ARCHAIC STYLE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE,
1590–1674

Ranging from the works of Shakespeare, Spenser, Jonson and Milton to those of Robert Southwell and Anna Trapnel, this groundbreaking study explores the conscious use of archaic style by poets and dramatists between 1590 and 1674. It focuses on the wide-ranging, complex and self-aware uses of archaic linguistic and poetic style, analysing the uses to which writers put literary style in order to re-embodify and reshape the past. Munro brings together scholarly conversations on temporality, memory and historiography, on the relationships between medieval and early modern literary cultures, on the workings of dramatic and poetic style, and on national history and identity. Neither pure anachronism nor pure nostalgia, the attempts of writers to reconstruct outmoded styles within their own works reveal a largely untold story about the workings of literary influence and tradition, the interactions between past and present, and the uncertain contours of English nationhood.

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To Matt Haynes
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2 Abraham Wheelock, ‘Eadem Anglo- & Scoto-Saxonice’, in *Irenodia Cantabrigiensis* (Cambridge, 1641), A4r. 52
4 John Selden’s notes on the eleventh book of Michael Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion* (London, 1612), R6r, with quotations from Robert of Gloucester (in black-letter) and Tacitus and Bede (in italic). 97

Photographs are courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
Preface

In preparing this book, I spent a good deal of time considering what procedure to follow in choosing editions for primary texts. There are no modern-spelling editions of many of the texts discussed here, notably those of Spenser, who is conventionally published in original spelling. Moreover, modernising early modern texts can obscure aspects of the ways in which they would have functioned for early modern readers. Yet to cite all texts in old spelling would not only risk jettisoning all of the valuable editorial work carried out on the works of authors such as Shakespeare, Jonson and Middleton, it would also obscure for modern readers the distinctions between words and styles which are archaic to us in the twenty-first century and those that would have registered as archaic to their original readers and spectators. In short: it seems self-defeating to modernise all quotations, yet fetishistic to cite Shakespeare and Jonson in old spelling. As a compromise, I have therefore cited a mixture of different kinds of texts and editions – sixteenth- and seventeenth-century quarto and folio texts; manuscripts; old-spelling editions; and modern-spelling editions – hoping in the process to foreground language change, and the various ways in which texts may and may not be archaic. Titles of primary texts are standardised and, in most cases, modernised in the main text, but given in their original form when early editions are cited in the notes.

Unless noted otherwise, all references to Shakespeare’s works are to Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (eds.), The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works, 2nd edn (2005); references to Chaucer’s works are to Larry D. Benson (ed.), The Riverside Chaucer, 3rd edn (1988); references to Milton’s poems are to Gordon Campbell (ed.), Complete English Poems, Of Education, Areopagitica (1990); and references to Spenser’s works are to The Faerie Queene, ed. A. C. Hamilton (1977) and The Shorter Poems, ed. Richard A. McCabe (1999). Latin text and modern translations of the works of Virgil are from Virgil I (Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I–VI) and II (Aeneid 7–12, Appendix Vergiliana), ed. and trans. H. Rushton Fairclough;
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rev. G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols. (1999). All references to the Bible, unless noted otherwise, are from the 'King James' version (1611).

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Part of Chapter 4 appeared in my essay ‘Archaism, the “Middle Age” and the Morality Play in Shakespearean Drama’, published in Shakespeare 8.4 (2012), 356–67. I am very grateful to the editors and Taylor and Francis for permission to reproduce that material here.

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Abbreviations

BL  British Library, London


LION  Literature Online (Proquest, 1996–2013): lion.chadwyck.co.uk

NA  National Archives, Kew, London

