounded conclusion and indirectly prompting the reinsertion of the dreamers into London society, either through expiation in prison or through the fulfilment of their aspirations within the city.[20] On the other

[17] Montgomery, 'Language and Seafaring', p. 111. On the links between the importation of luxury cloth (and, more widely, clothing), language, and travelling in early modern England, see Sarah Knight's chapter in this volume. On clothing and English national identity in the early modern period, see also Hentschell, *Culture of Cloth*, chapter 4.
[18] As also noted by Montgomery, 'Language and Seafaring', p. 111.
[19] Montgomery, 'Language and Seafaring', p. 123.
[20] This argument is also developed by Gordon when he establishes parallels between *Utopia* and *Eastward Ho!*. Gordon argues that *Eastward Ho!*, by staging a failed trip to a dreamy 'perfect commonwealth', forces the characters and audience to re-concentrate their efforts on how to attain a better society in London, much like More's *Utopia* indirectly addresses the issue of how to improve English society through the staging of the ideal island whose geographical situation remains unclear. Gordon, 'Traffic of the Stage', p. 94. Peter Holland interestingly mentions how, in several cases, failed or imaginary travelling in drama proves 'as restorative as a real one',

hand, travelling and foreign imports are presented as regular parts of life, alongside other, more ‘domestic’ travelling and wares, highlighting the growing role of the foreign in Jacobean London and the city’s cosmopolitanism.[21] The distant foreign is seen as both material and cultural capital, present in the collective imagination, and, especially in the case of foreign clothing, seen as a potent force of social differentiation, with exotic clothing shown to be a mark of social prestige.[22] Although travelling never occurs on stage, it is thus ‘restage[d] […] as a domestic activity’.[23]

The duality between exoticism and familiarity illustrated in these two functions brings to light the profoundly ambivalent relationship of early modern Londoners with the foreign, seen as both an inherent part of the city and as a culturally different, sometimes threatening, other.[24] This double, paradoxical relationship, in turn, points to a third, quite frequent function of staged travelling: the foreign as a means of national self-definition, helping to make sense of one’s own national identity and belonging, and to look at one’s country from a critical distance.[25] In *Eastward Ho!* and *AQL*, I argue, this function is especially fulfilled through the use of French. As both one of England’s most familiar enemies and a historical source of comparison and inspiration – to use Jean-Christophe Mayer’s apt definition, a ‘dissembling semblance’ of

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fulfilling the therapeutic or didactic function of travelling for the characters without them actually leaving their country. Holland, ‘“Travelling Hopefully”’, p. 176.

[21] Gertrude’s journey to the countryside is presented alongside Seagull and Petronel’s distant voyage, and Camlet’s clothes are just one of the many items and services present in *AQL*. Similar arguments can be found in Coleman, ‘Purchasing Purgatory’, p. 88; Montgomery, ‘Language and Seafaring’, p. 112; Howard, *Theatre of a City*, p. 8.

[22] Sarah Knight’s chapter in this volume similarly highlights how analogies based on luxury material are used to describe the quality of one’s language, including on the commercial stage (p. XXX).

[23] Jowitt and McInnis, ‘Introduction’, p. 4.

[24] The term ‘foreign’ is taken here in the contemporary sense, as opposed to the early modern sense of an outsider to one’s city.

[25] Gibbons, ‘Wrong End of the Telescope’, p. 162; Bate, ‘Elizabethans in Italy’, p. 79.

England – France epitomizes the paradoxical relationship to the other in city plays, marked by both alienation and familiarity.[26] French is thus used in the plays as a substitute for the present-absent distant other, bringing the foreign home and helping to give it a sense of familiarity. It fulfils a role of self-analysis and self-satire, negotiating English identity in a cosmopolitan London through the confrontation with alterity. As will be developed in the next sections, French, used by the two characters most closely tied with travelling, establishes bridges between the self and the other, acting as an intermediary in the uneasy relationship with the internalized, but inherently different, foreign.

French in English: Petronel and the Frenchified Englishman

The shared history of conquests, wars, and royal intermarriages between France and England, seen for instance in the Hundred Years' War, created an ambiguous relationship between the two countries, marked by both attraction and repulsion, identification and rejection. As an object of fascination, even a 'fetish', for England, France perhaps unsurprisingly became a privileged point of reference in the exercise of national self-definition in the late medieval and early modern periods, with English self-images of straightforwardness, honesty, simplicity in speech, humility, and masculinity being constructed partly in dialogue with French stereotypes of courtliness, duplicity, promiscuity, pretension, and effeminacy.[27] The English interest in French fashion,

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[26] Mayer, 'Introduction', p. 26.
[27] The term 'fetish' comes from Deanne Williams, *French Fetish* (the term is explained on pp. 13-16). On common stereotypes of the French, see Hoenselaars, *Images of Englishmen and Foreigners*, p. 16; Florack, 'French', pp. 154-59. On French as a means of English self-definition, see also Saenger, *Shakespeare and the French Borders of English*, pp. 2-4. Although an important 'other' for England, the French were, needless to say, not the only community through which a sense of English identity was developed and negotiated in the Tudor era.

additionally, was coupled with a fear of losing one's identity, perhaps reinforced by the relatively widespread conception that Englishmen were easily influenced by foreign customs.[28] Crude as it is, the 'morbus gallicus', or syphilis, may be the most representative example of this fear of contamination, tied with the French stereotype of lasciviousness and seductiveness: a fear that foreignness might infect and take over Englishness, that English may become French.[29]

When Sir Petronel Flash is stranded on the Isle of Dogs after the alcohol-fuelled abortive trip to Virginia, he mistakenly believes he has arrived on the coasts of France. Faced with Seagull's scepticism, he argues that he can recognize the 'elevation of the pole, and […] the altitude and latitude of the climate' (4.1.142-43) and, upon meeting what he believes to be Frenchmen, he ironically asks Seagull if he thinks that 'our Englishmen are so Frenchified that a man knows not whether he be in France or in England when he sees 'em' (146-48). He then addresses the purported Frenchman as follows:

> *Monsieur, plaist-il d'avoir pitié de nostre grand infortunes* [*sic*]. *Je suis un povre chevalier d'Angleterre qui a souffri l'infortune de naufrage.* […] *Oui, monsieur, il est trop vraye ; mais vous scavés bien nous sommes toutes subject a fortune.*
>
> (Sir, please have mercy on our great misfortune. I am a poor knight of England who suffered the misfortune of a shipwreck […] Yes, sir, it is too true; but you know we are all subject to fortune.)[30](4.1.153-58)

Donatella Montini, for instance, mentions the prominent role of the Italian community in her contribution to this volume (p. XXX).

[28] McEachern, *Poetics of English Nationhood*, p. 26. This fear was presumably linked to the fear of estrangement of the English language through its capacity to assimilate foreign vocabulary On this, see also Emily Stevenson's chapter in this volume, pp. XX-XX.

[29] Howard, *Theatre of a City*, p. 145. See also Fouassier, '"French disease"', pp. 193-206.

[30] Translations are my own.

He is immediately corrected, however; and his interlocutor's question ('Why speak you this broken French when y'are a whole Englishman?', 160-61) only further demonstrates Petronel's incompetence. Not only is he 'ultimately incapable of navigation by topographical or celestial signs', but he is grossly mistaken even in his reading of his own city.[31] His conceited, misplaced self-confidence is translated further into his broken, error-ridden French. Petronel's wished-for translation from a life of roguery and self-serving deceit (seen for instance when he tricks Gertrude into signing off her dowry) into one of long-distance voyages and trade ventures 'for the sake of further enrichment' not only culminates in failure, but it exposes him as an easily deceived fool himself.[32] For all his trickery, apparent wit, and self-confidence, Petronel is ultimately little more than Thomas Dekker's gull in his satirical *Hornbook*: a gallant whose exclusive focus on fashion and appearance hides a lack of substance, both material and intellectual, and whose role-playing is not accomplished or informed enough to convincingly assume the shape of a knight, of an adventurer, or of a linguistically able Englishman.[33] Even his tricking skills are much of a façade: his gulling of Gertrude is not his own idea, but is suggested by Quicksilver (2.3), his attempts to steal usurer Security's wife is cut short because of the shipwreck, and his fleeing of his creditors only lands him in the Counter. Petronel's surname, in

[31] Gordon, 'Traffic of the Stage', p. 102.
[32] Zwierlein, 'Shipwrecks in the City'. In addition to the narrative of roguery and that of adventure and seafaring, Anne-Julia Zwierlein identifies a third life plot in city comedies, which she names the 'plot of increase', associated with steady, painstaking increase of wealth through hard work. In *Eastward Ho!*, the best examples of this third plot are Touchstone and his apprentice Golding.
[33] Dekker, *Gull's Hornbook*, ed. by McKerrow; see also Howard, *Theatre of a City*, pp. 6-7. On role-playing, see Leinwand, *City Staged*, pp. 89-90; 109-14. Zwierlein interestingly argues that the traditional plot elements of romances and knightly adventures were recuperated and converted into sea travel adventures with the rise of a mercantile paradigm ('Shipwrecks in the City'). See also Gordon, 'Traffic of the Stage', pp. 101-02.

the end, carries all there is to him: he is a *flash-y* character, but there is not much behind the façade.

Peter Holland interprets Petronel's poor French-speaking skills as 'the authentic voice of the Englishman abroad clinging to his innate sense of cultural superiority'.[34] It is also a probable mockery of James I's court: Petronel's interlocutors, whom he mistakes for Frenchmen, are revealed to speak English with a pastiche of the Scottish accent, effectively comparing Scotsmen with England's ancestral, often vilified 'Other', namely the French.[35] But Petronel's own mocking allusion to the trope of the Frenchified Englishman, ironically, may not be only directed at others: it may be more topical than he thinks, and more telling of his own Englishness. Petronel, after all, seems to correspond to many of the early modern stereotypes associated with the French: he has a marked, but superficial, interest in courtly fashion ('boldness is good fashion and courtlike', 1.1.75); he is rash and excitable, which prompts him to leave for Virginia while drunk; he is pretentious, deceptive, and dishonest, boasting about a castle that does not exist and a title that he has merely bought.[36] He is very easily persuaded that Gertrude will be a shrew, and subsequently turns his attention to Security's wife instead (2.3), illustrating at once his promiscuity and how, 'like a Frenchman', he 'turn[s] and turn[s] again' (*Henry VI*, 3.3.85). Not only, then, are Englishmen 'so Frenchified that a man knows not whether he be in France or

[34] Holland, '"Travelling Hopefully"', p. 174.
[35] It is not the sole example of Scottish mockery in the play. In Act 3, Seagull comments that Virginia is a temperate country where he and his sailors will be able to live free lives 'without sergeants, or courtiers, or lawyers, or intelligencers; only a few industrious Scots, who indeed are dispersed over the face of the whole earth. But as for them, there are no greater friends to Englishmen and England, when they are out on't, in the world, than they are. And for my part, I would a hundred thousand of them were there; for we are all one countrymen now, ye know; and we should find ten times more comfort of them there than we do here' (3.3.37-45). Jonson and Chapman were famously imprisoned in 1605, after the first performances of *Eastward Ho!*. See Petter, 'Introduction', pp. xxiii-xxiv; xxxvii.
[36] This last point is also presumably a criticism of James I's selling and distribution of titles.

in England', but Petronel himself is ironically part of the problem, being unable to distinguish the French behaviours in himself. And, as a proper Frenchified gentleman and appearance-obsessed gallant, Petronel speaks a rather poor French, just like Jonson's *English Monsieur* whose 'whole body should speak French, not he'.[37] The knight's combination of the negative traits of the superficial city gallant who loses himself in his role-playing, and of the stereotypical Englishman losing himself in French fashion, culminates in his mistaking his own country for the coasts of France and, especially, in his ironically self-reflexive comment on French contamination in England. French traits and language, in this case, seem to draw attention to Petronel's own 'foreignness' to the city of London, seen in his inability to understand and recognize it. The characterization of Petronel is thus, ironically perhaps, partly based on traditional anxieties of contamination.

Eastward Ho!, as suggested by Gibbons in his study of the influence of William Shakespeare's *Henry V* on the play, 'takes Shakespeare's point that the journey to France […] is an occasion for inspecting British national and personal issues'.[38] In this case, the play uses French stereotypes, and the French language, to highlight flaws in the London gull. This is not to say that the play necessarily rejects anything foreign, or portrays all gentlemen as ridiculous gulls.[39] Rather, the presence of French stereotypes in an otherwise incompetent character is used

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[37] Jonson, 'On English Monsieur', ed. by Gifford, p. 119 v.2.
[38] Gibbons, 'Wrong End of the Telescope', p. 150.
[39] On the metatheatrical subversiveness of *Eastward Ho!*, mostly based on the character of Quicksilver, see Howard, *Theatre of a City*, p. 112; Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy*, pp. 10-11; Turner, *English Renaissance Stage*, p. 214.

to reinforce the criticism of naïve gallants.[40] Foreign traits and language are used to make a point about the mindless, uncritical attitudes of London prodigals like Petronel.

’Tis the likest an Englishman that ever I saw’: Franklin and internalized cosmopolitanism

Although Young Franklin shares a lot of characteristics with Petronel, *AQL* offers quite a different reading of foreign exchanges. While Franklin is also a penniless, indebted gentleman who leads a life of conning to maintain his fashionable habits, his use of French is more mastered and deliberate than that of Petronel. After setting up an elaborate linguistic trick to steal rich cloth from Camlet, Franklin finds himself cornered by his victims, and claims to be a Frenchman in a case of mistaken identity to avoid being arrested:[41]

> Ha! Qui va la? Que penses vous faire Messieurs? Me voles vous derober? Je nay point d’argent : Je suis un pouvre Gentilhomme Francois […] me voules vous tuer? Les Francois ne sont point enemis : voila ma bource […], que voles vous d’avantage?
>
> (Ha! Who goes there? What do you think you are doing, Sirs? Do you want to steal from me? I don’t have any money: I am a poor French gentleman […] do you want to kill me?

[40] Incidentally, the image of such gallants, with its traditional narrative of gulling, lasciviousness, and expensive tastes, might at its basis have been influenced by the old trope of the Frenchified gentleman.

[41] Montgomery offers an interesting reading of the linguistic confusion created by Franklin. According to her, Franklin’s mastery of languages, due to his experience in travelling and multilingualism, allows him to easily adapt to any form of dialect, giving him an advantage over the merchants. Camlet’s apprentice, Ralph, and the barber are unable to understand each other because their jargons differ; and they end up in a comical linguistic confusion in which Ralph believes the barber will pay for Franklin’s cloth, while the barber believes Ralph has contracted a venereal disease. Franklin’s French, in this perspective, is another proof of his linguistic superiority over the merchants, allowing him to dominate the conversation and steal from the merchants. See Montgomery, ‘Language and Seafaring’, pp. 116-19.

The French are no enemies: here is my purse [...], what more do you want?)[42](3.2.40-42; 46-48)

As opposed to Petronel's incompetent use of French, the language here is used strategically and more correctly, as a linguistic disguise which helps Franklin get away with his tricks. Although the pursuers are not at first convinced by Franklin's disguise, they are eventually persuaded of his Frenchness:

Young Franklin. Ceste femme ici est de mon pais. [to Margarita] Madame je vous prie Leur dire mon pais, il [*sic*] m'ont retarge [*sic*], Je ne scay pour quoy.

Margarita. Estes vous de *France* Monsieur?

Young Franklin. Madame vray est, que je les ay trompes, et suis areste, et n'ay nul moien d'echaper qu'en changeant mon Language; aides moy en cest affaire […]

Margarita. Laises faire a moy. […] Mon Cozin! Je suis bien aise de vous voire en bonne disposition! [*Embrace and complement*]

Young Franklin. Ma Cozine!

Camlet. This is a French-man sure.

(*Young Franklin.* This woman is from my country. [to Margarita] Ma'am, please tell them my country, they have hindered me, I don't know why.

Margarita. Are you from France, Sir?

Young Franklin. Ma'am, in truth, I tricked them, and I've been arrested, and have no other way to escape but to change my language; help me in this enterprise. […]

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[42] The French scene is quoted from David Gunby's old-spelling critical edition, which is closer to the 1662 quarto than Thomson's modernized version.

Margarita. Let me help. […] My cousin! I am very glad to see you in good health!

[*Embrace and complement*]

Young Franklin. My cousin!

Camlet. This is a French-man sure.)(3.2.74-86)

Through his competent, timely French disguise, Franklin manages to enlist the help of the French prostitute Margarita, explaining his situation to her in a language his pursuers cannot understand. Margarita's claim that they are cousins eventually convinces Camlet that he has caught the wrong person.

The presence of Margarita in this scene is not fortuitous. The relationship with the foreign in early modern city plays is frequently examined through the figures of prostitutes.[43] Discourses of anxiety accuse prostitutes, often staged either as aliens themselves or as influenced by foreign fashion, of contributing to the influx of outsiders in London. Prostitutes are associated with the dissemination of foreignness in proper Englishmen through intercourse with clients from multiple nationalities, spreading, for instance, 'morbus gallicus' (or, in *AQL*, 'gallicus or neopolinatus', 2.4.20-21) in England.[44] But prostitutes, in some cases, are also associated with a more positive cosmopolitanism and cultural openness, adapting to the various nationalities and languages present in London and cleverly combining them to their advantage.[45] In *AQL*, the 'French bawd' Margarita is mainly a helper figure: although she tricks the merchants and mocks

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[43] Twyning, 'City Comedy', p. 357.
[44] Howard, *Theatre of a City*, pp. 141-44. Early modern stereotypes associated with the French and Italians tend to be quite similar, with unbridled sexuality, courtliness, and deception being associated with both nationalities. Compare the stereotypes of the French highlighted above with, for instance, Jonathan Bate's description of Italian portraiture in Elizabethan travel literature in 'Elizabethans in Italy', pp. 55-57.
[45] Howard, *Theatre of a City*, pp. 146-48. See for instance the figure of Doll in *Northward Ho!*, a positively connoted, culturally open-minded English prostitute who cleverly uses London cosmopolitanism to her advantage, eventually 'upgrading' her status to that of a respectable wife.

them (‘Tree, four, five fools of u’, 3.2.152), she later helps Camlet win his wife back by pretending to be his future bride (4.2). *AQL*, and Margarita, play with the stereotypes commonly associated with her Frenchness to help the main characters, mimicking stereotypically French promiscuity when she embraces Franklin to prove his Frenchness, or playing with her French clothes (‘French hood’) to provoke Rachel Camlet’s jealousy and prompt her to get back to her husband ‘the English fashion’ (4.1.342).[46] French stereotypes, although present, are thus not criticized *per se*: rather, they are cleverly used and subverted to assist characters in need; and Margarita proves through her help that ‘les Francois ne sont point ennemis’ (the French are no enemies, 3.2.46-47).[47]

Franklin, even when not using his French disguise, similarly shares in some of the stereotypes of Frenchified gentlemen, demonstrating his lasciviousness through his interest in ‘French lessons’, a common euphemism for intercourse with a prostitute, and using dupery to fuel his expensive tastes.[48] But these behaviours, which are standard for London gallants in city plays, are both limited and unproblematic: despite his gulling, Franklin appears much more constant, competent, and self-aware than Petronel. His French-speaking is a means to an end; and the internalization of French characteristics is controlled. Franklin is aware of the roles he is playing, and can shed them when they are no longer needed. His ability to internalize the foreign,

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[46] The so-called French hood became a fashionable headdress in sixteenth-century England. Leslie Thomson notes that it may also refer to a headdress worn by women punished for unchastity (footnote on 4.1.319, p. 1620). In *AQL*, Rachel Camlet metonymically refers to Margarita as ‘the French hood’, possibly playing on this double meaning. Montgomery, ‘Language and Seafaring’, p. 122.
[47] A similar argument is developed by Hoenselaars, *Images of Englishmen and Foreigners*, pp. 140-41.
[48] Montgomery, *Europe’s Languages on England’s Stage*, p. 41.

both in terms of language and attitude, effectively makes him superior to his pursuers, whose inability to see through a mere linguistic disguise makes them appear particularly foolish.

In this case, then, it seems that the satire is not directed at the Frenchified gentleman, but at those who are unable to effectively internalize London's cosmopolitanism, who take the normative trope of the 'plain-spoken, straightforward, honest Englishman' too seriously, or who only treat foreignness as something distant.[49] Camlet accepts and participates in foreign trade in London; but his inability to truly understand the other, illustrated in his perception of the foreign as either a luxury item or a distant, quiet, paradisiac island, plays against him. Similarly, the barber-surgeon, despite his Latinate prose and his comment that 'tis the likest an Englishman that ever [he] saw, all his dimensions, proportions' (3.2.100-01), is ultimately unable to understand Franklin and Margarita's tricks. His comical Latin only proves his inability to detach himself from the jargon of his profession, even in everyday situations; and his comment that he could prove Franklin's true identity by dissecting his heart 'for a Frenchman's heart is more quassative and subject to tremor than an Englishman's' (103-04) only demonstrates the superficiality of his understanding of London's cosmopolitanism. In a comic inversion of *Henry V*'s bilingual scene in which a French soldier offers his fortune to the English soldier Pistol in exchange for his life, Franklin thus manages to successfully steal from the English merchants by playing the victim of manly, straightforward, but ultimately foolish, Englishmen.[50] Whereas Petronel's transformation from a plot of roguery to one of voyage is unsuccessful, Franklin's opposite transformation, turning down his friend Young Cressingham's offer to go to the Low Countries presumably to 'join English volunteers in the Palatinate', in order to live a life of roguery instead, is

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[49] On normative Englishness in early modern England, see Larkin, *Making of Englishmen*, pp. 7-15; Tudeau-Clayton, *Shakespeare's Englishes*, pp. 22-39.
[50] Hoenselaars, *Images of Englishmen and Foreigners*, pp. 141-43.

successful.[51] As suggested by Montgomery, this is because his linguistic ability, acquired through his travelling experience, allows him to navigate the cosmopolitan city more effectively. Through his ability to navigate the wider world, Franklin is made a better navigator of the city than London natives.[52]

The reasonable 'contamination' of Englishness by foreign traits and languages is thus presented not only as acceptable, but as desirable. Franklin is no less an Englishman for adopting a French persona or speaking French. On the contrary, his ability to play with national conventions makes him a better Londoner, a cleverer citizen who can internalize foreignness without losing himself. Just as it is acceptable for Rachel Camlet to be a proper, subservient English wife while sporting foreign pantofles,[53] it is acceptable for Franklin to be an Englishman while flexibly adopting certain French behaviours. As expressed by Jean Howard in her analysis of Cocledemoy in *The Dutch Courtesan* (1604), Franklin combines 'an Englishness dependent on quick wits, libertine sexuality, and the cosmopolitan ability to observe and master otherness without being destroyed by it', making him the best possible version of the English Londoner.[54]

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[51] Montgomery, 'Language and Seafaring', p. 115.
[52] Montgomery, 'Language and Seafaring', p. 117. The link between navigating the city and the sea is also established by Howard, albeit in the opposite order, with navigating skills in the city being translated on sea. *Theatre of a City*, p. 11. The positive treatment of linguistic disguise and of controlled internalised foreignness may also have had to do with the fact that Englishmen were often forced to parade as continental Europeans when travelling in Europe and therefore had to have at least a basic mastery of other languages. The issue is touched upon by Chloe Houston in this volume, p. XXX.
[53] With clothing, in this case, acting as a metonymy for the adoption of the foreign in early modern London. Montgomery, 'Language and Seafaring', p. 123. The use of a French cognate is illustrative of the links between foreign language and clothing, and doubly (linguistically and sartorially) illustrates the unproblematic, controlled incursion of foreignness in English identity fostered by *AQL*.
[54] Howard, *Theatre of a City*, p. 157. This view of the traveller as most adapted to London life subverts the figure of the translator-traveller as a fringe figure excluded from society, developed in Di Biase, 'Introduction', p. 15.

Critical distance and cultural mediation

In the introduction of their volume on *Travel and Drama in Shakespeare's Time*, Michèle Willems and Jean-Pierre Maquerlot argue that, in *Eastward Ho!*, Petronel's mistake 'turns out to produce, as through a lens, a critical, defamiliarized image of the home-country'.[55] The notion of a defamiliarized outlook developed through the lens of travelling, also seen in Franklin's enhanced ability to navigate the city because of his travelling experience, as opposed to London locals, resonates with Henry Peacham's 1642 essay *The Art of Living in London*. London, in Peacham's words, is a 'vast sea, full of gusts, fearful-dangerous shelves and rocks, ready at every storm to sink and cast the weak and unexperienced back'.[56] Although published later than *Eastward Ho!* and *AQL*, Peacham's essay aptly translates the feeling of foreignness and opacity which seventeenth-century Londoners may have felt in what seemed like a new, ever-expanding city marked by population growth, mass immigration, social mobility, economic development, and rapid expansion. The feeling of defamiliarization arguably created by Petronel's misreading of London's geography and highlighted in his inability to recognize his own country may, in fact, have been very real for the London audience.[57]

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[55] Maquerlot and Willems, 'Introduction', p. 4.

[56] Peacham, *Art of Living in London*. This analogy also evokes Sindefy's comparison of London court life with the perilous sea, as well as Petronel's failure as one of the 'unexperienced' – which may suggest that establishing links between London and the wide seas was somewhat of a commonplace in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.

[57] As also noted in Paravano, *Performing Multilingualism*, p. 6.

In line with one of the main purposes of city comedies, *Eastward Ho!* and *AQL* attempt to conceptualize and make sense of this 'opaque and unfamiliar' city.[58] The recuperation of certain codes inherited from travel writing and drama in the plays, in this perspective, makes particular sense. Not only was travelling central to the economic and social life of this new, cosmopolitan London, but it was also, it seems, a relatively widespread metaphor used to apprehend what then felt like a foreign city to its inhabitants.[59] But whereas travel literature and plays recounted adventures and findings in the wider, far-away world, and tried to make sense of culturally distant customs, in this case, the object of study and analysis was primarily ethnocentric. If travelling is decisively present in the two plays, it fulfils a double purpose of representation of real cosmopolitanism, and of ethnocentric self-analysis and identity negotiation.

In her chapter on the staging of distant lands in early modern drama, Ladan Niayesh notes that it is frequent, in late medieval and early modern representations of the distant foreign, to use the familiar, yet liminal image of the French as an 'in-between' figure. In some cases, French characters act as physical mediators between Englishmen and aliens; in other cases, the French language and characteristics are lent to the distant foreigner, as a way to more efficiently apprehend the culturally new by analysing it through the prism of a more familiar other.[60] In the

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[58] Howard, *Theatre of a City*, pp. 5, 11; Sanders, *Cambridge Introduction to Early Modern Drama*, p. 133.

[59] The macro and micro levels which permeate the structure of this volume here seem to merge: the macro level of the wide sea is replicated at the micro level of London, and the former helps to make sense of the latter.

[60] Niayesh, 'Strangers *Alter et Idem*', pp. 179-80. She thereby notes a process of 'amalgamation of distant aliens and closer-to-home preoccupations' (p. 180). Early traces of this movement can already be found in the Corpus Christi plays, in which Herod is represented with French characteristics to translate his moral corruption. See Williams, *French Fetish*, pp. 50-53. It is tempting to draw parallels between the French as a 'go-between' figure introducing the English to foreign culture and the figure of the translator as an intermediary helping to make foreign source materials more familiar, largely discussed in this volume (see Emily Stevenson's and Choe Houston's chapters).

case of *Eastward Ho!* and *AQL*, as suggested above, French is used for critical self-analysis, exploration, and (re-)definition of English identity, pointing at certain absurdities of London life and its relationship to increased cosmopolitanism. It is striking, in both cases, that French effectively serves as a way to make sense of the foreignized city: drawing attention to London's absurdities, the use of French language and stereotypes creates a critical distance, offering a solution to the feeling of helplessness by arguing for a certain form of stability. This is done either through a warning against superficiality represented by French fashion, or through an argument for an Englishness which has internalized London's cosmopolitanism. In essence, French retains the purpose of cultural mediation identified by Niayesh: helping to navigate and make sense of what feels like an incomprehensible reality and to bring in a sense of familiarity in a disorderly, perilous 'sea', ultimately allowing the Englishman to position himself vis-à-vis this challenging other and creating a sense of stability out of perceived chaos. The difference, in this case, is that the object of defamiliarization is London itself, which turns out to be, perhaps, most in need of cultural mediation. Echoing Peacham's description, the 'vast sea' of the English capital is conceptualized through tools used in travel drama to conceptualize the wider seas. French, as suggested by Niayesh, serves the purpose of a 'discourse of cultural definition that remains resolutely ethnocentric': doubly so, in this case, since the foreign typically used to define Englishness is actually London.[61] This actualizes, maybe more than ever, the notion that the trip is less about meeting the culturally other, than about meeting and understanding oneself.

In the plays, interestingly, both the trope of the internalization of foreign traits and the French man as an intermediary character can be identified. In *Eastward Ho!*, the extreme internalization of foreign traits helps shed light on Petronel's shortcomings as a London citizen

[61] Niayesh, 'Strangers *Alter et Idem*', p. 189.

who is unable to look at the city from a critical perspective, which ultimately proves his foreignness to his own city. The familiarity of French traits, once again, helps draw a portrait of the 'outsider', albeit a Londoner in this case, and to mark him as different. In *AQL*, on the other hand, Margarita is an 'in-between' figure, acting as a literal linguistic mediator between the fake Frenchman who supposedly cannot speak English and the English natives. But Margarita does not help the merchants understand the foreigner: rather, by gulling them, she metatheatrically subverts the trope by helping the audience work out that the character who is most adapted to London life is, in fact, the other himself. She thereby urges the viewer to embrace the 'foreignness' and defamiliarization of London. Similarly, when she acts as Camlet's bride, Margarita ultimately helps the characters reach a reassuring stability in their unfamiliar reality, by helping Rachel Camlet realize that she wants to be with her husband and can be a proper wife while sporting foreign fashion, and helping Camlet himself realize that he does not need to exile himself to have a quiet life. Once this stability is achieved and the negotiation of difference is 'concluded in a satisfactory way', the mediator can be put 'safely aside': Margarita does not appear in the last act of the play.[62]

It is ironic, maybe, that the often-vilified figure of the French may have helped the early modern English audience define itself. But, as an intermediate, borderline figure perceived as both resembling England and being fundamentally different from it, it is perhaps logical that such a figure would have been considered the perfect go-between to conceptualize a city both familiar and alienating, and to help members of the audience find their place in it. The

[62] Niayesh, 'Strangers *Alter et Idem*', p. 188.

Frenchified gentleman, who laughed at ‘all the estates of Englande’, has ironically become an ambassador – albeit, in cases like Petronel, sometimes at his own expense.[63]

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[63] Hall, *Chronicles*, p. 587.

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