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Hsy examines how writers working in English, Latin, and French (and combinations thereof) theorized the rich contours of polyglot identity. In a range of genres—from multilingual lyrics, poems about urban life, and autobiographical narratives—writers found venues to consider their own linguistic capacities and to develop new modes of conceiving language contact and exchange. Interweaving close readings of medieval texts with insights from sociolinguistics and postcolonial theory, Trading Tongues not only illuminates how multilingual identities were expressed in the past; it generates new ways of thinking about cultural contact and language crossings in our own time.

Jonathan Hsy is assistant professor of English at The George Washington University.