Alexander Nagel and Cristopher Wood. 2010. Anachronic Renaissance.

ONE

Plural Temporality of the Work of Art

"The Imperial Palace does not have a restored look, nor has it an ancient one: this hesitation makes it appear not eternal but precarious and like an imitation of itself." This is Simone de Beauvoir describing the Forbidden City in Beijing in her travel memoir *The Long March* (1957). "There is nothing accidental about the impermanence of the materials; it is simultaneously the cause, the effect, the expression of a troubling fact; the traces left upon this palace by the past are so few that, paradoxically, I would hesitate to call it a historical monument."[1] These were buildings, Beauvoir recognized, that disguised their own histories of fabrication and subsequent restorations. The Forbidden City transcended the merely human circumstances of its life in time. In the European tradition of building and making to which Beauvoir was implicitly comparing the Chinese palace, an artifact's historicity is both the source of its authority and the basis for an eventual demystification of that authority. In the modern West, the very old building or painting is venerated for having survived and for testifying with its body to the corrosive effects of the passage of time, a passage that can sometimes be measured precisely, to the year. But by virtue of its anchorage in history, the European building is also a mere product of its time. It is all too obviously contrived by real agents—human beings, not giants, not gods. The Imperial Palace in Beijing seemed to evade all these conditions. Beauvoir did not feel invited either to contemplate the structure's great antiquity or to read it as the index of its times, and so she saw the palace as inauthentic, as an "imitation of itself." The palace's true self, for Beauvoir, was its historical self.

The premise of the present book is that the Forbidden City is no anomaly. Most cultures have created buildings and artifacts that "hesitate" in just the way Beauvoir describes. They resist anchoring in time. Societies tend to coalesce around artifacts that embody institutions, but often on the condition that the historicity of those artifacts—as much as that of the institutions—is masked. Like the buildings of the Forbidden City, such artifacts are not meant to look old, nor are they meant to look as if

someone has tried to recover their original look. There is no premium placed on their historical moment of origin because they are supposed to deliver still older truths, or even timeless truths. For anyone can see that the possible gain in legitimacy conferred by the marks of time is easily offset by the risk of loss of aura through fixing in time. To fix an image or temple in time is to reduce it to human proportions.

Most societies also recognize, alongside the timeless object, a completely different kind of object whose historicity, its link to a point in time, is the entire basis of its value. Such an object is called a *relic*. The relic is irreplaceable. But even here societies have tended to provide for loopholes, for the consequences of loss or destruction of the relic are too great. The ancient Roman historian Suetonius, for example, reported that the emperor Nero in his megalomania and want of money "stripped many temples of their gifts and melted down the images of gold and silver, including those of the Penates," the household gods of the Romans. This outrage proved easy to correct, however. The next emperor, Galba, simply had the statues recast.[2]

The work that manages to retain its identity despite alteration, repair, renovation, and even outright replacement was a sustaining myth of art in premodern Europe. Ontological stability across time was figured by the Ship of Theseus, a relic of the Athenian state. In this ship the hero-king Theseus had returned from Crete together with the Athenian youths, destined for sacrifice, whom he had rescued from the Minotaur. According to Plutarch, the ship "was preserved by the Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phalereus [that is, late fourth century BCE], for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place, insomuch that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same."[3] The Ship of Theseus is a paradigm of the object defined by its structure rather than by its material make-up. The age of the planks is accidental; essential is the form. To grasp an object's structure is to abstract from the mere object as given to the senses. The identity of such an object is sustained across time by the stability of its name and by the tacit substitution of its parts. The "structural object," in the phrase of Rosalind Krauss, here following Roland Barthes, has "no other causes than its name, and no other identity than its form."[4] The Ship of Theseus "hesitated" between its possible historical identities, not settling on any of them, and in this way managed to function both as a marker of a great span of time (the history of Athens) and as a usable instrument in a living ritual (the annual votive mission to Delos).[5] To think "structurally," then and

now, is to reject linear chronology as the inevitable matrix of experience and cognition.

Chronological time, flowing steadily from before to after, is an effect of its figurations: annals, chronicles, calendars, clocks. The diagrammatization of time as a series of points strung along a line allows one to speak of diverse events happening in different places as happening at the same time. This is not an obvious concept. The ancient Romans, Denis Feeney has argued, had no notion of linear time and therefore no notion of the date. Instead they saw the myriad interconnections among events and people.[6] Many societies have figured to themselves the ramification, the doubling, the immobilization of time: in the naming of planets and seasons; in the promise of reincarnation; in narratives of the rise and fall of worldly empires understood in cyclical terms; in the time travel of dreams and prophecies; in religious ritual; and, within the Christian tradition, in the mystical parallel between Old and New Dispensations, read between the lines of holy scripture. Such contrivances mirror the sensation, familiar to everyone, of time folding over on itself, the doubling of the fabric of experience that creates continuity and flow; creates meaning where there was none; creates and encourages the desire to start over, to renew, to reform, to recover.

No device more effectively generates the effect of a doubling or bending of time than the work of art, a strange kind of event whose relation to time is plural. The artwork is made or designed by an individual or by a group of individuals at some moment, but it also points away from that moment, backward to a remote ancestral origin, perhaps, or to a prior artifact, or to an origin outside of time, in divinity. At the same time it points forward to all its future recipients who will activate and reactivate it as a meaningful event. The work of art is a message whose sender and destination are constantly shifting. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it became increasingly common, in the West, to attend closely, perhaps more closely than ever before, to what it is that artworks do. Christians wondered whether the temporal instability of images made them more suitable for religious devotion, or less suitable. On the one hand, art with its multiple temporalities offered a picture of a meaningful cosmos woven together by invisible threads, of an order hidden behind the mere illusory sequence of lived moments. On the other hand, the references back to the meaning-conferring origin points that art seemed to offer—the god, the temple, the founding legend—threatened to collapse into their own historicity. The link back to the origin might turn out to be nothing more than a historical link, crafted by human hands, and therefore unreliable.

The art historian Aby Warburg (1866–1929), trying to explain the peculiar hold of ancient Greece and Rome on the European imagination right

up to his day, spoke of the *Nachleben der Antike*, the "afterlife" or "survival" of antiquity. For Warburg, a painting or a court masque was a dense archive of cultural energies, a *dynamogram* that concretized and transmitted traumatic, primordial experiences.[7] Archaic stimuli were directly imprinted in matter and gesture, Warburg believed, giving figuration the power to disrupt an historical present tense. Warburg's cultural symbol was a token (*sumbolon*) that literally "throws together" past and present. For Warburg, the painter Sandro Botticelli was not only "assimilating" ancient art. Rather, his paintings *became* instantiations of ancient gestures. When Warburg described the mysterious continuity of life forces across far-flung chains of symbols, whereby pictorial form delivered, centuries later, the pitch and pulse of primordial emotions, he was describing nothing other than a real virtue of artworks.

With its power to compel but not explain a folding of time over onto itself, the work of art in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was able to lay a trail back to Europe's multiple pasts, to the Holy Land, to Rome—monarchical, Republican, Imperial, or Christian—and sometimes to Rome's Byzantine legacy. Historical treatises, philological glosses, sketchbooks, paintings, monuments, and anthologies of inscriptions notated the relics and events of disappeared worlds. Forms of life, ways of picturing or building, customs and costumes came to seem obsolete and yet retrievable, retrievable perhaps because they were obsolete. The differentness of the past made repetition an option. The figuring of succession in turn made reckoning possible, enabling a comparison of the present to the past, and bringing forth new worries about the inferiority or superiority of the present.[8] New systems for storing and recovering information, above all the printed text and the printed image, allowed for direct comparison of historical life-worlds. The commercial and colonial networks that were closing the globe, meanwhile, offered evidence of otherness across gaps of space rather than time. The two remotenesses, temporal and spatial, were confused, and from that moment onwards non-Europeans were condemned as non-synchronic, out of sync, trapped in states of incomplete development.[9] The hypothesis of cultural anachronism made it possible for Europeans to deny the synchronicity of other people they shared the world with, and so to refuse to engage with them in political terms.[10]

Artifacts played an indispensable role in the overall cultural project of time management, not simply as beneficiaries or participants, but as the very models of the time-bending operation. Non-artists aspired to imitate the artist's ability to conjure with time. Theologians, for example, read sacred texts as indications of a suprahistorical divine plan that suspended earthly time. The theology of typology identified formal rhymes between

historical events that revealed the pattern imposed on reality by divinity.[11] One event was the shadow, the image, the figure of another. For the theologian, therefore, merely secular time was overcome through metaphors of figuration that invoked the powers of imagination and intuition.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, different models of the image's temporality came into conceptual focus, and nowhere more clearly than in works of art themselves. One powerful model proposed the perfect interchangeability of one image or work for another. Under this model, the work did not merely repeat the prior work, for repetition proposes difference, an altering interval. Rather, the work simply *is* its own predecessor, such that the prior is no longer prior but present. This model of perfect commutativity among works across time and space flies in the face of the empirical fact that works of art are created by specific people at specific times and then replaced for various reasons. Communities may well ask a mere artifact, image, or statue to stand in for an absent authority. They may well propose the work's perfect exchangeability, involving no loss of reference, with other works referring to the same source. This capacity to stand in for absent authority, however, comes to be doubted when too much is learned about how works are actually fabricated. The idea of the artwork as an effective substitute for another, absent work, which itself stands in for yet another work, is reasserted in the face of such doubt. The hypothesis of substitutability, conceived in this manner, is a mode of magical reasoning because it asserts the identity of like to like. "Magic" is nothing more than the name given to the attempt to manipulate the hidden paths and conduits that connect like to like, behind the deceptive screen of experience. Art, too, is a manipulation of the similarities and identities proposed by the substitutional model of production. Art, therefore, cannot be understood as an enlightened successor to magic.

According to Paul Valéry, in his essay on the "method" of Leonardo da Vinci, creativity is the perception of relations, or a "law of continuity," between things where others see none.[12] This formulation permits us to understand the chain of substitutions, one work standing in for the next, not as a historical reality but as a fiction that the artist and a viewing public create backward from present to past. The new work, the innovation, is legitimated by the chain of works leading back to an authoritative type. But the chain also needs the new work. It is the new work that selects the chain out of the debris of the past.[13] Valéry's phrase gives the model of a perfect substitutability among artifacts a new reality that poses a challenge to the materialist and literalist—one might almost say counterintuitive—model of an artwork securely moored in historical time, the model that dominates the modern scholarly study of art.[14]

With their temporal flexibility, artworks and other "structural objects" were the perfect instruments of the myths and rituals that knit present to past. The reforming humanist Erasmus homed in on the fiction of irreplaceability when he set out to discredit the custom of pilgrimage, the journey undertaken by hundreds of thousands in the late Middle Ages in hopes of a glimpse of or even contact with a relic. In a letter of 1512 Erasmus announced his intention to visit Walsingham, the pilgrimage target in Norfolk, England, and hang up a Greek poem in honor of the Virgin; a humanist scholar's wry parody of a votive offering.[15] Erasmus transformed his experiences at Walsingham into a dialogue, "A Pilgrimage for Religion's Sake," one of the *Colloquies* published in 1526. In that dialogue, the character Ogygius recounts his visit to a popular pilgrimage site. He is shown a shrine, a simple rustic hut, by a local guide. By legend the shrine at Walsingham was a building constructed by angels in the late eleventh century, a scale model of the Virgin's house in Nazareth.[16]

> *Ogygius*: Inspecting everything carefully I inquired how many years it was since the little house had been brought there. "Some ages," he replied. "In any event," I said, "the walls don't look very old." He didn't deny they had been placed there recently, and the fact was self-evident. "Then," I said, "the roof and thatch of the house seem rather recent." He agreed. "Not even these cross-beams, nor the very rafters supporting the roof, appear to have been placed here many years ago." He nodded. "But since no part of the building has survived, how is it known for certain," I asked, "that this is the cottage brought here from so far away?"
>
> *Menedemus*: How did the attendant get out of that tangle, if you please?
>
> *Ogygius*: Why, he hurriedly showed us an old, worn-out bearskin fastened to posts and almost laughed at us for our dullness in being slow to see such a clear proof. So, being persuaded, and excusing our stupidity, we turned to the heavenly milk of the Blessed Virgin.[17]

Erasmus's skeptical prolocutor does not accept the principle of continuity that holds together the shrine's identity across four centuries of rethatchings and replaced rafters. To Ogygius's jaundiced eyes the shrine has become, like Simone de Beauvoir's Imperial Palace, a mere "imitation of itself."

Erasmus derided the credulous Walsingham pilgrim. And yet that pilgrim was as justified in his or her attentiveness to the relic as any Athenian in the presence of the reconstructed Ship of Theseus, or any Roman in the presence of the statuettes that Galba made to replace the Penates destroyed by Nero. For the pilgrim, the identity of the shrine at Walsingham with an original eleventh-century structure, which was in turn homologous with the Virgin's house in Nazareth (which in the meantime had been

transported by angels to Loreto, on the east coast of Italy; see section 18) and was protected as such by the building's label.

This book is about European buildings, paintings, prints, drawings, sculptures, medals, pavements, and mosaics, mostly of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, that moved between the two conditions marked out by Erasmus's satire: on the one hand, the shrine at Walsingham as understood by the devout pilgrim, on the other, the shrine as understood by Erasmus. For the pilgrim, the shrine is linked, no matter how often its timbers are replaced, to a primordial, meaning-conferring past through labeling and ritual. The shrine's reference to the dwelling of the Virgin Mary, ultimately to her body, is effective. For Erasmus, the shrine was drained of its meaning once it turned out not to be a literal, physical relic of the eleventh century (of course, it is not clear that Erasmus would be impressed even if the shrine really were old). Erasmus did not permit the shack to "deliver" the founding legend of the cult site. For him, the reference to the past is ineffective. The shrine on the site is evidence of nothing more interesting, in his view, than the capacities of its contemporary restorers.

The power of the image, or the work of art, to fold time was neither discovered nor invented in the Renaissance. What *was* distinctive about the European Renaissance, so called, was its apprehensiveness about the temporal instability of the artwork, and its re-creation of the artwork as an occasion for reflection on that instability. The work of art "anachronizes," from the Greek *anachronizein*, built from *ana-*, "again," and the verb *chronizein*, "to be late or belated." To anachronize is to be belated again, to linger. The work is late, first because it succeeds some reality that it re-presents, and then late again when that re-presentation is repeated for successive recipients. To many that double postponement came to seem troublesome, calling for correction, compensation, or, at the very least, explanation.

The work of art when it is late, when it repeats, when it hesitates, when it remembers, but also when it projects a future or an ideal, is "anachronic." We introduce this term as an alternative to "anachronistic," a judgmental term that carries with it the historicist assumption that every event and every object has its proper location within objective and linear time. From a historicist point of view, an artifact that has been unmoored from its secure anchorage in linear time and has drifted into an alien historical context is an "anachronism." Such an artifact can appear inside a representation: the Elizabethan clock that strikes the hour in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, for example, or the "doublet" Caesar wears. The embedded anachronism creates a temporal tension between container and contained. An anachronism can also appear on the stage of life itself—but only when sensitivity to the historicity of form is so far developed that the entire

visual environment is seen to comply with a stylistic "program." The anachronistic artifact then appears to be out of step with that program. Such an artifact is the sixteenth-century painting with a gold ground, for example the *Crucifixion* by Albrecht Altdorfer in Budapest (ca. 1520), a picture that reprises an iconographic type (the "Crucifixion with Crowd") and a non-naturalistic approach to space long out of fashion. Historical anachronism of this sort may be the product of naiveté or ignorance—with the possibility of historical accuracy comes the possibility of error—or it may contribute to a deliberately anachronistic cultural project such as neoclassicism or archaism. The anachronic artifact also moves freely in time, but unlike the anachronistic artifact, it does not depend for its effect on a stable conception of the historicity of form. The anachronic artifact is quite generally an artifact that resembles an artwork. It is the more global category: the anachronistic artifact is just a special case of the anachronic artifact.[18]

To describe a work of art as an "anachronism" is to say that the work is best grasped not as art, but rather as a witness to its times, or as an inalienable trace of history; it tries to tell us what the artwork *really is*. To describe the work of art as "anachronic," by contrast, is to say what the artwork *does*, qua art.[19]

in *Renaissance Medievalisms*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2009), pp. 53–74.

Two articles by Alexander Nagel presented material that pointed forward to this book: "Fashion and the Now-Time of Renaissance Art," *Res: Antrhopology and Aesthetics* 46 (2004), pp. 33–52; and "Authorship and Image-making in the Monument to Giotto in Florence Cathedral," *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 53–54 (2008), pp. 143–51. We are grateful to Francesco Pellizzi for his support.

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Notes

ONE — PLURAL TEMPORALITY OF THE WORK OF ART

1. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Long March: A Book on China*, trans. Austryn Wainhouse (Cleveland: World, 1958), pp. 64–65.

2. Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, ed. and trans. J.C. Rolfe (London: Heinemann; New York: Putnam, 1930), vol. 2, pp. 140–41 (Life of Nero, §32). The episode is attested nowhere else; see K.R. Bradley, *Suetonius' Life of Nero: An Historical Commentary* (Brussels: Latomus, 1978), and Annie Dubourdieu, *Les origines et le développement du culte des Pénates à Rome* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1989). Further examples of counterfeit heirlooms are the Japanese imperial regalia, immemorial but apparently dating no further back than the fifteenth century; see Joseph Alsop, *The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Art Collecting* (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1982), p. 156.

3. Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, trans. John Dryden, vol. 1 (New York: Modern Library, 1992), pp. 13–14. For other ancient ship relics, see Friedrich Pfister, *Der Reliquienkult im Altertum* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1909–1912), p. 335. The Ship of Theseus still poses a central problem of philosophy, continuity of identity; see Tamar Szabó Gendler, *Thought Experiment: On the Powers and Limits of Imaginary Cases* (New York: Garland, 2000), pp. 65–109.

4. Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985), p. 2, referring to a parallel myth about the Argo.

5. Plato *Phaedon* 58B.

6. Denis Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 12–16.

7. See Ernst Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 248. See also Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante: Histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2002), p. 176. Didi-Huberman's book is one of the few of the many recent studies of Warburg to take his Romantic conception of the power of the symbol at face value. Warburg's major texts on Renaissance art are translated in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 1999).

8. On the development of the modern European conception of historical time, see Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship*, vol. 2, *Historical Chronology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

9. "*Geopolitics* has its ideological foundations in *chronopolitics*," Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 144.

10. Cf. Walter Seitter who writes: "The inner simultaneities have determined my reading of the *Nibelungenlied*, and thus in a certain sense my reading became a political one, insofar as politics consists in the simultaneity (*Gleichzeitigkeit*) of numerous people, places, actions, and differences." *Distante Siegfried-Paraphrasen* (Berlin: Merve, 1993), p. 9.

11. Erich Auerbach, "Figura," in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), pp. 11–76.

12. "[O]n substitue un ordre à un autre qui est initial," Paul Valéry, *Introduction à la méthode de Léonard de Vinci* (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), p. 41. See also pp. 17–18 and 31–32.

13. The picture of art history as a collection of "form-classes" made up of innovative "prime objects" and long sequences of replicas was introduced by George Kubler. See *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1962).

14. The inability of the scholarly discipline of art history to acknowledge the unstable temporality of the image is a persistent and deeply developed theme in the writings of Georges Didi-Huberman. See, for example, *Devant l'image: Question posée aux fins d'une histoire de l'art* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1990); *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, trans. John Goodman (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2004); *Devant le temps: histoire de l'art et anachronisme des images* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2000); and *L'image survivante*.

15. Letter of May 9, 1512 (Epistle 262), to Andrea Ammonio; presumably he made the trip soon afterwards. See also *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 40 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 651 n.7.

16. J. C. Dickinson, *The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956).

17. Erasmus, *Collected Works*, vol. 40, pp. 631–32.

18. Jacques Rancière makes a similar distinction when he speaks of events and meanings as *anachronies*, attempting in this way to liberate historical thinking from linear temporality: "There is no anachronism. But there are modes of connection that we can in a positive sense call *anachronies*: events, notions, significations that are contrary to time, that make meaning circulate in a way that escapes any contemporaneity, any identity of time with 'itself.' An *anachronie* is a word, an event, a signifying sequence that has been cast out of its time, and in this way given the capacity to define completely original temporal switchings, to carry out leaps from one temporal line to another." "Il n'y a pas d'anachronisme. Mais il y a des modes de connexion que nous pouvons appeler positivement des anachronies: des événements, des notions, des significations qui prennent le temps à rebours, qui font circuler le sens d'une manière qui échappe à toute contemporanéité, à toute identité du temps avec 'lui-même.' Une anachronie, c'est un mot, un événement, un séquence signifiante sortis de leur temps, doués du même coup de la capacité de définir des aiguillages temporels inédits, d'assurer le saut d'une ligne de temporalité à une autre." Jacques Rancière, "Le concept d'anachronisme et la vérité de l'historien," *L'inactuel: Psychanalyse & Culture* 6 (1996), pp. 53–68, here 63–64.

19. An illuminating account of "chronology's hold on historical thought," esp. since the seventeenth century, is Margreta de Grazia, "A Story of Anachronism," in Brian Cummings and James Simpson (eds.), *Cultural Reformations: From Lollardy to the English Civil War* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

20. This is based on the translation of Claire J. Farago, *Leonardo da Vinci's "Paragone": A Critical Interpretation with a New Edition of the Text in the Codex Urbinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), pp. 186–90. Here is the original Italian text: "[Q]uesta non si coppia, come si fa le lettere, che tanto vale la coppia quanto l'origgine; questa non s'inpronta, come si fa scultura della quale tal'è la impressa qual'è la origgine in quanto alla virtude l'opera. Questa no' fa infiniti figlioli, come fa li libri stampati. Questa sola si resta nobbile, questa sola onora il suo Autore e resta pretiosa e unica e non partorisse mai figlioli eguali a sé. E tal singularita la fa più eccellente che quelle che per tutto sonno publicate."

21. See the analysis in Renate Lachmann, *Memory and Literature: Intertextuality in Russian Modernism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 1–24.

22. "Onde andando un giorno Cimabue per sue bisogne da Fiorenza a Vespignano, trovò Giotto che, mentre le sue pecore pascevano, sopra una lastra piana e pulita con un sasso un poco apuntato ritraeva una pecora di naturale, senza aver imparato modo nessuno di ciò fare da altri che dalla natura." Giorgio Vasari, *Vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori*, vol. 2, ed. Rosanna Bettarini (Florence: Sansoni, 1966–1969), p. 96.

23. Xavier Barral i Altet, *Artistes, artisans et production artistique au Moyen Âge*, Colloque international, Centre national de la recherche scientifique, Université de Rennes II–Haute Bretagne, 2–6 mai 1983, 3 vols. (Paris: Picard, 1986–1990); Peter Cornelius Claussen, "Früher Künstlerstolz : Mittelalterliche Signaturen als Quelle der Kunstsoziologie," in Karl Clausberg (ed.), *Bauwerk und Bildwerk im Hochmittelalter: anschauliche Beiträge zur Kultur- und Sozialgeschichte* (Giessen: Anabas, 1981), pp. 7–34 and "Künstlerinschriften," in Anton Legner (ed.), *Ornamenta Ecclesiae: Kunst und Künstler der Romanik*, vol. 1 (Cologne: Stadt Köln, 1985), pp. 263–76; Maria Monica Donato (ed.), *Le opere e i nomi: Prospettive sulla "firma" medievale* (Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 2000).

24. Richard A. Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300–1600* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); John Michael Montias, *Le marché de l'art aux Pays-Bas, XVe–XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Flammarion, 1996); Lisa Jardine, *Worldly Goods* (London: Macmillan, 1996); Evelyn Welch, *Art and Society in Italy, 1350–1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Marina Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance: Burgundian Arts across Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Evelyn Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance: Consumer Cultures in Italy, 1400–1600* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); Neil De Marchi and Hans J. van Miegroet (eds.), *Mapping Markets for Paintings in Europe, 1450–1750* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006); Michelle O'Malley and Evelyn Welch (eds.), *Material Renaissance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

25. Michael Cole, *Cellini and the Principles of Sculpture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

26. On the artwork as a recursive system and as second-order observation, see Niklas Luhmann, *Art as a Social System* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), esp. chs. 1 and 2. For a theorization of hesitation as one of the political and aesthetic "fields" of modernity, see Joseph Vogl, *Über das Zaudern* (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2007), esp. pp. 22–24 where the "hesitation-system" is defined as a suspension of countervailing forces that simultaneously obstruct and motivate. Vogl ascribes a "meta-stability" to hesitation that distinguishes it from mere indecision, laziness, or lack of will. Hesitation provides for re-initiation of activity on new terms.

27. Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Gerhard Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani: Die Geschichte römischer Kultbilder im Mittelalter* (Weinheim: VCH, 1990); Giovanni Morello and Gerhard Wolf (eds.), *Il volto di Cristo* (Milan: Electa, 2000); Gerhard Wolf, *Schleier und Spiegel: Traditionen des Christusbildes und die Bildkonzepte der Renaissance* (Munich: Fink, 2002); Maryan Ainsworth, "'A la façon grèce': The Encounter of Northern Renaissance Artists with Byzantine Icons," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New York: Metropolitan Museum, 2004), pp. 545–55.

28. Francis Haskell, *History and its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); Margaret Daly Davis (ed.), *Archäologie der Antike 1500–1700*, exhibition catalogue, Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994); Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venice and Antiquity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); Ingrid D. Rowland, *Culture of the High Renaissance: Ancients and Moderns in Sixteenth-Century Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Madeleine Viljoen, "Prints and False Antiquities in the Age of Raphael," *Print Quarterly* 21 (2004), pp. 235–47.

Rather than summarising in detail all of the influences on the approach to literary archaism adopted here, I instead set out four theses about its nature and function:

1. *Archaism is a form of imitation*.
2. *Archaic words and styles undermine linear temporality, reconfiguring relationships between past, present and future*.
3. *Archaism is intertwined with national identity*.
4. *Archaism is self-conscious and artificial, yet capable of arousing strong emotion*.

As I explain in greater detail below, early modern archaism's closest conceptual bedfellows are anachronism and nostalgia; its affinity with anachronism in particular marks its difference from the literary archaisms of some other periods. For instance, some of my theses challenge the model outlined in the fullest study of literary archaism to date, Linell B. Wisner's 'Archaism, or Textual Literalism in the Historical Novel', largely because the nineteenth- and twentieth-century historical novel, Wisner's object of study, pursues different ends and employs rather different techniques from early modern texts. As Wisner notes, his texts

do not 'merely sprinkle their narratives with obsolete mannerisms'; instead, they faithfully reproduce an 'antiquated literary idiom', most closely resembling forgeries of older texts.[20] In contrast, early modern archaist writers mingle outmoded linguistic and literary forms with contemporary idioms; they 'sprinkle' their texts with archaism or embed archaising characters or self-contained sequences within their narratives, and the products only rarely resemble forgeries. While archaism may be deployed strategically as an authenticating gesture in early modern texts, its claim to truth is generally complicated or compromised. Moreover, even where a complete work is written in an archaic form – for instance, the seventeenth-century composition of poems in Old English or a cod-Chaucerian style – anachronistic details are included, and archaisms often jostle with neologisms and other forms of temporal dissonance.

While the post-eighteenth-century novel uses archaism extensively, early modern prose fiction employs it only very rarely, even in texts set in the historical past.[21] Furthermore, unlike the historical novel, archaist texts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries do not use archaism to represent 'a specific historical experience', as Wisner terms it ('Archaism', 12). Instead, early modern literary archaism has more in common with the techniques used in the temporally hybrid form of steampunk, a recent novelistic and filmic subgenre that often places anachronistic technology in nineteenth-century settings; in steampunk, as Margaret Rose describes, archaisms 'often help the texts to masquerade as Victorian'; they represent 'an engagement with the historicity of the present', playing with what Fredric Jameson has termed 'connotations of pastness'.[22] In a similar fashion, early modern archaism masquerades as Anglo-Saxon, as Chaucerian, as early Tudor, or as the product of a less clearly specified past, but it never expects its masquerade to be fully credited or taken wholly seriously.

1 Archaism is a form of imitation. Archaism requires a writer to mimic older literary and linguistic forms, as a number of the terms used by early modern writers to describe it acknowledge. The term 'archaism' itself appears to have been first used in the mid-seventeenth century, but prior to that writers occasionally used a term closer to the original Greek, 'archaismos'.[23] Writing in the 1530s, Nicholas Udall quotes the fourth-century grammarian Donatus' commentary on Terence's *Eunuch*, defining 'archaismos' as 'an imitation of spekynge of the olde tyme'.[24] This definition stresses both the diachronic and imitative aspects of archaism: a writer is required not merely to refer to past forms, but to seek to recreate them. Archaism might also shade into cacozelia, a rhetorical technique criticised as 'Fond Affectation' by George Puttenham in *The Art of English Poesy*

(1589), which often entails imitating the 'wrong' models.[25] Cacozelia is often linked with neologisms taken from other languages, but it can also encompass archaism. In Thomas Elyot's 1538 Latin–English dictionary a 'Cacozelus' is 'an yll folower or imitatour';[26] here, the writer who employs cacozelia chooses the wrong exemplars to imitate, exemplars which might be classical texts, modern works in foreign languages, or older texts from his or her own national tradition. The past is a different country, and archaism as cacozelia is an affected, potentially ill-mannered, form of imitation.

The slightly later term 'Chaucerism', used from at least the 1590s, also foregrounds imitation – here of a specific medieval forebear – while suggesting in addition a certain primitivism of style.[27] Jonson, for instance, complains that Chaucerisms 'were better expunged and banished', while Thomas Fuller comments that Chaucerisms in Spenser's poetry 'are thought by the ignorant to be *blemishes*, known by the learned to be *beauties* to his book; which notwithstanding had been more salable, if more conformed to our modern language'.[28] The term also highlights the intertexual relations that can be created through the imitation of an earlier text or even the use of a single word or metrical form. For instance, when Spenser says in the opening lines of the Proem to *The Faerie Queene* that his 'Muse whilome did maske, / As time her taught, in lowly Shepheards weeds' he not only draws attention to his own archaising style in *The Shepheardes Calender*, but also invokes the literary history of the word 'whilom' itself, and the authors – most notably Chaucer – who used it.

Imitation was central to early modern poetics, but its characteristics and problems are particularly evident when a writer chooses to mimic the style of a predecessor whose work has become outmoded. Terence Cave points out that in literary imitation 'the activities of reading and writing become virtually identified'; readers read with the intention of incorporating a text into their own work, while the imitating writer 'cannot entirely escape the constraints of what he has read'.[29] When the text imitated is an outdated one, and aspects of its form or style have become archaic, the 'writer as imitator' is forced to negotiate carefully the demands of two sets of aesthetic conventions: those of the source text and those of his own day. As Thomas M. Greene notes, imitation 'makes possible an emergent sense of identity, personal and cultural, by demonstrating the viability of diachronic itineraries'.[30] In imitating older texts, the archaising writer constructs his or her own poetic identity through a form of literary time travel, underscoring the network of diachronic interactions on which early modern literary composition depended.

Imitation is crucial to one of the most important early modern critiques of archaism, Jonson's comments in his commonplace book, published posthumously as *Timber, or Discoveries*, in which he sets out some typically stringent advice for the young writer, drawing closely on Quintilian's guidelines for the use of archaism in the *Institutio Oratoria*. '[A]s it is fit to read the best authors to youth first', Jonson writes,

> so let them be of the openest, and clearest. As Livy before Sallust, Sidney before Donne. And beware of letting them taste Gower or Chaucer at first, lest falling too much in love with antiquity, and not apprehending the weight, they grow rough and barren in language only. When their judgements are firm and out of danger, let them read both the old and the new; but no less take heed that their new flowers and sweetness do not as much corrupt as the other's dryness and squalor, if they choose not carefully. Spenser, in affecting the ancients, writ no language; yet I would have him read for his matter; but as Virgil read Ennius.[31]

Typically concerned with avoiding the extremes of poetic style and diction, Jonson suggests that writers such Gower and Chaucer are best left to experienced poets, who will be able to bear the 'weight' and avoid the 'rough[ness]' and 'barren[ness]', the 'dryness and squalor', that imitating older writing might bring. The original work might be good, but in attempting to imitate it a modern writer merely produces a worthless reiteration of its worst stylistic features. Nonetheless, although he condemns writers' love affairs with antiquity, Jonson's comments also hint there is a dangerous allure in the works of Gower or Chaucer. Despite their stylistic limitations, these writers continue to work on the imaginations of their early modern successors.

In fact, Jonson's discussion of archaism becomes more multifaceted the more attention we devote to it. His allusions to the classical writers Ennius (*c.*239–*c.*169 BCE) and Sallust (86–*c.*35 BCE) – the latter taken directly from Quintilian – remind us that archaism has a long history, and one that was intertwined with ideas about imitation. Archaism in Greek texts stretches back at least as far as Homer, and Sander M. Goldberg argues that Roman archaism may be nearly as old as the literature itself, pointing out that it was 'a way to make the legacy of the past legitimize the work of the present'.[32] Archaism in Latin verse is instructively complex. For later writers, much of the archaic quality of Ennius' work derived from its genuine antiquity, but Ennius had also introduced self-conscious archaisms of his own, imitating aspects of Homeric style in his *Annales*.[33] Ennius' works thus embody both forms of archaic text: that which has become old and that which imitates older works. His voluntary archaism

was often overlooked; in the *Institutio Oratoria*, for instance, Quintilian writes, 'Ennius we should worship as we do groves whose age has made them sacred, and whose huge and ancient trees have come to have more sanctity about them than beauty.'[34] Sallust, viewed more straightforwardly as a self-conscious archaiser, receives harsher criticism: Quintilian quotes an epigram that describes him as a 'plunderer of old Cato's words', and comments, 'This is sheer pedantry' ('Odioso cura').[35]

Thus, when Jonson juxtaposes Donne with Sallust he criticises what he perceives as the wilful and affected obscurity of Donne's style; when he compares Spenser with Ennius he suggests that on some level Spenser is unable to prevent himself from imitating his medieval forebears.[36] As Anne Barton notes, some of the earliest commentators on *The Shepheardes Calender* claimed that Spenser was 'the Virgil to Chaucer's Ennius'; however, for Jonson in *Discoveries* 'Spenser was Ennius: an important but stylistically primitive writer who should be respected by future poets, but not imitated'.[37] David Scott Wilson-Okamura takes this line of argument further, associating Jonson's statement with Virgil's supposed response to someone who asked why he read Ennius, 'I am combing dung (*stercore*) in search of gold', and commenting, 'the allusion is unmistakable: for Jonson, reading Spenser was like sifting dung'.[38] Jonson here expresses a fierce resistance to archaism. However, as I will describe later in this book, his resistance is accompanied by extensive – though often edgily self-conscious – use of archaism in some of his own works. He thus epitomises early modern culture's simultaneous attraction to and suspicion of the revival of outmoded style.

Considering early modern culture's ambivalent response to archaism also raises the question of another form of imitation: parody. Many early modern writers simply found older words or styles amusing. William Hawkins' school play *Apollo Shroving* (1627), for instance, has a good deal of fun with the use of archaism in erotic poetry, and in particular its stubborn adherence to outmoded forms such as 'eyne' for 'eyes'. In one comic set-piece, the affected Captain Complement attempts to instruct a young boy, Gingle, in wooing technique, only to find that his lesson is derailed when his pupil fails to understand the incongruous poetic archaism in the doggerel lines 'Souse not thy glittering globy eyne / In dreary teary salt sea brine'. Frustrated, Complement asks Gingle, 'Knowst thou not what globy is? I perceiue then thou art no traueller, thou hast not (as I haue done) trauelled about the globe of the earth. Know'st not what eyne be? I see thou art no Poet, thou hast neuer read *Chaucer*. Hast thou neuer heard of eyne twaine?'[39] The comedy of the sequence derives from the

assumption that audience members will recognise and understand the phrase 'globy eyne' as a parody of poetic archaism, and from the disparity between their knowledge and the ignorance of the unfortunate Gingle.

In *Apollo Shroving*, Complement attempts to justify his use of archaism by drawing on Chaucer's poetic authority; as this might suggest, diachronic interactions between past and present are important to parodic imitation. Parody encompasses a range of imitative forms, including quotation, allusion, burlesque and pastiche, and all of these forms can draw on older words and styles. Linda Hutcheon usefully defines parody as 'repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity', describing it as a process of 'revising, replaying, inverting, and "trans-contextualizing" previous works of art'.[40] Both Hutcheon and Margaret Rose stress parody's capacity to make past and present speak to one another, invoking temporal as well as critical distance. Rose, for instance, argues that it is 'synthetic and analytic and diachronic and synchronic in its analysis of the work it quotes, in that it is able to evoke a past work and its reception and link it with other analyses and audiences'.[41] In recycling older texts and imitating their conventions, a parody establishes interconnections between past and present and between older and newer generations of writers, genres and texts; further, each individual parody becomes part of a multi-temporal network of previous and, potentially, future parodies. Moreover, parody also highlights the fact that archaism's imitation is never a neutral process: writers who introduce older forms into their works do so for specific reasons, and from specific perspectives.

2 Archaic words and styles undermine linear temporality, reconfiguring relationships between past, present and future. Thus far, I have argued that archaism is a form of diachronic imitation; however, the interactions that it creates between past, present and future are more complex than this suggests. Archaism draws on its closest conceptual analogues, anachronism and nostalgia, yet it also complicates some of the assumptions of these two models; in doing so, it has affinities with recent attempts to reconceptualise the temporality of literary texts and other aesthetic objects of the early modern period, and with recent accounts of the cultural workings of memory.

A popular stereotype of Spenserian poetics is invoked by Samuel Daniel in the 1592 version of his sonnet sequence, *Delia*: 'Let others sing of Knights and Palladines,' he writes, 'In aged accents, and vntimely words.'[42] Writing two years after the publication of the first part of *The Faerie Queene*, Daniel vividly evokes its stylistic archaism, but his use of the word

'untimely' also suggests the ways in which archaism violates chronology. The recycling of old linguistic and stylistic conventions invariably pulls the past into the present, even if only by virtue of the fact that the old word is uttered in a new context, or the old convention is juxtaposed with forms that long post-date it. Moreover, archaism depends on the simultaneous presence of what the linguist Manfred Görlach calls '*diachronically different forms of speech*'.[43] It does not seek simply to erase temporal difference, but to play with the aesthetic and interpretative possibilities that the combination of old and new forms provides.

As this suggests, archaism carries with it an inherent anachronism. We often think of anachronism as occurring when an author imports something new into an ancient setting – the clocks that strike in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, for example, or Dante's introduction of Virgil into *The Divine Comedy*.[44] However, as Jeremy Tambling points out, the anachronistic is 'what is out of time, the heterogeneous within time', and in an early gloss Thomas Blount defines both 'Anachronicism' and 'Anachronism' as 'an error in Chronology, or an undue connexion of time, a false Chronicling, a repeating of time'.[45] Taking something out of its usual place in time makes it anachronistic. Therefore, when a writer imports something old into a new setting they equally create anachronism; archaism is, in Blount's terms, very precisely a 'repeating of time'. The links between archaism and anachronism are forcibly stated in Greene's discussion of what he terms '*pathetic* or even *tragic* anachronism': 'all of us and all the things we wear and make and build and write . . . are condemned to anachronism insofar as we and they endure into an estranging future'.[46] Greene's examples of pathetic anachronism include old words which have survived into the present and superannuated figures; his comments on the superannuated character might also be applied to old words: such a character 'will typically attract ambivalence, the ambivalence of all historical change, and this divided awareness will affect the posture of the text toward its own historicity'.[47] Greene here engages with the archaism of the text or figure that has become old, but his comments reverberate with the deliberate archaism that concerns me here, in which words or styles that have been allowed to 'die' are brought back to life.[48]

A number of scholars have argued that a sense of anachronism is crucial to the existence of historical consciousness.[49] Margreta de Grazia points out in her elegant recent account of anachronism that the Renaissance is often said to have been 'not only conscious of diachrony but also conscious that it was conscious of it: in recognizing itself as a distinct period, both from remote antiquity (to which it would draw closer) and from the

proximate dark ages (from which it would distance itself)'.[50] De Grazia rightly questions the preconceptions about the classical and medieval pasts upon which this model depends; however, her summary suggests some of the connections between archaism and anachronism, and the negotiations that are required – between past and present, between the present day and different versions of the past – when writers choose to write in a self-consciously archaic style. For a word or stylistic element to be archaic, language users must have a sense of the developments within a language over time, and archaism is an intensely and innately self-conscious form of diachrony.

Anachronism, and archaism with it, can also complicate linear models of historical progression. To quote Tambling again, anachronism counters a 'definable historical framework, with "before" and "after", cause and effect';[51] archaism as anachronism aligns the 'before' with the 'after', or even privileges the 'before', confusing and potentially challenging a model of temporality based on cause and effect. Like the Renaissance artworks recently examined by Christopher S. Wood and Alexander Nagel in *Anachronic Renaissance*, literary texts that employ archaism are marked by 'temporal instability', and Wood and Nagel's comments on visual art also hold true for the literary text. Like the artwork, an archaising text points away from the moment of its own making or design backwards towards an earlier point of origin; yet at the same time, 'it points forward to all its future recipients who will activate and reactivate it as a meaningful event'.[52] An artwork thus resists both linear temporality and periodisation; it has the ability 'to "fetch" a past, create a past, perhaps even fetch the future' (18).[53] Literary works share this quality – for instance, in their use of source texts or narratives, and in their frequent appeal to not only contemporary but also future readers. In fact, it could be argued that the literary work is even more temporally unstable than the artwork, as through his or her use of language and literary form – and, in particular, of archaism and neologism – a writer is able to pull together words and styles from different periods.

A further means of conceptualising temporal fluidity, and one that has particular significance here, is set out by Jonathan Gil Harris in his recent book *Untimely Matter in the Age of Shakespeare*, in which he describes the capacity of material objects to 'articulat[e] temporal difference'.[54] Drawing on Bruno Latour and Michel Serres, Harris suggests that early modern objects might be both polychronic and multi-temporal. An object such as a joint-stool might be polychronic because it gathers associations and meanings as it descends through time, while a printing press might be

considered to be multi-temporal because it gathers together substances and technologies developed in various historical periods, complicating linear temporality. As Serres argues, 'every historical era is likewise multitemporal, simultaneously drawing from the obsolete, the contemporary, and the futuristic. An object, a circumstance, is thus polychronic, multitemporal, and reveals a time that is gathered together, and with multiple pleats'.[55] For Harris, the early modern 'thing' is not solely or simply early modern: it might be an object that had survived from an earlier time, such as the Roman walls of the city of London, or the items of clothing recycled in the royal courts and the public theatres; its technology might be ancient, as in the case of many industrial tools used during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such objects are 'of the English Renaissance, yet not of it', and might be characterised as 'untimely matter' (*Untimely Matter*, 3). Harris deals with objects, whereas this book focuses on literary and linguistic style, yet his comments here have a suggestive resonance for the ways in which archaism functions in early modern texts.

To apply a theory of materiality to words and stylistic conventions might seem incongruous, but in an important sense early modern words *were* things, and their function often blurs into the material. Jane Donawerth notes that early modern writers favoured the idea of a 'connection between words and things', and she notes that the popularity of this idea 'may explain some of the reverence in which the ancient words of Latin, Greek, Hebrew and even Anglo-Saxon were held'.[56] Words are here granted the status of prized objects, and we can see how this way of thinking might be applied to archaic terms or concepts: to use a phrase that Elizabeth Fay borrows in turn from Nietzsche, archaisms are 'conceptual mummies', seemingly dead but capable of recovery.[57] Moreover, 'untimely terms' are belated but also, crucially, 'out of joint', to borrow Hamlet's phrase; to adopt another term with bodily connections, they are 'dislocated' – removed from their proper or correct place, disarranged and confused. Words and conventions, like things, might be both polychronic and multi-temporal, and, as I argue in detail below, words – even more than things – have the capacity to carry with them the emotional resonance of their earlier uses.

The temporal fluidity of archaism also associates it with nostalgia, its other conceptual analogue. Like archaism, nostalgia can pull together past, present and future; as Svetlana Boym describes, the nostalgic's 'fantasies of the past, determined by the needs of the present, have a direct impact on the realities of the future', he or she 'feels stifled within the conventional confines of time and space'.[58] The archaist is similarly stifled, but he or she reacts to this confinement in a different fashion from the nostalgic, seeking

to recreate and reshape, rather than simply to remember or fantasise. Nostalgia attempts, as Renée R. Trilling has recently argued, 'to reconstruct the lost past in the present moment', and 'its manipulation of material events into aesthetic objects turns the present into history, thereby reifying the separation between present and past'.[59] In contrast, archaism transforms aesthetic objects into new aesthetic objects; in its reinvigoration of old words and conventions, it turns history into the present, undermining the separation enacted by nostalgia. Furthermore, while archaism can invoke nostalgia, and can mimic its conservative tendencies, it is not reducible to nostalgia because it not only looks back to the past but also insists upon the present's ability to match past achievements and even, through the combination of archaism and neologism, to outstrip them. As Harry Berger Jr writes of *The Faerie Queene*, 'Spenser places traditional material in historical perspective by quotation and revision: he depicts it as something old, separates those elements which are still valid from those which are inadequate or outmoded, and transforms it into something new'.[60] Unlike nostalgia, archaism is fundamentally transformative, and it goes to old texts for new answers.

If recent studies underscore the differences between archaism and nostalgia, scholars' accounts of memory offer a more directly productive way of thinking about archaism's configuration of the relationship between past, present and future. In *Matter and Memory*, first published in 1896, Henri Bergson suggests that memory 'imports the past into the present, contracts into a single intuition many moments of duration'.[61] Bergson's description of the way in which memory recovers the past, reshaping it in the process, has marked affinities with the process of the archaising writer, for whom archaic words and conventions function as a form of semi-embodied memory. Further, archaism resonates with the model of 'multi-directional memory' recently described by Michael Rothberg, who argues that

> recollections and representations of personal or political history inevitably mix multiple moments in time and multiple sites of remembrance; making the past present opens the doors of memory to intersecting pasts and undefined futures. Memory is thus structurally multidirectional, but each articulation of the past processes that multidirectionality differently.[62]

Archaism, similarly, is 'structurally multidirectional'. The archaising writer moves backwards and forwards in time, plundering a series of intersecting pasts for material that will suit his or her project; similarly, every archaist work reshapes its material in a different manner, and each will look forward and backwards in a different way.

For example, when Spenser uses the word 'wight' in *The Shepheardes Calender* or *The Faerie Queene*, he looks back to Chaucer, whereas when Shakespeare, Jonson or Milton use the term, it is filtered through Spenser; when 'wretched wight' appears in the opening line of Keats's 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' (1820) it is an even more self-consciously adopted element of poetic diction,[63] and in later novels such as Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849) or Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853), it appears in moments of narrative burlesque. Thus Dickens's sardonic description of Sir Leicester Dedlock being treated for his hereditary gout condition concludes with the statement, 'And he is very great, this day. And woe to Boythorn, or other daring wight, who shall presumptuously contest an inch with him!'[64] Dickens's use of the term 'wight' carries the weight of the word's history with it, but, simultaneously, readers of *Bleak House* carry Dickens with them if they turn to Spenser or Chaucer, meaning that the history of the word works both backwards and forwards.

3 Archaism is intertwined with national identity. As described above, the use of archaism raises specifically early modern concerns about the relationship between language and national identity: to quote Paula Blank's useful summary, 'A traditional language, yet one invoked by writers for its novelty, a "pure" English that was foreign to native readers, archaism highlights the complexities of the Renaissance "question of the language" – especially, the question of which version of the vernacular was truly "English".'[65] Archaic forms of English belong to linguistic and, thereby, national tradition, but they also have the capacity to undermine long-standing assumptions about the nature and status of English, England and the English.

Although archaism appears in medieval English texts, it found new prominence in the context of sixteenth-century debates about the status of English as a national and literary language.[66] Many commentators argued that loan-words should be incorporated into English from classical languages such as Latin and Greek, or from modern vernaculars such as French and Italian, yet others insisted that English should instead look to its own past.[67] In the 1530s, when Wyatt was experimenting with Chaucerian forms in his poetry, Thomas Berthelet published an edition of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, in which he tells Henry VIII, to whom the book is dedicated, that wise readers will not 'throwe asyde' the 'olde englisshe wordes and vulgars' of Gower's text. Instead, Gower's words 'shall as a lanterne gyue him lyghte to wryte cunnyngly and to garnysshe his sentencis in our vulgar tonge'.[68] In Berthelet's powerful metaphor, the older text illuminates not only the past, but the present and, potentially, the future.

In the following years, the idea that the works of earlier authors might provide a fruitful source for linguistic renewal gained traction, partly as a result of the activities of an influential group of mid-sixteenth-century archaisers, including John Cheke and Thomas Smith. In a letter to Edward Hoby appended to the printed text of Hoby's translation of Baldassare Castiglione's *The Courtier* (1561), Cheke argues that

> our own tung shold be written cleane and pure, vnmixt and vnmangeled with borowing of other tunges ... if she want at ani tijm (as being vnperfight she must) yet let her borow with suche bashfulnes, that it mai appeer, that if either the mould of our own tung could serue vs to fascion a woord of our own, or if the old denisoned wordes could content and ease this neede, we wold not boldly venture of vnknowen wordes.[69]

Cheke's emphasis on the purity of an English free from Latinate neologism is underlined in his idiosyncratic orthography, and his vision of a self-sufficient English tongue recurs in the work of both his contemporaries and later commentators such as William Camden, Alexander Gil and John Hare.[70] Although Richard Foster Jones is probably right in his assessment of this project as 'hardly feasible', the idea that English could become self-sufficient through the revival and recasting of old words, and that it might thereby preserve its continuity with its own past, nonetheless exercised a powerful hold on the imagination of writers.[71]

Nearly a generation after Cheke, ideas of national identity, belonging and estrangement were crucial to the period's most influential expression of an archaist stance, E.K.'s letter to Gabriel Harvey, printed as the preface to *The Shepheardes Calender*. The degree to which Spenser's diction is 'genuinely' archaic has been much debated.[72] More intriguing, however, is the strategy that E.K. adopts in defending the poet's use of potentially outmoded words, and the aim of the preface to naturalise archaism as decorous, aesthetically valid and truly 'English'. Among the features of Spenser's verse that E.K. praises are his

> dewe obseruing of Decorum euerye where, in personages, in seasons, in matter, in speach, and generally in al seemely simplycitie in handeling his matter, and framing his words: the which of many thinges which in him be straunge, I know will seeme the straungest, the words them selues being so auncient, the knitting of them so short and intricate, and the whole Periode and compasse of speache so delightsome for the roundnesse, and so graue for the straungenesse.[73]

In using archaic words, E.K. argues, Spenser creates an alluring remoteness and unfamiliarity (see, for instance, the emphatic use of variations on the

word 'strange'), which sets off other aspects of his poetry to advantage. This is not a crude way of using language. On the contrary, the words are woven together in a manner that is concise ('short') and intricate, and which produces a pleasing 'roundness', generally glossed as 'fullness' or 'careful finish', of style.[74]

Despite his emphasis on archaism's 'strangeness', E.K. nonetheless sees Spenserian archaism as part of a programme of linguistic renewal; it restores to English writers their national heritage and enables them to reach across time in order to reshape contemporary aesthetics. He writes:

> [I]n my opinion it is one special prayse, of many whych are dew to this Poete, that he hath laboured to restore, as to theyr rightfull heritage such good and naturall English words, as haue ben long time out of vse and almost cleane disinherited. Which is the onely cause, that our Mother tonge, which truly of it self is both ful enough for prose and stately enough for verse, hath long time ben counted most bare and barrein of both. (ll. 77–84)

Echoing the likes of Cheke, he proclaims the self-sufficiency of English, arguing that those who would incorporate 'peces and rags of other languages' merely make 'our English tongue, a gallimaufray or hodgepodge of al other speches' (ll. 86, 90–1). The idea of a 'natural' English is associated here – as elsewhere – with what Blank terms 'the preservation of an original – and threatened – national identity' (*Broken English*, 101). Archaism appears to offer a means of confronting and assuaging anxieties about the status of English as a 'pure' expression of national identity, but the purity that it offers is itself open to question, given that the outmoded words promoted by archaists are no longer part of the living language.

Although Spenser and E.K. brashly announced a 'new' English poetry, Cathy Shrank points out that 'in its consciousness of its own novelty the *Shepheardes Calender* is closer to mid-Tudor writing than that of subsequent decades, when authors generally felt less need to justify their choice of English as a language in which to write'.[75] What brings Spenser closer to late-Tudor concerns is his need not simply to defend writing in English, but to defend the uses of outmoded style. Archaism was becoming somewhat less prominent and credible as a means of linguistic renewal or a literary technique in the 1570s. John Baret spoke for many when he rejected 'olde obsolet words, which no good writer now a dayes will vse' in his 1574 dictionary,[76] and E.K.'s self-defensive stance is suggested in the ways in which he attempts to forestall criticism. Particularly evocative are his comments that some critics on hearing an old word 'crye out streight way, that we speak no English, but gibbrish, or rather such, as in old time

Euanders mother spake' (ll. 93–5). Evander's mother Carmentis, a prophet, was said to have spoken in archaic Greek, and her name became a byword for Roman poets in describing the affected use of obsolete words.[77] The allusion seemingly leads into the statement that the anti-archaists' 'first shame is, that they are not ashamed, in their own mother tonge straungers to be counted and alienes' (ll. 95–7), which recuperates the potentially damning link between archaism and female garrulity. E.K. thus casts them as alienated from their own linguistic, cultural and national heritage. While archaic language is alluring precisely because it is 'strange', to reject it is to leave oneself a stranger or alien, divorced from one's own history and cultural inheritance.

E.K.'s defensive stance and Samuel Daniel's snide comments about 'aged accents, and vntimely words' both suggest that archaism was a controversial technique in the late sixteenth century. Moreover, as I will explore in greater detail in the following chapters, political changes in the seventeenth century were to make its place in literary culture yet more complex. The Elizabethan alignment of linguistic and national identity was itself a convenient fiction given the presence of many non-English speakers within what was still referred to by the regime as the realm of 'England, France and Ireland'. After James Stuart's accession to the English throne in 1603, this picture became yet more complex – what was the status of archaic English in a realm newly re-christened 'Great Britain, France and Ireland', one that incorporated England's powerful neighbour, Scotland, its linguistic traditions, and its own network of European allegiances? The king's assertion that his two kingdoms were 'alreadie ioyned in vnitie of Religion and language' not only elided the existence of Scottish Gaelic, but also belied the important differences between English and Scottish versions of English.[78] Between 1642 and 1660, the national picture became still more fraught; it is perhaps unsurprising that the Restoration saw a turn away from archaism and the linguistic past, as part of a wider retrospective reshaping of a traumatic recent history.

By 1660, neoclassicism was beginning to dominate English literary aesthetics. In earlier years, however, classicism and archaism were held in a more delicate balance. When writers incorporate outmoded linguistic or stylistic forms into their work, they also acknowledge, implicitly or explicitly, the existence of a tradition of writing in English, a tradition that might run counter to – or at least complicate – the ways in which they interact with classical or continental influences. This tension underlies Jonson's comments in *Discoveries* and the hostility of the Caroline poet

George Daniel to the continued influence of Chaucer on literary aesthetics. Daniel sets out his intention

> to Shew
> A Spring more worthy; whence wee may derive
> With greater Honour, the Prerogative
> Of English Poesie; and Clearlie evince
> Noe Age can be call'd Darke to a Cleare Sence,
> As in the Ancients.[79]

Contrasting antiquity with a 'dark' age, and rejecting Chaucer as 'Mustie and antiquated', Daniel exhorts his contemporaries to look instead to Elizabethan greats such as Sidney, Spenser and Jonson, and to classical poets such as Virgil and Ovid.[80] When a writer deliberately resorts to archaism they therefore implicitly reject neoclassicism and embrace the primitive barbarism of Chaucerism. In this respect, the uses of archaism fall into a pattern observed by Helgerson, in which patterns of thought taken from either classical antiquity or the middle ages 'provided the recognized models of civility and barbarity against which English writings were inevitably measured'.[81] However, Daniel's comments fail to take into account the extent to which both Elizabethan and classical writings were themselves open to the uses of archaic style. What looks like a binary opposition between the archaic and the neoclassical begins to break down.

These debates show us, in addition, the ambiguous place of outmoded style in relation to the ways in which language creates and maintains community. As Jonathan Hope argues, 'language existed to communicate people's ideas to other people – so the best language was that which communicated to the largest number of people. For most in the Renaissance, language that did not communicate across society – that did not in fact *create* society – was pointless'.[82] Deliberately to employ obscure, outmoded terms is potentially to prize the symbolic significance of a word over its communicative value, to break the circuit of understanding between speaker and listener, and to refuse to create society. Thus, while archaist writers may harbour a dream of reviving a 'pure' form of English and, with it, a renewed English nation, the use of archaism itself splinters that dream because the revived words, restored from the dead, may no longer be able to communicate with current speakers or even be recognised as 'English'. As McEachern argues, the nation itself is 'an ideal of community that is, by definition, either proleptic or passing, ever just beyond reach'.[83] Archaism, which itself looks both backwards and forwards, has the capacity both to create that community and shatter it, its vision of linguistic and national union always just out of reach.

4 Archaism is self-conscious and artificial, yet capable of arousing strong emotion. In his comments about his epic poem *Gondibert* (1650), William Davenant renews the attack on archaism, focusing his attention on Spenser himself. Noting that Spenser's 'obsolete language' is criticised, Davenant explains in detail the reasons for these negative assessments:

> Language (which is the onely Creature of Man's Creation) hath like a Plant, seasons of flourishing, and decay; like Plants, is remov'd from one Soil to another, and by being so transplanted, doth often gather vigour and increase. But as it is false Husbandry to graft old Branches upon young Stocks: so we may wonder that our Language (not long before his time created out of a confusion of others, and then beginning to flourish like a new Plant) should (as helps to its increase) receive from his hand new Grafts of old wither'd Words.[84]

Archaism, in Davenant's view, does not breach merely stylistic decorum, but also temporal decorum; moreover, his comparison of language to a plant suggests the potentially unnatural quality of archaism's desire to reach back in time, and to revive past forms. Attempting to give dead words new life, he argues, is as artificial as trying to graft dead twigs onto living plants.

Archaism is – as Davenant's account suggests – a highly self-aware and self-conscious process. Despite its marked differences from nostalgia, archaism shares its tendency towards the inauthentic or ersatz; Susan Stewart's description of nostalgia as 'the repetition that mourns the inauthenticity of all repetitions and denies the repetition's capacity to form identity' holds equally true for archaism.[85] While E.K. and other proponents of archaism may try to naturalise it, using outmoded literary or linguistic forms can leave an author open to charges of stylistic perversion, affectation or unnaturalness. As a result, the majority of writers who employ outmoded forms are acutely aware of the problematic nature of their claim to authenticity. For instance, Spenser's self-consciousness about using archaic forms is displayed not only in the provision of E.K.'s glosses in *The Shepheardes Calender*, but in the somewhat nervy foregrounding of the word 'whilom' in the first line of the Proem to Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*.

Nonetheless, archaism's radical inauthenticity is also one reason for its impact on readers and spectators, and the archaist writer's self-conscious imitation of outmoded styles can produce various kinds of aesthetic and emotional effect. Francesco Orlando's resonant discussion of the timeworn object is useful here: 'Time uses up and destroys things, breaks them and reduces them to uselessness, renders them unfashionable and makes people

abandon them; time makes things become cherished by force of habit and ease of handling, endows them with tenderness as memories and with authority as models, marks them with the virtue of rarity and the prestige of age.'[86] Archaism imitates or incorporates timeworn linguistic and literary styles, and, like the timeworn object, it can create a range of responses, some ambivalent or paradoxically mixed. Encountering an archaic form might provoke distancing emotions of surprise, derision or awe in readers or spectators, but it might equally incite more intimate feelings of comfort, grief or longing. As E.K. notes in his preface to *The Shepheardes Calender*, quoted above, Spenser's 'pastorall rudenesse' and 'seemely simplycitie of handeling his matter, and framing his words' result in a work that is both 'delightsome for the roundnesse' and 'graue for the straungeness' (ll. 19, 21–2, 26–7).

These varied effects permeate the uses of archaism in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century texts. As I explain in detail in Chapter 1, in Middleton's *Hengist, King of Kent, or The Mayor of Queenborough*, a phrase in Old English functions as a linguistic alienation effect, distancing the audience from the treacherous Saxon who speaks it. Elsewhere, archaism is often calculated to arouse amusement or laughter – as in Dickens's use of 'wight', or Hawkins's 'globy eyne' – and a pervasive anxiety surrounding the use of archaic words was that they might become not merely obsolete, but obscene. In Middleton's *No Wit/Help Like a Woman's* (Prince Henry's Men, 1611), the Widow asks 'How many honest words have suffered corruption since Chaucer's days? A virgin would speak those words then that a very midwife would blush to hear now'.[87] As I will explore further in Chapters 2 and 3, words such as 'jape' and 'occupy' were considered in the seventeenth century to have been rendered obscene by the passage of time. Their place in certain contexts, such as literary works and liturgical translations, was therefore questioned, and the words took on a comic or satiric quality that was not present in their original use, potentially rebounding on their innocent users.

In contrast, Anne Norris Michelin notes that stylistic archaism is effective because 'older styles make a dual impression, first of novelty, deviation from the expected, but second of appropriateness and familiarity'.[88] Archaic literary and linguistic styles can be distancing and surprising, but also – as in pastoral literature or religious diction – homely and subliminally comforting. In using the word 'whilom' in the opening of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser seeks not only to give his epic the kind of grandeur that Quintilian and Jonson suggest might be conveyed through archaism, but also to display his affinity with older literature and to

reinscribe his kinship with Chaucer. In this fashion – to appropriate Carolyn Dinshaw's term – archaism can create 'affective connections'[89] across time through the recycling and reshaping of outmoded styles. When poets compose in Old English, when dramatists weave quotations from Chaucer or morality plays into their texts, when writers inhabit outmoded metrical forms, they express a longing to make contact, to speak for or through the past.

Archaism's affect can also be conjured through the relationship between the outmoded element and the surrounding text. In his account of photography, *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes encapsulates the emotional tug of the photograph in terms that resonate strongly with archaism's potential effects:

> A Latin word exists to designate this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument: the word suits me all the better in that it also refers to the notion of punctuation, and because the photographs I am speaking of are in effect punctuated, sometimes even speckled with these sensitive points; precisely, these marks, these wounds are so many *points*. This second element which will disturb the *studium* [i.e., the content of the photograph which arouses the intellect] I shall therefore call *punctum*; for *punctum* is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole – and also a cast of the dice. A photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me) . . . the *punctum* shows no preference for morality or good taste: the *punctum* can be ill-bred.[90]

In his preface to *The Shepheardes Calender*, E.K. suggests that 'rough and harsh' archaic and dialectal terms 'enlumine and make more clearly to appeare the brightnesse of braue and glorious words. So oftentimes a dischorde in Musick maketh a comely concordaunce: so great delight tooke the worthy Poete Alceus to behold a blemish in the ioynt of a wel shaped body' (Epistle, ll. 68–72). Like Barthes's *punctum*, or the grit in an oyster, an archaic word or style is an aesthetic irritant, rubbing up against its surroundings. Spenser's 'whilom' is a sting, speck or hole, jolting his reader and reminding him or her of the history of both the English language and English poetry. The archaic *punctum* is also indecorous, excessive, 'ill-bred'; Thomas Nashe, in an evocative phrase, refers to archaisms as 'Oouse' – as waste or remnant.[91]

The four theses outlined above link archaism with imitation, temporal dissonance, nationhood and affect; they argue for the multiplicity of the ways in which it functions in texts written between 1590 and 1674, and the various effects that it might have on readers and spectators. Taken together, however, they also suggest archaism's aesthetic and emotional

potential, and some of the reasons why it was so consistently appealing to poets and dramatists. Whether archaism is viewed as a debased or elevated form of imitation, a temporal medley or an expression of a particular form of 'pastness', a saviour of national pride or an embarrassment to it, an alienating device or a means of instilling familiarity to a text, it has the capacity throughout this period to disrupt or unsettle aesthetic norms. Literary archaism looks to the past, and to former modes of expression, but it also seeks to reshape the present, and to look forward to new futures.