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Excerpt

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Introduction

Etymology in Early Modern literature

But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay ...
Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* 1

The opening sonnet in Philip Sidney's sequence *Astrophil and Stella* (1591) finds the poet trying to express himself:

Loving in trueth, and faine in verse my love to show,
That the deare She might take some pleasure of my paine:
Pleasure might cause her reade, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pitie winne, and pitie grace obtaine,
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertaine:
Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitfull showers upon my sunne-burn'd braine.
But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay,
Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Studie's blowes,
And others' feete still seem'd but strangers in my way.
Thus, great with child to speake, and helpesse in my throwes,
Biting my trewand pen, beating my selfe for spite,
'Foole,' said my Muse to me, 'looke in thy heart, and write.'¹

The deceptively simple role of the poet described here is twofold: he must 'looke' and he must 'write'. Sidney also begins his *Defence of Poesy* (1595) by defining the word 'poet', the central term in his argument. Sidney offers two pieces of linguistic history elucidating the twin aspects of the poet's persona. He is both the 'diviner, forseer or prophet' of the Latin title '*vates*', and the 'maker' of the Greek term, '*poiein*'.² Or – in the terms of the sonnet fundamentally concerned with finding 'fit words', a poem that can be read as an extended gloss on this etymological distinction – one who

¹ *Astrophil and Stella* 1, *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney* (ed.) William A. Ringler, Jr (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), 165.

² Sidney's *The Defence of Poesy* and *Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism* (ed.) Gavin Alexander (London: Penguin, 2004) 6, 8. The sonnets and *Defence* were composed during the early 1580s.

must 'looke' and one who must 'write'. It is the second of these elements that Sidney emphasizes in the *Defence*, in part it seems because he considers this second etymology of the term 'poet' more fitting: 'which name hath, as the most excellent, gone through other languages. It cometh of this word, *poiein*, which is "to make", wherein, I know not whether by luck or wisdom, we Englishmen have met with the Greeks in calling him a "maker"'.³ The poet as 'maker' will be important to Sidney's argument that poetry is a form of Aristotelian mimesis. But it is Sidney's means of expounding the poet's role here that I am most interested in, the etymological distinction upon which his treatise, and his entire conception of poetry, is premised.

Astrophil has studied 'inventions fine', looking in vain in 'others' leaves' for inspiration.⁴ This resembles the classically derived mode of poetic composition Sidney lays out in the *Defence*; 'invention' in this context denotes 'the finding and elaboration of arguments', rather than creating something altogether new.⁵ But this kind of looking has proved unproductive for the frustrated Astrophil, whose 'words come halting forth, wanting Invention's stay'.⁶ Part of the difficulty, I would suggest, is that Astrophil cannot quite decide what 'Invention' properly means: is it found in books or in 'Nature'? Does it derive from study or from a more organic moment of insight? Is it found in (or at) 'others' feete' or within oneself? And, even more crucially, does it represent something new, 'fresh and fruitfull', or something old that already exists in 'others' leaves', to be dredged up out of the recesses of his 'sunne-burn'd braine'? The meaning of the word 'invention' is then a further etymological crux in this sonnet. The word was in flux as Sidney composed his poem, moving away from its original signification, derived from the Latin '*invenire*', 'to come upon, discover, find out', and towards the sense it holds today, first documented by Robert Cawdry in 1604, whose dictionary entry for 'invention'

³ Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy*, 8.

⁴ In fact the inspiration he seeks lies within his own name: 'Astrophil' is etymologically 'star-lover', from Greek roots; Stella's name derives from the Latin for 'star'. This translinguistic union provides the drama that will animate Sidney's sequence.

⁵ See Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, 2nd edn (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 91–2. Lanham gives a full explanation of the place of invention in classical rhetorical theory at 166–71.

⁶ Ringler explains Astrophil's difficulty as stemming from the fact he 'began in the wrong order with an inadequate method. He first sought words (*elocutio*) rather than matter, and tried to find words through imitation of others rather than by the proper processes of invention.' *Poems of Sir Philip Sidney* (ed.) Ringler, 459n.

reads ‘deuse, or imagination’.⁷ The notion of discovery continued to be closely enmeshed with that of invention in Early Modern English. When Polydore Vergil’s *De Inventoribus Rerum* was translated into the vernacular by Thomas Langley in 1546 its title reflected this: *An abridgement of the notable worke of Polidore Vergile conteyngnyng the deuiseurs and first finders out aswell of artes, ministeries, feactes [and] ciuill ordinaunces, as of rites, [and] ceremonies, commonly used in the churche: and the originall beginnyng of the same*.⁸ This underlying tension between the etymological sense and current usage of the word ‘Invention’ is evidenced in the dissatisfaction with this composition process shown by Astrophil, his struggle to balance what he can divine in the work of others from what he must make for himself.

In fact, as I will argue here, the closely interrelated principles of discovery and invention underpin the workings of etymology itself, which is at once the act of uncovering the history of a word and, at the same time, remaking that word for present use by reconnecting it to this past. The role of these contrasting but interconnected notions of invention and discovery in the Early Modern understanding of etymology is also evident in the accounts of the form found in other rhetorical treatises of the period. In *The Arte of English Poesie* (1585), George Puttenham’s explanation of the relationship between words and things emphasizes both these aspects of etymology. *Onomatopoeia*, in Puttenham’s terminology ‘the new-namer’, ‘is the sense figurative when we devise a new name to anything, consonant, as near as we can, to the nature thereof, as to say “flashing of lightning”, “clashing of blades”, “clinking of fetters” and so on.’⁹ Puttenham’s description of the process of ‘invention’ by which names are given to things reflects the mixed sense of the word in the Renaissance, combining

⁷ Robert Cawdry, *A Table Alphabetically, Conteyning and Teaching the True Writing, and Vnderstanding of Hard Vsual English Wordes, Borrowed from the Hebrew, Greeke, Latine, or French. &c.* (London, 1604), F2r. See also *Oxford English Dictionary* (ed.) John Simpson, 2nd edn (Oxford University Press, 1989) ‘invent, v.’, (hereafter abbreviated to *OED*).

⁸ Originally published in 1499, Vergil’s work does not itself seem to distinguish the concept of discovery from that of invention. As a recent translator of Vergil’s *On Discovery* observes, ‘The root sense of the Latin *invenire*, to come upon, is on the side of discovery, but the same verb also means to devise or invent.’ Polydore Vergil, *On Discovery* (ed. and trans.) Brian P. Copenhaver (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), xi. As Copenhaver points out, Langley used the word ‘inventours’ to mean ‘those who *found* ... without inventing anything’. In other words, those who discovered things.

⁹ Puttenham’s ‘invented’ term is a strictly etymological derivation from the classical term for ‘name maker’, (*poeia* coming from the same Greek word as ‘poet’). George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy* in Alexander (ed.) *Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, 156–7. Thus we can begin to see how the term has come to refer in modern critical terminology to mimetic sound effects by which words can audibly resemble some aspect of what they describe. This usage is not, however, recorded until c.1860; Tennyson is credited with the innovation by the *OED*, ‘onomatopoeia, *n.*’

elements of novelty (the new name) with the discovery of qualities that have been there all along (the essential nature that gives rise to that name). This book argues that the history and development of English words as revealed through etymology underpins the literary work of ‘invention’, in its multiple senses, in the Renaissance.

Etymology in Early Modern England

I began work on this book because I was puzzled by the fact that despite the prevalence of poetic etymologies in Early Modern literature (such as those of Sidney) I could find no really adequate theorization of the subject in the period. How did Early Modern writers think about the history of the words they used? When they evoke a particular root meaning of the term they are using what do they think they are doing? Do they conceive of such activities as etymological? These were the key questions I set out to address. The first dilemma I encountered in seeking to answer them was a fundamental one, namely that there is considerable ambiguity in the period as to whether etymology is properly a rhetorical device or a form of logical thought.¹⁰ The lack of sustained theoretical attention to etymology and its functions in Early Modern England is also at odds with its recurrence throughout the works of the rhetoricians and logicians of the period. Puttenham, whom I have just quoted, only touches upon etymology in passing, as a kind of prehistory to the act of naming; he has no rhetorical trope that would fully account for what Sidney is doing when he alludes to the Greek origins of the name of the ‘poet’. Sidney’s own *Defence* similarly contains no description of the very rhetorical device with which it begins. Early Modern logic treatises more readily engage with the idea of etymology and the practicalities of its operations; the textbook *Dialectique de Pierre de la Ramée* (Paris, 1555), which was to have a formative influence on the study of the subject in Renaissance England, devotes a chapter to what its author calls ‘*notation or etimologie*’, for instance.¹¹ The terms ‘etimologie’ and ‘notation’ are treated interchangeably by Ramus; the latter simply represents the Latin translation of the Greek term

¹⁰ The territory between the two is explored by the contributors to John Bender and David E. Wellbery (eds.) *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice* (Stanford University Press, 1990).

¹¹ See *Dialectique de Pierre de la Ramée* (Paris, 1555), Cap. xxiii. The work was translated by Ægidii Hamlini as *The Logike of the Moste Excellent Philosopher P. Ramus, Martyr Newly Translated, and in Diuers Places Corrected, after the Mynde of the Author* (London, 1574). The English translation of the *Logike* is based not on the French original but on the Latin text resulting from Ramus’ visit to Basel, *Dialectica A. Talaei Praelectionibus Illustrata* (Basel, 1569). Walter J. Ong, SJ, *Ramus and Talon Inventory: A Short-Title Inventory of the Published Works of Peter Ramus (1515–72) and of Omer*

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(although whether two words of differing origins can ever be considered the same is a moot point).¹² ‘Etimologie is the interpretation of a worde: For wordes are nothing els but notes of matters signified: as Isaac, was so called because his mother laughed at the promise of God made to her’, Ramus writes, alluding to the Hebrew root of the name.¹³

Abraham Fraunce’s Ramist *The Lawiers Logike* (1588) reiterates this definition, tracing its own origins to one of the key works written on etymology in ancient and modern times: ‘All *Platoes Cratylus* is spent in the interpretation of woords after this manner’, he remarks.¹⁴ The text to which Fraunce refers here – Plato’s dialogue known as the *Cratylus* – is one of the touchstones for Early Modern thinking about etymology, mentioned frequently by the growing number of scholars of the history of language at this time.¹⁵ But such references occlude the subtleties of the arguments presented in Plato’s text itself, which stages a debate between the character Cratylus – who insists upon an entirely naturalistic relationship between word and thing, whereby names exactly imitate what they describe – and his interlocutor Socrates – who evinces a more arbitrary correspondence between signifier and signified that owes to convention rather than any innate resemblance. As David Sedley reminds us, the dialogic nature of Plato’s tract thus embraces a diversity of arguments, although the *Cratylus* is most usually taken as a kind of shorthand for the theories belonging to the character of that name.¹⁶ This is especially true in Early Modern

Talon (ca.1510–1562) in *their Original and in their Variouslly Altered Forms* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), items 245 and 254, 190–1 and 195–6.

¹² This differs from the treatment of them by John Milton in his highly derivative Ramist *Art of Logic* (c.1645–7), where he makes a notable departure from his source in distinguishing between the Greek word ‘etymology’, meaning ‘in its own derivation true-speaking’, and Cicero’s preferred term, ‘NOTATION (notatio)’, which ‘is the interpretation of a name, that is, a reason given why a thing is named as it is’. *Complete Prose Works of John Milton* (general ed.) Don M. Wolfe, 8 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953–82), VIII, 294. This distinction arises partly from his definition of logic itself: ‘Now logic, namely, the rational art, is so named from λογος, a Greek word meaning reason; and the object of logic is to refine reason’ (YP VIII.217). Reason intervenes in linguistic interpretation; it is one key difference between a quasi-instinctual ‘true-speaking’ and the thought process of ‘interpretation’. I examine the *Art of Logic* in more detail below, at 162.

¹³ *The Logike*, 51. The name Isaac derives from the Hebrew verb ‘to laugh’, as in ‘*Isaac. Heb. Laughter*’, William Camden, *Remains Concerning Britain: Their Languages, Names, Surnames, Allusions, Anagramms, Armories, Moneys, Impresses, Apparel, Artillerie, Wise Speeches, Proverbs, Poesies, Epitaphs* (London, 1674), 100.

¹⁴ Abraham Fraunce, *The Lawiers Logike, Exemplifying the Praecepts of Logike by the Practise of the Common Lawe* (London, 1588), 51v.

¹⁵ There was no English edition of the *Cratylus* until Thomas Taylor’s translation of 1773, but it was freely available throughout Europe in both Latin and Greek.

¹⁶ David Sedley provides a nuanced account of its arguments in *Plato’s Cratylus*. *Cambridge Studies in the Dialogues of Plato* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3–5.

England, where allusions to the text invariably assume that it stands for the linguistic naturalism of its eponymous participant. Consequently, where the *Cratylus* appears in this study, it is in the sense I have just outlined; I borrow Judith Anderson's term – 'Cratylism' – to denote the particular form of exact correspondence between word and thing that Plato's text is assumed to espouse in the period.¹⁷ Fraunce here replicates this extremely common Early Modern assumption that the *Cratylus* posits a straightforwardly naturalistic relationship between word and thing.

The Lawiers Logike is typical of its time and place in both mistaking the *Cratylus* for an unquestioning articulation of the doctrine of linguistic naturalism and, at the same time, in itself working to undermine such a position. Fraunce begins with a description of two competing explanations of the roots of the term 'logic', for example. 'Although this woord, *Logike*, bee generally receaued of Englishmen, and used euen of them that know no Logike at all, yet for that it was a stranger at the first, I thinke it not impertinent to seeke from whence it came, and what it doth betoken', he writes:

λοζος therefore in Greeke signifieth Reason, of λοζος, is deriued this word, λοζικη, that is to say, Reasonable, or belonging to Reason, which although it bee an adiectiue, and must haue some such like woord, as Arte, Science, or Facultie, to be adioyned unto it as his substantiue, yet is it substantiue taken and vsed in Latine, and also in our English tongue. Sturmius and some others, deriue this woord Logike from λοζος, as λοζος betokeneth speech or talke: whose opinion, although the other name of this Art (which is διαλεκτικη ... to speak or talke) doe in some respect seeme to confirme, yet for that the whole force and vertue of Logike consisteth in reasoning, not in taking: and because reasoning may be without talking, as in solitary meditations and deliberations with a mans selfe, some holde the first deriuation as most significant.

Fraunce's explanation of the word's derivation simultaneously considers two quite differing strands of development – from the Greek for either 'Reasonable' or, conversely, 'speech' – remaining relatively neutral in its conclusion that 'some holde the first' of these histories 'most significant'. In entertaining multiple possible explanations for how the term has come to mean what it does in Early Modern England, and in showing how both roots might cast light on its present significance, Fraunce's etymological practice rejects the naturalism of Cratylism in favour of a more pragmatic,

¹⁷ Describing the widespread divergence in attitudes towards words in Early Modern England and a general shift away from the naturalism expressed by the character Cratylus, Anderson observes that 'While variations are rung on such views in the Renaissance, a great many are similarly mixed, expressing neither Cratylism nor Aristotelianism exclusively.' Judith H. Anderson, *Words That Matter: Linguistic Perception in the English Renaissance* (Stanford University Press, 1996), 11.

pluralistic view of language development that emphasizes the arbitrariness preferred by the Socrates of Plato's dialogue (ironically replicating the very sophistication of the tract that Fraunce had failed to recognize in dismissing the work as one of mere 'interpretation of woords'). One of the central claims of this book is that the more pragmatic kind of etymologizing seen here is a distinctive feature of Early Modern thought about the history of language, and that it comes about owing to the birth in the period of what we would today consider the discipline of linguistics.

Etymology and the invention of English

Etymology lies at the root of English Renaissance poetics, as Sidney's influential discussion of the origins of the name 'poet' in his *Defence* makes clear. This study traces the recurrence and explains the uses of such etymological moments in the texts of the period. Its four chapters explore the underexamined political, religious and literary implications of the increased interest in the history of the English language arising in Early Modern England as a result of early attempts to study Anglo-Saxon, the antiquarian movement, Biblical humanist practices and the growth of lexicography, respectively. I consider the ways in which the origins of English are understood and employed in certain Early Modern controversies and the manifestation of these contentious uses of linguistic history in the work of Spenser, Jonson, Donne and Milton. As is true of Sidney's sonnet, etymology offers each of these writers not only a means of expressing thought, but also – more importantly – a way of thinking. Each of my chapters concentrates primarily on a particular form of writing, encompassing Spenser's poetry, Jonson's masques, Donne's sermons and Milton's prose. In each I resituate a major Renaissance writer within the arguments of a constellation of Early Modern language scholars working at the same time, with whose methodology they have much in common, tracing the particular narratives of a word's history in contemporary etymological scholarship and the deployment of those narratives in literary texts. By recognizing for the first time the important literary consequences arising from Spenser's familiarity with the Anglo-Saxon scholarship of Archbishop Matthew Parker, Jonson's friendship with antiquarian William Camden, Donne's awareness of the latest developments in Hebrew scholarship in the work of Hugh Broughton, and Milton's engagement with the field of lexicography through his nephew, Edward Phillips, my study offers a new reading of their work that is firmly grounded in contemporary developments in linguistic thought. Early Modern literature does not only engage

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with the origins and meanings of words via this kind of direct communication between writers and philologists, however. In addition to the specific relationships of influence that I address in this book, I also trace the collateral patterns of etymological thinking that appear in the work of early linguists and literary authors more generally, patterns that function in parallel but differing ways across disciplinary boundaries and which make clear the extent to which the issue of what and how words mean mattered to writers and thinkers at this time. Throughout this book I draw solely upon an understanding of words and their meaning that would have been available to the writers and readers of Early Modern England, tracing all etymological moments explored here to sources existing and circulating in the period. My interest lies not in linguistics as it is currently practised today but instead in attempting to reconstruct what the discipline might have looked like at the moment of its inception, and how these dazzling developments inspired four literary writers of the period who were particularly attuned to them.¹⁸

My first chapter presents a new reading of Spenser's poetry by showing how he draws upon the discoveries and rhetoric of the polemically motivated efforts to recover the Anglo-Saxon language that begin in the 1560s with the work of Archbishop Matthew Parker and his scholars.¹⁹ Where previous critics have scrutinized Middle English sources in their search for the origins of his distinctive diction, my own account of Spenser shows his rootedness in an older period in the history of English, a past that is very far removed from Renaissance classicism and decidedly northern European in orientation, its language often revealingly termed 'rough' or 'native'.²⁰ I argue that Spenser's engagement with the Parker scholars' work

¹⁸ 'Imagine a scholarly world without the *OED*, bereft of the definitions, the detailed etymologies, and the explanations of origin it offers. Worse yet, imagine one without the ubiquitous desk dictionary. How would we determine meaning? Is it even conceivable that our theories of signification and practice of analysis would remain the same?' asks Judith Anderson evocatively in the 'Prologue' to *Words That Matter*, 1.

¹⁹ Old English had been entirely lost and could only be reconstructed via intermediary Latin glosses. See Eleanor N. Adams, *Old English Scholarship in England from 1566–1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1917) and, more recently, *Anglo-Saxon Scholarship: The First Three Centuries* (ed.) Carl T. Berkhout and Milton McC. Gatch (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall & Co., 1982); *The Recovery of Old English: Anglo-Saxon Studies in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (ed.) Timothy Graham (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University Press, 2000).

²⁰ As recent developments within Anglo-Saxon studies (inspired in part by post-colonial theory) have shown us, the question of how far Old English is 'English', and the perplexing 'strange likeness' this unfamiliar form bears to our own language, has powerful allegorical potential. I borrow a phrase here from Geoffrey Hill's *Mercian Hymns* (1979), xxix: 'Not strangeness, but strange likeness'. Geoffrey Hill, *Collected Poems* (London: Penguin, 1985), 133. Hill's phrase, which captures the ambiguities of the relationship between modern forms of English and their precursors perfectly,

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to recover Anglo-Saxon heightens his awareness of the etymological power of vernacular words, and suggests to him the allegorical potential latent within terms of Old English derivation.²¹ Just as Parker's circle sought precedents in Anglo-Saxon legal and ecclesiastical practices that would prove their own progressive agenda 'no newe reformation', but rather a return to the ways of the past, Spenser derives from his consideration of native vocabulary a similar sense of the interrelationship between innovation and tradition, and a scepticism towards claims of novelty that in fact represent nothing new. Representing 'what seems most foreign' as 'what is most native' (to borrow Paula Blank's phrase) creates a rhetoric of linguistic estrangement in *The Shepheardes Calender*, which Spenser uses to biting satirical effect in his ecclesiastical eclogues.²² As such I show that etymology offers him a veiled mode for expressing criticism of the contemporary Elizabethan Church in this poem. In the latter part of this chapter we see how Spenser develops this idea of linguistic estrangement further in his epic, *The Faerie Queene*, which operates according to a fundamentally etymological form of allegory, combining elements of invention and discovery. I show here how a strongly etymological sense of alienation from what lies within words themselves contributes to the poem's deep allegorical insight as to how we become estranged from our true natures. Accordingly, the key challenge each of Spenser's knights must face is the rediscovery of what lies within him or her self, an identity often concealed within their etymologically resonant names, containing elements of which they themselves are not aware but which emerge through the poem's action. Where *The Shepheardes Calender* is concerned with the nature and origin of words in so far as they can create (or recreate) the true English Church, *The Faerie Queene* pursues the root meaning of words as a means of accessing true faith.

If my study of Spenser's poetry shows his involvement with the etymological world of Protestant polemic, Ben Jonson's masques show a more complicated set of doctrinal affiliations. My second chapter situates Jonson's work within the context of the wide-ranging antiquarian interest in etymology that flourished under his schoolmaster, William Camden,

provides the title of Chris Jones's recent book, *Strange Likeness: The Use of Old English in Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Oxford University Press, 2006), see esp. 4–5.

²¹ Jennifer Summit's superlative *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England* (Chicago University Press, 2008) considers the literary impact of the Parker circle's work upon Spenser in an antiquarian context, but does not address the linguistic aspect.

²² Paula Blank, *Broken English: Dialects and the Politics of Language in Renaissance Writings* (London: Routledge, 1996), 113.

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and that reached its height in the philological scholarship of his acquaintance, John Selden, but that also encompassed a counterinsurgent recusant movement to claim linguistic history (including the Anglo-Saxon inheritance of English) for the Catholic cause. I argue that Jonson's familiarity with the writing of Richard Verstegan, who headed this response in his *Restitution of Decayed Intelligence* (1605), suggests to Jonson a covert, etymological means by which to express his loyalty to the old faith. In so doing, I respond to Peter Lake's call for Jonson's Catholic affiliations to be restored to their rightful place in scholarship upon his work.²³ Perhaps as a consequence of his potentially dangerous recusant allegiances, Jonson displays an almost obsessive interest in the operations of secrecy throughout his work. Hidden forms of writing, including the cipher and the hieroglyph, both fascinate and repel the quixotic Jonson. In my study of his writing here I focus particularly on the masques, in which he uses etymology as a form of allusion, a linguistic device of lasting significance designed to counteract the ephemeral nature of this courtly form. Jonson employs etymology's enduring allusive powers alongside other more instantaneous devices, such as the anagram, in order to answer the dual temporal demands of the masque and its two differing audiences, theatrical and textual.

My third chapter focuses upon the sermons of John Donne, arguing that etymology is fundamental to his preaching, and that the process of tracing out the history of words itself has a metaphorical power for him. I take as my case studies here sermons delivered from three very different pulpits – at the court of James I, the Inns of Court and St Paul's – in order to show how etymological metaphors allow him to engage more closely with his varying auditories, political, legal and ecclesiastical. My contention here is that the recent move to place Donne's sermons within the context in which they were preached should also be accompanied by attention to the disparate branches of linguistic study that he draws upon in crafting his highly virtuosic sermons, which are often constructed around an elaborate exposition of the origins and development of the language of his chosen scriptural passage. Etymology does not merely provide content for his sermons; it often furnishes him with his structure as well. Donne himself seeks to place his preaching within the latest developments in Biblical Humanism, his sermons responding to the thriving discipline

²³ Peter Lake, 'From Leicester his Commonwealth to Sejanus his Fall: Ben Jonson and the Politics of Roman (Catholic) virtue', in *Catholics and the 'Protestant Nation': Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England* (ed.) Ethan Shagan (Manchester University Press, 2005): 128–61.