*Archaic Style in English Literature, 1590–1674*. Lucy Munro. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. xii + 308 pp. $99.

Lucy Munro's *Archaic Style* joins a number of recent books and articles — by David Scott Wilson-Okamura, Kathy Eden, and Daniel Shore, among others — that take up the question of style in early modern literature. It is a timely collective project. Style is not form, but its description relies upon keen attention to aspects of writing that we often call formal. It is also fundamentally, inextricably historical: indeed, as Gadamer, Ginzburg, and others before them have suggested, style is the fundamental way we know history when we know it as more than names and dates. The two strongest strains in our criticism, formalism and historicism, find their most fundamental common ground in matters of style.

Of all this new work, Munro's is the most historical, the most thoroughly dedicated to teaching its readers to hear the sedimentation of the past in literary language. It proceeds

under the auspice of four basic principles, which together could be understood as the argument of the book: that archaism is a form of imitation; that archaic language "undermines linear temporality"; that archaism is "intertwined with national identity"; and that archaism is "self-conscious and artificial, yet capable of arousing strong emotion" (12). The last is not the least important: the effects of style can be visceral, and a mannerism can be a strong encounter with a welcome or unwelcome otherness or familiarity.

The book is divided into six chapters, case studies in a variety of different sources and genres. The first treats the use of Old English vocabulary in seventeenth-century plays, translations, and university collections; Munro is particularly interested in how the language can function not as an index of English purity, but as a common inheritance for English and Scots, even Dutch. The second chapter takes up the afterechoes of Chaucer and Gower, following them in different directions: Spenser's complex meditation on the risk of obsolescence, and Shakespeare's and Wilkins's more commercially confident appropriation of Gower in *Pericles.* The third chapter is about Bible translation and religious language, how archaism served to give scripture an immemorial ring, but also how Catholic poets like Robert Southwell and Gertrude More could use by-then-old-fashioned fourteeners and common measure to make their doctrinal agenda sound like good native English. (Radical Protestant poets, Munro observes, could do the same.)

The fourth chapter turns to the theater; there are some fine pages on *Hamlet*, taking up Margreta de Grazia's claims about the play's "timeworn" character and exploring the different times it wears, for example the two modes of Senecanism, circa 1560 and 1590, that Munro hears in *The Murder of Gonzago* and Aeneas's speech, respectively. The fifth chapter follows the story of the stage into Stuart pastoral drama, and Fletcher, Jonson, and Milton's modulations of pastoral archaism. The final chapter is about epic: Spenser, where Munro traces the word *dight* from Duessa in *The Faerie Queene* through to Fairfax's Tasso, a superb juxtaposition of questions of general style and particular allusion; Chapman and the fate of the fourteener; and, finally, Milton, and the archaism of the fallen angels and the postlapsarian world. The range of examples demonstrates how variously the sound of the past can be troped, the same words and constructions made to sound used up and nobly enduring, discredited (even tainted) and reassuringly, ingratiatingly familiar. Munro's examples also make a consistent case for the attention to the "madeness" of literary language, attention that allows her to judge, for example, when a fourteener submits to the regular caesura that turns it to common measure, and when it sustains, by resourceful variation, its identity as a long line.

Throughout the book, the emphasis falls on diction and, to a lesser extent, versification. There is less attention to syntax, a harder matter to quantify but increasingly tractable to new stylometric methods. Munro's procedure is to take "'snapshots' of the use of archaic style in different contexts" (7). Before long, it will be difficult to do such work without drawing on the resources of our increasingly comprehensive text databases. It is a coming challenge for criticism to work out how statistical findings will interact with interpretive case studies. Munro's book also has relatively little traffic with stylistic study in art history, of which Nagel and Wood's

*Anachronic Renaissance* is only the latest influential instance. That too is an open prospect for the study of early modern style. But the book she has made is invaluably alert to the way time was once heard in words, and can still be.

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