

Raf Van Rooy\* and John Considine

# Between Homonymy and Polysemy: The Origins and Career of the English Form *Dialect* in the Sixteenth Century

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**Abstract:** The emergence of the form *dialect* in early modern English is often mentioned in histories of the language, but important as it is, the evidence for it has never been analyzed as a whole, and its treatment in the revised *OED* entry for *dialect* leaves room for modifications. This article presents and re-evaluates the evidence for *dialect* in sixteenth-century English sources. It demonstrates that there were two homonyms with this form, one a shortening of English *dialectics* and one a borrowing from post-classical Latin *dialectus*, from its Greek etymon δίαλεκτος, and, less often, from French *dialecte*. After treating *dialect* ‘dialectics’ briefly, it explores the known attestations of *dialect* ‘kind of language’, showing the range of senses in which this word could be used, and the ways in which it can be shown to have spread from one user of English to another, beginning with one clearly defined expatriate learned circle in the 1560s, entering more general learned use in the 1570s and 1580s, and becoming a fully naturalized literary English word in the 1590s. The paper therefore offers a detailed case-study of the naturalization of a learned word in early modern English and also contributes to the history of the conceptualization of language variation in sixteenth-century England.

## 1 Introduction

The English form *dialect* had, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, three senses in the sixteenth century. The first of these in chronological order is equivalent to *dialectic* “logic, reasoning”; the second begins “[a] form or variety of a language which is peculiar to a specific region” (and then goes on to tease out meanings which are only present in post-1600 uses of the word); the third begins

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\*Corresponding author: Raf Van Rooy, KU Leuven

E-Mail: Raf.VanRooy@kuleuven.be

John Considine, University of Alberta

E-Mail: jc18@ualberta.ca

“[m]anner of speaking, language, speech; *esp.* the mode of speech peculiar to, or characteristic of, a particular person or group”.<sup>1</sup> *OED* dates these senses ?1545, 1566, and 1579 respectively. As Philip Durkin has recently written (2016: 242), a problem which is “ever present in historical lexicography” is that “most statements about the development of words over time are abstractions from a complex set of data, open to challenge on numerous points of detail when investigated closely”. He goes on (2016: 244) to give the example of *culture*, quoting the revised *OED* etymology of this word, which refers the reader to Raymond Williams’s *Keywords* (1976) for a fuller account of the sense-development of the word. *Dialect* is not as important a word as *culture*, and we do not seek to rival the work of Raymond Williams, but we do intend that, like Williams’s discussion of *culture*, our discussion of *dialect* should tell the story of the early development of a significant word in a way which supplements, and where necessary corrects, the *OED* entry.<sup>2</sup> We believe that telling this story will provide a useful case-study in the adoption of a learned word into early modern English. We also hope that it will give a sense of the extent to which using the form *dialect* might have helped speakers of English to think about their own language and other languages, and will hence contribute to the understanding of what Paula Blank has called “the Renaissance discovery of dialect” in sixteenth-century England.<sup>3</sup>

Having said that, we should make it clear that this is an article about the form *dialect* in sixteenth-century English, and not about the whole story of how sixteenth-century English people perceived and designated variation in their own and other languages. A different article might explore the whole semantic network of *lingua*, *dialectus*, *idioma*, and *proprietas* in early modern Latin, and of *language*, *dialect*, *idiom*, and *property/propriety* in early modern English. *Idiom* might be used of “[t]he specific character or individuality of a language; the manner of expression considered natural to or distinctive of a language; a language’s distinctive phraseology” (*OED*, s.v. *idiom* n., sense 1), or of a language as a whole, or of one variety within a language. Likewise, a *propriety* of a language might be a “special characteristic” of that language (*OED*, s.v. *propriety*

1 All three definitions are from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, online edition, s.v. *dialect* n., as revised June 2014; further references to *OED* are, unless otherwise specified, to this edition, as revised up to May 2016.

2 *Early English Books Online*, as enriched by the work of the Text Creation Partnership, has been invaluable in the collection of material for this article. *OED*’s sixteenth-century citations are Langton (?1545: fol. 6r) and Wilson (1551: sig. B2v) at sense 1; Rastell (1566: fol. 64v) and Eusebius et al. (1577: 1.70) at sense 2; Spenser (1579: sig. 2v) and Nashe (1599: 41) at sense 3.

3 Blank (1996: 7–32), reworked, with more recent references, as Blank (2006).

n., sense 5a), or a distinctive variety of it.<sup>4</sup> So, as we shall see in Sections 4, 5, and 6 below, *dialect*, *idiom*, and *property* are often associated with each other: but our focus here is on *dialect*.

Before moving on to the sixteenth century, we should consider the ancient Greek etymon of *dialect* and its several meanings. The Greek feminine noun διάλεκτος (*diálektos*) derived from the mediopassive verb διαλέγομαι (*dialégomai*) ‘to converse with’, initially designated ‘conversation’ as well as ‘means of conversation’, viz. ‘manner of speaking, tongue’. Probably through interference with the verb’s active counterpart, διαλέγω (*dialégō*) ‘to select, to separate’, an emphasis on the distinctiveness of a διάλεκτος emerged early on; in other words, it was increasingly interpreted as a ‘manner of speaking distinct from others’. Some authors even characterize it as a regional variety (see Van Rooy 2016: 254–256, 268). It should be kept in mind, however, that by no means a διάλεκτος was inherently subordinate to a ‘language’, as it nowadays often is. On the contrary, it could refer to speech forms we would call *languages* (e.g., Latin); it was, in other words, more often than not a synonym of γλώσσα (*glōssa*), Attic γλῶττα (*glōtta*), ‘tongue’ in both senses. The adjective διαλεκτικός (*dialektikós*), as in ἡ διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη (*hē dialektikē tékhnē*) ‘the art of dialectics’, is likewise derived from διαλέγομαι. In contrast to διάλεκτος, διαλεκτικός was borrowed into Latin before the early modern period as *dialecticus*, viz. by Cicero.<sup>5</sup> The Latinization of διάλεκτος as *dialectus* only took off in the last decades of the fifteenth century on the Italic peninsula, impelled by a need to discuss, for philological reasons, the varieties of the Greek language (traditionally termed διάλεκτοι [*diálektoi*]) in Neo-Latin as well as motivated by the alleged presence of *dialectus* in Quintilian’s work (at *Institutio oratoria* 1.5.29). The Latin word, which gradually spread throughout Western Europe, took over several of the Ancient Greek meanings, most importantly ‘(distinctive) manner of speaking’ and ‘language’; it moreover became the prototypical term to denote a ‘speech form subordinate to a language’, which was largely a sixteenth-century innovation.<sup>6</sup>

4 For “special characteristic”, see *OED*, s.v. *propriety* n., sense 5a, and for the sense ‘distinctive variety’, not identified explicitly in *OED*’s definition at sense 5a, see the quotation from Mornay (1587: 123) at this sense: “the *Punicke* tongue was but a kinde of seuerall proprietie of the *Hebrew*” (i.e., Punic was a kind of distinct idiom of Hebrew).

5 See, e.g., *Academica priora sive Lucullus* 91.

6 For the premodern history of the word *dialect* (from antiquity to the end of the eighteenth century) and the emergence of the conceptual pair ‘language’ and ‘dialect’ in the sixteenth century, see Chapters 2 and 3 of Van Rooy (forthc.).

## 2 The Latin Word *Dialectus* in Sixteenth-Century England

Because the Latin word *dialectus* was available to English-speakers before the English form *dialect*, we will touch on it before turning to the English form. As Gabriele Stein has pointed out, *dialectus* was first explained in English in 1538, when Sir Thomas Elyot made it a headword in his Latin-English *Dictionary*: “*Dialectus*, a maner of speche, as we wolde saye diuersities in englysshe, as Northerne speche, Southerne, Kentyshe, Deuenishe, and other lyke”.<sup>7</sup> As she remarks, the presence of this explanation makes the first occurrence of English *dialect* with reference to language less important than has sometimes been suggested. “A borrowed word’s first attestation in English is not the only significant fact in its history” (Durkin 2014: 336); it is all too easy to abuse the historical principles on which the *OED* is founded by placing exaggerated emphasis on the date of its first quotation for a given English word, particularly when that first quotation is from a medieval or early modern text. Not only is it true that a first quotation may reflect the chance documentary appearance of a word with a long prehistory in oral use, as is true of many non-literary words (*limestone* was doubtless used long before its first attestation in 1523), and that it may alternatively reflect an isolated early use of a word which remained vanishingly rare for many years after that one attestation (*imagination* is attested in a text of 1340 which did not circulate widely, and then disappears until the 1390s; see Hailey 2007: 18–20), but it is also true that the etymon of a learned word like *dialect* might be well known to many English-speakers before the word appeared in an English context (compare *pentagon*, of which the etymon was widely known before the first attestation of the English word in 1570).

The appearance of the Latin word *dialectus* in Elyot is in fact important only in so far as he applies it to varieties of English: the people who read his Latin dictionary were almost bound to have some knowledge of Latin, and so they could have found the word in the principal source of Elyot’s dictionary, the monolingual Latin *Dictionarium* of Ambrogio Calepino, which had registered *dialectus* in its first edition in 1502, giving the accusative plural *dialectos* as the headword. The *Dictionarium* offered very much the same entry in the edition of 1535, which Elyot appears to have used: “Dialects (διαλέκτους) is what the Greeks call the kinds of speaking, as Quintilian tells us in his first book. They had five of

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7 Elyot (1538: s.v.), discussed in Stein (2014: 101–103).

them: Ionic, Doric, Attic, Aeolic, and the common language”.<sup>8</sup> (Readers would not, by the way, have found *dialectus* in earlier Latin dictionaries; the Greek word διάλεκτος is used in a few classical Latin texts, but it was only from the 1490s onwards that it was treated as a naturalized Latin word.<sup>9</sup>)

The later editions of Elyot’s dictionary, up to 1559, reprinted his explanation of *dialectus*, but their Latin-English successor, Thomas Cooper’s *Thesaurus linguae romanae* of 1565, replaced it with “*Dialectus*. A maner of speache in any language diuers fro[m] other”, no doubt on the grounds that an observation about the English language was not the best way to explain the sense of a Latin word, and this definition was reprinted in later editions of Cooper and in Thomas Thomas’s *Dictionarium* of 1587. Although the new definition was less specific than Elyot’s explanation, it did suggest, like his, that the word *dialectus* could be applied beyond the context of classical Greek. The breadth of application in these English sources is exceptional; elsewhere in Europe, the Latin word was at the time still prototypically used with reference to Greek. Two years after Thomas, John Rider would offer a broader understanding of *dialectus* in his English-Latin *Bibliotheca scholastica*: “A propertie of speech, diuise from the rest of the same language” is *dialectus*, and “A kind of spech in any language differing from others: or a kinde of speech proper to one part of a countrie” may be *dialectus* or *idioma*.<sup>10</sup> So for Rider, a speech variety might be a *dialectus* whether or not it was geographically limited: his senses of *dialectus* correspond to *OED*’s senses 2 and 3 of *dialect*.

Shorter dictionaries from the sixteenth century did not usually include *dialectus*, and this was, at least in one case, not simply because it was a rare word, but because it was a suspect one. It is not registered in the Latin-English-French *Dictionariolum puerorum* prepared by Jean Véron in 1552, or in its source, the 1544 edition of Robert Estienne’s *Dictionariolum puerorum* of 1542, or in Robert Estienne’s *Dictionarium latino-gallicum* of 1538, from which his *Dictionariolum* was abridged, or in his *Dictionarium, seu linguae latinae thesaurus* of 1536, from which

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**8** Calepino (1535: s.v.), “Dialectos (διάλεκτος [sic]) Graeci uocant loquendi genera, sicut docet Quint. lib. i. quae apud illos quinq[ue] sunt, scilicet Ionica, Dorica, Attica, Aeolica, & communis lingua”; this differs only in details and the addition of the Greek from the corresponding entry in Calepino (1502: s.v.). The word is lacking from Calepino’s major source, Perotti’s *Cornu copiae*; instead, he took it from Beroaldo (1493: fol. 138v), “Dialectos. loquendi genera graeci dialectos uoca[n]t ut docet quintilianus in primo. quae illis plura sunt. nam linguas quinq[ue] habent. Ionica[m]: dorica[m]: atthica[m]: eolicam & co[m]munem”. For Elyot and Calepino, see Considine (2014: 311).

**9** This question is treated in full in Van Rooy (forthc.: Chapter 2).

**10** Rider (1589: cols. 460 and 1384); the Latin-English index only refers the reader to the former of these.

the *Dictionarium latino-gallicum* was produced, or indeed in the first edition of the *Dictionarium, seu linguae latinae thesaurus*, published in 1531.<sup>11</sup> Tracing the word, or rather its absence, back through the succession of Robert Estienne's dictionaries demonstrates that it is not simply lacking from the *Dictionariolum* for reasons of space. Estienne had plenty of room for it in the great *Dictionarium* of 1531 and 1536. Nor was he unaware of it, for he would have encountered it in Calepino. He must have rejected it as lacking adequate classical authority. So, modest as it was, Véron's little dictionary echoed a more fastidious assessment of the vocabulary of classical Latin than Elyot's, namely Estienne's rather than Calepino's.<sup>12</sup> The word *dialectus* is registered in 1552 in the English-Latin *Abcedarium anglicolatinum* of Richard Howlet (formerly known to scholars as Huloet).<sup>13</sup> This is because the *Abcedarium* is indebted to Elyot: it catches on to the word *diuersities* in Elyot's definition, reversing and adapting it in a short series of entries following the main headword *diuersitie* to read "Diuersitie of speache wythin one realme. *dialectus*". But the word disappears from the second edition, prepared by John Higgins, no doubt because it was one of the "woordes as were not sufficient (by consent of authoritye)" (Howlet 1572: sig. 3r) which he removed in the course of his revision. We have not found it in other sixteenth-century Latin dictionaries from England, though we note that John Florio adopts and adapts Cooper's definition in his treatment of the Italian word *dialetto* in *A Worlde of Wordes*, published in 1598: "a manner of speech in any language differing from others of the same countries".

English-speakers naturally encountered the Latin word in Latin texts other than dictionaries. As we shall see in Section 4 below, an important development in the use of *dialect* in English was a result of an Englishman's engagement with the use of *dialectus* in Conrad Gessner's survey of languages *Mithridates*. Moreover, every schoolboy who learned Greek would use a Greek grammar written in Latin, in which the word *dialectus* was very likely to appear, as, for instance, it does near the end of the century in William Camden's *Institutio Graecae grammatices compendiarie* (Camden 1595: sig. I1r etc.). In addition, a trio of Greek dialectological texts (by "Joannes Grammaticus", pseudo-Plutarch, and Gregory of Corinth) circulated widely in a Latin translation in which the word *dialectus* was prominent. As we will also see in Section 4 below, one of these texts played a role in the emergence of English *dialect* 'kind of language'.

<sup>11</sup> For the *Dictionariolum* of 1552 and its immediate source, see Stein (1985: 166–175).

<sup>12</sup> But Estienne did use the word in another dictionary of his; see Estienne (1541: 473), "vocauique [templum] Apollinis Sminthei, quod eius linguae dialecto mures σμίνθηα vocantur". For Estienne and Calepino, see most recently Flow (2015: 36–39).

<sup>13</sup> For the right form of the author's name, see McConchie (2007: 39–40).

Our first point, then, is that sixteenth-century speakers of English might encounter the Latin word *dialectus* in monolingual Latin dictionaries and other Latin texts, or in Latin-English dictionaries. The Latin word was not to be found in every English dictionary, but those which did register it were more likely than other European dictionaries to associate it with variation in modern languages. The encounters of English-speakers with *dialectus* are necessarily part, though only part, of the story of the English form *dialect*.

### 3 The English Form *Dialect* in the Sense ‘Dialectics’

We now turn to the first appearance of *dialect* as an English word. Its sense is immediately striking: it is ‘dialectics’, and the Latin word *dialectus* appears never to have been used in this sense. Since the English noun *dialectic* was well established by the sixteenth century, the most economical explanation of the English form *dialect* in this sense is that it is from *dialectic*: a comparable case is the development of the verb *pract* (a1513) from the verb *practic* (?a1425).<sup>14</sup> So, the English form *dialect* is not one word but two homonyms, distinguished by their separate etymologies: one of the two is a shortening of English *dialectic*, and the other is a borrowing from Latin *dialectus*.

The sixteenth-century rise and fall of the earlier of these two words can be traced by examining the available attestations, with particular attention to their dates. Christopher Langton’s *Introduction into Phisycke* recommends that the would-be physician “be exercysed, euen from hys tendre age, in dialect, arithmaticke, and mathematicke”, and remarks that there are would-be physicians “whose bryngynge vp hath not ben amongst learned men of the vniuersities, wherby they are destitute, bothe of dialecte, naturall Philosophie, and other artes” (Langton ?1545: fols. 6r, 19v). In 1551, the humanist Thomas Wilson stated in his *Rule of Reason* that “Logique otherwise called Dialecte (for they are bothe one) is an Arte to try the corne from the chaffe”; in 1556, the controversialist John Standish wrote that if an adversary “had any lerninge in tharte of dialecte he woulde not collect or gether his argume[n]t in the negatiue *per locum abauthoritate*”; in 1565, William Alley stated in his encyclopaedic *Πτωχομυσεϊον* that the

<sup>14</sup> The noun *dialectic*, derived from the Ciceronian Latin term *dialecticus*, is attested from the fourteenth century onwards, with six examples in *MED*, s.v. *dialetik* (one of them rejected by *OED*, s.v. *dialectic* n.) and further examples in *OED*; the form *dialectics* is not attested until the seventeenth century.

heretic Arius “was very expert in the arguments of Dialect” and that the magician and proto-simoniac Simon Magus was “very experte to dispute in dialect”; in 1573, the purist Ralph Lever argued in his *Art of Reason* that “doubtesse neyther Logicke, nor Dialect can be thought so fit an Englishe worde to expresse and set fourth the Arte of reason by, as Witcraft is”; in 1587, Thomas Thomas explained *logica* in his *Dictionarium* as “Logike, dialect, the manner or art of reasoning”, and was followed by Florio in his treatment of the Italian word *logica* in the *World of Wordes* in 1598; in or around the latter year, a translation of Annibale Romei’s *Discorsi* gave a list of the liberal arts which included “Rhethorike, Dialect, Poesie, Musicke [...] painting, Architecture, and the art of Phisicke”.<sup>15</sup> This last example is doubtless influenced by the use of the Italian word *dialectica* in the original (Romei 1586: 198). In the twenty or so years from Langton to Alley, then, *dialect* occurs six times in the sense ‘dialectics’, and in the thirty-five years from Alley to the end of the century there are only three independent occurrences: once to be rejected, once in a dictionary entry, and once in a translation. Taken with the fact that far more books were published from 1565 to 1600 than in the two previous decades, this suggests a marked decline in the frequency of the use of *dialect* in this sense (though *OED* does illustrate it with further quotations from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries). This decline can be attributed firstly to increasing familiarity with *dialectus* as a Latin word in senses which did not include ‘dialectics’, and secondly to the emergence of an English homonym, the word *dialect* as a borrowing of Latin *dialectus*; both of these developments were bound to make the use of *dialect* in the sense ‘dialectics’ look increasingly like something of a solecism.

Having now established the presence in sixteenth-century English of two homonyms with different etymologies, namely *dialect* from English *dialectic* and *dialect* from Latin *dialectus*, and having noted the decline in frequency of the former towards the end of the century, we turn to the latter.

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<sup>15</sup> Wilson (1551: sig. B2v); Standish ([1556]: sig. O7v), the reading “any lerninge” for “my lerninge” being from a contemporary manuscript correction in the Bodleian copy Crynes 881(1), reproduced on *Early English Books Online*; Alley (1565: fols. 109v and 562r); Lever (1573: sig. P6v); Thomas (1587: s.v. *logica*); and Florio (1598: s.v. *logica*); Romei ([?1598]: 269), the date of the last being apparently conjectured from the entry of the work in the *Stationers Register*; see Tomita (2009: item 258).



## 4 The First Attestations of English *Dialect* with Reference to Language in the 1560s

The new borrowing from Latin was first used in the course of a religious controversy. John Jewel, the Protestant bishop-elect of Salisbury, had preached a sermon which challenged Roman Catholics to give authority from Scripture or from the custom of the early church for certain practices, including the celebration of Mass in a language which was not the normal spoken language of the congregation: could it, he asked, be shown “that the comen prayers were then pronou[n]ced in a strau[n]ge to[n]gue, that the people understood not” (Jewel 1560: sig. A6r)? This sermon, the Catholic responses to it, and Jewel’s counters to those responses are known collectively as the Challenge controversy (see Jenkins 2006: 115–154). Jewel’s first adversary had agreed that Greek and Latin were used in the liturgy at a very early date, but had asked whether these really were the languages of the common people. Jewel replied that “if the common Greke people vnderstode not the Greke to[n]gue nor the common latine people, the latine tongue, then would I fain know, what tongue they vnderstode” (Jewel 1560: sig. K4r). A second adversary of Jewel’s, Thomas Harding, sometime professor of Hebrew at Oxford and now in exile in Leuven, pointed out four years later in *An Answer to Maister Iuelles Challenge* that many languages were spoken in the ancient eastern Mediterranean, citing the story of Pentecost, in which the words of the Apostles were, marvellously, understood by people from a great many different places (*Acts* 2.6–11, where the Greek word διάλεκτος is used twice of the different languages spoken by the Apostles), and also citing *Acts* 14.11, in which a miracle performed by St Paul in a part of Asia Minor called Lycaonia was acclaimed by a crowd who are described as speaking Λυκαονιστί ‘in the Lycaonian speech’ (Harding 1564: fols. 54r, 55r–v). This implied that people who did not speak Greek might be converted to Christianity, and would therefore, after their conversion, hear Mass in Greek despite not understanding it. In *A Replie unto M[aster] Hardinges Answere*, of the following year, Jewel replied to the point about Pentecost that perhaps “al there rehearsed were not diuerse tongues, but rather certaine differences in one tongue”, and to the point about the speech of the Lycaonians that perhaps “the Lycaonical tongue was a corruption, or difference of the Greeke tongue, and not a seuerall tongue of it selfe” (Jewel 1565: 160, 164). What is striking here is that he was not using the word *dialect*, which would very neatly have captured the point he was making.

The word was, however, used in the following year, in *Beware of M[aster] Jewel*, a reply to Jewel by another Leuven exile, John Rastell (not to be confused with the lawyer and printer of that name), which we will quote at length. If there

were “certaine differences” between the language varieties of those who heard the Apostles speak at Pentecost, wrote Rastell:

(I trust) you meane not such differencies, as are made by reason of Swiftnesse, Slownesse, Smothesse or Hardnesse, and so furthe of Tounge: but such only as co[n]sist in the variety of Letters, wordes and Dialect. In which respect, though the Tounge of Saxonie, Flanders, England and Scotland be one: yet because of a peculiar Property and Dialect whiche is in them, the Vulgar Saxons are not only Strangers to Englishe men, but also to the Flemminges their neighbors: and the Vulgare Scottesman not only vnderstandeth not the Flemming, but of the Sowtherland so nigh vnto him, he knoweth not the wordes and meaning.

There be about three skore seuerall Cou[n]tries, that vse the Tounge named Illyrica, but though the kind of the Tounge be one, and the difference consist in Dialecte and proprietie only: yet they vnderstande not one the other, as in example: *Moscouites*, *Polonians*, *Sclauons*, *Bohemians*, & *caet*.<sup>16</sup>

Rastell made a marginal reference to the *Mithridates* of Conrad Gessner, published in 1555, beside his point about “the Tounge named Illyrica”, and it is very highly plausible that this text was his source for the word *dialect*. In its introduction, Gessner had translated Clement of Alexandria’s definition of *dialectus* as “the distinctive way of speaking of a certain place”. To this, Clement added that the Greeks had distinguished the *dialecti* of Greek from the incomprehensible *glossae* spoken by barbarians. Gessner goes on by mentioning different usages of the term *dialectus* in ancient and contemporary texts. Prominent among these usages is the grammarians’ interpretation of *dialectus* as “a property of a certain language (*linguae alicuius proprietas*), either in separate or in several words; by this property, it differs from the common variety or from the remaining similar or related dialects”.<sup>17</sup> Gessner’s account of the *lingua Illyrica*, cited by Rastell, does not use the word *dialectus*, but his account of the *lingua Germanica* uses it several times, so Rastell could, as he looked at Gessner’s introduction and as he saw what Gessner had to say about the languages of Saxony, Flanders, England, and lowland Scotland, have seen the word *dialectus* at work.<sup>18</sup> If he had glanced at a

**16** Rastell (1566: fols. 64v–65r; the latter folio is misnumbered 75 in at least some copies).

**17** Gessner (1555: fol. 1v), “Est autem dialectus dictio peculiarem alicuius loci notam seu characterem præ se ferens” and (1555: fol. 2r), “Nos dialectum [...] (apud gram[m]aticos præsertim) linguae alicuius siue in singulis siue in pluribus uerbis proprietatem, qua à com[m]uni uel reliquis similibus aut cognatis differt”. See also Van Rooy (forthc.: Chapter 3).

**18** The *lingua Germanica* is treated in Gessner (1555: fols. 27r–44v) – identifying Frisian as a *dialectus* at fol. 39r, and referring to the *dialectus* of lower Germany at fol. 41v and to the varying *dialecti* of German-speaking Europe and the strongly marked *dialectus* of the Bavarians at fol. 42r – and the *lingua Illyrica* at fols. 52r–56r.

copy of Elyot's dictionary when he encountered the word in Gessner, he would have had another authority for using *dialectus* with reference to language variation within the British Isles. Moreover, Rastell seems to leave another important source unmentioned: Jean Bodin's 1566 *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem*, first published only some months before Rastell's work. In it, Bodin reports that he has heard that "Poles, Bohemians, Russians, Lithuanians, Muscovites, Bosnians, Bulgarians, Serbians, Croatians, Dalmatians, and Vandals use the same language of the Slavs, which is used in Scandinavia, and differ only in dialect".<sup>19</sup>

Rastell did not draw exclusively on Gessner and Bodin for his use of the word *dialect*. As he moved on to Jewel's discussion of the language of the Lycaonians, he remarked that "the Greeke tounge is divided by the learned therein, into fyue Dialectes: of which Ionica, Æolica, and Dorica are three", while nobody speaks of a Lycaonian dialect (Rastell 1566: fol. 66v). He then made the point that even if the Lycaonians spoke a variety of Greek, that does not prove that they would have understood a liturgy in "the learned Greek": after all, he said, bringing the word *dialect* to bear on his lived experience of language as an exile in the Low Countries, speakers of Dutch do not understand "the hygh Almanes (which yet differ but in Dialect)" (Rastell 1566: fol. 68r). So, he asked, would speakers of "Corrupte and Barbarous Greeke" have understood "the pure Greeke, which holy Fathers haue writen, and in which the Scriptures be preserued?". He answers by saying that

*Ioannes Grammaticus* writing purposoly of y<sup>e</sup> Greeke Dialectes, him self being a Greeke writer, sayeth, that if ye will take into the number, y<sup>e</sup> Dialect called *Co[m]munis*: then are there fyue of them, *Ionica, Attica, Dorica, Aeolica, Communis*. But the barbarous Dialectes (sayeth he) being of great number and far out of reache, it is not easy to declare. ἄλλως τε οὐδὲ λεκτέον αὐτάς [*sic pro* αὐτάς] διαλέκτους, ἀλλὰ γλωσσας [*sic pro* γλώσσας]. Yea rather we muste not call them Dialects, but tounes. So vnlike they were to other Greke Tounes, not only the Common but also y<sup>e</sup> peculiare fower Dialectes. (Rastell 1566: fol. 68v)

Now, the passage which Rastell quotes actually distinguishes non-Greek languages from varieties of Greek, rather than distinguishing marginal and central varieties of the same language (see Van Rooy 2016: 256–257). But more interesting to us than its interpretation is its source: Rastell did not get it from Gessner (or Bodin). A very similar passage is indeed quoted in *Mithridates* (Gessner 1555: fol.

19 Bodin (1566: 439): "Sic enim audio Polonos, Bohemos, Rufios, Lithuanos, Moschouitas, Boſinios, Bulgaros, Seruios, Croatios, Dalmatas, Vandalos eade[m] Sclaurorum vti lingua, quæ in Sca[n]dia vsurpatur, ac sola dialecto differre".

2r), but from Clement of Alexandria rather than from “Joannes Grammaticus” and in Latin rather than Greek. The Greek had been in print, in a short account of the Greek dialects attributed to Joannes Grammaticus (who is sometimes identified with Joannes Philoponus), since the previous century, circulating in freestanding grammars and in grammatical appendices to many dictionaries, from 1512 onwards often with a Latin translation printed beside it.<sup>20</sup> If the order in which he cited his texts is any guide, then Rastell first encountered the Latin word *dialectus* in *Mithridates* and saw its relevance to the Challenge controversy, and then saw from *Mithridates* that there were discussions in Greek of the Greek equivalent of the Latin word, and sought one out in a readily available collection of Greek grammatical texts. We note that the current *OED* etymology of *dialect* identifies the English form as borrowed from words in three languages: from French *dialecte*, and from Latin *dialectos* [*sic*], and from Greek διάλεκτος (hasty reading of the etymology in the first edition of *OED* has led to the claim that the English word is simply “a borrowing from Latin via French”; see Crystal 2004: 342).<sup>21</sup> Rastell himself clearly had his English word from Latin in the first instance and also used it in a passage of which the source was a passage of Greek; but there is no reason to suppose that he also used a French source, and as we shall see in Section 6 below, it is only in the 1590s that instances of *dialect* appear to show borrowing from French rather than from the classical languages.

Rastell was not the only English exile in Leuven reading “Joannes Grammaticus” on the dialects in 1566. A few months after the publication of *Beware of M[aster] Jewel* – the liminary epistles are dated 10 May and 24 July respectively – Thomas Stapleton published his own riposte to Jewel’s *Replie unto M[aster] Hardinges Answere*, called *A Returne of Untruthes upon M. Jewelles Replie*, quoting “Joannes” in Latin, “*neque dicendum ipsas Dialectos, sed linguas*”, and translating these words as “they are not so much to be called *Dialectes* or proprieties, as tongues” (Stapleton 1566: fol. 59r).

Rastell’s use of *dialect* with reference to the Germanic languages provides *OED* with its first attestation of the word in its sense 2: “form or variety of a language which is peculiar to a specific region”. But the *OED* definition does not

<sup>20</sup> The *editio princeps* is in Manutius et al. (1496: fol. 236v *et sqq.*); for further printings up to 1529, see Botley (2010: 130 and 145–146) (grammar of Constantine Lascaris, Venice 1512 and Venice 1521), and (2010: 159–162) (*Dictionarium graecum*, Paris 1521; *Lexicon graecum*, Basle 1522; *Lexicon graecum*, Paris 1523; *Dictionarius graecus*, Basle 1524; *Dictionarium graecum*, Venice 1524; *Lexicon graecum*, Basle 1525; *Dictionarium graecum*, Venice 1525). See also the appendix of Trovato (1984).

<sup>21</sup> At the time of writing, the etymological summary in *OED*, s.v. *dialect* n. reads only “[o]f multiple origins. Partly a borrowing from French. Partly a borrowing from Latin”, but the triple derivation is made perfectly clear in the etymology itself.

quite capture his sense here. Languages, he writes, have “a peculiar Property and Dialect whiche is in them”. The single “Property and Dialect” which is *in* a language is clearly not one of the regional varieties of the language, just as in Gessner, a *dialectus* is not always quite the same sort of thing as a *lingua*, but can rather be *linguae alicuius proprietates*, a property of a language. It seems better to say that the “Property and Dialect” of a language is, to quote the beginning of *OED*’s sense 3, its “[m]anner of speaking”. When, on the other hand, Rastell goes on to refer to “Greeke Dialectes” and “barbarous Dialectes”, he is surely using *dialect* to mean ‘regional language variety’. So *OED*’s sense 2 and the first part of its sense 3 are both found in Rastell, and both correspond to uses of Latin *dialectus* which Rastell could have found in Gessner’s *Mithridates*. Stapleton’s use of the word seems likewise to extend to both of the senses which *OED* differentiates: “*Dialectes* or proprieties” is closer to ‘manner of speaking’, and the distinction between “*Dialectes* [and] tonges” is closer to ‘regional language variety’. It is probably true that the sense-divisions which are appropriate when setting out the whole history of *dialect* with hindsight were not clearly present in the minds of Rastell and Stapleton.

What we have just seen is that the second English word *dialect* emerged in 1566, in the course of religious controversy which hinged on a point about the languages of the ancient eastern Mediterranean. The writers who used it were Catholic exiles, working in continental Europe. They had it from two sixteenth-century Latin authors, Conrad Gessner and Jean Bodin, and from a(n early) Byzantine Greek author, Joannes Grammaticus. From the beginning, it had multiple senses, reflecting the multiple senses of the Latin and Greek words: *dialect* could mean ‘regional language variety’ or ‘manner of speaking’.

## 5 The Developing Use of English *Dialect* with Reference to Language from the 1570s to the 1590s

These instances of *dialect*, occurring in Catholic texts published abroad and only clandestinely distributed in England, cannot have had a broad influence. Attestations of the word from the 1570s are by no means confined to the recusant circles in which Rastell and Stapleton would have been read most eagerly, and it is likely that their range of senses reflects a further sequence of re-borrowings rather than direct influence from texts of the 1560s.

The first in chronological order is from a work of controversy by the Presbyterian Thomas Cartwright, directed at opponents in the Church of England, whom

he accuses of insulting the godly in just the way that Catholics do: “Thes reproches off ignorance / so ofte[n]times caste vpon the people off God / are not spoken with the tou[n]ge off Canaan / but is the proper dialecte off the Papistes” (Cartwright 1575: 141). This is the first example known to us of the use of *dialect* in the second part of *OED*’s sense 3, “mode of speech peculiar to, or characteristic of, a particular person or group”. Cartwright wrote and published these words in Heidelberg, and it is striking that once again, the sense-development of the English word takes place in the writings of an English-speaker in continental European exile, where it was easier to come into contact with books in which the word *dialectus* occurred.

The next attestation of the word known to us was likewise written beyond the shores of England. It occurs in the “Description of Irelande” by Richard Stanihurst, written in Dublin in the 1570s and published in Holinshed’s *Chronicles* in 1577: “As the whole realme of Ireland is sundred into foure principall parts [...] so eche parcell differeth very much in y<sup>e</sup> Irishe tongue, euery country hauing his dialect or peculiar maner, in speaking the language”.<sup>22</sup> Here, *dialect* has the sense ‘regional language variety’. Five years later, in his preface to his translation of the first four books of the *Aeneid* into English hexameters, written and published at Leiden, Stanihurst writes of a Latin rule for determining the length of the middle syllable of a trisyllabic word that “doubtlesse thee natural dialect of English wyl not allow of that rule in middle syllables” (Stanihurst 1582: sig. B1r), and here *natural dialect of English* might be glossed ‘the way in which English is naturally spoken’, and therefore falls under the sense ‘manner of speaking’, so Stanihurst, like Rastell and Stapleton, was using the word in what we would now regard as two senses.

The first attestations of *dialect* in these two senses which we have found in a text written in England come from an English translation of a text by the Greek ecclesiastical historian Eusebius of Caesarea published in 1577 by the clergyman Meredith Hanmer. One of these was until recently supposed, on the authority of an *OED* entry published in 1895, to be the first attestation of the English word *dialect* with reference to a regional variety of a language.<sup>23</sup> The passage in question states, as translated by Hanmer, that the chronicler St Hegesippus “maketh relation of the Gospell after the *Hebrewes*, and *Syrians*, and seuerally of certayne Hebrue dialectes” (Eusebius et al. 1577: 1.70 = IV.xxi [IV.xxii in the original Greek]). This is slightly puzzling, because the Greek original, ἐκ τῆς

<sup>22</sup> Stanihurst (1577: fol. 4r); the word is not used by St Edmund Campion, who had worked with Stanihurst, in his *Two Bokes of the Histories of Ireland*, composed 1570–1571, and Latin *dialectus* is not used by Stanihurst in his *De rebus in Hibernia gestis*, published in 1584.

<sup>23</sup> Murray (1895: s.v. *dialect*, sense 2), followed, e.g., by Blank (1996: 7) and Crystal (2004: 342).

Ἑβραϊδὸς διαλέκτου ‘from the Hebrew dialect’, refers only to one Hebrew διάλεκτος: the Greek word διάλεκτος can simply mean ‘language’, and Eusebius’ text means ‘he makes extracts [...] from the Hebrew language’.<sup>24</sup> The three Latin translations known to Hanmer all treat the word as singular, as does the French translation by Claude de Seyssel (which has “de la Langue Hebraique” *ad loc.*), so his plural form is not a result of his following a translation closely; it must reflect his own ideas.<sup>25</sup> Hanmer was evidently unfamiliar with διάλεκτος as a word meaning ‘language’ but aware of its use in the sense ‘regional language variety’, and supposed that Eusebius must have been using it in that sense and that he must therefore have meant to say that St Hegesippus was at home in multiple dialects of Hebrew. The reader of Hanmer’s Eusebius would also have encountered a different sense of the word *dialect*, in a discussion of the authorship of the Gospel of St John, the Epistles of St John, and the Book of Revelations. These were not, according to Eusebius, all by the same author, for whereas the Gospel and the Epistles were written in faultless Greek, the Book of Revelations was not: as Hanmer rendered it, “I see his greeke not exactly vttered, the dialect and proper frase, not obserued” (Eusebius et al. 1577: 1.138). Here, Eusebius’ form of words is διάλεκτον [...] καὶ γλώσσαν (rendered “his style and [...] his use of the [...] language” in Eusebius 1932: 207 = VII.xxv). The two Latin translations of this passage known to Hanmer had respectively translated διάλεκτος in this passage as *dialectus* and *sermonis proprietates*, and he must have felt that in the context, the English word *dialect* gave the sense ‘style, manner of speaking’.<sup>26</sup> As well as using the word *dialect* to mean ‘regional language variety’ and ‘manner of speaking’ in his translation, Hanmer used it in a third sense in his introduction: the ecclesiastical historian Evagrius is compared unfavourably to the historian Socrates because he “is full of Dialects, and therefore in Greeke not so pleasaunt as Socrates” (Eusebius et al. 1577: sig. \*5r). Here, *dialect* must surely mean ‘dialect word or idiom’, as ancient Greek διάλεκτος occasionally does.<sup>27</sup>

The word *dialect* first appears in a self-consciously literary text in English in 1579, when “E. K.” uses it in the paratexts of Spenser’s *Shepherd’s Calendar*. In

<sup>24</sup> There does not seem to be a variant of the Greek text where διάλεκτος is pluralized: see the collations in Eusebius (1852: 146) and Eusebius (1903: 372).

<sup>25</sup> Rufinus of Aquileia (4th century) has “de lingua Hebraica” and Wolfgang Musculus (1549) has “ex Hebraea dialecto” – we quote from the texts in Eusebius et al. ([?1523]: 91) and Eusebius et al. (1554: 61) – and the newest Latin translation, by John Christopherson in Eusebius et al. (1570: 91), has “de Hebraicae linguae proprietate”. The French is from Eusebius (1533: fol. 104r).

<sup>26</sup> Rufinus translates material before and after the relevant passage at Eusebius et al. ([?1523]: 170); Musculus has “dialectum ac linguam” at Eusebius et al. (1554: 118); Christopherson has “sermonis proprietatem et linguam” at Eusebius et al. (1570: 171).

<sup>27</sup> See, for instance, Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, 31.6–7.

the dedicatory epistle to Gabriel Harvey, E. K. writes that archaisms should not be overused: “nether euery where must old words be stuffed in, nor the comen Dialecte and maner of speaking so corrupted therby, that as in old buildings it seme disorderly & ruinous” (Spenser 1579: sig. 2v). In his comment on the September eclogue, he writes that “[t]he Dialecte and phrase of speache in this Dialogue, seemeth somewhat to differ from the comen. The cause whereof is supposed to be, by occasion of the party herein meant, who being very freend to the Author hereof, had bene long in forraine countryes” (Spenser 1579: 39). In both of these cases, the sense of *dialect* is close to ‘manner of speaking’; the relevant part of the dedicatory epistle is at present *OED*’s first quotation for its sense 3, although as we have seen in Section 4 above, this sense can be traced back as far as Rastell.

Cartwright had been a well-known senior member of the University of Cambridge when Spenser was an undergraduate there (see Pearson 1925: 188–189), and if E. K. was not Spenser himself, he is likeliest to have been Spenser’s and Gabriel Harvey’s Cambridge contemporary Edward Kirke. Before that, Spenser’s master at the Merchant Taylors’ School had been Richard Mulcaster, who used the word *dialect* in a similar sense to E. K. in his *Elementarie*, in which he expressed the hope that just as grammars had been made for other languages, the same might be done for English, “where the vse of our tung, & the propertie of our dialect will not yeild flat to theirs” and remarked that “as in other tungs there is a certain propertie in their own dialect, so is there in ours, for our deliuerie, both as pretie and as pithie, as anie is in theirs” (Mulcaster 1582: 54, 268). Here, the English language was not being divided into multiple dialects: it was seen as having one characteristic *dialect*, in other words one characteristic manner of speaking. Likewise, William Webbe asked in the “Preface to the noble poets of Englande” of his *Discourse of English Poetrie*, a text which shows extensive and appreciative knowledge of the *Shepherdess Calender*: “What shoulde be the cause, that our English speeche in some of the wysest mens iudgements, hath neuer attained to anie sufficient ripenes, nay not ful auoided the reproch of barbarousnes in Poetry? the rudenes of the Countrey, or basenesse of wyttis: or the course *Dialect* of the speeche?” (Webbe 1586: sig. A4v), where “course *Dialect*” means something like ‘characteristic coarseness’ (an accusation which Webbe himself did not endorse). The fact that Cartwright, E. K., Mulcaster, and Webbe all use *dialect* in the sense ‘manner of speaking or writing’, and that all had a connection with Spenser, need not be made to bear too much weight, but it gives a sense of one of the circles in which the word was being used between the mid-1570s and the mid-1580s.

Meanwhile, *dialect* continued to be used by recusant exiles, the group who had introduced it into English in the first place. In 1583, the Catholic priest



William Rainolds, writing from Rheims, explained how the translator of the Greek New Testament into English can distort its sense for heretical purposes: “by corrupting one word, by conferring an other with the greeke of this or that dialect [...] and so patching vp a sense” (Rainolds 1583: 429). Here, the sense is clearly ‘regional language variety’. The word reappeared two years later, this time with reference, as once in Hanmer’s Eusebius, to Semitic language varieties, in a rejoinder to a different passage in Rainolds’ book by the Anglican William Whitaker. Arguing that books associated with the Old Testament but not transmitted in Hebrew are generally to be taken as apocryphal, Whitaker makes an exception for the Book of Daniel, despite its Aramaic content: “As for *Daniel*, albeit some parte of him be written in the Chaldey tongue, yet was it vnderstood of the Church, being then in captiuitie vnder the Babylonians: and that tongue is but a diuerse *Dialect* from the Hebrew, and differeth littel from it” (Whitaker 1585: 25). In the same year, the Jesuit Robert Persons, writing from Rouen, argued of the confusion of tongues at Babel that it must have been a matter of the miraculous radical alteration of the workers’ languages: “if there had not bene some such miracle in the diuision of tongues; no doubt, but that all tongues, being deriued of one, (as all me[n] are of one father,) the same tongues would haue retained the self same rootes and principles, as in all dialectes or deriuations of tongues we see that it co[m]meth to passe”.<sup>28</sup> No previous instance of the English word associates it so clearly with the differentiation of language varieties from each other over time.

Just the same senses of *dialect* as are to be seen in the writings of the Catholic controversialists of the 1560s and 1580s – ‘manner of speaking’ and ‘regional language variety’, the latter sometimes with reference to Semitic varieties – are to be seen in the 1590s in the writings of the Hebraist Hugh Broughton, yet another Englishman living in exile in continental Europe. In 1591, he argued that the words of the Apostles should be interpreted with reference to the Greek language as used by their Jewish contemporaries: “the Apostles spech lyke theirs, and to them, and differing from all others, shoulde be expounded according to their dialect and peculiaritie of spech” (Broughton 1591: sigs. D2v and D3r). Here, *dialect* is equivalent to “peculiaritie of spech”, referring to the language of a distinctive group of persons, while elsewhere in the same work it means ‘regional language variety’: Broughton argued that the Canaanites were accursed by pointing out that “[t]hey whose tongues were confounded, also lost religion, by the

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<sup>28</sup> Persons (1585: 102); the passage is not in the earlier version of this work, *The First Booke of the Christian Exercise* of 1582. He might have been inspired by Mornay (1583: 575). For Persons’ press, and for his location when he revised his earlier work to produce *A Christian Directorie*, see Persons (1998: xlii–xliii).

wrath of God. But the *Chananites* had seuerall Dialectes, therefore they all had lost religion” (Broughton 1591: sig. C2v). Some three years later, in a defence of his work of Biblical exposition *Concent of Scripture*, he referred to his having drawn material “from east writers of hard and diuers tongues, and subtilties: not Ebrew onely, but Syriaque and Chaldean, in sundry Dialectes[,] from Greekes and Latines of all sortes” (Broughton 1594?: sig. [fleuron]2v), and here a comma is surely to be inserted between the two phrases beginning “from”, so that one class of his sources is written in “Syriaque and Chaldean, in sundry Dialectes”: he had in mind the Aramaic of the Talmud. In 1596, he applied the word again to a range of Semitic languages including Syriac and Aramaic: many speakers of Hebrew and related languages would be able to understand the Aramaic material in the Book of Daniel, because “[b]esides the North, East, South Dialectes, Syriaque, Arabique, Aethiopian were neare the Chaldie: so that with a little paynes they might learne it” (Broughton 1596: sig. \*4v).

In 1587, another controversialist, the Presbyterian John Penry, called for a translation of the Old Testament into Welsh, adding that “[t]he dialect that euery sheire hath almost proper vnto it selfe, should not hinder this woorke” (Penry 1587: 57) – a single Welsh translation would serve across the principality. This recalls Thomas Elyot’s application of Latin *dialectus* to language variation within the British Isles back in 1538. A tract of 1589 from the Martin Marprelate controversy, *The Iust Censure and Reproofe of Martin Iunior*, printed at a press managed by Penry but probably written by an associate of his rather than by Penry himself, remarked sarcastically that

the bishops English is to wrest our language in such sorte, as they will drawe a meaning out of our English wordes, which the nature of the tongue can by no meanes beare. As for example, *Receiue the Holy-Ghost*, in good bishops English is as much as, *I pray God thou mayest receiue the Holy-ghost*. And againe, *My desire is, that I may be baptized in this faith*, to their vnderstanding, and in their dialect is after this sort; *My desire is, not that I my selfe, but that this childe wherevnto I am a witnesse, may bee baptized in this faith*. (“Martin” [1589]: sig. c4v)

Here again, as in Cartwright (1575) and Broughton (1591: sigs. D2v and D3r), a dialect is the language of a distinctive group of persons.

In this part of our account, we have shown the expanding use of *dialect*. In the 1560s, it was only used by religious exiles in their controversial writings. It continued to be an important word for religious controversialists, but it was used by a widening circle of writers, in England as well as continental Europe, and in a widening range of texts, including Spenser’s *Shepherdes Calender*. The senses in which the word was used expanded: to the original two senses ‘regional language variety’ and ‘manner of speaking’ which are attested in 1566 were added ‘lan-

guage of a distinctive group of persons' (such as Papists, or Greek-speaking Jews, or bishops) from 1575 onwards and 'word characteristic of one variety of a language' in 1577, the latter probably reflecting use of Greek διάλεκτος in this sense.

## 6 The Increasingly Widespread Use of English *Dialect* with Reference to Language in the 1590s

Thomas Nashe used *dialect* in his *Have with you to Saffron-Walden*, an attack of 1596 on Gabriel Harvey, whom he accused of having promised to "accelerate & festinate his procrastinating ministers and commissaries in the country, by Letters as expedite as could bee", commenting on this pompous form of words that "I giue him his true dialect and right varnish of elocution" (Nashe 1596: sig. O3r). This is the first instance of the extension of *dialect* 'language of a distinctive group of persons' to the usage of one individual rather than of a group. Perhaps Nashe owed the word to his time as a writer of anti-Martinist pamphlets, when he might very well have read *The Iust Censure and Reproofe of Martin Iunior*, or to his formative years in Cambridge in the early 1580s; perhaps he thought it the right sort of donnish word to use when teasing the donnish Harvey (who, we remember, had been the dedicatee of the preface to Spenser's *Shepherdes Calender* in which E. K. had used the word *dialect* for the first time in an English book of poetry).

Nashe used *dialect* again at a mock-learned moment in *Lenten Stuffle*, his praise of the red herring, picking up a reference in a travel narrative to the cult of Muhammad's son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib as "Mortus Hali" and pretending that this was a variant of "*mortuum halec*, a dead red herring, and no other, though by corruption of speech, they false dialect and misse-sound it".<sup>29</sup> Here, the syntax is elusive: do the devotees of Ali falsify dialect (*false* can be a verb with the sense 'falsify'), or is *false-dialect* a verb formed for the occasion, syntactically parallel with *mis-sound*, which appears also to have been formed for the occasion?<sup>30</sup> The

<sup>29</sup> Nashe (1599: 41), derived from Varthema (1577: fol. 363r), "This Hali, our men that haue been in Persia, call Mortus Hali, That is, Saint Hali" (is *Mortus* an echo of Ali's title *Al-Murtadha*, "The Chosen One"?).

<sup>30</sup> For *false*, see *OED*, s.v. *false* v., sense 3, with quotations from 1530 and 1605; for *mis-sound*, see *OED*, s.v. *missound*, which gives two different earlier senses with no post-medieval examples, and cites this passage of Nashe as the only pre-nineteenth-century example of a third sense: the implication is rather strongly that Nashe's word is an independent coinage.

first of these interpretations is preferred by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, but we do not find this convincing. It is not clear what sense of *dialect* could be the object of the transitive verb *false*. Moreover, if *dialect* is indeed the object of *false*, then what is the *it* which is the object of *mis-sound*? If *it* refers to *dialect*, the sense is ‘they falsify dialect and they mis-sound dialect’ – but in what sense does *dialect* refer to something which can be mispronounced? The other possibility is that *it* refers back clumsily to an object before the object of the previous verb, namely *mortuum halec*: ‘they falsify dialect and they mis-sound *mortuum halec*’.<sup>31</sup> We therefore suspect that *false-dialect* is a verb, analogous to verbs like the early modern *false-play* and *false-promise*, which should be counted among Nashe’s neologisms.<sup>32</sup>

The freedom with which Nashe treats the word says something of the extent to which English writers might regard it as naturalized by the 1590s (see Durkin 2014: 401 on “new compound or derivative formations in English” as signs of the naturalization of a loanword). In the three previous decades, it is used by quite select groups of authors, often in learned texts, and always in prose. In the 1590s, it starts to appear in a wide range of texts in prose and verse.

It is used in the sense ‘regional language variety’ in John Eliot’s French-English *Ortho-epia Gallica*, which calls Castilian “le plus pur dialecte Espagnol, auquel les hommes doctes escriuent & parlent ordinairement”, and gives the English equivalent as “the purest Spanish dialect, in which the learned write and speake ordinarily” (Eliot 1593: sig. G4v). The same is, we think, true of its use in Francis Meres’s translation of the *Libro de la oracion y meditacion* of Luis de Granada: just as it is not a marvel “if a man [...] speake that *idiome* and dialect of speech, which he hath alwaies vsed”, so our moral habits will be as hard to shake off as our customary dialect.<sup>33</sup> Whereas a number of the instances of *dialect* which we have discussed above show an English author responding to Latin *dialectus*, Greek διάλεκτος, or, in Eliot’s case, French *dialecte*, Meres was using the English word as a livelier improvement on his original, which simply has the word *lenguaje* ‘language; speech’: evidence, like Nashe’s verb *false-dialect*, of the confidence with which *dialect* was being handled as a naturalized English word.

<sup>31</sup> See *OED*, s.v. *dialect* v.; it follows that we regard the interpretation of the passage in Davies (1881: s.v.), which is cited by *OED*, as vindicated.

<sup>32</sup> For both verbs (attested in Shakespeare and Joshuah Sylvester respectively), see *OED*, s.v. *false* adj., adv. and n., sense C2c (a). For Nashe’s neologisms, see, e.g., Schäfer (1980: 60–62 and 137–164).

<sup>33</sup> Granada (1598: 325), translating an edition such as Granada (1556: part 2, fol. 339v), “Ni es marauilla que el hombre [...] hable en aquel lenguaje que siempre ha vsado”; lightly adapted in Meres (1598: sig. 189v).

John Florio applied *dialect* to varieties of Italian in the preface to his *Worlde of Wordes*: “How shall we, naie how may we ayme at the Venetian, at the Romane, at the Lombard, at the Neapolitane, at so manie, and so much differing Dialects, and Idioms, as be vsed and spoken in Italie, besides the Florentine?”, he asked, and referred later to the “varietie [...] of dialects” in Italian (Florio 1598: sigs. a4r, b1r). The word could of course be applied to Greek, as it is in the gloss of *Dórica* as “one of the fower toongs spoken in Greece, called Dialects, as the Doricke dialect” added to John Minsheu’s edition of Richard Perceval’s Spanish-English dictionary in 1599.

It is used in a sense something like ‘manner of speaking’ in a characteristically difficult passage of Chapman’s *Ouids Banquet of Sence*, which laments that spiritual experience does not have its own language but must be expressed in the spoken language of embodied humans:

Alas why lent not heauen the soule a tongue?  
 Nor language, nor peculier dialect,  
 To make her high conceits as highly sung,  
 But that a fleshlie engine must vnfold  
 A spirituall notion.

(Chapman 1595: sig. E3v)

Likewise, in a poem of Donne’s which may well belong to the early 1590s, the speaker and his secret lover “[v]aryed our language through all dyalects / [o]f beckes, winckes, lookes” (Donne 2000: 333), *dyalects* meaning ‘ways of communicating’. A couple of years later, in Edward Guilpin’s collection of satires *Skialetheia*, the sense is clearer: the acidity of Aretino’s writing would “saue the *Idiome* of the English tongue, / [g]iue it a new touch, liuelier Dialect” (Guilpin 1598: sig. C5r). In the preface to the second edition of Richard Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations*, the sense of the word is again ‘manner of speaking or writing’, as the earlier sixteenth-century writer Richard Chancellor is remarked upon for “the olde dialect of his wordes” (Hakluyt 1599: sig. \*6v). Francis Thynne refers twice to “the dialecte of our tongue” in his animadversions on Chaucer in 1599. In the first case, “they made the pronuntiatione of Campaneus to be the dialecte of our tongue for Capaneus” (Thynne 1865: 34) is awkwardly expressed, but can perhaps best be resolved by seeing *dialecte* as meaning ‘regional variant form’ as it had once done in Hanmer: *Campaneus* is the English form of *Capaneus*. More straightforwardly, “a true conuersione after the dialecte of our tongue” shows us that in a certain passage, the sense of “this maketh the fende” is “the fende makethe this” (Thynne 1865: 45); the “dialecte of our tongue” is the idiom or manner of speaking of the English language, which permits occasional Object-Verb-Subject constructions for emphasis. In William Fulbecke’s *Direction or Preparatiue to the Study of the*

*Lawe*, the sense is once again ‘manner of speaking or writing’, this time with reference to professional jargon: lawyers, he says, are not at fault when they use non-classical Latin “in their owne dialect and language proper to their Art” (Fulbecke 1600, fol. 22v).

Finally, the word comes in a couple of texts from the very end of the decade to take on the sense ‘language’ which we saw puzzling Meredith Hanmer in the 1570s. George Chapman argues in the dedication to the Earl of Essex of his *Achilles Shield* that English would be just as suitable a language for a translation of Homer as Italian, French, or Spanish, “which I would your Lordship would commaunde mee to proue against all our whippers of their owne complement in their countries dialect” (Chapman 1598: sig. A3v), in other words against all those users of English who speak or write ill of the English language. In his translation of Saluste du Bartas, William Lisle twice praises the Hebrew language as “holy Dialect”, once translating Saluste’s “idiome sacré” and once his “Saint dialecte”, not in comparisons of Hebrew with other Semitic languages but in meditations on it as a language isolated from others.<sup>34</sup> Once again, we see a confident use of *dialect* as an English word even when the text being translated does not use a similar form. (But the confidence was not universal: Joshua Sylvester more cautiously rendered the same passages “sacred *Idiome*” and “sacred *Dialect*” respectively in his translation of 1598.<sup>35</sup>) The translation of the travel narrative of Willem van Ruysbroeck in the second edition of Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations* refers to “your Maiesties letters, with the translation therof into the Arabike, & Syriake languages” and adds “[f]or I caused them to be translated at Acon into the character, & dialect of both the saide tongues” (Hakluyt 1599: 106). We suggest that here, Hakluyt’s translation treats Arabic and Syriac as languages as distinct as their writing systems: we take the sense to be ‘I caused them to be translated into the Arabic language, written in the Arabic script, and into the Syriac language, written in the Syriac script’. This is another example of an English translation of the 1590s confidently using *dialect* where it is not prompted by its original, for of course Willem did not use *dialectus* in his thirteenth-century original; his form of words was “in utraque lingua et littera” (Willem van Ruysbroeck 1929: 203).

<sup>34</sup> Saluste du Bartas (1595: 25 and 34), rendering Saluste du Bartas (1584: 128), “L’idiome sacré”, and (1584: 132), “Saint dialecte”, or a similar edition.

<sup>35</sup> Saluste du Bartas (1598: sigs. E8r and F2v). The latter passage was reprinted in Allott (1600: 496).

## 7 Conclusion

We have seen how the word *dialect* ‘dialectics’ was formed from *dialectic* in the 1540s, was used in a number of texts in the following decades, but had declined in frequency by the end of the sixteenth century. We have seen how the word *dialect* ‘kind of language’ was adopted into English over the period from the 1560s to the end of the century, appearing first in learned expatriate contexts in the mid-1560s as a borrowing from Latin and Greek; appearing in a wider range of contexts in the late 1570s and 1580s, sometimes no doubt as a product of secondary borrowings from Latin and Greek; and starting to become fully naturalized in the 1590s, with some apparent secondary borrowing from French. By the end of the 1590s, this word was being used in five senses, reflecting the sense-development of its Greek and Latin etyma: ‘regional language variety’ (first attested 1566), ‘manner of speaking’ (also first attested 1566), ‘the way that one particular group or person speaks’ (first attested 1575), ‘word characteristic of a regional language variety’ (first attested 1577), and ‘language’ (first attested 1598). The writers who used it still tended to be educated men, but it could be found in numerous genres: in language textbooks and travel narratives, in the satirical prose of Nashe or the erotic poetry of Donne.

This account supplements (and to some extent corrects) the account of *dialect* offered in *OED*, but that was to be expected: “the necessary constrictions of dictionary form” and “the complex and often messy realities of the histories of words” are, as Philip Durkin says (2016: 252), two different things. We have presented the histories of two words without the constrictions of dictionary form, and so we have been able to say more than a dictionary about their complex and messy realities. In the case of *dialect* ‘kind of language’, we have even been able – to quote the same passage of Durkin (2016: 252) – to trace a number of the “multiple similar but distinct innovations” which contributed to “the emergence and growing establishment of a new lexical item”, and since “such processes can rarely be traced in detail”, our doing so here provides a case-study in borrowing which may be of some general interest. But it is also true that the specific interest of *dialect* is not inconsiderable, and that therefore, the best possible understanding of precisely how the word was used is worth having. Let us conclude with two examples.

Our first comes from the history of English attitudes to the English language. When we are offered the statement that “[t]he earliest recorded use of the word *dialect*, referring to a kind of language, dates from 1579” (Blank 2006: 264–265), we can not only correct the date of first attestation to 1566, but also see how few readers would have encountered that first attestation. We can likewise see in what contexts the word *dialect* ‘regional language variety’ was used in sixteenth-

century English: with reference to ancient and Hellenistic Greek from 1566 onwards, to Hebrew and other Semitic languages from 1577 onwards, to Irish in 1577 and to Welsh in 1587, to languages in general in 1585, to Spanish in 1593, but to English only after the end of the sixteenth century, despite Elyot's application of Latin *dialectus* to English in the 1530s.

Our second example comes from the works of Shakespeare. He would only start to use *dialect* in the 1600s, a fact which is consistent with our profile of its use in the 1590s, when it was still largely confined to the writings of university-educated men or of their bookish peers like Florio and Chapman. It occurs in *Measure for Measure*, probably written in 1603 or 1604, and in the Quarto text of *King Lear*, probably written in 1605 or 1606 (and in "A Lover's Complaint", a text of the 1600s which was printed with Shakespeare's *Sonnets* in 1609). In *Measure for Measure*, it is used by Claudio, who reflects that his sister Isabella may be able to intercede for him with Angelo because "in her youth There is a prone and speechlesse dialect, Such as moue men" (Shakespeare 1623: 63; cited in *OED*, s.v. *dialect* n., sense 3b). Only two sixteenth-century authors, both poets, had used *dialect* of communication by means other than spoken words: Donne and Chapman. For Donne, speechless dialect is a matter of erotic invitation: "beckes, winckes, lookes". For Chapman, the disembodied soul should have, but does not have, a "peculier dialect" to express its "high conceits". It is therefore striking that Isabella should be identified by Claudio's messenger as a disembodied soul, "enskiéd [...] an imortall spirit", and that her interview with Angelo should end with his erotic temptation. We need not suppose for our present purposes that Shakespeare had been reading Donne's elegies in manuscript, or Chapman's poetry in print, but we note that when he took up the word *dialect*, his first use of it was very much in sympathy with ways in which it had just started to be used a decade earlier. In the passage in *King Lear*, the Earl of Kent, disguised as a servant, has first spoken to the Duke of Cornwall with offensive bluntness, and then flattered him in absurdly florid language; asked why he did the latter, he answers that it was "[t]o go out of my dialect". We note that the Quarto compositor was unfamiliar with the word *dialect*, and set *dialogue* instead (Shakespeare 1608: sig. E2r). But the same line occurs in the Folio text of the play (Shakespeare 1623: 292), and there the word is *dialect*, and rightly so. Kent's dialect is his proper or natural manner of speaking: "his true dialect" as Nashe put it in 1596. Again, Shakespeare is taking up a use of the word – its application to the manner of speaking of a single individual – which was first attested in a text about a decade earlier than his own. And again, there are odd resonances between his use of the word and that of an earlier writer: Nashe and Shakespeare both use the word with reference to a switch from a plain style to a florid one, but whereas Nashe writes that the florid style is the "true dialect" of Gabriel Harvey, Kent says that it is the opposite of "my dialect".



To quote Philip Durkin one last time, he points out towards the end of his monograph on English loanwords (2014: 401) that two important questions are “What sort of people is a word used by?” and “In which sorts of contexts is it found?”. This paper has suggested what the answers to these questions might look like, decade by decade, in the case of the English form *dialect*.

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