

The Labor of Writing in the Pastoral Genre, Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* through John

Milton's *Paradise Lost*

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy in the Department of  
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ABSTRACT

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## Abstract

In this dissertation, I argue that the pastoral genre in early modern England is a genre of gentlemanly social mobility that defines itself precisely by denying the political, social, and economic pressures that underlie this mobility. The pastoral world incorporates an ideal balance between pleasure and profit, while warding off the material institutions associated with that pair: courtly culture and patronage, foreign influences and dissipation of city manners, and the growing power of domestic and foreign trade. I read Spenser's deployment of the trope of labor in *The Faerie Queen* (1596) as a textual operation that distances his poetry from dependence on royal patronage. Sidney's *Old Arcadia* (1580) conceives of language and erotic desire as a social credential for aspiring youth. I read moments from Shakespeare's early romances and the history play *Richard II* (c.1590), in order to chart some of the ways in which the pastoral mode redefines language, property, and political sovereignty in dramatic narratives. Finally, Milton's *Comus* (1634) and the pastoral scenes in *Paradise Lost* (1667) provide a cultural critique of the growing power of commerce in the seventeenth century.

## **Dedication**

For my family.

## Contents

Abstract .....	iv
Acknowledgements .....	ix
1. Introduction .....	1
2. Edmund Spenser and the Pastoral in Book VI of the <i>Faerie Queen</i> (1596).....	20
2.1 <i>The Munster Plantation</i> .....	25
2.2 <i>Patronage and Labor in Book VI of The Faerie Queene</i> .....	35
2.3 <i>Necessity and the Waning of Providence in Book VI</i> .....	57
3. The Politics of Uncaught in Philip Sidney's <i>Arcadia</i> .....	62
3.1 <i>Desire and Language in Sidney's Arcadia</i> .....	62
3.2 <i>Base and Literate Shepherds in Arcadia</i> .....	85
3.3 <i>Pastoral Poetry</i> .....	92
4. Pastoral Re-fashioning in Shakespeare .....	107
4.1 <i>Labor in Midsummer Night's Dream</i> .....	107
4.2 <i>Pastoral Politics in Thomas of Woodstock</i> .....	114
4.3 <i>The Notion of Use in Agrarian Literature</i> .....	136
4.4 <i>Gardening the State in Shakespeare's Richard II</i> .....	140
4.5 <i>The Fortune and Nature of Literacy in Much Ado about Nothing</i> .....	147
5. Pricing the Pastoral in Milton's <i>Comus</i> (1634) and <i>Paradise Lost</i> (1667).....	166
5.1 <i>Commerce and Dispensation in Milton's Comus</i> .....	166
5.2 <i>Pastoral Labor in Paradise Lost</i> .....	198

5.3 <i>The Logic of Improvement</i> .....	208
5.4 <i>Gift-giving</i> .....	211
Bibliography .....	221
Biography .....	232



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# 1. Introduction

The pastoral genre during the early modern period is often read as the product of an elite ethos of rustic retirement, a realm of *otium* and leisure where the routine of shepherding is balanced with dialogues and contemplation, song contests, and rural entertainments, thus creating the semblance of a simple, innocent life that has been spared the vicissitudes of courtly life and the hustle and ambitions of the city.<sup>1</sup> The pastoral appears as a static realm caught up in eternal cycles of eclogues and songs that persists as a remnant of antiquity within the wooded, green periphery of various early modern narratives. The chief representatives of the courtly pastoral during the Elizabethan time, Sir Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser posed the pastoral as alternative realm of the court and a peripheral space where the court met a semantically simpler and more material world. There, the more insulated realms of courtly poetry and virtue came into a confrontation with an ethically and politically marked world defined by a humanist praise of thrift and prudence, the mistrust of commerce and urbanity, or the threats posed by marginal evil characters as pirates or riotous peasants.

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of the pastoral genre in early modern England, see Michelle O'Callaghan, "Pastoral," in *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 307-316. For broader studies that reach to the twentieth century, see Paul Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996), and Terry Gifford, *Pastoral* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

The sense of demureness and humble dignity projected by the pastoral thus appears transparent and self-explanatory, until one comes across those critical takes on the genre that look at the pastoral as a cultural sham and a social posture. In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams notes the abstract and decorative nature of the rustic settings in the courtly pastoral that bear no trace of the material condition and physical toil of peasant laborers.<sup>2</sup> In *Some Versions of Pastoral*, William Empson compares the modality of the pastoral genre with “those jazz songs which give an intense effect of luxury and silk underwear by pretending to be about slaves naked in the fields.”<sup>3</sup> For Empson, this constitutes the essence of what he calls “that curious trick of pastoral” which knows how to offer an extreme form of courtly flattery by talking about the poorest sort of people. Empson’s analysis is driven by a suspicion of fraudulence, not strictly a literary but rather a class one: the pastoral genre endows simple folks with a natural sense of aristocratic dignity, which, for Empson, is symptomatic of a bourgeois consciousness that likes to see its labor somehow immune to the realities of commercial exchange.<sup>4</sup> If we zoom in over the paradigmatic Elizabethan pastoral authors, Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser, Empson’s class terms lose their historical relevance, but the moment of denial remains somewhat valid: both Sidney and Spenser wrote within the paradigm of courtly patronage while simultaneously staking their poetic endeavors

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<sup>2</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 20-22.

<sup>3</sup> William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (New York: New Directions, 1974), 98.

<sup>4</sup> See Empson’s opening chapter, “Proletarian Art,” 3-26.

above the realm of petty competitions for courtly preferment. In that context, pastoral simplicity ceases to be about bourgeois notions of labor and becomes a symptom of the labor of writing at a moment when the system of patronage confronts the market of print.

My line of reading in the following chapter draws, somewhat obliquely, on the premises that John Guillory outlines in the opening chapter of *Cultural Capital*, where Guillory argues that the institutional value of canonical and non-canonical literary works has little to do with some social relevance inhering at the level of the text, and much to do with the context of production and consumption of literature, as well as the various institutional forms of access to the means of composing or consuming literature.<sup>5</sup> Guillory's analysis commences with a reading of Grey's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751), which Guillory identifies as symptomatic of a bourgeois readership and its symbolic property over an invented notion of a common, vernacular literacy that bears no historical connections to existing or past forms of the vernacular. If the eighteenth century as a period allows us to talk about the consumption of an invented vernacular, I would like to suggest that the pastoral genre at the end of the sixteenth century emerges as a literary mode consciously interested in the production of literature with a national, pseudo-vernacular character. The pastoral realm makes possible

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<sup>5</sup> John Guillory, "Critique," in *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 3-82.

imagining a quasi-utopian realm of literary production that does not depend on the market or on patronage and instead proceeds in some natural fashion in a world defined by material sufficiency and agrarian labor. Simultaneously, however, the pastoral is bound to another fantasy that is destined to undergo a considerable revision in the beginning of the seventeenth century: that of a prospering domestic economy based on agrarian improvement and commercial pragmatism,<sup>6</sup> where knowledge and literacy, as well as the institutional forms supporting them, become a significant form of property and capital.<sup>7</sup>

In his study of Elizabethan poetry, Hallett Smith has famously described the project or the intention of the pastoral genre as “the rejection of the aspiring mind.”<sup>8</sup> The pastoral ostensibly identifies itself with a rejection of worldliness, riches, and urban sophistication. To put this in less philosophical terms, the pastoral is a rejection of social mobility, or rather of the cultural markers and phenomena that the end of the sixteenth century saw as the roots of social unrest and instability. The pastoral shepherd is the antithesis of a cluster of related images that publicists and writers often associated with

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<sup>6</sup> On the importance of the woolen cloth (and thus sheep) industry as the “first national industry,” see David Rollison, “Discourse and Class Struggle: The Politics of Industry in Early Modern Europe,” *Social History* 26, no. 2 (May, 2001): 166-89.

<sup>7</sup> For a Foucauldian analysis on the emergence of the concept of intellectual labor in the seventeenth century, see Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Imaginary Puritan: Literature, Intellectual Labor, and the Origins of Personal Life* (Berkeley: University of California, 1992). For a more structural Marxist account, see Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labor: A Critique of Epistemology* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1977).

<sup>8</sup> Hallett Smith, *Elizabethan Poetry: A Study of Conventions, Meaning, and Expression* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), 10.

the loose state of morals in early modern London: upstart courtiers and young men looking for patronage or a position within the state administration, importation of foreign fashions and luxury, lavish and wasteful urban lifestyle, public entertainments stigmatized as lowly and excessive. That means that we have to revise the common critical assumption of pastoral shepherds as being simply highly idealized depictions of rustic folk. In the wake of Paul Alpers and Raymond Williams, critics rightfully choose to emphasize the lack of realistic detail and the highly stylized and decorative aesthetics of pastoral scenes in Elizabethan literature, but such scenes still exhibit historical specificity of a different order. In spite of the highly formalist and formulaic description of pastoral bliss, the genre is responding to concrete historical anxieties by negotiating more and less socially legitimate forms of entertainment and leisure.

The self-sufficiency and ostensible refusal of material and social ambitions that define pastoral shepherds in fact testify to a life of rustic ease and prosperity without rendering that prosperity offensive or threatening to the established order. During the second half of the sixteenth century, rural England is undergoing a period of rapid growth, and even as rural hired labor is faced with diminishing prospects for employment and resources at its disposal, a growing number of yeomen and lesser gentry are able to amass wealth and upgrade their status by capitalizing on the rising agricultural prices and the active land market. The period between 1575 and 1625 was known as the "Great Rebuilding" because of the staggering growth of building and

construction in the countryside.<sup>9</sup> Lawrence Stone rates the paths of upward mobility according to the varying speeds and certainty these paths entailed: estate management figures out as the slowest one – compared to the opportunities opened up through marriage, a state office, or law – but still one of the steadiest and most reliable courses of upward movement for the lesser gentry.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the pastoral shepherds praised by Sidney and Spenser for their humbleness and content with life and modest but sufficient wealth appear as a more accurate representation of the lesser gentry rather than the hired laborers and landless peasants who experienced this economic upheaval as a loss of customary use of land, traditional forms of employment, and the development of industrial enterprises in the countryside.

Concomitant with this growth of the agrarian market, the period also witnessed a dramatic shift in the relative distribution of economic power between the countryside and the center of much administrative and commercial activity, London. During the century that preceded the Civil Wars in England, the social groups involved in commerce and the professions were able to rise to income levels comparable to those of the landed classes.<sup>11</sup> As Lawrence Stone puts it, London was “in a class of its own.” Pastoral discourse, on the other hand, appears to be resisting precisely this shift towards a greater concentration of economic power in the cities relative to the landed gentry. As

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<sup>9</sup> Lawrence Stone, “Social Mobility in England, 1500-1700,” *Past and Present* 33, no. 1 (1966): 33.

<sup>10</sup> Stone, 34-35.

<sup>11</sup> Stone, 28.

a discourse, the pastoral genre aligns the countryside with true English values, true nobility, and real wealth while it adopts a solemn attitude of mistrust for ambitions, aspirations, and the more volatile forms of wealth and social relations found in London. The pastoral moments in Sidney and Spenser in particular display a deep-seated suspicion towards money and commerce associated with social and moral corruption, and on the surface, the pastoral wants to contain its rustic pleasures and delights within the space of the country-side. The genre celebrates a flourishing countryside of agrarian plenitude purged from the social unrest and deep restructuring of wealth and power that have made this wealth possible in the first place. Indeed, brigands, lawless thieves and peasants do threaten Sidney's Arcadia and the Spenserian realm of Pastorella, but such threats remain episodic and leave the very pastoral ideal untouched and all the more secure as the shepherds retain their stoic pose and propensity for poetry composure even as the kingdom of Arcadia appears to be falling apart. Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser attempt to transfer and rewrite an older courtly aesthetics in terms of this new wealth, in terms of locality and boundedness to a place. This form of courtly pastoral wants to territorialize and domesticate a certain form of aristocratic leisure by making it English, without the historical insight that the very material culture and wealth that sustain landed wealth being praised – sheep-raising and the cloth industry that supports it – in fact constitute highly liquid and perishable assets acutely sensitive to fluctuating foreign markets of English cloth. The ideological effect produced by the

pastoral genre is that it arbitrates among forms of social mobility and privileges landed wealth, positing a world of rural harmony as primal, organic, and inherently English while simultaneously excluding other, less savory forms of social mobility – the unrest among the impoverished peasantry and the massive influx of young men and women into London.

Yet, even though pastoral shepherds like Sidney's declare indifference to worldly temptations and retain a marked composure and demureness in times of social strife and upheavals, these shepherds still display signs of social mobility of a different symbolic and cultural register: innocent rustic entertainments, highly contemplative and formalized poetry. The ability to speak allegorically differentiates and elevates these shepherds above the rebellious, vagrant, semi-civilized rustic elements who also inhabit Arcadia. This particular gift for allegory and double-speech lifts up the Arcadian poet shepherds above the lot of rude churls like Dametas or the rebels and brigands in Arcadia. To put it bluntly, if foreign manners and importations are synonymous with prodigality, allegorical double speech signals self-sufficiency and economic soundness. Allegorical speech magically traverses class and status lines and allows shepherds to speak on illusively equal terms with such knight-shepherds as Dorus (Musidorus) or Philisides. Dorus, himself a knight disguised as a shepherd, resorts to allegorical, veiled speech in order to woo Pamela and reveal to her his noble identity without abolishing his disguise. Among the shepherds, the use of irony and allegory draws an invisible line

between the baser and the learned rustics and creates a linguistic alliance between the shepherd poets and their superiors without blurring the lines of social hierarchy. In this context, we may invoke Adorno's essay "On Lyric Poetry and Society" where lyric maintains a paradoxical relationship with the profane world – while lyric seeks to detach itself from the world and give reign to pure subjectivity, it nonetheless continues to reveal and reproduce the logic of the world.<sup>12</sup> In a fashion that recalls this ambivalent relationship between lyric and the profane world, the pastoral announces its autonomy from worldly corruption and mutability but then it finds itself reinstating and guarding the divisions and forms of differentiation that it purportedly sought to escape.

The tradition associating the pastoral with *otium* and ease derives chiefly from Virgil's *Eclogues*, and the first eclogue in particular where the exiled Meliboeus becomes a temporary guest of Tityrus, a more fortunate shepherd who has secured a peaceful, untroubled existence now devoted to poetry and the praise of rural bounty. In addition to Virgil, the continental pastoral tradition exemplified in texts like Jacopo Sannazaro's *Arcadia* (1504) and Torquato Tasso's *Aminta* (1573) contributed further to the courtly appeal of the genre as it turned the pastoral into a fit vehicle for the display of courtly poetry, decorum, and *sprezzatura*. Not unlike the later development of the Stuart courtly masque, European pastoral drama "solves potential social conflicts, restoring and

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<sup>12</sup> Theodore Adorno, "On Lyric Poetry and Society," in *Notes to Literature*, ed. Rolf Tiedermann., trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, 37-54 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

celebrating the political legitimacy of the prince.”<sup>13</sup> What distinguishes the courtly pastoral from the more visual court masque built around courtly dances and costumes, however, is the role that the language of poetry and beauty plays in the mediation and resolution of conflicts.

The proverbial expressions that more courtesy is to be found in a rustic cottage than at court, in fact, derives from Ludovico Ariosto’s epic *Orlando Furioso* (1532), and while Ariosto’s epic pays scant attention to the doings of rustics and peasants, it turns shepherd abodes into a locus of amorous trysts and temporary retreats from the fighting scenes. Such a rustic setting becomes a temporary sanctuary for the Oriental princess Angelica and the Arab knight Medoro, of “the rank of common soldier,” who carves his amorous thoughts of Angelica on the trees in the bower.<sup>14</sup> These love verses carved in Arabic also become the occasion for Orlando’s furious destruction of the trees, which earns him the second part of his name from the epic’s title. The trees of carved poetry become a site where Orlando, a paragon of aristocratic valor, encounters the very essence of aristocratic property – that is, the claim to exclusive enjoyment – but reflected back at him through the medium of poetry in a foreign language.<sup>15</sup> This brief encounter with the trees turned into records of poetry in fact shakes Orlando far deeper than any of the stunts and pursuits so far and leaves his readers wondering if courtly, love poetry

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<sup>13</sup> Federico Schneider, *Pastoral Drama and Healing in Early Modern Italy* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 2.

<sup>14</sup> Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, Pt. 1, intr. and trans. Barbara Reynolds (New York: Penguin, 1975), 723.

<sup>15</sup> We never learn if Angelica herself knows Arabic to be able to read the poems, but the narrative shows no interest in that aspect.

does not hold a different understanding of possession that is not accessible to the fearsome epic knights on their steeds.

This particular cross-boundary, cross-class, and semi-licit elopement of Angelica and Medoro in the shepherd's house alludes to another aspect of the pastoral romance, the fantasy of the unequal match between a shepherd or shepherdess and a noble heir. This plot informs Elizabethan prose romances like Robert Greene's *Pandosto* (1588) and Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* (1590) where the retreat into the pastoral, according to Richard Helgerson, offered an escape from more respectable but rigid forms of writing prescribed by the Tudor humanist education system. At the same time, the rural cottage comes to host a fantasy that circumvents the rules and demands of primogeniture and patrimony, where second sons, traditionally left outside the structure of landed property, resort to a vocation of love poetry, a dubious advantage at any rate, which in this fantasy world still performs the magic of ensuring a match with the proper heiress. This is the realm of Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (1580) where knights in shepherd disguise are able to manifest their nobility through the vehicle of poetry and courtly language, but in later developments of this plot, as in Lodge's *Rosalynde* (1590) and Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (c.1599), love poetry becomes the sole property and vehicle of advancement in the second son's quest for social status.

If the space of the pastoral provides a safe heaven for love poetry and courtship which is not of the court, it is also a host of rural paternalism and countryside ethos of

labor. The flourishing of the courtly pastoral towards the end of the sixteenth century was preceded by a tradition of husbandry manuals that already featured a praise of country life as the ideal balance of pleasure and profit, in the spirit of the classical praise of agriculture.<sup>16</sup> The classical texts of Xenophon, Varro, Columella imparted a stately, patrician grace to rural life that compensated the English gentlemen farmers for their relative distance from the urban centers of political power. Columella, in particular, provided writers of husbandry manuals like Gervase Markham with the proverbial notion that country life was a far more dignified and honorable path than seeking preferment at court.<sup>17</sup> If an early Roman militaristic ethos had seen hard rural labor as a remedy for the idleness and profligacy of the city, the English writers of husbandry manuals adopted those classical values in support for a paternalistic ideal of the lord of the manor.<sup>18</sup>

The classical and the continental tradition also provided arguments that linked rural retirement with intellectual labor and contemplative writing. When political intrigues forced Cicero into an involuntary exile in the countryside, he devoted this time to a series of works on philosophy and rhetoric in order to justify his withdrawal from

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<sup>16</sup> Varro, in his widely read Latin text *On Agriculture*, for example, names the two intended goals of farming life as “profit and pleasure” or “*at utilitatem et voluptatem.*” See Andrew McRae, “Husbandry Manuals and the Language of Agrarian Improvement,” in *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England: Writing and the Land*, ed. Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (Leicester: Leicester University Press: 1992), 40.

<sup>17</sup> Joan Thirsk, “Making A Fresh Start: Sixteenth Century Agriculture and the Classical Inspiration,” in *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England: Writing and the Land*, ed. Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (Leicester: Leicester UP: 1992), 27.

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of the Roman notions of *otium* and idleness, see Brian Vickers, “Leisure and Idleness in the Renaissance: The Ambivalence of *Otium*,” *Renaissance Studies* 4, no. 1 (1990): 1-37.

public life.<sup>19</sup> Ovid saw rural *otium* as a necessary condition for the writing of poetry.<sup>20</sup> Petrarch defined *otium* as a life of self-restraint, proximity to nature, diligent study and friendship.<sup>21</sup> Such examples might have provided an alternative, rural model of a writerly occupation, as authors of husbandry manuals occasionally ventured into composition of eclogues and pastoral prose. Barnaby Googe, the translator to Hereshbach's *Book of Husbandrie* and himself a landowner, was one of the first to compose English poems for print: his *Eglogs, Epythaphes, and Sonnets* from 1563.<sup>22</sup> Thomas Tusser organized his *Five Hundredth Points of Good Husbandrie* (1574) in a calendar with poems for each month interspersed with other poems devoted to thrift, household keeping, and moral advice. Tusser, a former student of music at Cambridge who left this more refined career in order to become a farmer, assumes a seamless continuity between music, writing, and farming when he compared his book to a tree and writes, "[m]y musick since hath ben the plough."<sup>23</sup> Gervase Markham, better known for his prolific writing on husbandry, also published *The English Arcadia* (1607), a prose pastoral in imitation of Philip Sidney's own *Arcadia*.<sup>24</sup> The propensity of authors of

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<sup>19</sup> Vickers, 10.

<sup>20</sup> Vickers, 21.

<sup>21</sup> For Vickers's discussion of early modern discourse on *otium*, see his "Leisure and Idleness in the Renaissance: The Ambivalence of Otium," *Renaissance Studies* 4, no. 2 (1990): 107-54. For the reference to Petrarch, see Vickers, 111-12.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor, "Introduction," in *Culture and Cultivation*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Tusser, *Five Hundredth Points of Good Husbandrie* (London: Richard Totell, 1574), 2-3. Available from: <http://lion.chadwyck.com/>.

<sup>24</sup> Gervase Markham, *The English Arcadia, Alluding his Beginning from Sir Philip Sydneys Ending* (London: Edward Allde, 1607). Available from: <http://lion.chadwyck.com/>.

husbandry literature to experiment with poetry and the courtly pastoral suggests that the division between georgic and pastoral was less relevant for authors who identified primarily with the ideal of agrarian improvement and did not see themselves as first and foremost as courtly men of letters, in the exclusive manner in which Sidney and Spenser conceived of their literary projects.

Nonetheless, the pastoral retains superior appeal over the georgic as a literary mode, and Anthony Low has argued that Spenser's gesture towards the English medieval precedents of georgic mode in Chaucer and Langland remains rather anomalous in the context of Elizabethan poetry.<sup>25</sup> What is more interesting, I would claim, is that the pastoral genre, even in its most courtly and imaginative flights, cannot completely shut off a certain range of social and cultural pressures that belong properly to the realm of economy and history but are still registered in the imaginary world of the pastoral. Paul Alpers notes that the Elizabethan pastoral form exhibits a structural opposition bound to emerge in any critical engagement with the genre: the soft, erotic version of desire in the pastoral, and the hard view of nature that hinges on the tension between wilderness and cultivation.<sup>26</sup> Pastoral romance coexist with an ethos of confront frugality and humble manners even in Sidney's *Arcadia*, one of the most extensive efforts at an Elizabethan courtly pastoral where male courtly bravado is set against the

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<sup>25</sup> Anthony Low, *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 13-70,

<sup>26</sup> Paul Alpers, "The Eclogue Tradition and the Nature of Pastoral," *College English* 34, no. 3 (Dec., 1972): 352-71.

background of communal pastoral life.<sup>27</sup> the larger pastoral endeavor of Spenser, comprised of the *Shepheardes Calendar* (1579), the pastoral moments the Book VI of *The Faerie Queene* (1596), and *Colin Clouts Come Home Again* (1595). Courtly pastoral texts from the period come to exhibit a general discontinuity between form and content, or between the aesthetics of courtly culture defined by sprezzatura, decorum, and the language of courtly romance, on one hand, and concerns about property and territorial domain on the other.

In the first chapter of the dissertation, I look at Edmund Spenser's rewriting of courtly sprezzatura as pastoral labor in Book VI of the *Faerie Queene*, a strategy that ostensibly allows him to distance his poetry from the realm of the court and valorize his authorial labor above his dependence on patronage from the queen. I situate Spenser's mixed aesthetics in the context of the project for the Munster plantation in Ireland which exhibits a similar discontinuity between design and implementation. The grand plan for the Munster plantation was imagined as a seigniorial holding of a medieval closed economy, while the recruitment propaganda for the plantation appealed to a gentlemanly class of wealthier, educated gentry and an ideal of freehold possession for the tenants who agreed to join the scheme. The disparity between the closed seigniorial economy imagined in the model and the more adventurous and mercantile interests of

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<sup>27</sup> V. L. Forsyth, for example, suggests that Sidney's *Arcadia* comprises the Italian mannerism of Sannazaro and the ascetic, martial ideals Sidney borrowed from the histories of Polybius who was a native of the original Hellenic Arcadia. See Forsyth, "The Two Arcadias of Sidney's Two *Arcadias*," *SEL* 49, no. 1 (Winter, 2009): 1-15.

those tenants it attracted are partially to account for plantation's lack of success. The local Irish resistance took both legal and violent forms which frustrated the plans of the English Protestant elite in Ireland, and I suggest that this moment might explain why Spenser's Protestant epic stalls at Book IV of the *Faerie Queene* where necessity supplants providence as the driving force of the narrative, and the virtue of courtesy and civility takes precedence over concerns of reformation.

In the second chapter, I continue to analyze the propensity of the courtly pastoral to host multiple voices and genres, and I focus on the tension between the courtly and humanist discourses in Sir Philip Sidney's *Old Arcadia* (1580). Love poetry and the language of courtship in Sidney's *Arcadia* constitute alternative means of social advancement and a social leverage capable of overriding concerns about status and lineage. The pastoral conventions and the fake shepherd and Amazon identities generate erotic desire in defiance of custom and status difference, while at the same time it is precisely the adept use of courtly language and poetry that contains this erotic desire within the bounds of gentility and ensures that the realm of courtship is accessible only to those of men of learning and taste for the beautiful. The value of learning as social capital derives from an earlier humanist tradition that has its roots in the commonplace book and the practices of citation and quotation, but, in Sidney's *Arcadia*, the humanist discourse of reason is stripped of its origin and put in service of a wholly new claim to nobility not predicated on birthright but on learning and refined speech.

Learning also constitutes the dividing line between the literate and the base shepherds in Arcadia. The shepherd-poets in Arcadia, in fact, represent an ideal compromise between the discourses of courtship and humanism, but at the same time, their special status is predicated on their property over the sheep they tend. The figure of the shepherd lover constitutes the singular fantasy of courtship and landed property that persists in pastoral poetry, and at the end of the chapter, I analyze the different readings this fantasy has received in the poems by Marlowe, Raleigh, and Donne.

Pastoral love poetry, however, presents us with a dilemma. If love poetry speaks the language of patronage and constitutes at its crudest an abstract bid for the preferment by a patron, the figure of the pastoral shepherd is simultaneously a rejection of worldly aspirations. Pastoral shepherds are the proverbial antithesis of the proverbial courtly upstarts and slaves of foreign fashions and manners.

In the third chapter, I situate the figure of the shepherd in the general trends of economic mobility in England and the mythological battle between merchant and gentlemen that colors much of the literary production in early modern England. As an antithesis to social ambition, the shepherd represents a different notion of literacy, domestic and English, and stands for an ideal of a self-sufficient model of a domestic wealth, immune to the centrifugal force of commerce. Yet, I argue that the pastoral genre does not evade fully the temptation of social mobility, but incorporates it at the level of allegorical speech which becomes a form of cultural capital that accommodates the

social order instead of posing a threat to it. Thus, Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* (c.1594) distinguishes between the literal labor of the amateur performers and the metaphorical flight of poetic inspiration. The particular English and domestic character of the pastoral genre serves as source of political and representational authority in the anonymous play *Thomas of Woodstock* (c.1591-1595), and in Shakespeare's *Richard II* (c.1595) the pastoral scene in the garden becomes an vehicle for a redefinition of the royal realm as a subject to agrarian improvement and administration. I conclude with a reading of Shakespeare's romances *Much Ado about Nothing* (c.1598) and *As You Like It* (c.1599) in order to map the displacement of this particular pastoral blend of humanism and love poetry by new discourses now entrenched in the city: the legal narrative of proof and evidence and the vernaculars of the London markets.

In the final chapter of the dissertation, I analyze John Milton's masque *Comus* (1634) and some pastoral scenes from *Paradise Lost* (1667), in order to delineate some of the transformations of the pastoral in the work of Milton. Departing from the chief premises in the pastoral genre, namely the vision of an eternal green world sealed off from the dramas of court and city, Milton mobilizes a pastoral tradition precisely in its capacity to interrogate and speak to contemporary affairs and discourses that dominate the sphere of public debates during the seventeenth century. Milton's political and religious tracts famously engage with the perceived social effects of the growing

importance of commerce,<sup>28</sup> and I would to argue that Milton's poetry is capable of a no less strenuous and intense response to mercantilism, attacking precisely the discursive modes of thinking and knowledge generated by mercantile exchange. My method here draws on a passage from Walter Benjamin where he formulates the terms of a cultural critique of capitalism: "It is not the economic origins of culture that will be presented, but the expression of the economy in its culture."<sup>29</sup> In other words, Benjamin does not call for a narrative of economic determination, but for an inquiry after the presence of the economy in cultural and thus 'organically' social forms of expression. Both in *Comus* and in *Paradise Lost*, Milton evokes the model of a naturally organized household economy inimical to the alienating effects of commerce and its propensity to naturalize the inherently social character of exchange and exchange values. This household mode of economy, however, is not conceived in terms of a patrimony or the private property of the individual subject, but rather as an economy based on non-wage, freely given labor which, for him, also includes writing and poetry.

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<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Milton's argument for free circulation of books in his "Areopagitica" (1644), or his critique of reification of religion in "On Reformation in England" (1641) and "The Reason of Church-Government" (1642), in *John Milton: Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Don M. Wolfe, 8 vol. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953-82).

<sup>29</sup> Walter Benjamin, Convolute N: "On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress," *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Teidemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Harvard: Harvard University Press), N1a,6.

## 2. Edmund Spenser and the Pastoral in Book VI of the *Faerie Queen* (1596)

Edmund Spenser poses a problem for critics who try to position him according to the different domains of genre and form: courtly lyric, pastoral, epic, or print. *The Faerie Queene* could be read both as a “chivalric romance and a dynastic national epic,” thus drawing on two contradictory impulses, a centrifugal force of feudal freedom and a centralizing one associated with the monarch.<sup>1</sup> Paradoxically, the narrative in Spenser’s longer texts undoes the expectations set up by the genre. A quest for a personal moral edification ends up as an impersonal litigation process between allegorical powers in *The Faerie Queene*. Where the genre leads us to expect a more public form, we see an inward turn: thus, for example, the wedding songs in *Epithalamion* betray a greater interest in interiority than becomes a genre of courtly ceremoniality.<sup>2</sup>

What continually drives the spoke in the wheels of interpretation seems to be an elusive dialectic between public and private that Spenser’s texts continually evoke and undermine at the same time. And the formal, literary shape this dialectic most often takes is the Spenserian allegory where the dynamics between idea and example make

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<sup>1</sup> See Richard Helgerson, *Forms of English Nationhood*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, and Elizabeth Fowler, “The Failure of Moral Philosophy in the Work of Edmund Spenser,” *Representations* 51 (Summer, 1995): 47-76.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Warley, “‘So Plenty Makes Me Poore’: Ireland, Capitalism, and Class in Spenser’s *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion*.” *ELH* 69 (2002): 567-598.

the genres of epic and pastoral perform tasks not entirely in line with their classical predecessors. Most critics begin with a look beyond the specificity of texts and genres and reach for an explanation in the social and geo-political spaces that Spenser evokes.

Paul Alpers, for one, notes Spenser's ambiguous relationship with courtly culture. He attempts to place Spenser somewhat outside a more conventional courtly realm by posing a different kind of poetic authority which finds its major concerns well beyond the confines of narrow anxieties over patronage. Spenser's poetic domain, however, remains hard to pin down. According to Paul Alpers, Spenser's *Shepheardes Calendar* of 1579 is already envisioning a "domain of lyric," or a virtual "aesthetic space" of "lyric authority," that recreates within itself a learned semi-autonomous community.<sup>3</sup> That space, according to Alpers, draws on the familiar entertainment and leisure themes of courtier lyrics and the court masque, while, at the same time, it represents a step away from them. Spenser's eclogues, for him, occupy a midpoint between courtier lyrics (that would have circulated in manuscript) and public print, and the transition is felt at the moment when self-consciousness and conceits give way to rustic and pastoral scenes. Richard Helgerson reads Spenser's move as a wholesale withdrawal from courtly and heroic themes in favor of praise for public forms of duty and obligation.<sup>4</sup> While, for Alpers, Spenser's humanism is more individualist and inner-oriented, and

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Alpers, "Pastoral and the Domain of Lyric in Spenser's *Shepheardes Calendar*," *Representations* 12 (1996): 93-4.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Helgerson, "The New Poet Presents Himself: Spenser's and the Idea of a Literary Career," *PMLA* 93, no 5 (October, 1978): 893-911.

Helgerson favors a proto-nationalist Spenser, their overall arguments seem similar. Spenser's take on the pastoral could be read alternately as a move away from the court and gentry, or as an address to a public made up of scholars, men of letters, and servants of the state. Alpers sees Spenser's avowed withdrawal from the ostentations of courtly pastorals into an autonomous, more private realm, while Helgerson reads this as deployment of romance towards public and thus political concerns. A similar critical tension arises between what Louis Montrose identifies as a turn towards 'domesticity' in Spenser's lyric,<sup>5</sup> and the "heroic-planter identity" associated with his epic work, *The Faerie Queen*. In light of Spenser's landed interest in Ireland, his lyric comes to exhibit a bourgeois, private subjectivity. For Thomas Herron, however – whose departure point is Spenser's estate in Ireland, too – the epic takes us back to the pre-modern violence of settler colonies, which can hardly be read as bourgeois.<sup>6</sup>

While these oppositions are useful overarching formulations with which to position Spenser's play with genre, I would like to suggest that another, more material pair of oppositions may help us map the relationship between Court and Pastoral, in the specific context of canto ix of Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*. From the perspective of the economical tropes used in the canto, the opposition there is between hired labor and exchange, on the one hand, and ownership of land that renders labor free from

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<sup>5</sup> Louis Montrose, "Of Gentlemen and Shepherds," *ELH* 50, no. 3 (Autumn, 1983): 415-59.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Herron, *Spenser's Irish Work: Poetry, Plantation, and Colonial Reformation* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007).

obligations, on the other. There, Melibee, the shepherd foster father of Pastorella, describes his sojourn at court almost in terms of tenant farming: "I did sell my selfe for yearley hire,/ And in the Princes gardin daily wrought"(VI.ix.24).<sup>7</sup> The vanity and superfluity of the court Melibee decries are coupled with the vocabulary of hired farming labor, as opposed to the less lucrative pastoral life of sheep-herding that is still part of his own inheritance. Spenser is no radical Lollard or Leveler, and *The Faerie Queene* could hardly be understood as hosting reformist collective sentiments. Instead, Melibee's story – not unlike the scene with Gyuon in Mammon's cave – contains a deep personal mistrust of hired labor. This mistrust seems based on a privately experienced jealousy about selfhood and its presumed loss with the hired labor. Paradoxically, though, this anxiety arises in connection with the court, where the labor performed by Melibee for the prince fails to establish the personal connection of patronage and benefice upon which the "livery" relationship of service and incorporation within the household structure depends upon. The court, thus, becomes the locus of anxieties and fears that are more commonly associated with the marketplace and the urban world of London where landed wealth was often dissipated in pursuit of less tangible or permanent forms of status. From the perspective of Melibee, the court is the place of fickle fortune and uncertainty, where what is being gambled away and spent is time and

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<sup>7</sup> Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr. (New York: Penguin, 1987). All references to Spenser's *Faerie Queene* will be drawn from the Penguin edition and designated by internal citations of book, canto, and stanza.

lives. The forms of patronage and the quest after fortune in this fallen court thus compromise and infringe upon the sense of personhood and self-possession that Melibee then seeks to reclaim in his return to his native village. In this sense, then, we can speak of a move toward a more subjective, private stance predicated on the sense of entitlement to one's labor which at the same time functions as a broader, more general critique of the court. Strangely, we find ourselves in a pastoral that retains many romance conventions but at the same time exhibits a deep mistrust for the court. Spenser clearly intends the critique, as he puts this pastoral in a book entitled the "legend of courtesy."

The movement towards privacy here is not quite the inward, lyric one we may associate with poetic subjectivity, as say, excavated in the sonnet cycles. Louis Montrose has made a similar case about Spenser's domestic turn precisely as a class-relations version of privacy – not the privacy of the individual poet, but rather of a class of gentry and landholders whose identification with their landed estates exceeded the attraction of the court. According to Montrose, Spenser's oeuvre "articulates in courtly genres, and disseminates through the commerce of print, an ideology of privacy and domesticity that had already been embraced by elements of the new Tudor aristocracy and gentry."<sup>8</sup> The point that Montrose makes is that the idiosyncratic use of genres in Spenser, and in

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<sup>8</sup> Louis Montrose, "Spenser's Domestic Domain," in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, ed. Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 96-7.

particular, of the Virgilian progression of pastoral, georgic, and epic, was not a backward-looking return to classical antiquity or the archaism of Anglo-Saxon lore, but rather the expression of *emerging* class sensibilities that will eventually come to dominate the rhetoric and cultural identity of the English gentry. Spenser, for Montrose, charts the grafting of bourgeois claims of privacy and domesticity onto genres that still speak the language of client-patron relationships. I would like to expand on Montrose's argument and suggest that we can talk about a 'middle-class' Spenser on the condition that we redefine those emerging notions of privacy and domesticity in the context of imperial politics and a settler economy. Or, to put it differently, with Spenser, an aristocratic identity of entitlement based on lineage and blood became attached to more inclusive and more abstract notions of land ownership, culture, and race.

## **2.1 The Munster Plantation**

The English-Gaelic relationships in Ireland underwent several important stages during the later half of the sixteenth century.<sup>9</sup> If the Old English lords and their Irish counterparts maintained a system of alliances based on marriage ties, the colonial policy in the beginning of the 1550s shifted towards an administrative and territorial consolidation within the exclusive control of the New English which led to a sequence of revolts in the period between 1560s and 1580s. Those confrontations, mostly instigated

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<sup>9</sup> John Morrissey, "Contours of Colonialism: Gaelic Ireland and the Early Colonial Subject," *Irish Geography* 37, no. 1 (2004): 90.

and led by Old English magnates like the Earl of Desmond and the Earl of Ormond, revealed a larger structural obstacle to the assimilation of the Irish population within English governance: “a fragmented and intricate Gaelic-Irish freehold system” which did not conform to the English common law practices based on single ownership and primogeniture and could not be converted easily into a rent-based economy. Thus, for example, the New English discovered that the lands initially sequestered from Desmond after the Desmond rebellions in the early 80s were not his property in a legal sense.

The New English described the situation they found in Ireland as one of “degeneracy” of the Old English elite from English customs and ways, but what they saw was rather an extreme form of political fragmentation or ‘balkanization,’ in the words of Nicholas Canny, where each of the powerful Old English lords maintained his power through internecine warfare among the lords and the building of political alliances based on personal authority.<sup>10</sup> The Old English saw themselves as firm supporters of the interests of the English crown, but their control over the island depended on relationships of clientelage with the Gaelic inhabitants. The judge or “breitheamh” held a privileged status under a particular lord. Merchants and priests generally operated as clients of the lords, and even the bishoprics in the Anglicized areas of Ireland were also often held by members belonging to a noble house. If the Old

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<sup>10</sup> Nicholas Canny, “Early Modern Ireland, c.1500-1700,” in *The Oxford History of Ireland*, ed. R. F. Foster (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 88-133.

English had assimilated older Irish customs and legal practices, they also benefited from some of them, as the customs of coign and livery in fact meant the extortion of rent and led to the impoverishment of the farming population by the Fitzgerald earls of Desmond in the beginning of the sixteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

Legal and material Gaelic practices like gavelkind, tanistry, coign and livery, and the nomadic lifestyle of transhumance, were deemed by many New English writers barbaric and inherently inimical to the spirit of English common law and the type of centralized settlement that the English sought to establish on their holdings in Ireland.<sup>12</sup> The notion of Irish difference quickly hardened into absolute terms of racial segregation that supplanted the older system of Anglo-Irish alliances. Thus, the plans for the Munster plantation, originally drawn up in 1588, explicitly prohibited any Gaelic contamination as the grantees of land had to agree “not to marry with any but with some person born of English parents, or of such as shall descend from the first patentees [...] English people now newly to be planted there, not to set their estates to any Irish.”<sup>13</sup> The grant of land provided detailed calculations for the “transporting of some English colonies or companies into Munster,”<sup>14</sup> and the use of ‘transporting’ in this passage suggests that the colony was conceived as a ready-made English model that had only to be brought in and implemented on Irish soil. The colonies were “to be entirely

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<sup>11</sup> Canny, “Early Modern Ireland”, 90.

<sup>12</sup> Morrissey, 93.

<sup>13</sup> Morrissey, 96.

<sup>14</sup> Canny, *Making Ireland British: 1580-1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2001): 130.

maintained of mere English persons without any intermixture of the mere Irish,” and the model village of each seignory on the plantation was based on the following list of occupations: “two gardeners, one wheelwright, one smith, one mason, one carpenter, one thatcher, one tyler, one tailor, one shoemaker, one butcher, one miller, a victualler, and the parish clerk.”<sup>15</sup>

If this list looks like a “Noah’s arc” of the skills deemed necessary for the establishment of a civilized, English village, it also tells a historical proto-narrative that begins with the labor of planting and building, moves into clothing and food provision, and concludes with the more spiritual labor of the parish clerk. The Munster design resembles a utopian blueprint, and it is one that draws on the closed economy of the manor house turned into a model of civilized settlement. Nicholas Canny emphasizes that each of these seignories was meant to function as an exemplary, model community, a “microcosm of English society on each of the sixty-two seignories,” set up with the explicit purpose of being imitated and reproduced amongst the adjacent eight seignories and further on amongst the Irish.<sup>16</sup> The grants also listed other conditions such as a

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<sup>15</sup> Canny, *Making Ireland*, 130-1. The Ulster plantation that took off in the beginning of James I’s reign, on the other hand, included provisions for grants of land for native Gaelic tenants who had proven their loyalty to the Crown. By that time, however, both native and English settlers were seeking to prove their Englishness at the level of house architecture and dress. See, for example, Canny’s “Early Modern Ireland,” 115.

<sup>16</sup> Canny, *Making Ireland*, 132.

formal requirement to improve the property and specifications of the construction materials and styles of building to be used.<sup>17</sup>

The Munster plantation thus implied a wholesale importation of a purely English and domestic version of a seignorial holding with a demesne estate and smaller tenant farms surrounding it, and it resembled more the complex, hierarchical structure of the manor estate<sup>18</sup> rather than the farming practiced by independent, free-holding tenants, where land use was defined by a lesser degree of customary and communal regulation.<sup>19</sup> From this perspective, the economic model of the Munster plantation, whose chief architect was William Cecil, Lord Burghley, was more conservative and domestically English than many of the farming economies functioning on English soil. The provision for farming personnel with one representative for each occupation implies a closed, static economy reliant on the constant occupational make-up of each village and sheltered from a fluctuating internal labor market of labor, which the model avoids by explicitly requesting that the grantees import their tenants from England. Moreover, these projected settlements were meant to rely on the protection of English soldiers maintained at the expense of the English propitiators,<sup>20</sup> which further confirms the

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<sup>17</sup> Toby Barnard, *Improving Ireland?: Projectors, Prophets and Profiteers, 1641-1786* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), 14.

<sup>18</sup> On the evolving social functions and architecture of the English country house, see Marc Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Geoff Kennedy, *Diggers, Levellers, and Agrarian Capitalism: Radical Political Thought in Seventeenth Century England* (Plymouth, Lexington Books: 2008), 76.

<sup>20</sup> Canny, *Making Ireland*, 131.

feudal model underlying the Munster design. In 1584, in the aftermath of the Desmond rebellion, English captains were complaining that they had been promised land, and specifically castles, in return for their service.<sup>21</sup>

Yet, if the overall design of the Munster plantation appears somewhat anachronistic and reminiscent of a feudal demesne economy that was already being challenged by commercial, more independent farming arrangements at the end of the sixteenth century, this resemblance applies more to the design than the implementation of the project. The manor estate in England retained customary relationships that were not and could not have been envisioned in the Munster scheme. The traditional manorial estate in England gave the landlord a greater degree of control over his customary farmers, but those farmers simultaneously had recourse to customary rights and a tighter collective organization that supported their common interests.<sup>22</sup> Geoff Kennedy even calls the villages within the English manor estate “small democracies of individual cultivators and proprietors,” since manorial courts and councils employed common forms of decision-making. The Munster plantation, on the other hand, right from its start ruled out considerations of customary rights by the virtue of its exclusively English make-up and design. The nominal customary users in this case, the Gaelic farmers, often sought redress in Irish courts that variably honored their land claims

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<sup>21</sup> Canny, *Making Ireland*, 125.

<sup>22</sup> Kennedy, 72.

against the New English,<sup>23</sup> but it appears that Irish tenants could not resort to such legal support after the end of the sixteenth century.

If the colonial project in Ireland was based on the notion of a superior English race, it was also based on class and status. The systematic English incursions in Ireland from the middle of the sixteenth century onward were driven by the ambitions of a choice Protestant elite that included such figures as Henry Sidney, wealthy gentry from the West Country, and the Earl of Essex who managed to attract the sons of many aristocratic families for his unsuccessful expedition to Ulster in 1573.<sup>24</sup> The recruiting propaganda for the Munster plantation directed the justices of various districts to have “a special regard... to the preferment and setting forth principally of the younger children, brethren, and kinsfolk of gent. of good families and countenance, and then of those of inferior calling and degrees.”<sup>25</sup> The younger sons of gentlemen who remained disadvantaged by the law of primogeniture were offered the prospect of gaining property and status fit for their gentlemanly upbringing. Those gentlemen, however, still needed farmers and skilled tenants, and the propaganda staked its bait on the ideal land arrangement for the English farmer, that of freehold possession. The land sequestered from the Irish rebels was offered at discounted rates, and Robert Payne, for example, sought to convince future proprietors that they could keep a better house in

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<sup>23</sup> Canny, *Making Ireland*, 140.

<sup>24</sup> Canny, “Ideology,” 577.

<sup>25</sup> A Privy Council record, quoted in Canny, *Making Ireland*, 135.

Ireland for a fourth of the rent in England, while artisans and laborers were promised a house, a plot of land, and cattle they could keep “for the term of three lives.”<sup>26</sup>

This ideal of freehold possession coupled with the supervision of gentlemanly landlords entailed contradictions that became apparent once the recruited farmers arrived and respectively left their ‘original patrons’ in search for more lucrative opportunities.<sup>27</sup> As settlers spread outside the initial boundaries of the plan and many reverted to cattle breeding instead of tillage, the reports from the next few years indicated a mixed economic success, but the original Munster plantation had turned into an opportunistic venture of rent extortion or extraction of natural resources like timber.<sup>28</sup> If this ‘actually existing’ colonial expansion fell short of the goals set up by the propaganda, that does not mean that it was simply based on inflated expectations or lies. The initial design of the plantation, unrealistic as it was, however, offers a striking parallel to the imaginary economy of the pastoral genre at the end of Elizabeth’s reign, and particularly to those idealized rustic scenes in Sidney’s *Arcadia* and the last book of the *Faerie Queene*. In that literary context, the very design of the Munster plantation emerges as another project of Renaissance gentlemanly self-fashioning that took a social mode of self-representation and emphasis on manners and turned it into a slogan for colonial expansion. In order to generate public interest and crown support for the

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<sup>26</sup> Canny, *Making Ireland*, 137.

<sup>27</sup> Canny, *Making Ireland*, 150.

<sup>28</sup> Canny, *Making Ireland*, 153.

project, the planners had to appeal to political and socio-economic tensions internal to the English realm: the Protestant reformist cause, the gentlemanly ideal of second sons and young men aspiring for administrative positions, the freehold ideal, the temptation of a purely commercial gain – and these tensions continue to be present both in the historical context of the Munster plantation and in Spenser's own experiments with the pastoral genre.

Thomas Smith, a civil lawyer and a proprietor in the Ulster plantation in 1570s, for example, posited the example of imperial Rome as the precedent for the civilizing mission of the Protestant circle in Ireland.<sup>29</sup> In the next decade, the ideal of civility and gentility continued to play a central role in discussions about the English course in Ireland. Ludowick Bryskett, a fellow English administrator and men of letters residing in Ireland, reports a conversation with Spenser where the later identifies the purpose of writing *The Faerie Queene* as a narrative of the moral virtues and ethical conduct a gentleman.<sup>30</sup> This account comes from Bryskett's own *Discourse of Civill Life*, composed the period 1580-82 when Bryskett served under Lord Grey in Ireland. Bryskett's *Discourse* is based on Italian sources of gentlemanly conduct and follows the larger trend of importing the sophisticated continental taste for courtiership handbooks into the

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<sup>29</sup> For the precedent of Roman history in justifying the English expeditions in Ireland, see Lisa Jardine, "Encountering Ireland: Gabriel Harvey, Edmund Spenser, and English colonial ventures," in *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict, 1534-1660*, ed. Brendan Bradshaw and Andrew Hadfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 60-75.

<sup>30</sup> Ludowick Bryskett, *A Discourse of Civill Life Containing the Ethike Part of Morall Philosophie* (London: 1606). Available from: [eebo.chadwyck.com/](http://eebo.chadwyck.com/).

English realm, but Spenser's last book of *The Faerie Queene* on the virtue of courtesy in fact redefines even the geographical positioning of this discourse. Calidore, the exemplary knight of courtesy, leaves the artifice of the court in order to discover a more authentic version of courtesy in the peripheral space of the wild forest and the pastoral of the shepherd Melibee.<sup>31</sup>

The pastoral genre in the Melibee episode, in fact, provides a form that accommodates the very contradictions underlying the idea and design of the Munster plantation. It provides an alternative model of courtesy which in this realm is translated as a rustic hospitality and a substitute for the court which Calidor has left. The brief sojourn of Calidore in the house of Melibee is a moment of pastoral retirement, but it is also an experimental alliance between a farming community and a soldier that resembles the same type of arrangement envisioned in the Munster plantation. In the realm of the pastoral, Calidor is simultaneously able to reclaim civility as well as his own military prowess by saving Pastorella from the rapacious brigands. On the other hand, the self-sufficiency and humble living of Melibee are a restatement of the freehold ideal that effectively allows the shepherd to conceive of his land as a patrimony protected from mercantile exchange and the uncertainties of rents and arbitrary fees. The identities of the gentlemen and the independent farmer coincide for a moment in

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<sup>31</sup> For a reading of *The Faerie Queen* as Spenser's attempt to imagine an alternative, homosocial court in Ireland, see Christopher Highly, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 13-39 and 110-33.

this pastoral setting, and if this pastoral idyll collapses with the incursion of brigands, it only serves to prove that rustic innocence and courtly games also demand something that the general premises of the genre exclude, the use of arms and violence for the protection of such a pastoral ideal.

## **2.2 Patronage and Labor in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene***

During the early modern period in England, the Virgilian triad of pastoral, georgic, and epic provided poets with a scheme that captured the vocational path of a poet which proceeded from an apprenticeship in pastoral praise of nature and beauty and aimed at the higher matters of heroic deeds and feats of the epic. The pastoral genre flourished during the Tudor and Jacobean periods, and land occupies a central place in poetry from the period, but the georgic genre of rural labor is almost absent, largely due to the unsuitability of manual labor in the realm of courtly and gentlemanly pursuits. Spenser and his insertion of the ploughman as a figuration of his authorial persona in *The Faerie Queene* constitutes one notable exception to the absence of the georgic genre in the literary production during the reign of Elizabeth.

The work of William Sessions and Anthony Law, who emphasize the importance of the georgic in Spenser's epic, have left us with a conundrum – the almost anomalous, or anachronistic, presence of agrarian labor in Spenser which seems out of place in the

context of 1590s in England.<sup>32</sup> Spenser, in Low's reading, while deploying all three genres of the Virgilian rota, resists the temptation of depicting a timeless, prelapsarian pastoral of simple living, leisure, and freedom from the vicissitudes of life, and instead stirs the heroes of his epic into a series of encounters that equally test their more noble qualities like fortitude and courage, as well as their perseverance in the world of mundane labors and obligations.

The figure of the poet himself shares into this world of mundane labor. The motif of poetry and the labor of plowing begins in Book I with the revelation that the Redcrosse Knight's identity is that of St. George, who has been hidden as a baby in a heaped furrow, and there discovered and raised by a ploughman guided by his "toilsome teme" (I.x.66). St. George, the patron of England, thus goes through a series of mistaken identities, but the discovery of his as an abandoned baby is represented less as a result of the intervention of providence, than as the chance product of the ploughman's "toylesome teme." The teme here implies both a theme, and a team of tamed, yoked animals. The ploughman remains clueless in this scenario, and yet, providence continues to work under the guise of necessity.

The famous hermaphrodite stanzas of Book III that Spenser removed from the second installment of *The Faerie Queene*, frame the poet as a ploughman leading ahead

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<sup>32</sup> On the exceptionality of Spenser's deployment of the georgic mode, see Anthony Low, *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 13-70, and William Sessions, "Spenser's Georgics," *English Literary Renaissance* 10, no. 2 (Spring, 1980): 202-38.

his 'teme' of animals. The story of Amoret from that book ends with the promise to be completed in another "furrow." In Book V, canto iii, another story is concluded as a furrow and a turn of the plough. The poet strangely speaks of himself and his team as a collective unity. With the return of the plowing motif, the poet identifies with the figures of the ploughman from the end of Book I, canto x, thus tying together the moments of origin and destination within a disorienting cyclical temporality. Plowing, or georgic labor driven by necessity, becomes a tool in the hands of providence.

As Spenser appropriates the figure of ploughman in order to speak about his own poetry, the anonymous ploughman who finds and brings up the Redcrosse knight from Book I merges with the persona of the poet. The Redcrosse knight stands for one more furrow in this epic narrative, in the same manner that the story of Amoret represents another furrow and a turn of the plough. Here, Spenser seems to be drawing on the Latin origins of the word *verse*, or *versus*, which literally meant a turning of the plow, or furrow.<sup>33</sup> In Book V, where Spenser adopts the plural "we" at the end of canto iii, the turning of the furrows has already become a collective endeavor: "And turn we here to this faire furrows end/ Our wearie yokes, to gather fresher sprights,/ Then when as time to Artegall shall tend,/ We on his first adventure may him forward send"(V.iii.40.6-9). The 'teme' that draws the plough has already become an inclusive

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<sup>33</sup> Alistair Fowler notes that "[t]he poem as furrow was conventional topos" in "The Beginnings of English Georgic" in *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, ed. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 112-3.

category that grants the reader a metaphorical agency of labor almost equal to that of the author. If the last stanza of the omitted passage at the end of Book III still distinguishes between “my teme” and “ye faire Swayns” and thus retains a distance between the two part of the metaphor – the poet and the rustic swain, in Book V the distinctions between the two proves malleable. This all-inclusive “we” also appeals to a readership extending outside the courtly elite and Spenser’s own circles of patronage.

All proems to the books in *The Faerie Queene* offer a deferential address to the Queen spoken from the person of a courtier and subject to a female sovereign. The metaphors that describe the relationship between the Queen and the poem belong to classical Renaissance allegoresis: the mirror, the veil, emphasis on imagery and visual effects, motions of unveiling and disclosing. All those allegorical gestures stop short of establishing a definitive identity between the poetic and the historical realm, and each is followed by a disclaimer and an apology about the unwarranted ambitions of the poem. Yet, the ploughman references belong to a register different from courtly mannerism. Buried at the end of cantos and books, those references boldly place Spenser within a literary genealogy that runs back to Langland and Virgil, and at the same time, they also speak to readers beyond the elite audience of the court. After all, *The Faerie Queene* is the first epic written for the printing press although it remains ambivalent towards print as its heroes fight moral combats with quite print-like monsters, such as Errour who vomits “bookes and paper” (I.i.20).

The poet maintains a close parallel relationship with the figurative ploughman or swain, retaining the metaphor as a metaphor, a matter of likeness, and, simultaneously, using it in order to propel the narrative. In Book VI, canto ix, Spenser again returns to the plowing metaphor:

Now turn againe my teme thou jolly swayne,  
Back to the furrow which I lately left;  
I lately left a furrow, one of twayne  
Vnplough'd, the which my coulter hath not cleft.  
Yet seem'd the soyle both fayre and frutefull eft,  
As I it past, that were too great a shame,  
That so rich frute should from vs bereft;  
Besides the great dishonour and defame,  
Which should befall to Calidores immortal name. (VI.ix.1)

The figure of the jolly swain, caught up in laboring over the mundane, is precisely the opposite of the muse we would expect to be evoked by an epic poet, and yet, the swain here occupies the position of a muse. He is both a subject to the poet's command and an alter-ego of the poet himself. The third line completes a chiasmus as it performs a literal flipping over of the previous line on itself: furrow and ploughman change places, and the 'I' of the poet takes precedence over the furrow.

With the asserted ownership of the poet over "my teme" and "my coulter," the turning of the plough also assumes a more violent form, that of breaking the soil asunder. Furthermore, the lines that follow imply that neglecting the unplowed furrows will produce a loss of the land's fruit, in addition to that of the dishonor of Spenser's hero, Calidore. Land, here, is present not as the free bounty or the innocence of unfallen

nature as we see in some of the other wild spaces and forests in the poem, but rather as a material resource that almost calls to poet to be utilized to its limit.

Our choice of privileging georgic, pastoral, or epic in *The Faerie Queene* and the relationship between these genres in the poem carries implications not only for the intended readership and its social position or aspirations, but also for the very formal modes of representation. The *sprezzatura* that we may expect in courtier writing, and especially in Book VI devoted to the virtue of courtesy, is being rejected in the pastoral world of Melibee, and in its place, we see something else. *Sprezzatura*, or “careless grace,” as it is being translated, is a display of courtly affectation that erases the very traces of effort and elaboration invested in the perfection of courtly manners. The performance of *sprezzatura*, thus, imparts to social artifice the semblance of its opposite, that of natural, inborn affinity and ease. Where the courtier labors upon his own social skills in private, he is advised to act natural in public. The genre of pastoral in England and on the continent incorporate to a large extent basic principles of *sprezzatura* perhaps because pastoral, mythological landscapes provide the most suitable location for the practice and display of ‘natural’ courtly behavior.<sup>34</sup> Spenser, however, shuns *sprezzatura*, and he cancels it out as a mode from the world of the pastoral in Book IV when Calidore’s attempt to woo Pastorella with blandishments and courtly clichés is met with

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<sup>34</sup> Louis Montrose warns us, however, not mistake the ‘non-purpose’ purpose of pastoral *sprezzatura* for a form of Kantian aesthetic autonomy and thus wrongly identify some independent aesthetic realm in the pastoral. See Montrose, “Of Gentlemen and Shepherds,” 451.

scorn. Instead, he turns labor into a currency of courtship as Calidore dons “shepherds weeds” and partakes into milking the sheep, and the poet does not spare his courtly audience the detail of the sheep’s “rugged teats”(VI.ix.36-7).

The pastoral world of Pastorella does not quite know the daily hardships and contingencies that accompany cultivation in Virgil’s *Georgics*. It is still a domain of innocence and security, and, in that sense, Spenser is not departing dramatically from the conventions of the pastoral. Curiously, this pastoral form celebrates labor indeed, but the shepherds and shepherd-knights there toil and sweat in order to court their lady, not unlike any other ways of courting a chosen female object. Calidore’s cross-dressing collapses pastoral and georgic against each other, in order to produce something of an anti-courtly pastoral that still hosts a romantic notion of labor, closer to the ennobling function of husbandry manuals than to the aesthetics of the court. Unless we want to pose a hybrid generic form, the Virgilian conventions cannot help situate the Pastorella episode either within the Virgilian georgic or the courtly Elizabethan pastoral. Pastoral labor – pastoral, because it remains free of any georgic concerns over necessity or survival – here grants the virtue of courtesy autonomy from the obligations in a patronage economy, and thus, from exchange. We can alternately read the scene as a lesson on unfallen labor or unfallen courtesy since leisure and labor appear to blend together.

Stephen Greenblatt suggests that Spenser's refusal of *spezzatura* is a response to the charges of idolatry and the power of false appearances to exert authority over human belief and actions. In place of the "discredited aesthetic" of courtly virtuosity, according to Greenblatt, the poet offers a description of his own workmanship, producing "art that constantly calls attention to its own processes, which includes within itself framing devices and sings of its own createdness."<sup>35</sup> The Protestant fear of idolatry was also one of the forms that the critique of the trade and monetary exchange assumed for early modern English writers who saw theatre, public entertainments, and trade as corrupting phenomena affecting society by substituting spiritual and subjective states with sensual and material forms of compensation.<sup>36</sup> Within the context of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser often directs the brunt of Protestant fear of idolatry against the royal court itself, almost rendering the court and its culture of patronage into the equivalent of a marketplace trading in people. By calling attention to the craftsmanship of writing and the multiple meanings of words, puns, and allegories, Spenser draws attention to the poet's power of manipulating images and semblances and making them yield knowledge and thus profit, the second component of the Horacian ideal of pleasure and profit. The multiplicity of allegorical meanings probably interferes with the

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<sup>35</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, "To Fashion a Gentleman: Spenser and the Destruction of the Bower of Bliss," in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 189-90.

<sup>36</sup> On the convergence of religious and material forms of idolatry in early modern discourses, see David Hawkes, *Idols of the Marketplace: Idolatry and Commodity Fetishism in English Literature: 1580-1680* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

transparency of the generic form and the formal totality of representation, but, at the same time, the emphasis on the material power of poetry to reveal and teach could be read as Spenser's solution of the double bind between court and marketplace. Even as he still writes within the paradigm of courtly patronage, the entertaining effect of his poetry is only a vehicle multiple other religious and political agendas.

Louis Montrose rightly suggests that the dedication page of the 1596 edition of *The Faerie Queene* shows a considerable attempt on the part of Spenser to aggrandize his authorial persona vis-a-vis the Queen.<sup>37</sup> The dedication to the first edition, six years earlier printed as prose, reads: "TO THE MOST MIGHTIE AND MAGNIFICENT EMPRESSE ELIZABETH, BY THE GRACE OF GOD QVEENE OF ENGLAND, FRANCE AND IRELAND DEFENDER OF FAITH &c." In 1596, Spenser's dedication reads:

TO  
THE MOST HIGH,  
MIGHTIE,  
and  
MAGNIFICENT  
EMPRESSE RENOVV-  
ED FOR PIETIE, VER-  
TUE, AND ALL GRATIOVS  
GOVERNMENT ELIZABETH BY  
THE GRACE OF GOD QVEENE  
OF ENGLAND FRANCE AND  
IRELAND AND OF VIRGI-  
NIA, DEFENDOVR OF THE  
FAITH, &c. HER MOST  
HVMBLE SERVAVNT

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<sup>37</sup> Montrose, "Spenser's Domestic Domain," 89.

EDMVND SPENSER  
DOTH IN ALL HV-  
MILITIE DEDI-  
CATE, PRE-SENT  
AND CONSECRATE THESE  
HIS LABOVRS TO LIVE  
WITH THE ETERNI-  
TIE OF HER  
FAME.

The second edition prints the dedication as a monumental form on the page; the only proper name to stand alone and occupy a line of its own is that of Edmund Spenser. If the first dedication solely highlights the honorary addressee of the poem, the second one stages a metaphorical ritual where the author presides almost as a priest and retains all the control over the verbs that follow at the end. The second dedication is thus a much bolder gift meant to ingratiate the poet with the monarch and secure for him a place within the gift economy of patronage, but, at the same time, Spenser is forcefully revising the conventional terms of the discourse of dedications by offering his poetry not so much as service but rather as labor. As Montrose notes, the poet is placing his bet on a reciprocal relationship with the Queen, where the afterlife of her fame becomes inextricably tied to him as one of her servants. At the same time, the inclusion of labor within a gift-rendering gesture forces the reader to confront the very terms structuring a patronage relationship. The second dedication buries the name of the patron within the text and accentuates the stand-alone nature of the poet.

Labor invokes a cluster of associations that differs from aristocratic forms of gift-giving: laborers and artificers in England possessed a separate legal persona and did not fall under the governance of their masters, as servants and apprentices did.<sup>38</sup> When the courtier is proffering his love and gratitude to the patron, he is offering in fact, something immaterial and precious, in return for a more or less material favor on the part of the patron. The courtier and the courtly poet, by proximity, find themselves inhabiting the position of the plaintive, solicitous lover, while the patron is elevated to unattainable heights of perfection and eminence. Undeniably, while a gift implies exchange, one that intensifies the bond of indebtedness between a patron and a client, yet, that exchange serves to cement the social distance between the two. What distinguishes this form of clientage from a labor contract or covenant for wages, for example, is that the covenant turns labor into the property of the master.

Spenser's dedication poses labor as a form of self-possession while at the same time the rhetoric of heroes like Guyon and Melibee exhibits a vehement rejection of the limits associated with hired labor, that is, the master's form of property over labor and the heavy terms of a wage earning relationship. My hypothesis is that Spenser's notion of free labor is an indirect expression of emerging forms of proprietorship, emancipated

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<sup>38</sup> Robert Steinfeld, *The Invention of Free Labor: The Employment Relations in English and American Law and Culture, 1350-1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 3-94.

from associations with the feudal tenure over land that derives from a monarch or a patron.

Patronage was a defining feature of high culture in Europe as it regulated the transfer of wealth and power at the level of politically prominent groups. Patronage also served as a major integrating force than balanced among groups with varying economic and political interests. "[P]atronage provided both the essential means by which Renaissance rulers gained the allegiance of the politically important and the primary method by which they integrated regional government and elites into the state", writes Linda Levy Peck about the particular situation in England at the turn of the 16th century, where the royal court in London held the monopoly over patronage.<sup>39</sup> For the landed nobility from the countryside, courtly patronage provided political recognition, while the smaller gentry could benefit from the procurement of offices in the central administration, the local government, and law courts. Alongside the forms of material and political forms of patronage, there also developed a courtly culture of entertainment and social rituals that officially sanctioned the various transfers of wealth and power, but at the same time also served to manipulate or critique the terms between rulers and ruled. Beneficiaries also challenged the very premises of this culture of advancement, and Thomas More's utopian vision of the disappearance of private property might be

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<sup>39</sup> Linda Levy Peck, "Court Patronage and Governmental Policy: The Jacobean Dilemma," in *Patronage in the Renaissance*, ed. Guy F. Lytle and Stephen Orgel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 27-46.

read in fact as radical critique of the culture of patronage, as Werner Grundesheimer has suggested.<sup>40</sup> Literary patronage often supplemented and meshed with blood relationship, as was the case with Philip Sidney and Mary Herbert, brother and sister, who shared common literary interests and aspirations, but appeals to patrons could also compete, at least symbolically, with blood ties and the patron's progeny, as Shakespeare's sonnets demonstrate.

The trope of labor is not unusual for dedication pages and poems, but we still need to be asking if the choice to include 'labor' in the second edition is changing or challenging the terms of patronage set up by the first one. The closest predecessor is Sidney's dedication in *The Old Arcadia* to his sister, where he refers to his pastoral work with casual nonchalance as "this idle work of mine."<sup>41</sup> The tension in this expression hangs on the contradiction between idleness and work, simultaneously acknowledging the leisurely, non-active aspect of writing and flouting political dissent behind nonchalance. *The Old Arcadia* is a critique of the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and the Duke of Anjou, but the dedication places the book itself, as a project and a work of its own right, as a familial property of the Sidneys. Idleness, in Sidney's dedication, conveys some sense of ploy, a staged, ironic gesture that plays with the conventions of patronage: a political satire is presented here as a gift between two aristocratic siblings.

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<sup>40</sup> Werner L. Grundesheimer, "Patronage in the Renaissance: An Exploratory Approach," in Lytle and Orgel, 21-23.

<sup>41</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia (The Old Arcadia)*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.

The offer of *The Old Arcadia* as a metaphorical child to be fostered by Mary Sidney, further mocks the institution of patronage by reverting to a different system, that of fosterage and familial bonds stronger than those between a patron and a client.<sup>42</sup> The dedication thus becomes a mild critique on the relationship of patronage as it retains the book as a property within the circle of the Sidneys without breaking away from the etiquette of authorial deference. Even as they occupy different positions, both Sidney and Spenser are questioning and redefining the relationship between author and monarch or patron – Sidney staking the name of his family, and Spenser his persona as a small landholder.

The history of labor relations in early modern England allows us to see how the holding of land or the lack of it almost singularly determined the forms of labor agreements one entered into.<sup>43</sup> The years of service in a household or manor generally were used to accumulate savings that allowed the leasing of a cottage or a small plot, setting up a household, and potentially, acquiring rights in the commons or the open fields. Tenancy meant settlement, access to communal rights and obligations, as well as means of subsistence. Lack of visible means of support made one subject to the compulsory-labor clause of the Statute of Laborers, according to which a laborer was forced to provide his or her services to anyone who might claim them. The refusal to

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<sup>42</sup> On the culture of fosterage and exchanges of children amongst the aristocracy, see Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 27-61.

<sup>43</sup> Steinfeld.

accept work for hire could lead to a penal action and imprisonment. In such cases, the possession of sufficient means was crucial in determining whether the person was a vagrant, expected by law to undertake any occupation, or whether his refusal was in fact legal. The law also disfavored hire by the day, and day labor in general allowed more freedom and flexibility to laborers; common laborers were expected to stay until they fulfilled their obligations or the task imposed. As Robert Steinfeld notes, laborers "preferred to work on a casual basis and to serve by the year or half a year," and service by the year usually awarded the master greater control over the movement of laborers and artificers.<sup>44</sup> Thus, we can see how the possession of land was crucial not only in securing independent means of subsistence, but in also in protecting laborers from compulsory labor, prosecution from the law, and imprisonment.

My argument is not so different from what Thomas Herron calls the "Georgic spirit" of Spenser in his *Spenser's Irish Work*, a militant spirit invested in cultivation, land improvement and the establishment of civil polity that openly adopts and hails the use of force and violence. According to Herron, Spenser celebrates the bloody labor of empire making and violent history of the Munster plantation, and instead of following along the progression of the Virgilian rota where epic war making constitutes the advanced, complete stage reached after the period of settlement and cultivation of the land (eclogues, and georgic respectively), Spenser collapses the Georgic and epic

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<sup>44</sup> Steinfeld, 36-40.

together, incorporating force and martial law as the necessary clearing for any form of rural labor, and at the same time, posing cultivation and improvement as the ultimate justification for the use of force. Such a reversal, then, does not dispense completely with the Virgilian narrative, but results in a changed configuration that is in fact closer to Virgil than to the Renaissance predecessors of Spenser, Tasso and Ariosto. Conquest and the use of violence lose some of their aristocratic luster and acquire the force of a necessity of a mundane, natural origin. Labor and settlement, in turn, provide a redemptive impulse.

If Herron's interpretation is correct, it follows that Spenser abandons the divisions and the hierarchies and teleologies implicit in the Virgilian rota and takes the poetry of labor beyond the mere account of daily activities and practical knowledge that define Virgil's *Georgics*. That also implies that Spenser rejects a notion of history that develops in stages driven by its own internal logic. More importantly, Spenser renders labor a political act, one that constitutes labor as a form of collectively owned victory over an enemy. Thus, the doubling of epic and georgic, and the "heroic, planter identity" Herron attributes to Spenser's knights, could be understood more properly as the politization of agrarian labor, not simply an activity subject to necessity and seasonal change, but also a duty that defines the polity envisioned in *The Faerie Queene*.

If the pastoral labor of Calidore in the realm of Melibee can be understood as unfallen labor, then the other extremes of fallen, depraved labor in *The Faerie Queene* is

the "idle labor" that Guyon encounters in his descent into Mammon's Cave. In that episode, Guyon indeed stakes a martial identity against the venality and corruption of the world of commissions and paid labor, but the heroism he attempts to salvage is rather defensive and flimsy, and, in fact, breaks down precisely when he has to demonstrate physical endurance. He finds himself prophesying the merits of heroic, selfless service, but his debate with Mammon remains a rhetorical clash that cannot be resolved through physical force; and even on the terrain of rhetoric, Guyon's denunciation of the evils of money and hired service cannot prevail completely over Mammon's pragmatic view of money. There is something slightly comic about the knight who indeed finds it necessary to engage in a rhetorical debate with Mammon and declares, "I riches read,/ And deem them the roote of all disquietnesse"(12), instead of proceeding to destroy the cave and free the captive laborers. Guyon needs to prove Mammon evil first, before he is able to exercise his own heroic identity, but he stumbles at the moment of the proof.

Part of his hesitation results from what Mammon diplomatically hints at to the knight early on: Mammon's servants have already accepted the terms of their drudgery in Mammon's service. When Mammon warns Guyon to withhold moral judgment, he is implying that this epic underworld functions according to rules different from the moral norms in the world above. Guyon's initial impulse to seek justice somehow dies out for a lack of proper target; his refusal to sympathize with the agonies of Tantalus or Pilate,

implies that their case is already closed for him. Their own actions have led them in Mammon's cave, on Mammon's own terms. Tantalus, the king who has killed and served his son at the banquet of the Greek gods in order to test their omniscience, now is serving as an example of human impudence and disrespect towards the gods on Olympus. In fact, it is not the murder of his son that defines his crime, but rather breaching the laws of divine hospitality by challenging Jove and serving him an ungodly dish. Pilate, punished by compulsive washing of his hands, like Tantalus, suffers for a failure to assume the consequences of his actions. Pilate refuses to act as a judge, while Tantalus breaks paternal bonds. While neither one could be considered responsible by the terms of a contractual obligation, the passage implies that their punishment arises from an initial breach of responsibility owed according to a law or custom.

The dialogue between Mammon and Guyon is marked by some peculiar dissonance and divergence of meaning, where both positions in this confrontation concern the same subject, that of money. At the same time, Guyon and Mammon are speaking in different, almost incommensurable terms. In fact, they are offering two different accounts of money: the very material processing and production of plate, coin, etc., that is, the narrative account Mammon offers, and, the structuralist narrative of Guyon who explains the moral hazard of coin by situating mining for precious metals in a history of the relationship between man and nature that runs back to antiquity. The fall, for Guyon, introduces a split and contradiction between man and nature that

overdetermines all the history to follow after and leaves its mark both inside, on man, and outside, in the mundane realm of wealth and money. In other words, the wealth amassed as coin and silver is irrecoverably fallen in a way analogous to the fallen nature of man who now craves and chases after excess that can neither be reached nor satisfy his own needs. The microcosm-macrocosm analogy we attribute to Renaissance thought, continues to hold true in Spenser, but with one qualification: after the Fall, the real nexus of the analogy is that of crisis: a disruption in the balance between man and nature corresponds to a disturbance in the natural impulses within man. The fall, in other words, becomes a critical tool for Spenser that performs something like a deconstructive function, allowing him to use the vocabulary of militant Protestantism in order to make a radical critique of the social order, which, nonetheless is bound to a specific agenda.

In Guyon's description of the golden age of man, the plenitude of nature and the "fat swolne encrease" that distinguishes the harmonic, pre-lapsarian relationship of man with the world, have not yet turned into morally problematic excess. In this state, men are still the grateful recipients of "gifts of soueraigne bountie", but the abundance of what the earth provides does not constitute an ethical problem. Mining and metal extraction, in contrast, figure as a trespass of the limits of what has been freely given to man, as well as an abuse of that gift, which amounts to finding "defect in his [man's] Creatours grace." The perceived excess or surplus that becomes the target of Guyon's indignation is the moment of violence. As often is the case in Spenser, the moment of the

fall, or the perversion of the virtues or institutions, is represented in sexual terms, as corruption resulting from the excessive human passions or appetites of man. The fall of man in relationship to nature, according to Guyon, commences with the metal age, the extraction of metals and respectively of monetary wealth directly from the bowels of the earth. The violence is described in particularly gruesome terms, suggesting the abuse of a pregnant female body, nature's "fat swollen encrease"(16). In Guyon's logic, excess is not merely an aspect of human insatiability, or the result of intemperance of human desires and passions, but also a quality that resides in the very material object of coin and money. The accumulation of plate and coin, or the vice of heaping wealth removed from circulating within the commonwealth is a direct result from an economy based on money and payment, which is fallen or corrupt at the very level material level of gold and coin, objects that derives from a violent, non-natural relationship with the earth.

Mammon refuses to consider any moral objection that lies outside of the material path of the transformation of ore, plate, and coins. The physical processes of metallurgy and minting leave no space for consideration of justice, and Guyon's indignation is taken almost as a sign of bad manners and outright rudeness. The use of money is marker of civilization and refinement, for Mammon, and he urges Guyon to let go of his "bitter scorne" and a rudeness that is "of antique age"(18.1-2). The knight is forced into the position of a primitive brute, whose own complaint about the justness or propriety of heaping money is cast as immature and lacking good manners. The barbarity or

rapaciousness of metal extraction belongs to a bygone age that cannot have any bearing in the present state of economic realities.

David Landreth calls attention to the importance of the very different temporalities of money that compete in the Mammon episode. Coin, as well as the money form in general, have no history and tell no story of their use. They are ready to assume any form, plate, coin, ore, independently of the particular circumstances or relations of exchange. In this reading, the hoarding of metal objects becomes synonymous with the more modern notion of the abstraction of money. Landreth, however, may be too hasty to disregard Guyon's arguments as weak, commonplace rhetoric and to cast Mammon as the champion of abstract capital capable of adapting to any position and infiltrating all spheres of life. Landreth is giving us a simplified version of Marx's analysis of money where money becomes the universalizing and homogenizing agent that renders all commodities exchangeable. Guyon is resisting this logic, repeatedly calling Mammon's solicitations "idle offers." Tantalus's eternal punishment of trying unsuccessfully to clean his hands is called "vaine and idle industry." Labor in the service of gold here is related to the pursuit of empty, idolatrous images, and in addition, it does not yield any material return back. Since gold can purchase "[s]heilds, steeds, and arms," the material correlatives of Guyon's own identity, gold can also take them away, thus rendering exchangeable not only things but people and their labor too.

Guyon, in the Mammon episode, is as concerned with the exchange of commodities as with exchange that occurs in hired labor. The invitation to Guyon to visit the cave is presented as a misleading gesture of hospitality and generosity. While Mammon seems to be promising all the wealth in the world, he is in fact seeking to bind Guyon in hired servitude or slavery. Maureen Quilligan reads the episode as a lesson intended to teach the distinction between the dignity of godly labor invested in a colonial project, and the outright violence of slave labor that Spenser's contemporaries would have associated with the mines in Peru and the Spanish conquest. In her account, physical labor acquires heroic status in Spenser's epic precisely through the dichotomy that Spenser draws between the work of planting and a different kind of labor where people are treated as objects.

The idleness implied in the Mammon's "idle offers" is far from the associations with spoil, leisure, and luxury in the episodes with the Idle Lake and the Bower of Bliss. Instead, the allegation of idleness attaches a stigma of wrongfulness, where the labor and industry are inherently corrupt and fruitless. Thus, *The Faerie Queene* distinguishes sharply between land and money based forms of production, where the accumulation of riches in fact creates scarcity and want, both in the inner world of the subject and in the realm of things and possessions. Payment and exchange carry the abuses associated with a money economy and are seen as deeply threatening for the social order. When Calidore offers to "recompense" Melibee's hospitality with gold, the shepherd rejects the

gold as an ugly sight: "ye ill display/ That mucky masse." Melibee also makes something of a counteroffer. He suggests that the knight's adoption of their humble means makes him an owner: "if ye algates couet to assay/ This simple sort of life, that shepherds lead/ Be it your own"(VI.ix.33). Melibee rejects the external exchange of gold and, instead, suggests a different relationship between the knight and the shepherds, that of a symbolic ownership based on a transformation of Calidore himself.

Within the moral economy espoused by the shepherd, exchange and wealth in fact do not produce surplus, but rather turn out to be the breeding ground for scarcity and lack. Exchange and payment, as opposed to sharing, already carry the stigma of dependence, of labor which is not free and thus turns it into a "care" and produces its own wants. In this schema, the shepherd Melibee stands in place removed both from the hierarchies and servility of court culture, as well as from another form of dependence, that of market exchange. If gold betrays the ills associated with the worship of idols and false semblances, then, labor offers a corrective, reformed relationship that resists idolatry.

### ***2.3 Necessity and the Waning of Providence in Book VI***

The savage man from canto iv belongs in the same category as Tristram, of swains and forest creatures who are still in possession of some inherent strength and quality that allow them to join knightly combats in spite of their lack of arms. He owes

his invincibility to his “mothers wombe”(VI.iv.4), and his fearlessness and disregard for arms also seems to derive from a collective identity of some “saluage nation”(VI.iv.6). If Tristram’s knightly qualities are derived from his royal descent, and his lowly attire is rather misleading, in the sense that it serves as a foil for his true noble identity, the salvage man’s prowess fully derives from his habitation and corresponds to a nation whose cohesion is based on locale and is transmitted at birth. Arms and horses, external trappings and noble insignia, in contrast, enter into the category of mere possessions and transferable property that easily changes hands and travels between knights and non-knights, without stirring questions of honor or fealty. Shield, spear, and horse are not deceptive in the way other instruments of disguise are rendered dangerous in *The Faerie Queene*. Book VI rather strips their essentiality and status of being a class marker. In the confrontation with the savage man, Turpine finds that he has “no vse of his long speare”, and that, “Both speare and shield, as things that needlesse were”(VI.iv.7). The encounter stages a clash between a strength that has a natural origin and derives from some magical moment from the time of gestation in the womb, on one hand, and then, on the other hand, the strength rendered by equipment of arms. Here, the prevalence of force and the superiority of arms appear to fall into the realm of chance. A little later, the meaning of “force” becomes aligned with fortune or necessity and pressure coming from the world of sheer materiality and contingency. The stable category that resists chance and dependency on arms is the one of invulnerability. The magic invulnerability

inherited from the mother's womb and very qualities of the savage nation provide a more reliable form of protection and resilience than the mastery or possession of arms.

Further on in canto iv, Spenser associates the lack of sword and arms with a form of liberty and in fact freedom. One of the tasks of the knights in Book VI is to learn to carry or bear – burdens, incapacitated ladies, babies, duties – with the same dignity that they would bear arms. Yet, arms in the episode with Calepine and the bear, are an unnecessary, superfluous burden: had he carried arms, they would “hinder him from the liberty to pant”(VI.iv.19). Spenser also calls the arms that Calepine used to wear as his “daily weed,” which has turned into a habitual attire that in fact incapacitates him. The association with liberty is enforced through the comparison with the flight of the falcon released from his “bels and iesses” or leather straps. In his struggle with the bear, Calepine happens to be aided by a rather undignified object, that of the “ragged stone,” and the aid of the stone is really a matter of chance, or what fortune makes available. Thus, the space of the savage woods, as opposed to the court, renders arms into mere tools or instruments of combat; in a sense, it historicizes or demystifies the objects of the sword, the spear, and the shield, foregrounding their practical use and exchangeability, and stripping them of their symbolic value as signs of class status and entitlement.

The pastoral mode in Book IV, however, preserves the teleology and narrative function of the knight at the expense of his armament and horse that are demoted to the realm of tools and everyday objects whose use is determined by the force of necessity

that remains neutral, not tied to agents of evil, but a product of the circumstances. The arms are impeaching Calepine's "needful speed" and he proceeds "on foot for need" (VI.iv.19). In the preceding stanzas, the savage man has been described as "naked without needful habiliments" (7), but his own inborn invincibility, due to his "saluage nation," renders the spear and shield of Turpine, his opponent in this scene, also "needlesse" in turn. A neutral form of need rules over clothing and armament. The providential order that structures the other books of *The Faerie Queene* here is largely missing.

The narrative is attentive to forms of need and necessity determined by the very geography of the terrain traversed by the knights, to the relative importance and use of horses as a means of transportation rather than a marker of nobility, to the constant need to negotiate and obtain hospitality.

Book VI draws our attention to another tendency that the English pastoral exhibits, namely, its propensity to neutralize romance. In this world, even blood lineage and inheritance of estates becomes a matter of fortunate coincidences and chance. After rescuing the baby and finding himself drifting in the woods without a direction, Calepine, again, helped by fortune, runs into the childless couple of Bruin and Mathilde. Bruin's victory over the ravenous monster Cormoraunt, however, is not sufficient to ensure the peaceful possession of their land. Two events make the adoption of the baby possible, and both chance and prophecy seem to exist in a happy coincidence. The first

force is that of mere fortune, or “good fortune” (VI.iv.25) that brings Calepine to Mathilda. The baby is quite an irksome burden for Calepine who is despairing over his “wearie travell” and “vncertain toil.” The prophecy that promised a heir to Bruin, on the other hand, places the whole case in the realm of providence, but it depends exclusively on marking the difference between “be gotten” and “begotten” (VI.iv.32). The force of the oral prophecy depends on and in fact becomes meaningful through interpreting the words of the prophecy in their written form. Part of Matilde’s despair with fate and fortune derives from misunderstanding the prophecy: the couple has been expecting a son, someone begotten. The difference between a son generated out of noble blood and one who has been gotten and then ‘improved’ with the seed of proper training and education depends on the spelling of “begotten,” a difference in the letter which allows Spenser to redefine the essential nature of nobility. What guarantees that the foundling will prove a deserving son is his face, but the inherent beauty and nobility of the face – that is, the external trait of both Tristram and the baby and that serves to distinguish them from the really savage inhabitants of the woods – is a superficial feature, contingent on the perception of Calidore or Calepine.

### 3. The Politics of Uncaught in Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*

#### 3.1 *Desire and Language in Sidney's Arcadia*

Much depends on the question of how we approach the genres of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*. The title of the text itself boldly names its own genre, that of the pastoral, but this opens up a series of questions about genre that only bring into sharper focus the stakes of the interpretive terms we bring to the text. *Arcadia* is first and foremost the name of a place with its own customs and laws that seem to overwrite any emphasis on a particular character or knightly feat, and as such Sidney's *Arcadia* is affiliated with those travel narratives and utopian texts that align their main characters with the particular geography of the realm they describe. Numerous critics have observed how the Renaissance pastoral in England demonstrates a certain propensity for mapping relationships between different social strata and representing the complex political impulses that motivate members within that social order. Sidney's *Arcadia* is a world where the ideal pastoral retreat is continually interrupted and disrupted by alien forces, and it is also a romance where amorous pursuits of characters continuously veer astray from the premises of romance.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, all amorous pursuits in the narrative conspire towards a break-down of the political order in *Arcadia*, thus generating

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<sup>1</sup> William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (New York: New Directions, 1974); Raymond Williams, *The Country and The City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973); Annabel Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valéry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

internal contradictions that push against the limits of the pastoral form which has lead critics either to dismiss the “pastoral” designation in favor of romance or rather use to terms anti- or counter-pastoral.<sup>2</sup> Peter Lindenbaum has even tried to accommodate such contradictions by arguing that the English pastoral is a particular national version of the genre structured around antithetical principles that question the complacencies and easy narrative resolutions of the continental model.

Granted that the rustic landscapes in Sidney’s pastoral are more dangerous and treacherous than tranquil, I want to argue in this chapter that the contradictions of genre in Sidney’s *Arcadia* are aligned with competing discourses of social advancement and entitlement in Elizabethan England. Rather than reading the premises of pastoral and romance as somehow operating on and sharing the same playing field, I suggest that the relationship between them can be understood as one between form and content. The aristocratic discourse of leisure and courtly pastimes is preserved as pure thematic content, and in turn, is being incorporated within a humanist discourse of reason and temperance, as critics have noted.<sup>3</sup> Yet, this humanist discourse is not the earlier sixteenth century version of humanism described by Mary Thomas Crane that

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<sup>2</sup> Sukanta Chaudhuri, *Renaissance Pastoral and Its English Developments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Peter Lindenbaum, *Changing Landscapes: Anti-Pastoral Sentiment in the English Renaissance* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986).

<sup>3</sup> Amelia Zurcher Sandy, ‘Pastoral, Temperance, and the Unitary Self in Wroth’s *Urania*,’ *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 42 (2002): 103-119.

addressed the monarch in cautious abstractions and classical references,<sup>4</sup> but instead a more domestic version of humanist learning deployed within the educated administrative elite of the Elizabethan state. Sidney's pastoral *Arcadia*, and more specifically his *Old Arcadia*, separates the realm of poetry as an autonomous one distinct from relationships of patronage and thus of personal loyalty and obligation owed to a patron or a superior. To put this bluntly: Philip Sidney throws his courtly personages into situations with portentously disastrous political consequences, while he still leaves untouched a realm of courtly pleasures and literary exercises reserved for "propertied" shepherds. The *Old Arcadia* effectively preserves an originally aristocratic realm of a literary leisure that it bestows to a class of wealthy shepherds. The high culture and literary merits of these shepherds, however, are ultimately predicated on their ownership of sheep. Thus, Sidney's pastoral elevates literary endeavor to a form of leisure that had been removed from the court and rendered common and available to shepherds, so to speak, but the access to that literary merit is still guarded through the means of property. At the end of this chapter, I try to show how the tripartite literary dialog between Christopher Marlowe, Raleigh, and John Donne in their shepherd love poems draws on the same move towards domestication of a courtly discourse and thus

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<sup>4</sup> Mary Thomas Crane, *Framing Authority: Sayings, Self, and Society in Sixteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

bring into the foreground concerns about land ownership, a domestic economy and literary authority.

The pastoral setting for Sidney is hardly the space of harmonious coexistence between lords and rustics. As Alan Sinfield has noted in connection with the *New Arcadia*, the text exhibits a reluctance to endorse “customary imagery of social equilibrium”<sup>5</sup>. The customary ways in their ideal, unperturbed state in Arcadia are really the bonds established through blood and marriage. The duke’s retirement from his court is only the first of a series of breaches of duty and customary procedure, but it foregrounds the ambiguous relationship between the pastoral genre and the marriage motive. The duke’s decision to withdraw his daughters from the court seems equally harmful as his other mistake of bypassing the social hierarchies and installing the base shepherd Dametas as his prime companion in the countryside. These two moves undertaken by Basilius in order to arrest the unfavorable course of things painted in the prophecy of the oracle, seem to derive from the same fear of history, and they also seem to entail a similar logic that points to the importance of marriage – especially amongst the higher ranks of the Arcadian order – for the maintenance of the social harmony of the state. V.L. Forsyth has noted how the two Sidney’s *Arcadias* both problematize the idea of marriage based on love, as Euarchus seems incapable on conceiving love as

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<sup>5</sup> Allan Sinfield, “Power and Ideology: An Outline Theory and Sidney’s *Arcadia*,” *ELH* (1985): 268.

grounds of marriage.<sup>6</sup> We may add that it is indeed chiefly heterosexual love that creates difficulties of political character where homosocial bonds and friendship appear fully accommodated with the social order.

Basilius's decision to remove his daughters from court and from the marriage is a violation of natural law. In the *New Arcadia*, the letter from Phalanx to Basilius reproaches the duke for barring his own progeny in that manner: "while you live to keep them both unmarried, and as it were to kill the joy of posterity... certain it is: the god which is the god of nature, doth never teach unnaturalness. And even the same mind hold I touching your banishing them from company, lest I know what strange loves should follow ."<sup>7</sup> Marriage is part of the customary order conceived as a law of nature, but, for Phalanx, marriage is understood as the vehicle for the maintenance of the royal blood line and thus the continuity of centralized rule and sovereignty of the state. In his discussion of the unusual prominence of erotic love in Sidney's *Arcadia*, Leonard Tennenhouse has called this principle the logic of patrimony and kinship,<sup>8</sup> which, in Phalanx's words is understood as a form of 'natural' love. The phrase that Phalanx uses in this passage to describe the discourse of erotic desire and courtship in

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<sup>6</sup> V.L. Forsyth, "The Two Arcadias of Sidney's Two Arcadias," *SEL*, 49 (2009): 1-15.

<sup>7</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia (The New Arcadia)*, ed. Victor Skretkovicz (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). Subsequent references to the *New Arcadia* are from this edition and will appear parenthetically in the text as *NA* by page number.

<sup>8</sup> Leonard Tennenhouse, *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

Arcadia is “strange loves” which closely corresponds to the “uncouth love” from the Delphic prophecy in the *Old Arcadia*:

Thy elder care shall from thy careful face  
By princely mean be stolen and yet not lost;  
Thy younger shall with nature’s bliss embrace  
An uncouth love, which nature hateth most.<sup>9</sup>

About a page later, the prophecy regarding Philoclea is also referred to as touching “some strange love of hers.” The ‘uncouth’ in the passage from the oracle becomes affiliated with “strange,” a trope commonly occurring in the *Old Arcadia* that renders the troubles in Arcadia both foreign and anomalous, and as such also captures the contradictions that “strange” draws in itself. What I am trying to underscore in this section of the chapter is the critical opposition between a lost sense of custom and ‘natural’ hierarchies and the entanglement of amorous pursuits caught in a discourse of patronage, erotic desire and courtly love. As Leonard Tennenhouse notes, the “uncouth” part of the oracle prophecy refers to the potential of uneven match for his younger daughter, which threatens to degrade the principle of kinship and patriarchal power based on blood and power.<sup>10</sup> Yet, the whole set of events spurred by the oracle results in forms of courtship which render that “uncouth” and “strange” love as a force of unnatural and uncommon – other connotations of strange – consequences for the

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<sup>9</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia (The Old Arcadia)*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). Subsequent references to the *Old Arcadia* are from this edition and will appear parenthetically in the text as *OA* by page number.

<sup>10</sup> Tennenhouse, 19.

commonwealth of Arcadia. Falling outside of custom and natural law, for Sidney, erotic love ceases to be the conventional code of patronage and instead becomes a symptom of disturbed social hierarchies. To cite a few examples the use of “strange” which appears ubiquitously in the text of the *Old Arcadia*: Philoclea’s residence in the forest is referred to as a “strange kind of captivity” (OA 11), Basilius’s courtship of Pyrocles with his Amazon disguise is also found “strange” (OA 85). Philoclea, befuddled by Pyrocles’s courtship of her own parents and herself included, also calls his manner “strange” (OA 204). After the assumed death of Basilius, Gynecia, the duchess, finds herself “overruled with some strange desire, as, in spite of God, nature, and womanhood” to take her own life in despair (OA 336).

Furthermore, this excessive “love” that produces a surplus to natural bonds of the social order in Arcadia is also linked to another larger structural rift in the text that Sidney frames as an overarching conflict between private desires and public concerns. The most dramatic moment in that conflict is probably the public trial of Pyrocles and Musidorus where the ruler Euarchus finds himself compelled to confirm the death sentence of his own son, choosing to favor public justice against his own blood line. Yet, the climactic ending of the *Old Arcadia* is only a starker rendition of what has already been a series of situations where strange, ‘uncouth’ passions lead to social breaches that “nature hateth most”: Pyrocles’s cross-dressing as an Amazon, Basilius infatuation with a male knight dressed as a woman, Gynecia’s pursuit of the same knight, Philoclea’s

turmoil at being drawn to an Amazon without being aware of the sources of this attraction, and Musidorus's cross-dressing as a shepherd and thus breaching the boundaries of a different order, that of social distinction and estate.

Sidney's *Arcadias* thus become a gallery of all the permutations of erotic desire, but, unlike the more conventional courtly poetry of George Gascoigne, for instance, in Sidney the discourse of courtship and love generates a force that strikes directly against customary hierarchies and obligations. The specifically Elizabethan culture of courtship and patronage centered around a female ruler, is thus implicitly presented as a degeneration from a natural order of patronage, one that we can see exemplified in the relationship between Musidorus and Pyrocles and their host Kalander in the *New Arcadia* where their friendship is based on ideals of hospitality and military assistance carried out independently of any overseeing rulers. Philanax's intervention is rendered superfluous in the case of Kalander's mission to save his captive son since it is a "private cause" (NA 26). Sidney often uses 'private' in order to distinguish the private desires of the knight in contrast to their knightly, heroic duties, but here 'private' also comes to denote a realm of purely aristocratic endeavors beyond the direct supervision of the current governor of Arcadia.

The discourse of heterosexual erotic desire, on the other hand, arises from distinctions between status and the transgression of these distinctions affected when a male inferior courtier addresses a female superior. In a paradoxical way, erotic desire

seems to be generated by the appearance of social difference, and Musidorus and Pyrocles in fact may have greater chances of winning the erotic game they begin precisely because they appear first attired as an inferior shepherd and an Amazon warrior. In her essay on masculine logic in the Petrarchan sonnet, Nancy Vickers turns to the myth of Actaeon in order to show the violence to the female body implied in the poetic act of seeing and description.<sup>11</sup> However, the Actaeon myth also stages something else: the fantasy of transgressing the taboo separating the human, divine, and the animal – an ontological distinction of status – and the erotic potential unleashed by the transformation of Actaeon into animal.

In this context, then, we see how erotic desire does arise in the context of social taboos that supplement the Elizabethan discourse of courtly patronage, while at the same time it taunts the very difference of hierarchical degrees that sustains relationships of patronage. The ambiguous status of erotic desire, which both sanctions and challenges social difference, demands from the courtier to seek appropriate literary forms of containment, and Margreta de Grazia, for instance, has read the dark lady from Shakespeare's sonnets precisely as an attempt to differentiate between homosocial discourse of courtly patronage and promiscuous heteroerotic desire that threatens a

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<sup>11</sup> Nancy J. Vickers, "Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 2, Writing and Sexual Difference (Winter, 1981): 268-270.

social fabric based on purity of blood.<sup>12</sup> The genre of pastoral that flourishes during the late years of Elizabeth's reign is another strategy of containment, providing a setting that accommodates erotic love and desire outside the confines of social hierarchies built in order to secure transmission of titles and property. The pastoral, thus, occupies the realm of Natural Law in respect to the realms of human, positive law associated with the urban realm of civil and public affairs, like the space of the trial scene from the last pages of the *Arcadias*. Robert E. Stillman, among other critics, notes the important role the references to nature and natural states play in the writing of Sidney and draws our attention to the Sidney's letter of protest against Elizabeth's infamous French match by grounding his arguments on some commonly shared understanding of Natural Law.<sup>13</sup> In his "Letter to the Queen," Sidney anchors his argument to a sense of necessity which arises out the "nature" of things, thereby avoiding a direct challenge of the Queen's prerogatives and status of English sovereign. The notion of Natural Law, thus, provides Sidney with a recourse to a universalist rhetoric that extends beyond the particular propositions of human law and sovereignty.

Yet, natural law, for Sidney, implies more than just a balance between passion and reason as has already been suggested by Stillman. Natural Law, a concept that Renaissance men of letters derived mainly from Thomas Aquinas, referred to the

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<sup>12</sup> Margreta de Grazia, "The Scandal of Shakespeare's Sonnets," 1994, in *Shakespeare's Sonnets: Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 89-112..

<sup>13</sup> Robert E. Stillman, "The Politics of Sidney's Pastoral: Mystification and Mythology in the Old Arcadia," *ELH* 52 (1985): 795-814.

intuitive understanding of justice and morality that man possessed intrinsically, beyond the confines of any written law. Thus, Natural Law occupied a middle position between the law of God and the set of positive human laws, and, as such, it predated the laws and written customs of man.<sup>14</sup> Hobbes's famous description of the state of nature completely ruled out the concept of Natural Law from nature in its proto-social stage which now became with him the site of pure hostilities and struggle for self-preservation. Yet, in the late sixteenth century, the notion of Natural Law still had considerable currency, especially amongst students of law and Sidney had been also educated at the Inns of Court.<sup>15</sup> Reading erotic desire as a state of nature, then, allows us to conceive of the pastoral as a realm where virtues and passions as well as the social classes associated with them are being tried and tested beyond the confines of the otherwise strict regulation of sexual mores in the realm of Arcadia. If human life in the state of nature is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" for Hobbes, we may paraphrase this state for Sir Philip Sidney and add that man in the realm of the pastoral is passionate, a little too prone to fantasies and desires, and drawn to poetry. The crucial point, however, is that the reign of passions takes place in a realm with a weakened state of sovereignty, and erotic desire comes to signal a fantasy about aristocratic identity that

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<sup>14</sup> R.C. White, *Natural Law in English Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> White, 74.

exists in a natural state and predates the allegiance owned by the nobility to the figure of the monarch.

Garret Sullivan places a particular emphasis on the external nature of those Arcadian passions, reading them in the context of psychosomatic theory of passions and humors that act on the human body from the vantage point of some "affective field" situated in the environment itself. This line of reasoning leads Sullivan to pose the genre of romance as the explanatory category that accounts for the inordinate passions that reign in Arcadia and produce 'supernatural' ripple effects beyond the subject into the very natural surroundings: "as both a mode and a genre, romance thrives on the breakdown of rational self-regulation."<sup>16</sup> Effectively, Sullivan's argument implies that we need to look into early modern psychosomatic theory of humors rather than Natural Law for the source of inordinate passions in Arcadia.

A humoral explanation places Sidney's pastoral alongside the genre of tragicomedy and the discourse on temperance and the need to reinstitute humoral balance within the larger body politic.<sup>17</sup> Yet, humoral influence is not sufficient to explain the confusion that befalls this otherwise happy and orderly realm in Arcadia which has hitherto been free of such disturbances. Humoral theory in the early modern

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<sup>16</sup> Garrett A. Sullivan Jr., "Romance, Sleep, and the Passions in Sir Philip Sidney's *The Old Arcadia*," *ELH* 74 (2007): 735-757.

<sup>17</sup> James J. Yoch, "The Renaissance Dramatization of Temperance: The Italian Revival of Tragicomedy and the Faithful Shepherdess," in *Renaissance Tragicomedy: Explorations in Genre and Politics*, ed. Nancy Klein Maguire, AMS Studies in the Renaissance (New York: AMS Press, 1987), 115-138.

period remains a lay version of popular psychology that operates with common, essential types, thus presupposing certain equality amongst those types. Passions in *Arcadia* are indeed suffered passively as overwhelming forces experienced as external within by the character, but unlike humors, they remain also external to the rational faculty of the character. The courtly elite adrift in *Arcadia* are all too self-conscious to allow us a critical recourse to the humors. The dilemma that Sidney presents to us is that what looks like enchantment and delusion is rather a Sartrean state of “bad faith” where the characters willfully ignore the public repercussions of their actions in favor of their personal desires. Before Pyrocles and Musidorus embark on their separate romantic pursuits, they engage in a thorough intellectual deliberation over the rationality of Pyrocles’s decision. Gynecia shows a similar way of conscious deliberation gone awry when she contemplates in herself both “her long-exercised virtue” and her vice which appears even more condemnable because of her virtue (OA 80). Any attempt at tempering and containment here produces the opposite effect, and even the remorse that befalls Gynecia after Basilius’s apparent death is hardly less violent and destructive than her former fits of jealousy. A depraved shepherd like Dametas needs “the smart of the cudgel” to put him out of his fancy (OA 234), thus requiring physical intervention rather than any moral lesson in temperance.

Characters seem to be going through what we might call Ovidian transformations or complete reversals of self and oblivion of their former personas,

while it is only their rational faculty – for those who possess it – that persists through change even though in a weakened state. Furthermore, unlike the erring characters in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* who are able to recognize error and intemperance and reintegrate them as lessons within a continuous self, Sidney's characters are not bound to a narrative of reformation. Arcadian erotic drives are also very different from the archetypal humors that drive the plot in Ben Jonson's plays. Passions here are squarely political, in the sense that they seem to arise out of the situations rather than the characters, and at the same time, they are defined as private in opposition to the rationality and sobriety presupposed by the public roles of those characters. Thus, erotic desire in courtly poetry captures a paradoxical relationship between the realms of the public and the private, where accidents or individual whims and fancies reverberate into the very heart of state governance.

The ambiguous role of erotic desire also opens up questions about the collective identities which are being constructed through that desire. Allan Sinfield has emphasized the ambiguous position that Sidney occupied in relationship to the Queen and the aristocracy since Sidney never gained a full membership in the landed nobility in spite of his intellectual abilities and commitment to the Protestant cause and who remained speaking from the displaced position of somebody who sought entrance to the

aristocracy but continued to be only a member of the Elizabethan state bureaucracy.<sup>18</sup> Sidney's Arcadian oeuvre explores the possibilities of an aristocratic identity that does not depend on its allegiance to a monarch for the conferral of titles, and the frequent renaming and transformations that Pyrocles and Musidorus further testifies to Sidney's willingness to dispense with the formal, external signs of nobility and his attempt to constitute an aristocratic identity based on markers of strength and refinement that are internally held and possessed by the knights, such as manners, prudence, and drive for action.

Regardless of their improbable disguises as an Amazon and a shepherd, Pyrocles and Musidorus continue to radiate a magical appeal with miraculous effects not only upon the whole ruling family in Arcadia but also amongst all classes in the realm. If Musidorus (disguised as the shepherd Dorus) does not fail to impress even the brigands in the forest with the fluency of his speech and manners, Pyrocles, on the other hand, scores victories amongst men and women with his appearance. This magical appeal retains its power in spite in any temporal change in status or gender that the knights undergo. We can see how the New Arcadia expands this experiment with identity shifts as Pyrocles's separate identities multiply beyond the initial two from the earlier text and he first adopts the name Diaphantus before embarking on his third identity, that of the

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<sup>18</sup> Alan Sinfield, "Power and Ideology: An Outline Theory and Sidney's Arcadia," *English Literary History*, 52 (1985): 259-277.

Amazon Zelmane. After his confrontation with Musidorus over his new female attire, Pyrocles concludes with an almost superfluous insistence: “from me – no more Pyrocles, nor Diaphantus now, but Zelmane. Zelmane is my name, Zelmane is my title; Zelmane is the only hope of my advancement”(NA 89). The Amazon dress and attire confer the sense of a title and a separate public station with it, but this title is all the product of Pyrocles’s invention. In the *New Arcadia*, Sidney lets the two knights display a more conventionally chivalrous character and prove their audacity in combat, but he does not abandon the project of self-determination that is already underway in the *Old Arcadia*. The use of “title” in the passage above is ironic but also indicative of the jealousy with which Pyrocles guards for himself the name Zelmane, which, in itself, has little bearing on the purported occasion for his transformation, that is, Pyrocles’s infatuation with the duke’s daughter Philoclea. In the *Old Arcadia*, Musidorus again speaks of love: “O thou, celestial, or infernal spirit of love... or what other heavenly or hellish title you list to have [...] let thy glory be great in pardoning them that be submitted to thee as in conquering those that were rebellious”(OA 38, emphasis mine). For Musidorus, the mysterious agent of love itself is a bearer of a degree and a title as it assumes itself the role of sovereign endowed with the power to conquer and pardon its subjects.

If such passages are invariably ironic and skeptical about the knights’ attempts to rationalize their desires, that irony is not to be transformed into some reformed state of sobriety and reason within the narrative but is rather maintained for the purpose of

entertainment. As Stanley Fish writes about irony in Milton, the “ironic voice, in short, always knows more” – than what it says as is draws an imaginary line between the literal and innocent readers and those who understand irony from the position of better knowledge.<sup>19</sup> This is also one of those moments where Sidney converts a humanist emphasis on reason and intellectual distance into a humorous effect and another source of courtly pleasure.

What takes the place of formal degrees and hereditary titles and ensures that the two knights triumph at the least in their individual pursuits of the hearts of the duke’s two daughters is style of manners and learning that the knights display. Manners also turn into a safeguard against the implicit threat of mixing of degrees, as the base shepherds like Dorkas are distinguished precisely by their offensive speech and rude behavior. When Damestas approaches Pyrocles/Zelmane, the knight can already recognize Dametas by the rustic oaths: “He needed not name himself, for Kalander’s description had set such a note upon him as made him very notable unto me,” remarks Pyrocles with certainty (NA 80). Manners announce one’s station at a glance, so to speak, and almost obviate the necessity of knowing the name of such characters. The rustic’s own pride in his name, in “Am not I Dametas? Why, am not I Dametas”(NA 80)

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<sup>19</sup> Stanley Fish, “‘Lycidas’: A Poem Finally Anonymous,” in *Close Reading: The Reader*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Andrew DuBois (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 179.

is rendered a silly and pompous gesture that only speaks of the character's propensity for shameless self-promotion.

In a way, here I am rehearsing the known thesis about the transformation of early modern aristocracy from a class defined by its military culture of daring action and heroic exploit to one distinguished by its refined manners, elaborate codes of behavior, and the exercise of rational control over the passions.<sup>20</sup> In this context, then, Sidney's elaboration on erotic love, his emotionally and intellectually expressive knights given to versification in their pastime, and the overarching concern with law and custom, all these elements of the two *Arcadias* suggest that Sidney's literary work falls within this narrative of transformation – or re-branding, to put it in lay terms – of the nobility under conditions of state centralization. Yet, in order to do that, Sidney needs to disassociate the ethos of learning and reason from a long-standing tradition of humanism that has been hitherto linked with a very different social strata of educated gentry employed within the administrative apparatus of the state. The set of common textual strategies characteristic of humanist discourse, namely those of gathering and selecting aphorisms and moral sententiae, are excluded from the narrative portions of the *Arcadia* and relegated to the eclogues sung by the shepherds, whose figure is a novel and unusual accommodation of the older version of the humanist as an advisor to the monarch.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Victoria Kahn and Neil Saccamano, "Introduction," in *Politics and the Passions, 1500-1850*, ed. Daniela Coli, Victoria Kahn, and Neil Saccamano (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1-5.

<sup>21</sup> See Crane.

The shepherd is also a departure from another figure in English courtly poetry, that of the “prodigal son,” and unlike him, the shepherd is deeply seated in a vernacular speech and a life of self-sufficiency and contemplation. The pastoral genre in the late sixteen century offers a symbolic reconciliation of two very different traditions, that of humanist and courtly writing, simultaneously transforming the terms of authority that used to characterize both of these discourses.

In *Framing Authority: Sayings, Self, and Society in Sixteenth-Century England*, Mary Thomas Crane identifies two major cultures of public writing that determined the literary and textual landscape in England during the sixteenth century. On one end of the spectrum, she positions the men of letters who came from the lesser gentry and the urban middle classes and were trained in classical rhetoric and the humanist tradition. The humanist poets amongst them modeled their writing on citation, excerpting, and rhetorical strategies adopted from the commonplace book, which provided a universal model for the gentry of “owning” and using their education as cultural capital without threatening the existing social distinctions. On the other end Crane posits the courtier poets who identified with and spoke an aristocratic discourse of aesthetic pleasure or heroic themes. Poets like George Gascoigne, for example, who relied on the system of courtly patronage and at the same time also wrote for the wider and less prominent public of print would try to reconcile the formal and thematic differences between humanist and courtly discourses by tempering their more wanton subject material of

courtly pursuits and conquests with a moralizing commentary based on humanist precepts and proverbs. For Crane, Sidney falls into to the line of poets who tried to reconcile “the bureaucratic and the chivalric, aphorism and heraldry, books and experience, wisdom and wit,”<sup>22</sup> “personal expression and impersonal generalization”<sup>23</sup> In her reading of Sidney’s sonnet cycle *Astrophil and Stella*, Crane specifically proposes that Sidney used the trope of love in order “to forge a version of the aristocratic self that contains, but is not contained by, the humanist ethical frame.”<sup>24</sup>

If poets like Wyatt and Gascoigne resorted to the figure of the “prodigal son” in order to accommodate a moralistic commentary within more titillating narratives of social mobility, Sidney’s solution lies in reinventing learning itself as a noble faculty unrelated to pedigree or titles and instead received as a mysterious gift of nature. Sidney’s own hope for inheritance of title and estate, as well the bitter disappointment when these hope came to nothing have turned into a proverbial example of the ambitions and fate of Elizabethan courtiers. In 1577, Philip Sidney returned to England back from his continental travels expecting to enter royal service. His sojourns throughout European courts and specifically his close ties with the academic and intellectual elite on the continent did earn him a reputation of an accomplished and promising young man, even more formidable for his young age. In Leiden, associate and

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<sup>22</sup> Crane, 130.

<sup>23</sup> Crane, 134.

<sup>24</sup> Crane, 190.

fellow scholars referred to him as “the son of the Viceroy of Ireland,” which elevated Sidney to the status of a Prince and also allowed him to speak to princes of continental descent on equal terms.<sup>25</sup> Daniel Rogers, a fellow Englishman amongst the Leiden humanists, wrote to Sidney from Ghent in 1579, praising him with a fanciful narrative of Sidney’s accomplishments: “It would be you, she [the Weird Sister] prophesied, who, born of great ancestors, would surpass your great descent by the nobility of your mind; whom every goddess would honour with her special gift, and who would be sacred to Virtue, the Muses, and the gods.”<sup>26</sup>

In the passage above, Rogers is essentially offering a narrative of social mobility, that of reaching beyond the social station inherited from one’s parents, but this account mystifies the various early modern institutions of learning and instead suggests that Sidney’s exceptionality is a mysterious, divine gift of the Muses. Further down, Rogers describes Sidney in terms that many contemporaries already associate with this unusually bright and accomplished youth: his continental journeys have taught Sidney “the manners and minds of the worlds,” the “histories and origins of states,” lending him with a special insight on the matter of both “war and peace.” Roger’s account places exclusive emphasis on Sidney’s direct, hands-on knowledge drawn from his travels, an accomplishment that implicitly places him above the average students of history with

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<sup>25</sup> J. A. Van Dorsten, *Poets, Patrons, and Professors: Sir Philip Sidney, Daniel Rogers, and the Leiden Humanists* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 49.

<sup>26</sup> Van Dorsten, 64.

their commonplace books. The praises bestowed on Sidney from his Leiden associates are sanctioned from the position of a collective humanist identity very different from the one Mary Crane Thomas ascribes to the tradition of humanism in England. Rogers addresses Sidney as an aristocrat of the mind amongst other aristocrats of the same standing.

It is not difficult to imagine how Philip Sidney, unanimously praised by his associates for the gifts of the Muses he embodied, could be seen as sharing partially within the character of Musidorus in his own *Arcadia*. After his return in England in 1577, he did find himself in a state of enforced inaction and idleness, looking in vain to ingratiate himself with the Queen with the composition of the pastoral entertainment "The Lady of May." In 1581, his hopes of becoming an heir to the title and lands of his uncle Leicester were all destroyed upon the birth of Leicester's son, when Sidney famously marked that event by inscribing "*speravi*" on his personal impresa. His own installment into knighthood had been occasioned by the urgency to find a substitute for Prince Casimir during a ceremony in 1583.

The *Arcadia* is indeed a world split between a courtly and humanistic discourse, and at the narrative level, it becomes the meeting between two structurally different realms, where the staple characters of romance – and, undoubtedly, representatives of the ruling order and the nobility – suddenly find themselves operative in a very different world, that of custom and legal constraint. In the vocabulary of genres,

Sidney's *Arcadia* releases the chivalric characters of romance into a world taken out of a travel narrative thick with accounts of the local customs and mores of the realm described. Sidney's two *Arcadias* are thus marked by something that we may call two-wordliness or the co-existence and mutual saturation of two worlds that nonetheless retain their distance as a difference of status held by commoners or rustics and aristocrats. Yet, the sense of double worlds here is very different from the Neo-Platonic construct of microcosm/macrocosm where worlds are rather contained within larger worlds. This double-wordliness is a restatement of my earlier point about the convergence of courtly and humanist discourses in the *Arcadia*, but to rephrase this pair into the terms of genres and worldliness means to pose their relationship as one of necessity: in other words – why is it impossible to tell a romance story of courtship without running into questions of customs and local law – or, respectively – why does a description of customs and law cease to be self-evident and runs into situations of conflict that require solutions that lie beyond the stipulations of those customs.

This confrontation between a communal, land- or place-based ethos and a military, expansionist one is certainly a defining feature of the epic, from Homer to Milton and Ariosto, and it takes us as far as the combat between Achilles and Hector, Odysseus's visit of the Cyclops, or the incursion of Satan in Milton's Garden of Eden. Sidney's pastoral, on the other hand, reverses the expansionist, outward-bound dynamics of the *imperial* epic project and turns it *inland*, as a drama staged between

ambitious courtiers and a rigid system of obsolete customs and laws. Law in Arcadia exists as a restrictive measure particularly aimed at erotic love, thus marking the limits of aristocratic pursuits of pleasure and pastime, while the elements of travel narrative and cross-cultural encounter are the narrative context that serves to explain how an aristocratic and a legal ethos find themselves at odds in the first place. The locality and the pure geographical situatedness of law are being set up in opposition to an ethos that comprises both social mobility and an ethos of leisure as these impulses are manifested as erotic desire. I want to suggest that these two worlds are not merely a reflection of Sidney's own ambiguous social status as a man of letters and a bureaucrat, or of the particular confrontation of the Elizabethan courtly upstarts with the persona of William Cecil, as Mary Thomas Crane might suggest, but also of the coexistence of two different economic modes of production – historically bound to each other, and yet perceived as distinct and oppositional – that appear as two different paths of social advancement.

### ***3.2 Base and Literate Shepherds in Arcadia***

The shepherd-poets in the Arcadia present an ideal compromise between humanist and courtly discourses. They have absorbed the humanist tendency to speak in abstractions and general principles, and if they also allow themselves to critique political matters, they also assume the strategies of the earlier figure of the humanist advisor, that is, of presenting their critique in an abstract, non-threatening language

comprised of commonplaces and sententious expressions. In his definition of the eclogue in *The Arte of English Poesie*, Puttenham has claimed that the eclogue was devised “not of the purpose of counterfeiting or represent the rustically manner of loves and communications: but under the veile of homely persons, and rude speeches, to insinuate and glance at great matters.”<sup>27</sup> This pattern of dressing up political advice in the guise of inoffensive speech is an essentially humanist one, yet an earlier humanist discourse used to draw on an anonymous collective identity based on classical rhetoric and citation that is omitted in the figure of the shepherd. We should note that the humanist kind of self-erasure that derives its authority through citation also differs from the courtly strategies of sprezzatura and what we may call courtly self-abasement: if the former relegates authority to the ur-texts of classicism and tends to emphasize role of the humanist as someone involved in the transmission and gathering of classical knowledge, the latter, courtly version of self-abasement associates authority with the figure of the beloved and is manifested as the product of invention and metaphorical conceits. The genealogy of Puttenham’s veiled shepherd is that of a humanist who has been domesticated and cloaked in the vernacular while the institutional marks of the very schooling system that has produced this humanist have been erased. What we see in its place is an emphasis on the vernacular, ‘homely’ identity of the shepherd, which at the same time is contrasted with another realm, of actual laborers and rustic figures. The

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<sup>27</sup> Williams, 21.

shepherds thus reconciles the aristocratic ethos of leisure which has been tempered with a humanist emphasis on frugality that had served as a social shield and a mask protecting the rising gentry against accusations of ambitions, but which is not being adopted in Arcadia as an economic principle.

Sidney distinguishes between two groups of shepherds: the literary shepherds who are the owners of their sheep and the household of the degenerate ones, serving the family of Basilius in their exile in the forest of Arcadia. In the introductory lines leading to the first set of Eclogues in the *Old Arcadia*, Sidney introduces them in the following manner:

Neither is it to be marvelled that they did so much excel other nations in that quality since, from their childhood, they were brought up unto it, and were not such base shepherds as we commonly make account of, but the very owners of their sheep themselves, which in that thrifty world the substantiallest men would employ their care upon. (OA 50)

This account of the peculiarity and strangeness of Arcadian mores and customs mimics the explanatory mode of travelogues and constructs Arcadia not simply as a fictional realm but as one situated in time and space. Arcadian shepherds and their manner of singing eclogues are construed as a matter of national pride; moreover, this comment poses a not so obvious link between pastoral songs and property over sheep. Elevating sheep-rearing to the rank of the most prominent industry in Arcadia at the same bestows a special status on their eclogues turning versification into an

entertainment and thus a cultural form that corresponds chiefly to wealth in general rather than to the particularity of patrons.

The literary shepherds of Arcadia have been blessed not only with “rural education” and pastimes consisting in sports and music, but they also keep a careful written record of their songs: “then was it their manner ever to have one who should write up the substance of that they said; whose pen, having more leisure than their tongues, might perhaps polish a little the rudeness of an unthought-on song” (OA 50). In this passage, Sidney represents the act of writing as another form of leisure, of a pastime which is independent from the other function of the eclogues, that of entertaining the duke’s family and retinue. Katherine Duncan-Jones suggests that this emphasis on the written records of the shepherds’ songs as opposed their performance is reminiscent of the tradition of courtly masques and pageants where actual performances and the written scripts for them could diverge considerably.<sup>28</sup> In Arcadia, eclogues thus comprise two different acts, that of courtly invention and imaginative impulse as well as the activity of recording poetry and preserving what appears to be a vernacular tradition in Arcadia.

The necessity to establish the proper social domain of shepherds in pastoral verse does not arise with Philip Sidney, but seems to be a continuous form of anxiety that accompanies the appropriations of continental pastorals in the English realm. In the

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<sup>28</sup> Katherine Duncan Jones in *The Old Arcadia*, 371.

dedication to his 1567 translation of Mantuan's *Eclogues*, George Turberville has already set up the terms for this ambiguous status of countryside shepherds that Sidney will reconsider later on in the *Old Arcadia*. George Turberville, a second son to his father and a man of letters better known for his *Book of Falconry and Hawking* and *The Noble Art of Venerie*, writes in the dedication to his uncle Hugh Bamfield:

...Whose title though at the first perhaps shall seeme overrude and barbarous (for EGLOGS are altogither of the Countrey affaires... They [shepherds] vvere not in that age such siellie sottes as our Shephierdes are novv a dayes, onely hauing Reason by Experience to prate of their Pastures, and folde and vnfolde their flockes. But these fellowves, vvhome the Poet and I haue here brought in, vvere vvell able both to moue the doubtful cause, and (if neede vvere) to discide the proponed case. They not only knevve the Calfe from the Lambe, the Woulfe from the Mastife, but had reason to knovv the dyfference tvvixt Tovvne and Countrey, the oddes betvvixt Vice and Vertue, and other thinges needful and appertayning to the life of man.<sup>29</sup>

Turberville's shepherds are familiar with the affairs of the world and happen to be skilled rhetoricians on the side. In a sense, these shepherds embody virtues of moderation and worldly knowledge largely associated with humanist learning and the qualities of lower gentry, equally at home in town and countryside, who can still hold their grounds in questions of moral and virtuous conduct. Yet, Turberville's pastoral shepherds are firmly situated in antiquity. What protects those shepherds from potential accusations of baseness and rudeness is that their ancient classical pedigree, so to speak,

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<sup>29</sup> George Turberville, Dedication to *The Eglogs of the Poet B. Mantuan Carmelitan* (London: 1567). Available from: <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/>.

the claim that they inhabit an ancient golden age where rustics possessed natural authority and knowledge of the matters of the world. The attention which Sidney pays to the economic standing of his shepherds and their peculiar taste for poetry signals that Sidney is speaking to a larger English audience of print and one that is familiar with the particular qualms Turberville faces in trying to translate social status across different literary traditions. Sidney's solution, however, is to replace the venerable, ancient status of Turberville's shepherds with a different explanation of their property. This gesture also severs the shepherds from their classical context and renders them decisively English domestic, and contemporary.

Moreover, Sidney's shepherds appear to be the sole masters of their poetic skills: "sometimes they would contend for a prize of well singing, sometimes lament the unhappy pursuit of their affections, sometimes, again, under hidden forms utter such matters as were otherwise not fit for their delivery" (OA 50). The tentativeness produced by the repetition of "sometimes" at once frees Sidney to use the Arcadian eclogues according to whatever occasions arise within the narrative itself, and at the same time it also suggests that the rustic poets are choosing freely their subject matter, without the pressure of any necessity and are equally equipped to delve into formal experiments as well as deal with heavy matters.

Yet, the skill of allegorical speech is reserved only for the well bred and educated characters in Arcadia. Those baser rustics like Dametas, Miso, and Mopsa remain caught

up in the world of literalism and language that is too coarse and blunt for any poetical exercises. Sidney is drawing a peculiar distinction between simple, non-affected speech that is nonetheless capable of revealing political matters under the veil of simplicity and another form of simple speech that never transcends the world of mundane worries and petty desires. These two type of speeches both arise in the domain of the shepherds, and yet, the line drawn between baser and less base shepherds resides in the property of sheep that shepherd singers can claim and which grants them access to wholly different kinds of literary production. Sidney's pastoral thus offers a politics of language where simple, common, unassuming conduct and the corresponding forms of poetry fit for its expression are linked with the possession of property. Keeping a written record of the shepherds' song presupposes leisure, according to Sidney, and the text links leisure explicitly with writing rather than singing. The care with which Sidney constantly brings forth the shepherds' concern over household management and the maintenance of good order betrays a degree of anxiety over the likelihood of having their songs and pastimes interpreted as a form of idleness. After all, the duke's exile in the forest, far from his seat, the court, and his people, draws with it the suspicion of idle abdication from the throne which becomes partially justified after his infatuation with Cleophilia, and which leads to the riots in the second book of the *Old Arcadia*. Yet, if Basilius's self-exile verges dangerously towards idleness, the pastoral setting still carries different

meaning for the other groups of characters, and the shepherd poets remain clear of such suspicions.

In Sidney's *Old Arcadia*, Sidney needs to establish some material foundation behind poetic and allegorical speech. The literary pastimes of the shepherds are a cause for marvel, a sign of strangeness that hints at the foreignness of the Arcadian state and which critics have associated with the enviable literacy and poetic skills of the shepherds, but Sidney is in fact explaining to his readers that the shepherd poets are not a cause for marvel and wonder, accounting for the shepherds' skills first by pointing out their childhood education and, second, the "substantial" property they possess according to the Arcadian standards. Not all substantial men in Arcadia are poets, but amongst the shepherds, it is the ownership of sheep that marks the crucial distinction between the baser and the cultivated ones. Philip Sidney establishes a degree of determination between poetry as political speech and the possessions of means that secure one's relative independence in society, a link that is far from presenting some totalizing equivalence between property and literacy, but one which signals a shift in the way social stations were constructed and interpreted in the Renaissance.

### **3.3 Pastoral Poetry**

The pair of poems on shepherd love, Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" and Walter Raleigh's "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd," are

an all-time favorite of anthologies of British literature and poetry. One of the features that warrants their inclusion in the canon is the simplicity of the language and the vernacular turn of the phrase that offer to the reader a more accessible and demotic version of Renaissance courtly lyric. The Renaissance pastoral poem is charming and witty without being pompous or pretentious; it continues to speak the language of courtly love, but now liberated from the contrivances and metaphorical conceits, from the elitism, artifice, and pomp of courtly discourse. In this section, I argue that the figure of the shepherd, an enduring feature of the pastoral genre, represents an antithesis of the older figure of the urban and urbane courtier, often caricatured for aping foreign fashions and foppish manners, strutting like peacocks on the streets of London, and speaking an unintelligible mixture of French and Italian.<sup>30</sup> If those so-called courtiers or “upstarts” resembled modern-day dissipated liberals, then the shepherd offered an alternative version of courtship gone suburban, an identity of frugality and domestic English dignity that was nonetheless based on landed property in the countryside.

The opening line of Marlowe’s poem, “Come live with me and be my Love,” is first and foremost a declaration of one’s estate, disguised as an amorous call. Marlowe’s shepherd is announcing his sure hold over the land that is to act as the lure for the invisible nymph he is addressing.<sup>31</sup> The romantic call “be my Love” suggests that this

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas Dekker, *The Gull’s Hornbook*, 1609. (London: Alexander Mooring, 1905).

<sup>31</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *The Collected Poems of Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Patrick Cheney and Brian

“Love” is a mere role or position that is to be occupied by any lover, regardless of their identity. The vague, unspecified status of the beloved in this poem has led Bruce Smith to make case about the homoeroticism implicit in the poem,<sup>32</sup> but what is more crucial is that the addressee of the poem appears merely incidental to the pleasures offered by the rustic setting. The shepherd poem thus marks a departure from the amorous pangs and urgency of courtly poetry or another related form, the *carpe diem* poem.

On the other hand, the poetic blazon, or the mode of describing the lover’s beauties, typical for the Petrarchan sonnet, is here mobilized in the very description of the rustic pleasures to be discovered in this shepherd’s paradise. The description of the pastoral pleasures forms a progression that begins with the varied features of the landscape, with the valleys and rivers with from the first two stanzas, then moves to the soft garments made from wool pulled “from our pretty lambs” in the next two stanzas, before it arrives at the comforts and bounty that is to be consumed within the household, most prominently described in the sixth stanza.

Looking at the object world in the poems may provide us with some clues about the nature of the “proof” announced in the second line, “we will all the pleasures prove”. The invisible detractor against whom the speaker is marching all his rustic

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J. Striar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 157-158.

<sup>32</sup> Bruce Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare’s England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

pleasures is the form of conspicuous consumption of foreign luxuries and commodities that has become emblematic of the city of London at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In a sense, the implied purpose of the 'proof' is to create an alternative realm of delightful sights and toys that exists outside the growing markets of London. The objects that attest to the joys of the countryside continue to bear unmistakable resemblance to the world of courtly pleasures, but unlike fashions brought from abroad, everything in this miniature pastoral is home-grown rather than obtained from the market: the embroidery made of myrtle leaves, the gown spun from the finest wool "which from our pretty lambs we pull," the cap of flowers and the belt of ivy buds, all these are made from materials found in some natural, pristine state, lying outside an economy of trade and petty mercantile considerations. The adornments listed here continue to bear a resemblance to courtly pleasures, but the poem consciously performs a gesture of estrangement, of presenting familiar luxury items in an unusual setting and context, and transposing them into a domain of domesticity that speaks not to a household economy based on frugality – as "beds of roses" would prove utterly impractical – but rather to a domestic economy based on the consumption of pleasures one already holds in possession. A certain aristocratic ethos of leisure and idleness, hitherto falling within the domain of the court and courtly poetry, here is being given a popular version translated into a vernacular phrase that appeals to a common readership even as it praises a rustic utopia inaccessible to the same common readers it seems to be wooing on its face. Christopher

Marlowe, himself a man of letters, soldier, and something of a prodigal, certainly could not claim a membership in the class of the landed gentry, but he is offering his readers a version of what Steven Mullaney has called “estrangement through familiarity,” of the propensity of the early modern English stage to rehearse and study the dominant institutional and cultural paradigms and scenarios, without necessarily identifying with or reinforcing them.<sup>33</sup> The poem is preserving the theme of aristocratic pleasures adorned with silver, gold, and ivory (!), but now giving them a new, emphatically domestic form, that of the pastoral. Indeed, the presence of ivory is awkward in this shepherd world as it reminds us of the trade of commodities obtained from the African continent. The “coral clasps and ember studs” speak about a maritime trade that exists outside the pastoral, and the golden buckles and silver dishes mentioned do imply the necessity of mining and extraction of metal ores— a violation of nature and a taboo in any self-respecting Golden age – but what warrants the presence of such objects is still the aura of being ‘natural’ or derived in some imaginary, pure manner outside the realm of merchants and intermediaries.

The arresting image of the gown made out of lamb’s wool is less a sign of some proto-ecological call for a return to nature and more the manifestation of anxiety about consumption driven by the import of foreign commodities at the expense of domestic

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<sup>33</sup> Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 132.

production. Marlowe's gesture towards the pastoral reproduces a logic similar to the one underling the current rhetoric of "green jobs" in the U.S. where the very term appeals to a mentality of environmental awareness but in fact is a desperate attempt to re-imagine the possibility of revitalizing a domestic economy after all production has already been subsumed within the larger logic of global capital.

The material world described in the poem is partially organized by the desire to surprise the reader. The shepherd seeks to "move" the mind of his auditor, and the wonder and effect sought here proceeds precisely from the discovery of the pleasures and entertainment that is to be found in the rusticity and plainness of the English countryside. The collapse of the courtly into the natural produces an effect of surprise and wit, but Marlowe's wit also demonstrates an unusual awareness of the material history and making of objects, which is absent from conventional courtly poetry. This sharp sense of the forms of labor and making already speaks of poetic project that extends beyond being a simple exercise in poetic wit, invention, and staging of affects and desire.

Here, we may turn briefly to the history of early modern lyrics in England, in order to position Marlowe's poem not merely as a fashionable invention, but also as an intervention in the development of two literary discourses and forms of literary authorship, those of humanism and courtly lyric. Marlowe's "Passionate Shepherd" is likely the one most anthologized exemplar of an English Renaissance poem, bar

Shakespeare, as editors do tend to select it for the vernacular turn of the phrase and the varied imagery, in comparison with the repetitive patterns of preceding courtier poetry.<sup>34</sup> Marlowe's language indeed gives the semblance of vernacular, more natural speech, but his "Passionate Shepherd" remains a vernacular version of what is still a set of themes inherited from courtly poetry.

As noted earlier in the chapter, Mary Thomas Crane has shown how the history of English poetry in print knew an older, different strain of common expression which preceded the flourishing of courtly poetry and grew out of the commonplace book and the gathering of moral aphorisms, didactic teachings, and abstract principles of conduct excerpted from humanist texts.<sup>35</sup> Yet, if commonplace books were a major source for humanist poets between the 1550s and the 1570s, the didactic nature and the imported, classical origins of such poetry would have hardly merited an inclusion in the English literary canon. The English Renaissance canon instead more than often begins with the sonnet form and thus with courtly poetry, where the humanist concerns with duty and morality have been superseded by lyric narratives with an emphasis on the private and more personal complaints of a lyrical subject.

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<sup>34</sup> Isaac Walton, *The Compleat Angler*, 1653 (New York: Modern Library, 1998), 73. For a brief survey of critical responses to the "Passionate Shepherd," see Patrick Cheney, "Career Rivarly and the Writing of Counter-Nationhood: Ovid, Spenser, and Philomela in Marlowe's 'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love,'" *ELH* 65 (1998): 523-555.

<sup>35</sup> Crane.

The separation between these two discourses became less stark towards the end of the century, and the figures of the profligate, or the “prodigal son” did provide one compromise position that allowed for the incorporation of humanist and courtly discourses, accommodating humanist claim on moral education and knowledge to themes of social mobility that were more popular amongst courtiers.<sup>36</sup> The pastoral mode inaugurated most prominently with Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser, then, provides a further link in this history of lyrics in print, as it preserved some of the appeals of an older version of English humanism, chiefly the emphasis on frugality and labor that now assumed the role of a purely economic principle, while at the same time the pastoral genre dismissed the formal features of that older humanism and the notions of learning, studiousness, and laborious acquisition of classical heritage.

Marlowe’s “Passionate Shepherd,” is a poem that alludes to an aristocratic entitlement to leisure, pastime, and entertainment and thus still speaks to subjects of the court, but it abandons that pledge of loyalty and adoration directed at female patron, and, moreover, dispenses with the very terms structuring a relationship of patronage and obligation to a benefactor. The shepherd derives his poetic authority from the ownership of the land and all the affects and goods that may be derived from it. He speaks in the common vernacular, but, unlike the humanist writers in Crane’s analysis who assumed their authority from a common background of classical education, his

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<sup>36</sup> Richard Helgerson, *The Elizabethan Prodigals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 159-160.

claim on the vernacular is predicated on the private possession of land. Poetic authority in this quintessential pastoral poem derives from a foundation in landed property, and Walter Raleigh's famous answer to Marlowe, "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd,"<sup>37</sup> is a pointed response precisely to the poet's assumption of a 'landed' identity.

Both Marlow's "Passionate Shepherd" and Walter Raleigh's "The Nymph's Reply" appeared together in print, first in the collection of poetry *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1599) and then in *England's Helicon* in the following year. Raleigh's reply is spoken from the mouth of a nymph, an amphibious creature that inhabits both land and water, and the implicit political lesson carried by the poem is that no landed property is secure without being protected by a relation of patronage with the sovereign. Raleigh's nymph challenges first the "the truth in every shepherd's voice" and "the honey tongue" assumed by Marlowe's lyric speaker, thus driving a wedge between rhetoric and reason. Marlowe's shepherd, according to Raleigh, speaks from a position of a "reason rotten," a pseudo-universality that loses its secure hold once it has been placed in the context of temporal change and uncertainty, which are given a distinct sea-time character in the nymph's reply to the shepherd. If simplicity and natural beauty have been elevated to a status of a higher "truth" by Marlow's shepherd, Raleigh's nymph is questioning the equation between truth and nature and instead is offering a return to truth as constancy, a trope that reintroduced the a theme from country lyric that has been sneaked in

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<sup>37</sup> Marlowe, 159-160.

through the back door – so to speak – from the position of a maritime economy that requires the protection of Elizabeth as a powerful female sovereign and patron.

The violent intervention of time that drives away the flocks in “The Nymph’s Reply”, the raging rivers and rocks growing cold, the “wayward winter,” all these evoke the imagery of a sea storm where weather change is in fact brought to the land from the outside, from the sea. The ending of the poem insists on a return to the more conventional courtly themes of loyalty and constancy. The ending of Raleigh’s poem extends a call for youth that lasts and love that still breeds, thus effectively reinstating the need for a relationship of unconditional political support and “love” between patron and client.

In the context of these literary exchanges, John Donne’s “The Baite,”<sup>38</sup> published in 1633 but most likely composed in the period 1593-1600, is the more interesting and complex one. The courtly themes of amorous pursuits and titillation remain strong in “The Baite,” which voices distinct suspicion of the pastoral innocence and ‘landed’ certainty assumed in Marlowe’s “Passionate Shepherd”. The rustic pleasures here are translated into a pastime of fishing, a markedly elite, aristocratic sport that cancels out any false appeals to rusticity and simplicity. These are “new pleasures” as opposed to the more conventional delights in Marlowe’s poem, and here Donne, like Raleigh, is

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<sup>38</sup> John Donne, *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne*, ed. Charles M. Coffin (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 36.

making a point that about temporal change and novelties that render the pastoral and its promise of security untenable. Anthony Low reads Donne's "The Baite" as "anti-pastoral" reaction more characteristic of the poet's loathing of the court than of any particular interest in the stakes of the genre,<sup>39</sup> but the poem still show a keen understanding of the conventions and affects deployed by the pastoral mode. "The Baite" collapses the pastoral theme borrowed from Marlowe into a piscatorial river realm of baits and fish where uncertainty and mutability are represented not simply as an external threat but rather as a logic internal to and inherent in this world. The courtier who speaks in the poem drops off his mask of assurance and self-confidence and finds himself in the position of the amorous fish. The luxurious objects from Marlowe's poem have been transformed into treacherous objects of violence and torture: the razor-sharp "angling reeds," the "shells and weeds," the "sleavesilke flies." The poem renders insignificant the very distinction between a land of permanence and a sea of trouble that still operates in both Marlowe's and Raleigh's shepherd poems. In a signature Donne-like fashion, the poet also collapses the distinction between the human and the animal world and replaces the flocks of sheep from the traditional pastoral with the school of silly fish that come to include the speaker of the poem. The courtiers are here allegorized as a school of fish who suddenly find themselves in the position of the

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<sup>39</sup> Anthony Low, "John Donne," in *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). 74-88.

bait and prey. Donne allows the trope of country “love” to consume its own object of desire which culminates in a moment of surprise and discovery, but what is revealed in this is the incapacitating dependency that underlies patronage. The speaker in the poem continues to plead his own allegiance to the beloved, but only after he has stripped off his own poetic persona from any agency and authority.

That could possibly leave us with another Ovidian love poem of temptation, pursuit, and entrapment that transforms wholesale the human subject into animal forms, were it not also for the fact that this Ovidian transformation also turns upside-down the major assumption of the pastoral, that of human dominion over nature. If there is indeed a distinct genre of anti-pastoral as some critics have claimed,<sup>40</sup> rather than simply disparate attempts of rewriting the pastoral, Donne’s “The Baite” would be an anti-pastoral as the poem destabilizes the very assumption of human property over land. The title of the poem takes the name of an object, the bait, and, poetic authority itself in “The Baite” arises out of a position of displacement and disenfranchisement shared with the “bedded fish.” Both Marlowe’s and Raleigh’s perspectives are spatial, or situated in a specific relationship to land: that is the position of land proprietor in Marlowe, and the external perspective of distance from the land as viewed from the sea, in Raleigh. Raleigh’s nymph confronts Marlowe’s shepherd from a different gendered

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<sup>40</sup> Terry Gifford, for example, uses a global division of the genre into pastoral, antipastoral, and postpastoral in his *Pastoral* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

perspective, that of the nymph, also a creature partially associated with water, but with Donne, his poetic intervention is staged from the vantage-point of radical animal alterity, that of the fish. If the speaker-fish ever speaks from a particular location, that is the “strangling snare,” the “windowy net,” and the “slimy nest,” and, here, the location is less a matter of ontological difference and being, and rather one of knowledge. The position of authority, if we can still use this concept in the peculiar case of Donne, is the position and the knowledge of the possessed, captured object. Marshall Grossman has suggested that Donne tends to privilege “critical epistemology” over “metaphysical ontology,”<sup>41</sup> or – to put it more bluntly – that his poems produce knowledge rather than a subject or a being. “The Baite” offers an emblematic example of the source of that epistemology as a dialectic between desire and possession. This is no longer the humanist valorization of knowledge and reason, but rather the knowledge produced from below, from a “natural” perspective, so to speak. “The Baite” offers us a different epistemology, the particular knowledge of the trapped animal and the caught fish, and as such, this is also knowledge that is common and shared across species but no longer related to the humanist ethos of reason that Sidney appropriates in the *Arcadia*. This is the knowledge produced by the singularity of ‘animal’ experience, and Donne thus in fact gives the lie to Sidney’s own tendency to privilege experience and action, as Donne

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<sup>41</sup> Marshall Grossman, *The Story of All Things: Writing the Self in English Renaissance Narrative Poetry* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 166-167.

teases out the inherent forms of dependence and possession that still underlie any pursuit of patronage. The narrator in Sidney's *Arcadia* is able to claim reason as a shield of ironic distance from the violent sway of political passions that reign amongst the knights. The character of Kalander in Sidney's *New Arcadia* is also an attempt to imagine more horizontal forms of patronage predicated less on relationships of power and more on natural reason. Yet, in this piscatorial poem, Donne insists on a different type of knowledge and subjectivity that is obtained not by distancing from passions and objects of desire but rather through merging with them.

But then, how does Donne's poetic idiosyncrasy relate to the pastoral genre? Nature in more conventional pastoral or topographical poems does yield too easily and joyfully to human authority. In his poetry, Donne may indeed harbor a "scorn for manual labor", thus rejecting both pastoral and georgic appeals to the lore of the countryside,<sup>42</sup> but he is also keenly aware of the stakes and material relationships that make pastoral idylls conceivable in the first place. One of the most vivid examples of this accommodating and obliging landscape that parades its bounties in the fashion of a courtier is Ben Jonson's country house poem "To Penshurst" (1616). In "Penshurst" the forest yields itself too readily, the birds give a free consent to be cooked and eaten, and "officious" fish form a peculiar realm of fawning servants swarming in numbers to present themselves as dishes on the table of the lord of the estate. Written much later

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<sup>42</sup> Low, 78.

than the Elizabethan pastoral poems, the country house poem becomes a pastoral celebration of landed property where the very estate assumes the discourse of an obliging courtier. The knowledge and the particular vantage point of authority in "The Baite" do not arise out of a human dominion over nature, as one of the predicaments of the pastoral setting organized for the specific purpose of human delight and pleasure; rather, the knowledge that organizes the narrative in the poem is that knowledge of the object, of the fish caught up and retained as property.

## 4. Pastoral Re-fashioning in Shakespeare

### 4.1 *Labor in Midsummer Night's Dream*

Lawrence Stone notes that the fundamental cultural distinction in early modern England was the one between gentlemen and non-gentlemen, “a division that was based essentially upon the distinction between those who did, and those who did not, have to work with their hands.”<sup>1</sup> The various forms of double-speech in the pastoral genre – didactic poetry, allegory, irony – reproduce this distinction with a twist, as a distinction between those able or not able to work with their minds. Here, I would to invoke the exemplary passage from *Midsummer Night's Dream* where Philostrates sums up the theatrical entertainment prepared by the ‘rude mechanicals’ for the wedding of Theseus and Hippolita:

Hardhanded men that work in Athens here,  
Which never labored in their minds till now,  
And now have toiled their unbreathed memories (V.i.72-74)

This lack of training of the mind results in a mechanical, literal performance where the mechanical occupations of actors correspond to the fundamental flaw in the staging of “Pyramus and Thisbe” – the failure to distinguish between the roles played by human characters, objects, and animals on the stage. The outcome of this failure is something we recognize today as slapstick – the comic confusion of persons and objects

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<sup>1</sup> Stone, 17.

where human beings are suddenly shoved into the world of purely physical motion. The real source of entertainment for Theseus and his male companions, however, is not the content of the performance but rather the discrepancy between the “rude” actors and their subject matter, as well as the failure of the amateur actors to read the irony in the remarks of their audience. Unlike the actors or Hippolita, Demetrius and Lysander choose to assert male familiarity and solidarity with the Duke precisely by flaunting a certain taste for irony and ambiguity. The presumptuousness and sophistication claimed by the male audience in *Midsummer Night's Dream* does not really correspond to the semi-licit status of the London stages and the mixed audience that attended such performances, but Shakespeare's play still performs a theatrical gesture of self-legitimation that mimics the dominant cultural and social codes in order to secure for itself a semblance of respectability.

The play aligns the cognitive skill of appreciating and understanding irony with the higher faculty of the imagination – a gesture finally aimed at courting Shakespeare's own audience – which posits the imagination as the superior form of mental labor. And Theseus describes the power of the imagination precisely as an effect achieved by transport, movement and translation – in the case of the madman, the imagination produces a proliferation of shapes, and, in the case of the lover, trivialities are confused with or take the place of virtues. This confusion of matter and shapes produced by the imagination in a sense restates an anxiety about mobility and mutability, but at the same

time, the passage also redirects this anxiety away from the subject into the world of objects.

The poet, on the other hand, is defined by his ability to bring a volatile imagination to a stand-still. As the third and most finished figure that stands for the imagination, he mediates between the worlds of earth and heaven and endows “airy” notions with a material form by giving them a “local habitation and a name”(V.i.17). The “local habitation” in particular invokes the tradition of humanist logic and the commonplace book that was used to organize learning around rhetorical *topoi* or *loci*, or what we understand today as topics. In the Aristotelian traditions, those places mapped the social consensus or the shared, accepted beliefs in a culture. They provided a pedagogical principle for collecting and framing together various fragments and sayings that readers culled out from classical texts and reorganized in a way that facilitated the quotation and reuse of ancient rhetoric in contemporary situations.<sup>2</sup> The “local habitation” in Theseus’s speech recalls those humanist *topoi* as a more general principle that makes the humanist practices of textual transmission available for the purposes of poetry and the imagination. The poet is simultaneously able to reach beyond, into the realm of “airy nothings” and nebulous visions and then integrate them within the accepted social discourse by giving them a “local habitation,” a phrase that implies both

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<sup>2</sup> Mary Thomas Crane, *Framing Authority: Sayings, Self, and Society in Sixteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 12-38.

locality and a dress. If humanist textual transmission operated within the same homogenous realm of classical learning, Theseus's theory of the imagination implies a vertical movement between substantially different realms, those of the earth and the heavens, as well as the ability to distinguish between the two, a project that the rude mechanical actors fail to fulfill but help to articulate within the play. The labor of the mind, or the imagination, stands for a power to transform things into virtues and bring vague ideas into the purview of the senses. The version of intellectual labor we derive from *Midsummer Night's Dream* essentially preserves and reaffirms status and gender hierarchical lines while it makes conceivable a form of intellectual upward mobility, of artistic representation able to transcend the mechanical world of objects without transcending dangerously social boundaries of status and dependence. At the same time, this poetic labor also serves to contain and trivialize already existing forms of popular literacy, such as the performances traditionally staged by the guilds, by mocking their literalism as too naïve and trivial. The notion of putting one's mind to labor and improvement is rooted in a humanist tradition too, which is erased here, and the play virtually draws a line between the classes of people capable of and entitled to perform such labor.

The mechanicals' performance takes place at court where the power differential between performers and audience generates those two different notions of art: as a flight of the imagination, and as a less sophisticated expression of deference and honor. Yet,

the true world of the imagination is the forest with its faerie creatures and magic of instant transportation and translation. The forest in *Midsummer Night's Dream* is a fantastic pastoral world that mirrors many of the social or individual conflicts in the city of Athens and then translates those into images and fantastic scenes. In the forest realm, Bottom's lower social status is translated into the lowly form of an ass, thus replicating his 'mechanical' status of crafts and craft guilds when juxtaposed against professional theatre and stagecraft.

The pastoral world brings into focus not only the division of wealth and economic power between the countryside and the city, but also the discourses and symbolic forms of cultural and social identification associated with those realms. Far from being the embodiment of some static, unchanging realm untouched by history, the pastoral genre captures alternative modes of social mobility that are nonetheless spared the stigma of brazenness and crude entrepreneurial spirit generally attached to the rising classes and upstart crows in London. This interpretation, however, stands at odds with the line of critics such as Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose who view the pastoral genre as one discursive medium among many that served a general project of self-fashioning and produced a semblance of gentility not predicated on blood or birth. The pastoral genre extends the early modern propensity for self-fashioning onto the whole realm of the countryside, recreating both the environment and its inhabitants into a realm that partakes into the natural world, but at the same time prides itself on the

harmony and social orderliness it puts on display. It is a project of self-fashioning precisely by its denial of the social costs of individual mobility, that is, the erosion of ranks and hierarchies. The courtly Elizabethan pastoral, in that context, could be read as the *par excellence* genre of self-fashioning that simultaneously turns the pastoral shepherd into an embodiment of poetic genius and natural reason while it also cancels out the social aspirations that necessarily underlie the pursuit of humanist education and the production of poetry.

The pastoral's ambivalence and self-conscious rejection of mobility and modernity in fact leaves us with the lingering suspicion that the genre ends up being a theatrical gesture, a mere scheme that does not live up fully to its ostensible vision of escape from the worldly. Louis Montrose reads the pastoral sentiment as a particular courtly mask where self-renunciation and self-denial serve as a strategic guise for positions of power. Thus, for example, when Queen Elizabeth identifies with the figure of the milkmaid, she is in fact seeking to project a benevolent persona without really renouncing her monarchical power.<sup>3</sup> Montrose reads the pastoral as a Foucauldian problem – a discourse of power that resorts to forms of authority associated with the manorial estate and an idealized relationship between a benevolent landlord and simple-minded rustics. Yet, while this analysis points to a certain patriarchal

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<sup>3</sup> Louis Montrose, "Eliza, Queene of Shepheardes and the Pastoral of Power," in *Renaissance Historicism: Selections from English Literary Renaissance*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney and Dan S. Collins (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 35-38.

conservatism wary of ambitions and social mobility, it does not do full justice to the rich presence of pastoral elements in early modern poetry and drama, or to the critical importance of the pastoral for authors like Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney, or Shakespeare where the pastoral setting in fact provides an alternative path of social mobility for poets, exiles, and second sons.<sup>4</sup>

The question of authority is complicated further by the certain transitoriness and liminality of pastoral worlds. Forests, dales, and caves provide a brief respite for characters like Sidney's Musidorus, Spenser's Dorus, or Shakespeare's Rosalind, but the pastoral is rather a site of reconfiguration or suspension of traditional hierarchies that the characters are bound to leave. In his study of the English pastoral, Peter Lindenbaum argues that the purported escapism of the pastoral genre should not be taken literally, at its face value. Lindenbaum claims that English pastoral texts are in fact anti-pastoral as they often question the viability of the pastoral ideal of retreat, leisure, and *otium*. On the surface, at least, the pastoral indeed enacts a withdrawal from active, worldly life, but this withdrawal is never simple or final enough. This adds one more conundrum to the already long list of propensity for self-contradictions characteristic of the early modern English pastoral:<sup>5</sup> pastoral shepherds serve as a denunciation of vanity and ephemeral success, but at the level of narrative and structural analysis, the pastoral realm proves to

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<sup>4</sup> Louis Montrose, "The Place of a Brother in 'As You Like It': Social Process and Comic Form," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (Spring, 1981): 28-54.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Lindenbaum, *Changing Landscapes: Anti-Pastoral Sentiment in the English Renaissance* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986).

be a space of transformation and transition for those characters thrown into the pastoral from the world of the court and the city.

#### **4.2 Pastoral Politics in Thomas of Woodstock**

In order to trace some of the labor that the pastoral genre performs, I suggest that we turn to two early modern plays that do not appear immediately related to the pastoral genre but instead incorporate pastoral characters and themes as elements within the narrative. Here I propose to turn to a play that has been traditionally read within the canon of early modern historical drama – the anonymous play *Thomas of Woodstock*, cited as a major predecessor and a source for Shakespeare's *Richard II*, or at least a close textual sibling of Shakespeare's historical play. Scholars generally agree that *Thomas of Woodstock* has been written some time between 1591 and 1595, and most probably before *Richard II*. One of the immediate parallels between the two plays is the close resemblance between the character of Woodstock from the anonymous play and John of Gaunt whose final speech in *Richard II* provides one of the most powerful and memorable praises of the English realm in Shakespeare. Both John of Gaunt and Woodstock embody the spirit of an older aristocracy imbued with a proverbial pride in its English origin, but Woodstock is also a pastoral character whose association with pastoral stoicism and asceticism is less central in the figure of Shakespeare's John of

Gaunt. In the context of *Woodstock*, the genre of the history play posits the pastoral as a transitory stage in the construction of English identity, and I am going to argue that the pastoral is also a necessary stage that incorporates a countryside ethos into the historical narrative and provides the elements that render this historical play a distinctly English one. It replaces the chronicle's mundane account of battles and conflicts with the narrative of a political identity manifest within a temporal continuum of English virtues and values that transcends the individual importance of monarchs and lords.

In spite of the chronological inaccuracies and the spurious blending of historical events and characters in the play, *Thomas of Woodstock* provides a relatively faithful dramatic depiction of the early reign of Richard II – mostly notably the Peasants' Revolt from 1381 incited by the imposition of the poll tax in 1380, and then the rebellion of the magnates that led to the Merciless Parliament of 1388. *Woodstock's* Richard II is a grotesque figure, a spoiled and hot-headed reckless youth, surrounded by courtiers-upstarts and a court immersed in sumptuous feasts and slavish imitation of foreign fashions. The king's court displays open disregard for the more moderate elderly statesmen comprised of the king's uncles and other 'true' nobility. The lifestyle and excessive consumption at court respectively drains out the king's treasury. He seizes upon his uncles' estates, handing them over to his personal protégés who further enrich themselves through legal schemes and the use of the much maligned "blank charters." These charters are fictive debts or bonds to the king that his subjects are forced to sign

and respectively repay. What looks like another administrative measure – the circulation of these blank pieces of parchment and the collection of signatures and intelligence about the wealth of the realm – is only an additional form of violent expropriation of revenue for the crown. Yet, the waste of wealth and the blatant exploitation of the commons provoke popular opposition and rebellion against the king, both among peasants and noblemen. Thomas of Woodstock is the most outspoken critic of the king and advocate for the people, who is captured by the minions of the king and later murdered in Calais. As a result, the king's uncles draw their armies together and force the king to accede to the abolition of all "blank charters" and forms of excessive taxation, the restoration of power to the Parliament, and the execution of the king's closest 'friends' blamed for 'farming' and laying waste of the kingdom.

Unlike Shakespeare's *Richard II* where the very nature of monarchical rule is altered and set upon a new path with the deposition of the king, the anonymous Woodstock is a narrative of corruption and decline of the monarchy that never reverses back to a state of redeemed balance and order. The faction of the older nobility triumphs at the end, but their intervention does not appear to produce a reformed king or a new version of monarchy. The consolidation of the aristocracy and the armed resistance to the monarch provide a temporary solution but no safeguards against future abuses of royal prerogative. In comparison with Shakespeare's *Richard II*, *Woodstock* fails to provide a new vision of monarchical rule, but it recompenses with the vivid depiction of

the conflicts and factions dividing the realm. If *Richard II* privileges the characters of Richard and Henry Bolinbroke and the high emotional drama that accompanies the deposition, Woodstock presents the early part of the king's reign as a more clearly defined structural conflict between social and cultural forces embodied by courtiers and king, the peer elite, and the commons. This conflict is manifested on three related levels – blood, language, and landed wealth, where a presupposed natural state of harmony and proper balance on these three levels is disrupted by the reign and policies of the young Richard II. In the play, each of these elements is in a state of crisis precipitated by forces of mobility and mutability – royal blood has degenerated into a humor out of balance, the plainness of English speech suffers from foreign importations and courtly verbosity, while landed wealth is being converted into expensive, wasteful apparel. In the midst of crumbling morals and institutions, the character of Woodstock acts as alternative center of the plot that counterbalances the king and also provides a symbolic center of stability and perseverance. The pastoral persona is thus invoked in order to hold back and discipline a process of dissipation and waste that the play associates with the court and king. Yet, the pastoral ethos is one of natural discipline and sufficiency, very different from the 18th century discourse of discipline focused on self-regulation. Instead, the pastoral is invoked by other genres in order to regulate things – objects, language, and clothing – and their proper circulation within the social order. In later developments of the pastoral genre, chiefly in John Fletcher's importation of Italian

tragicomedy with his *Faithful Shepherdess* (1608), we can indeed see the pastoral turning into a site of rituals of self-regulation, but the earlier courtly pastoral foregrounds conflicts that involve circulation and social mobility at the level of concrete matter, things, and language.

While both Richard and his uncles belong to the same blood line that guarantees their consanguinity and minimal allegiance to the same standards of noble integrity, the conflict between these two factions is continuously staged as an opposition between profligacy of youth and the wisdom of old age. In this play, the young Richard presents the possibility of degeneration of royal blood: in the words of his uncle Lancaster he is “so wild a prince,/ So far degenerate from his noble father”(I.i.28-9). The drama of blood is further explored in the same passage where Lancaster notes how Richard’s father, the Black Prince, would “first have lost his royal blood in drops” than see how his son is dissipating his life (I.i.42). This degeneration of royal blood is mirrored by the king’s covert attempt to poison the dukes, his own noble uncles. Unlike Shakespeare’s play where grievances center around property, here we see a greater anxiety about the nobility inherited with one’s blood and the potential of royal blood to grow degenerate and defective. Blood and origins continue to define the claims of this older nobility of the uncles and their faction, but true Englishness here is defined less by the possession of a noble blood, and more by the willingness to spend it for the glory of England. Thus, Arundel insists that his entitlement is based on service and not on noble origin: “If

service such as this done to my country/ Merit my heart to bleed, let it bleed freely" (I.i.91-92). The play does not abandon the mythography of royal blood, but instead redefines the logic of its circulation. Mere possession of noble blood is opposed and superseded by a gesture or an act – that of shedding or sacrificing one's blood for England – able to ennoble blood beyond claims of ancient lineage.

This is also one of the many moments in the play that aligns Woodstock with the general import of Shakespeare's second tetralogy of history plays where notions of nobility, royal claims and titles are now redefined by their use rather than by their possession. The cure that Woodstock proposes for the corruption at court is to "let blood where the corruption lies" (I.i.147). Woodstock enlists humoral physiology in order to challenge the primacy of royal blood – in this context, the metaphor of blood-letting is not an infringement on the king's rule but rather a palliative measure meant to restore the balance between the metaphorical head and body of the commonwealth. The intervention does not consist in merely observing that the king is subject to a "wanton humor" like any other subject of the realm, but rather in the transformation of the status of blood as an indicator of privilege. Early modern humoral physiology presents the human passions as physical, material forces subject to the same laws that govern the larger natural world. Woodstock's metaphors thus "socialize" the royal body and blood by integrating them within the body of the commonwealth and demanding from them a function or a use. The humoral model calls for balance and homeostasis, and when

blood is placed in as one amongst other humors, it becomes subject to measuring and partitioning. Woodstock's diagnosis of the "wanton humor" indicates that the king and his circle suffer from a surplus or excess of blood. Thus, humoral theory explains 'lapses' in royal government and provides a justification for intervening – as in blood letting – without abandoning the primal symbolism of blood altogether.

In such a context, Woodstock acts as the physician and the cure meant to suspend monarchical degeneration. Woodstock, as the staunchest and most passionate champion for English commonwealth, is cast as a shepherd figure, here, in the words of his brother York:

How does thy master, our good brother Woodstock,  
Plain Thomas, for by th'rood so all men call him  
For his plain dealing and his simple clothing?  
'Let others jet in silk and gold,' says he,  
'A coat of English frieze best pleaseth me.' (I.i.98-102)

The "plain" that prefaces his name invokes "complain" – a pair that echoes back Spenser's Colin Clout. The English frieze is also coarse woolen cloth not intended for export. Here plainness makes Thomas of Woodstock into one of those pastoral figures where a noble character fully assumes the identity of a shepherd, in a political gesture that exceeds the amorous pursuits of Arcadian cross-dressing and indeed turns the shepherd's ethos of simplicity and frugality into a position with political and rhetorical impact. Woodstock is almost the fulfillment of the wish expressed by the king in Shakespeare's *3 Henry VI*, "To be no better than a homely swain" (II.v.22). Woodstock is

the embodiment of a particular form of domestic Englishness that resists the temptation of foreign luxuries, and at the same time he has adopted a particular humanist turn of the phrase. He speaks by way of roundabout proverbs and general sayings, not out of fear of political backlash, but rather in a jest that associates him with folk wisdom and the plain language of the commons. Instead of naming the king as the chief source of corruption, Woodstock uses a typically humanist set of metaphors:

[...] I have found out the disease:  
When the head aches, the body is not healthful.

But 'tis not deadly yet; it may be cured:  
Some vein let blood where the corruption lies,  
And all shall heal again. (I.i.142-148)

Another one of Woodstock's political advices dressed up as a proverb:

Fruit that grows high is not securely plucked;  
We must use ladders and by step ascend  
Till by degrees we reach the altitude. (I.i.173-175)

Such passages summon common sayings and proverbs as a source of timeless, collective wisdom mobilized against a corrupt monarch. Woodstock occupies the place of the proverbial humanist councilor, but his plainness of speech and clothing serves another function in the play, that of translation and mediation between the excessive royal court and the king who has "lost touch" with his subjects and the very realm of plain rustic and simpletons. Woodstock's plainness, thus, is anything but plain or transparent since it provides him with the symbolic authority to translate between the

different registers of plain and allegorical speech and thus between two socially and economically differentiated realms. Thus, for example, when the Earl of Arundel, a chief opponent of the king, chides the other nobility for resembling great oaks that let themselves be destroyed by the ivy, the passage is quite clear on its own, but Woodstock finds it necessary to clarify Arundel's meaning: "ay, good coz, as if you plainly said,/ 'Destroy those flatterers and tell King Richard/He does abase himself to countenance them'"(I.i.169-171). Such didactic interventions remain untheatrical and steal away from the metaphoricity of the dialogue, but they define Woodstock's mandate to translate and mediate between discourses. On the wedding-day between Queen Anne and King Richard, Lancaster gives voice to his fear that English speech is not eloquent enough to give sufficient praise to the Queen, thus evoking the feeling of cultural and literary inferiority of Englishness in comparison with the manners on the continent. In response to Lancaster, however, Woodstock is quick to assert the merits of plain, unadorned English:

If all their welcomes be as long as thine [Lancaster's]  
This health will not go round this week, by th' Mass!  
Sweet Queen, and cousin – now I'll call you so—  
In plain and honest phrase, welcome to England.  
They speak all in me, and you have seen  
All England cry with joy: 'God bless the Queen!'  
And so, afore my God, I know they wish it. (I.iii.15-20)

Not surprisingly, "they" from the passage above refers to the English commonwealth, and Woodstock here has elected to serve as the spokesperson for the

whole English realm. What appears as a cultural deficiency, the “harsh” sound of the English tongue, is transformed into a political advantage and authority not acquired by blood or title but rather by the claim of speaking a common, demotic version of English.

However, we should be wary of the claim that Woodstock is acting or speaking on behalf of the commonwealth. The symbolic authority that Woodstock derives from his “plainness” depends on the moments of silencing the commoners that the play enacts. The dissent brewing amongst the commoners is equally threatening for both king and peers, and the Earl of Lancaster remarks:

The commons murmur 'gainst the dissolute king,  
Treason is whispered at each common table  
As customary as their thanks to Heaven (I.i.158-160)

If the play valorizes Woodstock’s plain speech in contrast to the artifice and pretentiousness of Richard’s minions, the grievances of the commons remain a blur of indistinct murmur and a whispering, buzzing sound that can mean only “treason.” Woodstock himself calls the dissent of the people “rank commotions”(I.iii.126), and later he compares the commons to “a flock of silly sheep”(IV.ii.24) whose blood has been sucked from ravenous wolves and angry lions. Blood or rather the shedding of blood serves Woodstock to identify with the commons and simultaneously reaffirm his status in the play as a sacrificial figure when he declares: “by wolves and lions now must Woodstock bleed”(IV.ii.212). The trope of blood is extended to encompass the whole realm, both peerage and common, which establishes consanguinity on grounds of

shared violence, but this is where the alliance between Woodstock and the commons stops.

When they are given a voice in the play, the effect is chiefly a comic relief rather than any intervention in the larger dramatic clash between the true English nobility and the retinue of minions and upstarts around Richard. The speech of the caricature rustic characters – Simon Ignorance, the bailiff of Dunstable; Cowtail; Farmer; and Butcher – is marked by comic malapropisms, inanity, and gullibility. When Simon Ignorance is asked to sign the blank charter, he produces “a sheephook with a tarbox” (III.iii.19) as his signature. This sheephook is a literal sign, unlike the metaphorical one from Sidney’s *Old Arcadia* where Dorus declares to Pamela in verse: “My sheephook is wan hope which all upholds.”<sup>6</sup> Dorus’s use of the sheephook in this metaphor is meant to signal to Pamela precisely that he is no common shepherd. The metaphor achieves its expressive power by erasing the ordinary sheephook and insinuating Dorus’s real social rank to Pamela.

After Ignorance signs the charter, he concludes by saying decorously “ecce signum” (III.iii.16), borrowing a Latin phrase which further mocks the fact that Ignorance cannot read nor write. The rustics’ speech is far inferior to the plain language advocated by Woodstock, and its comic import is meant to emphasize the rustics’

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<sup>6</sup> Sidney, Sir Philip. *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia (The Old Arcadia)*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 94.

inability to distinguish between high and low speech as evidenced in their awkward attempts to grasp and imitate the 'legalese' of minions like Nimble. Woodstock's role then is precisely to mediate between the inarticulate country bumpkins and the political elite of the kingdom, and the plainness of his speech and his English apparel guarantees his loyalty to the state and the interests of the commons and simultaneously presents those two notions as identical.

In my previous chapter on Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, I have argued that the figure of shepherd poet functions to reconcile two discursive modes that have hitherto stood on relatively opposite ends: the ethos of aristocratic pleasure and the humanist ethics of exertion, simplicity and frugality. The quintessential shepherd is humble but rich in simple pleasures. His language lacks courtly or urbane polish but he speaks with a natural simplicity. He is alien to excessive passions but still capable of expressing love and obedience to the ruler. He is foreign to political intrigue but still capable of making profound political statements. The shepherd or rustic swain thus appears a late development of a humanist learning that has been stripped of all the traces of classical texts and scholasticism and has been put into the service of a national ideology that finds its foundation in the virtues and rustic scenes of an idealized English countryside. What betrays the origin of Woodstock's pastoral rhetoric are the traces of humoral theory, and the use he makes of the proverbs and sayings more typical of the sixteenth century commonplace book. The origins of these humanist discursive strategies taken from the

grammar books and the Tudor educational system, however, are erased and adopted as the natural foundations of an English national character.

Woodstock's pastoral guise and rhetoric turn into powerful instruments that not only serve to disenchant the power exuded by the monarch and the attraction of foreign fashions and speech but also map geographically the material transformations of wealth and property that fuel courtly display and ambitions. The king's minions stand a little higher than rogues or cony-catchers – the stereotypical Elizabethan impostors – who are pushing schemes of quick enrichment to the level of state-wide policies. Nimble, a varlet to Tresilian, one of King Richard's minions, describes his dilemma in choosing for a title fit for Tresilian's 'stellar' rise through the social ranks. He observes in an aside:

Neither 'sir,' nor 'monsieur,' nor 'signior'? What should I call him, trow?  
He's monstrously translated suddenly. At first, when we were schoolfellows,  
then I called him 'sirrah,' but since he became my master, I pared away the 'ah'  
and served him with the 'sir.' (I.ii.76-80)

The anxiety about the mobility and mutability of titles and ambition of the 'upstart' characters like Tresilian finds expression in the rhetoric of monstrosity, aberrations, and unnatural changes. In Nimble's aside, "monstrously" resembles phonetically the French appellation "monsieur" used earlier, suggesting that the imitation of foreign fashions in the English resemble degeneration in the natural order. Tresilian's "translation" here refers not only to his abnormal ascent on the social ladder, but also to his foreign or "frenchified" manners, in the words of Nimble (I.ii.72). We see

another translation of a different order, where the newly-crowned Queen Anne of Bohemia declares her loyalty to the English realm and described the effect of her arrival to England:

Like brambles to the cedar, coarse to fine,  
Or like the wild grape to the fruitful vine,  
And having left the earth where I was bred,  
And English made, let me be Englishèd. (I.iii.46-48)

Proper translation of foreignness into Englishness implies bending wild nature towards fruitfulness and productivity, and Englishness is identified with cultivation and grafting, a natural progress of improvement antithetical to courtly refinement of wealth or speech.

Early modern English used the label of monstrosity for an array of social aberrations as varied as having a female monarch on the throne, the practice of cross-dressing, or the much maligned practice of money-lending. What is more peculiar and interesting is the framing of this social monstrosity as a translation, a linguistic transformation that has marred the order and logic of the original. Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* offers us some clues about what constitutes good and bad or monstrous translations. Helena's initial plea to be translated into Hermia, as in "My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody" (I.i) is a reasonable request for a translation between equal and female and thus exchangeable and substitutable characters. Lysander's complaint that Helena and Hermia are different as a raven and a

duck relies on a difference that produces a similarity – the comparison operates within the same species and in fact allows for a seamless translation of affections. Such distinctions exist only in the eyes of the beholders whom Pluck manipulates with ease. Bottom, on the other hand, undergoes a monstrous translation, first by assuming the inappropriate part of the tragic lover and then by enlisting himself in Titania’s train. Titania’s sudden lapse in foolish amorousness for Bottom becomes reminiscent of the foolishness with which profligate kings like Richard are known to dispense titles and coveted favors to persons of little merit.

Puck’s dismissal of Bottom as a “rude mechanical” already builds on the class distinction that separates the theatrical troop of artisans from their sophisticated audience. The strange and unaccountable acquisitions of titles and favors is deemed a violation of good sense and biologically ordained boundaries which become monstrously marred when members of different stations forget their place. According to the logic of the play, professional actors are still uniquely positioned and trained to traverse and translate across social stations since they are able to manipulate objects and shapes while still honoring the difference between metaphorical or allegorical speech and reality. John Pendergast notes that “[a]llegory and irony both require shared cultural knowledge in order to be rhetorically effective.”<sup>7</sup> Yet, this shared cultural

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<sup>7</sup> John Pendergast, *Religion, Allegory, and Literacy in Early Modern England, 1560-1640: The Control of the Word* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 140.

knowledge is also a form of cultural capital and a claim on the right to speak publicly which the play carefully transfers to poets as laborers of mind.

To return to my discussion of the *Woodstock* play, notwithstanding Woodstock's spite for foreign importations, fashions, and innovations that are deemed corrupting or simply wasteful, the threat associated with foreign luxuries is not a direct consequence of their foreignness. After all, the Earl of Arundel, an ally of Woodstock, who holds the office of the Admiralty, is proud to claim having secured "the score sail of tall and lusty ships, and six great carracks fraught with oil and wines...high-prized wines of France" (I.i.85-6). Anxiety about foreign influences mirrors a deeper split experienced internally, between the conflicting interests of landed and urban wealth. The threat arises out of the transformation of landed property in the countryside and the changes in the social relations and forms of community associated with that property. Tresilian, musing over his future appointment as Lord Chief Justice, orders his wife to "remove her household up to London," thus alluding to what is already a widespread trend of converting land into liquid monetary wealth consumed to sustain one's social standing in the city. Tresilian's "translation" is part of a larger transformation of wealth where the garments worn at court suddenly a different origin – the landed countryside estates sold in order to support the conspicuous consumption at court. In order to honor the king's wedding ceremony, Woodstock makes an exception to his plain dress and arrives in a sumptuous attire. Yet, as observers note, Woodstock's own horse appears somewhat

dejected by the lavish costume of his owner, and Woodstock deftly uses the occasion to lash out against the spending habits at court by explaining the reaction of his horse as a reaction against the burden of such an expensively dressed horseman as himself:

He [Woodstock's horse] was not wont to bear such loads, indeed,  
A hundred oaks upon his shoulders  
To make me brave upon your wedding day,  
And more than that, to make my horse more tire,  
Ten acres of good land are stitched up here. (I.iii.94-98)  
[...]  
Should this fashion last I must raise new rents,  
Undo my poor tenants, turn away my servants  
And guard myself with lace; nay, sell more land  
And lordships too. (I.iii.104-107)

The acute sensitivity of the horse to these alleged forms of social injustice is partly misleading since in the early modern animal iconography, the horse is the quintessential aristocratic animal prone to manifest an emotional register appropriate for the ethos of the nobility. As Gail Kern Paster notes, the horses of the nobility were capable of display strong emotional ties with their owners, and, as "aristocrats of the animal world, horses were especially vulnerable [...] to emotions ranged along the shame-pride axis."<sup>8</sup> The shame and indignation of Woodstock's horse remain quintessentially aristocratic and bound to notions of honor and status which render

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<sup>8</sup> Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 170.

Woodstock's critique of the sale of landed wealth dubious in its purported solidarity with the plight of tenants and servants.

The Woodstock play attempts to distinguish between the liquidity of landed wealth and the productive use of land by associating the former with the wasteful state policies and the later with English countryside values, but these phenomena are essentially part of the same process of emergence of land as an economic resource and private property. The political signification of land – that of blood relationships sustained through inheritance, and feudal relationships of fealty based on loyalty – needs to be separated from productive and commercial uses of the land. These two processes, instead of being contradictory, belong to a more general trend of crystallization of private ownership and abstraction of land from local and regional forms of use and dominion. As Richard Halpern comment on the shift from customary rights to more “absolute” forms of property:

...new forms of tenure, combined with the spread of market relations, led to decoding of feudal production on the local level, in other words, to the stripping of economic relations from their direct encoding (embeddedness) in legal and political forms, and their reorganization at a more abstract regional or national level (the absolute state, mercantilism).<sup>9</sup>

Without this process of sufficient abstraction of landed property from older forms of possession, we end up with a peculiar double vision like Woodstock where he

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<sup>9</sup> Richard Halpern, *Poetics of Primitive Accumulation: English Renaissance Culture and the Genealogy of Capital* (Cornell: Cornell University Press), 70.

looks at his hose and sees the “hundred oaks” that must have been felled, or the propertiless farmers he sees when he turns to his other hose. This double vision is shared in John Williams’s *Sermon of Apparell* (1620) where the transformation of land into private, alienable property produces similar indignation and shock at the perceived abuse of customary rights:

To see a man (who is but a *Steward* of what he possesseth, and to render a fearfull account of the same) to haue a *Farme* clapt vpon his feete, a *Coppy holde* dangling vp and downe his legges, a *Manor* wrapt about his body, a Lordship hanging from vpon his shoulders, nay (peraduenture) the *Thythes* (*Christs patrymonie*) turn’d to a Cap, and the *bread* of the poore to a plume of feathers, and all this waste to no *ende* than this, that people might come out and see, *this man cloathed in soft raynments*.<sup>10</sup>

Some of the rawness and grotesqueness of the sermon’s language resemble the cannibal sheep from More’s *Utopia*<sup>11</sup> – the culprit garments represent a dismembered or ‘dangling’ version of the manor estate, and a very short step keeps Wilson from saying that those “soft raynments” have stolen the bread of the poor. The sermon also performs the a similar repositioning gesture where the stark metaphors create a dissonance that challenges immediate appearances and relates a social problem back to its causes, only here the origin of social erosions are traced not to the industry of sheep-raising, but rather to the dissipation of landed wealth. Williams’s sermon, printed about thirty years after Woodstock, continues to rehearse anxieties about the lavish amounts spent for

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<sup>10</sup> John Williams, *Sermon of Apparell* (London: Printed by Robert Baker and John Bill, 1620), 18. Available from: <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/>.

<sup>11</sup> John Williams, in fact, refers to Thomas More as one of those “Utopians.” See *Sermon*, 7.

exotic fabrics and foreign goods which Elizabeth had already tried to restrict through the imposition of sumptuary laws in the 1570s.

The language mirrors an earlier homily, "Agaynst Excesse of Apparrell" (1563), originally printed in the *Book of Homilies* commissioned by the Church of England:

Thus with our fantastical devices, we make ourselves laughingstocks to other nations, while one spendeth his patrimonie upon pounces and cut [cutwork], another bestoweth more on a dancing shirt, than might suffice to buy him honest and comely apparel for his whole body. Some hand their revenues about their necks, ruffing in their ruffs, and many a one jeopardeth his best joint [inheritance], to maintain himself in sumptuous raiments.<sup>12</sup>

The general sentiment and line of indictment in the homily anticipates Williams's sermon, but in 1563, apparel is still conceived as a 'fantastical device' that causes individual misfortune limited to the drained patrimonies and incomes of young men. The apparel sermon from 1620 paints a more distressful picture where the costly apparel is a source of indignation to the extent that it is linked to the erosion of manor economies in the countryside. Excess of apparel is now perceived as "waste," a concept that belongs to a discourse of agrarian improvement and profitable use of landed resources. If the 1562 homily indicts urban garments as signs of impropriety and buffoonery, the 1620 sermon associates with the decay of custom in the countryside. What was only the result of improvident spending at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, in the beginning of the

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<sup>12</sup> John Jewel, "Agaynst Excesse of Apparrell," in *The Second Tome of Homilees* (London: Printed by Richard Jugge and John Cawood, 1571), 219-20. Available from: <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/>.

sixteenth century is already conceptualized as a wholesale erosion of the social structures of agrarian economy.

To return back to our discussion of Woodstock, his rhetoric calls into being the system of rent extraction which, historically, benefits the large landholders and gentry and is of little direct relevance as a critique of the court, but the fact that Woodstock's courtly apparel and his horse are able to register popular grievances so far removed on a spatial scale, indicates an early modern conceptual imagination that corresponds to a fully-fledged, integrated national market where the circulation of commodities produces effects that are felt at all levels of the economy. A hundred oaks are not the same thing as a pair of fashionable pants, and tenant leases are not directly conceivable in terms of lace. The series of metonymies deployed by Woodstock testify to a form of perverse, unnatural proximity between these two disparate classes of objects which is imaginable only through the abstraction of commodities at the level of a national market. The lavish consumption associated with the personal courtiers of Richard II (or would-be courtiers seeking positions and patrons in London) thus testifies not only to London's infamous taste for fashionable baubles, but also to a larger process of erosion of the manor economy. Woodstock's role then is to translate not only the pompous speech of the courtiers and the evasive language of politics into plain English speech but also the pompous raiment back to its sources. This translation – of sleeves and hoses into oaks and rents – is a doomed attempt at an impossible reversal but represents a

particular narrative that situates the origins of English wealth away from trade and into the countryside.

Historians explain the concentration of wealth in London with the formation of a fully integrated national economy where major industries, and the clothiers' one in particular, moved from the medieval cities to the countryside and led to the establishment of distinct production zones, while at the same time the medieval market towns ceded their commercial or 'market' function to London which turned into an exclusive commercial hub. This trend meant that regional economies lost their local character and the economy was increasingly organized along national lines that connected London to the countryside. Among other things, the formation of a national economy meant that the mobility of vagrant, expandable labor increasingly came within the purview of the state, as testified by the 1349 Ordinance and the 1388 Statute of Laborers – state legislation which remained unenforceable but still attempted to force a mandatory agrarian labor and restrict laborers' movement through the issuance of passports. Anne Middleton has analyzed brilliantly how *Piers Plowman* draws on the 1388 Statute of Laborers for new strategies of textual and literary self-representation, as Will constructs his poem as a 'life-work' and thus a self-authorized passport.<sup>13</sup> In the 16th century, the Elizabethan Statute of Laborers and Artificers (1562) introduced

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<sup>13</sup> Anne Middleton, "Acts of Vagrancy: The C Version 'Autobiography' and the Statute of 1388," in *Written Work: Langland, Labor, and Authorship*, ed. Steven Justice, Kathryn Kerby-Fulton (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 244.

further state-mandated regulations on hired labor, while sumptuary laws and protestations against excessive spending on apparel, on the other hand, sought to control a different form of mobility, that of visual distinctions between social ranks as the mobility of wealth. In this context, the turn of the 16th century in England with its particular anxiety about the sudden mobility and “vagrancy” of wealth represents an ironic reversal of the attempt of state legislation at the end of the 14th century to restrict an increasingly mobile population

The growing administrative control of the state over the economic life of the nation does not obey a singular logic, and London and the different regions of the English countryside follow their own internal dynamics, but the rhetoric against sartorial excesses achieves its effect by superimposing those two worlds – rustic and urban – together, in order to construct a narrative of economic waste and flight of wealth. The force of the words spoken by Woodstock in the eponymous play derives from this violent juxtaposition between seemingly disparate and unrelated pictures of rural and urban economic realities which suddenly reveal a deeper logic underlining the bizarre changing fashions in London.

### ***4.3 The Notion of Use in Agrarian Literature***

What Woodstock’s rhetoric occludes, however, is another form of commodification, one which hardly speaks the language of commerce and yet testifies to

a wholly new organization of labor and resources in the burgeoning clothier industries in the countryside.

In her study *The Culture of Cloth in Early Modern England*, Roze Hentschell describes the diametrically opposite positions that sheep occupied in the imagination of the English countryside. Agricultural manuals often depicted sheep as the miraculous solution to all wants and human needs. Thus, for example, in *The First Book of Cattell* (1587), Leonard Mascall includes a verse about sheep: “His fleece of wooll doth cloth us all.” Mascall continues: “They do not onely nourish the people of the villages, but also to serve the table with many sortes of delicate and pleasant meates.”<sup>14</sup> Amongst the versatile uses of the sheep, Mascall also notes the tallow made from sheep’s fat, the parchment used for writing as well as sheep-skin used for clothes, strings made out of the sheep’s guts, and the dung used to manure the soil. Such a proliferation of uses, however, testifies to a radical process of substitution which is taking place in this glorified portrait of the sheep. Sheep have been converted into a form of tangible currency that possesses a magical universality not that different from the multiple uses of oil in our own global world. Use turns into an abstract form of usefulness and sheep in fact come to occupy the abstracting role of money even without any direct mention of

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<sup>14</sup> Hentschell, Roze. *The Culture of Cloth in Early Modern England: Textual Constructions of a National Identity* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 22; Andrew McRae also discusses the improvement literature published by Mascall which targeted both the gentler and the less learned farmers. See McRae’s “Husbandry Manuals and the Language of Agrarian Improvement,” in *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England: Writing and the Land*, ed. Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (Leicester: Leicester UP: 1992), 47.

the market. The pamphlets praising the wealth generated by the sheep do so by occluding the importance of the foreign markets of cloth and instead listing all the ways in which sheep benefit the countryside as if the source of wealth indeed resides in the different body parts of the animal. Such descriptions evoke the passage from Dr. Seuss's *Lorax* book where the Once-ler, a creature not unlike the capitalist owner, praises his newly-produced Thneed as "a Fine-Something-That-All-People-Need!":

It's a shirt. It's a sock. It's a glove. It's a hat.  
But it has other uses. Yes, far beyond that.  
You can use it for carpets. For pillows! For sheets!  
Or curtains! Or covers for bicycle seats!<sup>15</sup>

Mascall's re-figuration of sheep into so many household objects and human needs becomes a testimony to the mid-sixteenth century transition from production and export of raw wool towards a development of industry specializing in broadcloth. For the modern practitioner of husbandry, sheep are not merely a source of wealth, but a raw material that can be transformed into other objects. The shift from raw wool toward cloth manufacturing renders the sheep into a natural resource waiting to be tapped and converted into so many useful items. It is not hard to imagine how the self-sufficiency that the pastoral genre attributes to shepherds reflects the singular importance of the sheep for the cloth industry and the fantasy of transforming the sheep into a universal remedy for scarcity. What descriptions such as Mascall's occlude, of course, is that the

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<sup>15</sup> Dr. Seuss, *The Lorax* (New York: Random House, 1999).

sheep's fleece can "cloth us all" only after the development of industrial zones defined by concentration of labor rendered contingent on the foreign markets of English cloth. Authors like David Hawkes and Joyce Appleby trace the origins of proto-capitalist commoditization to the increasing importance and agency that the early seventeenth century began to attribute to money and coin, as seen in the debate about the material or symbolic nature of money, but we can trace a parallel form of commodification of the very notion of use which takes place from the perspective of industrial production and appears far removed from hustle of the market.

Thus, Woodstock's complaints about the conversion of land tenure into clothing unwittingly captures a deeper form of commodification which takes place in the heart of the his beloved countryside where the economy of the manor house is being supplanted by that of industrial production of cloth, and the endearing English pride in their sheep in fact obscures the fact the figure of the sheep already is doubled up into an animal and an exchange value. The manorial ethics of stewardship whose erosion is the source of lament and outrage in Williams's sermon is undermined less by the "soft rayments" flaunted by youths in London but rather by the transformation of landed property which no longer supports older forms of dependability, benevolent landlordism and manorial labor. Yet, if such complaints against the excess of apparel appear mistaken about their target, they still testify to the unease caused by the conversion of land into liquid, easily spendable wealth. Encoding property from a regional to a national level –

to use Halpern's terms – does not proceed seamlessly but rather produces moments of dissociation.

#### **4.4 Gardening the State in Shakespeare's *Richard II***

Both the anonymous *Woodstock* and Shakespeare's *Richard II* stage nostalgia for a feudal hierarchical order sustained by codes of allegiance, old chivalric values and a commitment to an English identity. Yet, *Richard II* registers and makes visible a new, more "modern" conception of land and property which the play uses as a tentative limit of royal power. The character of Henry Bolingbroke has often been read as the herald of modern monarchical politics stripped off from the trappings of ceremony and ritual in favor of a more practical, Machiavellian approach to rulership, but I would like to suggest the rationalism invoked in order to reform the monarchical institution in the play has less to do with a new conception of politics and more with a pastoral ideal of stewardship, improvement and a profitable use of recourses. As a history play, *Richard II*, takes off where the pastoral genre stops: that is, not only does it punish a wasteful, dissipate court and its king, but then also reinstates rational rule defined by respect for landed property.

In *Richard II*, Gaunt accuses the king: "[l]andlord of England art thou now, not king" (II.i.113) implying that the king is acting as a profiteer in respect to the realm, bypassing the nobility's own claims to their hereditary estates and the very role the

aristocracy plays in mediating between the king and the realm. Instead of respecting the titles of the nobility to the land, the king is leasing the realm as a “pelting farm.” This process of ‘farming’ the realm and its attending legal instruments are given a more detailed explication in the *Woodstock* play:

Crown lands, lordships, manors, rents, taxes, subsidies, fifteens, imposts, foreign customs, staples for wool, tin, lead, and cloth; all forfeitures of goods or lands confiscate; and all other duties that is, shall, or may appertain to the King or crown’s revenues. (IV.i.186-91)

The allegation of farming laid against the king is in fact a way of naming the larger process of centralization of the state administration where collection of duties, taxes, and other fees is relegated to offices or agents directly servicing the state. The list of grievances in *Richard II* is somewhat shorter, but again directed at the fiscal centralization of the state. As the lords complain in Act II, scene i, the commons have been “pill’d with grievous taxes” , the nobles have been fined for “ancient quarrels”, and “daily new exactions are devised, / As blanks, benevolences”(251). Without quite realizing it, the play produces the singular insight about the logic of state centralization: the charges of the peers against a monarch seeking to centralized his rule for a moment resemble the complaints of commoners against enclosure and land improvement. Both of these processes seek to achieve efficiency and higher revenues by eliminating or streamlining the intermediary social structures. It is as if in a moment of ironic misrecognition, the

older nobility in the play experiences state centralization as a loss of common rights of grazing and trespassing. In fact, as we know from John Guy's *Tudor England*, the English monarchs learn many techniques of state centralization from the more efficient management of the large landed estates:

It is, however, that Yorkists, and Henry VII administered their assets more efficiently than their predecessors. Except during a brief interlude after Bosworth, they adopted the latest management techniques of the great baronial estates, transferring the Crown lands from the control of the exchequer, which farmed that at fixed rents, to that of surveyors, receivers, and auditors, who specialized in maximizing income.<sup>16</sup>

Shakespeare's play, however, wants to make clear that Richard II is a wasteful "landlord" who is not maximizing revenues but instead squandering the value of the land for minions and associates without any merit, as the Gardener provides the most elaborate political analysis of the king's reign in the garden scene:

....Bolingbroke  
Hath seiz'd the wasteful king. O! What pity is it  
That he hath not trimm'd and dress'd his land  
As we this garden. (III.iv.62-4)

The discourse on waste in the late sixteenth century still draws on an older Aristotelian concept of value where waste simply means diminishment in value,

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<sup>16</sup> John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 8.

but the allegory in the garden scene does not correspond fully to the Aristotelian schema since the waste that Gardener laments is the waste of overabundance and unchecked growth of both cultivated plants and weeds:

Go, bind thou up yon dangling apricocks,  
Which, like unruly children, make their sire  
Stoop with oppression of their prodigal weight:  
Give some supportance to the bending twigs.  
Go thou, and like an executioner,  
Cut off the heads of too fast growing sprays,  
That look too lofty in our commonwealth:  
All must be even in our government.  
You thus employ'd, I will go root away  
The noisome weeds, which without profit suck  
The soil's fertility from wholesome flowers. (III.iv.34-44)

The precise target of this lesson in gardening is the practice of hoarding, or allowing the accumulation of riches to stem and burden the whole system while threatening the order and hierarchy between plants. Words like apricocks, which derives from the Latin *praecox* or premature, and the implications of wasteful youth in “unruly children,” “prodigal weight,” “too fast growing sprays” are all unmistakable references to the so-called courtly upstarts of lower birth seeking offices and positions within the central administration of the state. Waste comes to denote the diverting and alienation of inheritable landed wealth into other forms of property that is absorbed too quickly by the market.

The issue of waste also constitutes a legal clause from property law and the Year Book of Edward II already contains a passing stipulating that: “If waste be made by a

tenant for a term of life of houses or of gardens [...] although it be of one house or twenty apple trees in a garden, the tenant will lose the whole messuage, and so he will lose the whole garden.”<sup>17</sup> Such a doctrine of waste mandated the eviction of tenants who held lifetime right over a piece of land, and its mobilization in the garden scene in the play constitutes an ingenuous move where the principles of efficient farming are invoked against a wasteful “landlord” himself. The term of “waste” has also a long legacy of providing evicted farmers and commoners with a major argument against enclosures and engrossment of farms.

The garden-scene in *Richard II* is significant as the single moment that that gives direct voice to the commonwealth while at the same it represents a remarkable moment of self-disciplining of the commons. The Gardener and his servant not only demonstrate pragmatism and acute political insight about the events taking place in the realm, but also quite skillfully weave their observations into allegorical and metaphorical language. The servant broaches the question of disobedience, his own reasoning demonstrates impressive scholarly grip of rhetoric: “Why should we in the compass of a pale keep law and form and due proportion, showing as in a model, our firm estate, when our seawalled garden, the whole land is full of weeds”(III.iv.42-6). The threat of popular revolt is framed as a proposition of a logical argument and a rhetorical situation without any

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<sup>17</sup> C. J. Bereford quoted in Dennis R. Klinck. “Shakespeare's Richard II as Landlord and Wasting Tenant,” *College Literature* 25, no. 1 (Winter, 1998): 24.

reference to the grievances suffered by the population. The Gardener himself emerges as a cultivated version of those peasants and commoners rocking the ground under the monarch's feet in the anonymous *Woodstock*. Even the dramatic framing of the scene – as a conversation overheard by the Queen – renders the scene a courtly fantasy availed to the Queen when other forms of distraction and entertainment have failed. This moment of eavesdropping on the commoners echoes the scene in *Woodstock* that capture the censoring and policing of potentially treasonous speech. Yet, in *Richard II*, this moment is presented as a decorous, Platonic dialog deprived of any subversive potential which only serves to confirm the audience's sympathies with the disinherited Hereford already posited as the future successor to Richard. This scene also offers a textbook example of Puttenham's definition of pastoral, namely, "under the veile of homely persons, and rude speeches, to insinuate and glance at great matters." The garden allegory dispenses with the other more readily available metaphor of the body politic as a microcosm capturing the relationship between king and commonwealth as that between the head and the other parts of the body<sup>18</sup> and institutes in its place the enclosed garden whose keeping requires thrift, specialized knowledge of soils and plants, as well as the daily labor of pruning and weeding the plants deemed superfluous and wasteful. If the metaphor of the body politic offered a model where different political and economic classes could be identified with an organic function, the garden allegory offers a rational

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<sup>18</sup> John Fortescue, *On the Laws and Governance of England* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1997).

model of the state where the plants themselves appear incidental to the design, in favor of an overarching imperative of administrative control and profit.

John Fortescue, for example, uses the body politic metaphor in order to insist on the importance of the law for the commonwealth as he compares it with the sinews and the founding role of the political will of the people, itself likened to the circulation of blood. The natural, organic constitution of the body and its metaphorical power thus exercise a binding power on the monarch and prevent him from dispensing with the law: "And just as the head of the physical body is unable to change its sinews, or to deny its members proper strength and nourishment of blood, so a king who is head of the body politic is unable to change the laws of that body, or to deprive that same people of their own substance uninvited or against their wills."<sup>19</sup> In this metaphor of political and bodily incorporation, all major classes are equally vital and indispensable for the commonwealth.

The garden allegory in *Richard II* also relies on the force and self-evidentiality of a natural analogy, but now it is nature that provides the license to dispense with members of this garden under the higher imperative for prudence and profit. The prominence of the soil and thus the land as the chief agent of nourishment further cancels out the very role that common people and laborers play in the production of nourishment and wealth. If the more conventional body politic unites its members into its immutable

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<sup>19</sup> Fortescue, 21.

corporeality, the garden allegory is concerned with the quantity of the input and output and the waste generated, and this more mechanistic, quantitative logic already prefigures the discourse of improvement and the tropes of efficiency that will become more pronounced in the seventeenth century husbandry manuals. Thus, the anonymous author of "Consideration of the Cause in Question before the Lords Touching Depopulation" from July 5, 1607 concludes with the following analogy between a surplus of soil that cannot be used and the surplus of vagrant population: "it must likewise be fit, as good husbands do with their grounds, to provide that you do not overburden it. But as they do with their increase remove them to other places, so must the State, either by transferring to the wars or deducing to the colonies, vent the daily increase that else will surcharge the State."<sup>20</sup> The economic discourse of improvement

#### **4.5 The Fortune and Nature of Literacy in *Much Ado about Nothing***

At the end of his chapter on the fetishism of the commodities, Marx quotes from Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*, in order to demonstrate the natural fashion assumed by exchange value among mainstream economists:

If commodities could speak, they would say this: our use-value may interest men, but it does not belong to us as objects. What does belong to us as objects, however, is our value. Our own intercourse as

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<sup>20</sup> "A Consideration of the Cause in Question between the Lords touching Depopulation," 5 July 1607, in *Seventeenth Century Economic Documents*, ed. Joan Thirsk (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 109.

commodities proves it. We relate to each other merely as exchange-values. [...] So far no chemist has ever discovered exchange-value either in a pearl or a diamond. The economists who have discovered this chemical substance, and who lay special claim to critical acumen, nevertheless find that the use-value of material objects belongs to them independently of their material properties, while their value, on the other hand, forms a part of them as objects. What confirms them in this view is the peculiar circumstance that the use-value of a thing is realized without exchange, i.e. in the direct relation between the thing and the man, while, inversely, its value is realized only in exchange, i.e. in the social process. Who would not call to mind at this point the advice given by the good Dogberry to the night-watchmen Seacoal?

'To be a well-favored man is the gift of fortune; but reading and writing comes by nature.' "<sup>21</sup>

Both use value and exchange value are the product of human activity and thus inherently social, but from the perspective of exchange, it is the latter, exchange value, which that appears to possess an origin independent from human intervention: for the consumer, it appears to possess a mysterious, magical character, while it confronts the economist with the simplicity and objectivity that belong to things of matter and nature. In *Capital*, this is an instance of "forms of thought, which are socially valid, and therefore objective" which reveal their historical character only against the background of other modes of production. For us, this passage contains a double irony since Marx's genuine faith in the popularity of Dogberry has itself become a thing of the past.

The quote comes from the scene in Act III in *Much Ado about Nothing*, where the constable Dogberry is seeking to appoint a watch for the Prince and explains his

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<sup>21</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (New York: Penguin, 1990), 176-77.

arbitrary choice of George Seacoal as an approval of the latter's ability to read and write. The quote stages the common binary of humanistic discourse – the pair of fortune and nature. Learning, according to Dogberry's logic, testifies to the inner character of men, and, given the excruciating regime of the Tudor educational system, the stamina and perseverance demanded of its students must have indeed left a lasting mark on the students in Tudor times. If good looks, or being "a well-favored man" is a matter of accident and thus of little bearing, reading and writing, for Dogberry, must be the proof a natural inclination towards prudence and good morals. Both Dogberry and his fellow "compartner" Verges are prone to malapropisms and saying the opposite of what they mean and their blundering speech attests both to their rudimentary education and their honesty. Marx must have chosen this passage for the "natural" character ascribed to learning, but if we are looking for a genuinely early modern "form of thought" in that comparison, this form begins in the paired opposition between Nature and Fortune. The attribute of reading and writing appear to be incidental if not irrelevant to the juxtaposition that Dogberry makes, and after all, what really matters is the preference to nature over fortune, of the internal gifts of nature over mere appearances, in this context. Traditionally, the play is read as built on the opposition between the destabilizing force of shows, fashions and appearances on one hand, and patriarchal authority and the law, on the other hand. As vigilantes, Dogberry and his crew fall on the side of the order, and it is easier to imagine why fortune, as the quintessential early modern watch word for

instability and change, is cast alongside another source of evil, that of appearances.

Literacy, on the other hand, appears to carry little merit, but I would like to suggest that reading and writing in fact figure out as a powerful counterforce against fortune in ways that critics have completely ignored and Dogberry's almost accidental remark provides a major key to understand the role of the pastoral genre in Shakespeare's romance as well as the larger field of early modern popular romance.

The use of Dogberry in the plot of the play constitutes a gem of dramatic invention. The crew of simpletons is prone to make blatant verbal blunders, to misunderstand and then misreport, but it is precisely this artless blundering that leads then on the track of Don John's "conspiracy." At the level of the dramatic plot, their discovery is a product of pure chance, in the same way that the intended marriage of Hero and Claudio becomes endangered by the chance and the rather gratuitous intervention of the bastard brother Don John who is not fully sure himself how he could benefit from the ruin of the marriage. Leonato also proves too vulnerable to the turns of fortune and fashion when he encounters the more arrogant and haughty aspects of Claudio and Don Pedro who are now described as "[s]crambling, outfacing, fashionmonging boys" (V.i.95) by Antonio. In that respect, chance acts as a general equalizer as both versions of masculinity, the prudence of the fathers as well as the rashness of the youngsters, appear equally subject to the whims of fortune and false appearance. In that context, the end of the play, Claudio's 'blind marriage,' as we might

call it, in fact provides a dramatic reversal and resolution to the problem of fortune as Claudio's choice becomes independent of appearances. He is committed to take the substitute bride even "were she an Ethiop" (V.iv.37). The darkness of an "Ethiop" implies not only ugliness but also baser moral character that would diminish Claudio's gentility. In the preceding act, Claudio's rage had been provoked not so much by Hero's presumed falsity but rather by the decline in status and loss of honor in marrying a "common stale," as Don Pedro calls her (IV.i.64). Yet, Claudio's leap into chance also becomes a pure leap of faith that eschews altogether the danger of false appearances or misperception.

I want to suggest, however, that the play offers another resolution to the inconstancy of fortune and appearance, namely the truth and clarity established through the acts of reading and writing. The more apparent instance of the power of writing, not surprisingly, is the scene of the play, where Claudio produces Benedick's sonnet and Beatrice's love letter as the conclusive evidence against their own denial of mutual affection. Faced with an evidence of their own making, Benedick exclaims: "here's our own hands against our hearts"(V.iv.90-91). The act of writing down one's affections in one's own hand seems to constitute a greater commitment than any of verbal protestations of the couple. Christopher Brandon has made the insightful observation that this scene as well as the whole play constitute instances of early modern state

surveillance,<sup>22</sup> but I would like to emphasize that before writing prove reliable sources of evidence, writing needs to demonstrate a certain mastery over the vagrancy of speech.

Let us follow Dogberry's trajectory first. As a constable, Dogberry selects the watchman George Seacoal on the presumption that reading and writing is a natural gift that reflects on the character of the watch. As he continues to speak in malapropisms, Dogberry hands the lantern to Seacoal and with the charge to "comprehend all vagrom men" (III.iii.24-25), where "comprehend" stands for "apprehend" and "vagrom" for vagrant. Dogberry's verbal confusion still displays a logic of its own: his assumption is that a man of reading and writing must be equipped with the ability to comprehend, or grasp together, all vagrants – poor trespassers, but also men on the loose who move at the interstices of law and respectability. Thus, when Don John's men, Borachio and Conrade, begin to discuss the vagaries and shifts of fashion, a subject that Borachio calls "deformed thief" for the propensity of fashion to impoverish and render bodies grotesque, the hidden Seacoal immediately seizes upon this chance metaphor for fashion. The whims and mutability of fashion its "giddily" motions, in the words of Borachio (III.iii.130-37), fits perfectly the description of a vagrant.

Christopher Brandon is too quick to identify Dogberry with the apparatus of state surveillance, but Dogberry himself most likely cannot read or write or has a very

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<sup>22</sup> Christopher Brandon, *"Officious Men of State": Early Modern Drama and Early English Bureaucratic Identity* (Unpublished thesis: September, 2007) Available from: [http://qspace.library.queensu.ca/bitstream/1974/880/1/Christopher\\_Brandon\\_W\\_200710\\_PhD.pdf](http://qspace.library.queensu.ca/bitstream/1974/880/1/Christopher_Brandon_W_200710_PhD.pdf).

rudimentary education as evidenced by his propensity to replace words with their opposites, misquote, or infer meaning in literal, crude ways by construing the mention of a “lock [of hair]” (III.iii.166) as a reference to a door lock implanted in one’s head: “they say he wears a key in his ear and a lock hanging by it” (V.i.303-4). Lacking in education, Dogberry’s own speech is vagrant and it tends to stray from its intended course precisely because it is distracted by the destabilizing force of puns, arbitrary associations, and deferral in meaning that accompany any verbal expression – or, in Derrida’s terminology, by the *différance* inherent in language. Thus, when the watch inquires from him whether he should “lay hands” (III.iii.51) on a thief if he happens to catch one, the constable Dogberry interprets mention of hands literally, and responds with a commonplace: “I think they that touch pitch would be defiled. I think that that the most peaceable way for you, if you do take a thief, is to let him show himself what he is and steal out of your company” (55-59).

In his first attempt to deliver the news of the discovered conspiracy to Leonato, Dogberry falls into a compulsive citation of commonplaces that he feels he needs in order to assert his credibility in front of Messina’s governor, but he never manages to construct a narrative. Instead, he proceeds to extol the honesty of his partner-constable Verges, “honest as the skin between his brows” (III.v.12), and proceeds with a litany of more jumbled proverbial expressions: “when the age is in, the wit is out” (33), “[a]n two me ride of a horse, one must be behind. An honest soul [...] he is, as ever broke

bread”(35-37). Exasperated by Dogberry’s nonsensical speech, Leonato sends him away. This initial failed to attempt to deliver the “truth” provides a parallel to the events in the major plot line where the first attempt to wed Claudio and Hero fails disastrously. The sub-plot of the simpletons both mimics and mocks the crisis at the higher levels in Messina, but if that double-plot resembles the pastoral schema in Empson’s book on the genre – where ordinary people are made to say profound things<sup>23</sup> – it also works unlike a pastoral. The simpletons not only fail to deliver some inherent folk ‘wisdom’ and the intelligence they have discovered, but the scene is also a merciless mockery of the humanist commonplace tradition which Dogberry uses in order to assert some putative authority and credibility. The commonplace tradition has become the very sign of illiteracy and inaptitude and lower status. The practice of citation becomes another form of linguistic vagrancy that interferes with Dogberry’s role as servant of the state. What sets straight Dogberry’s own marred report is the examination entered on paper, and Dogberry is very particular in his insistence that they need a person with a pen and ink: “Go, good partner, go, get you to Francis Seacoal. Bid him bring his pen and inkhorn to the jail”(III.v.55-56).

It is not until the prison scene when the sexton begins to record the cross examination of Borachio and Conrade and the narrative begins to take a legible shape. The sexton put the whole plot together by asking about the basic elements of narrative:

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<sup>23</sup> William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (New York: New Directions, 1974), 51.

the identity of the perpetrators, the identity of the accusers, and the details of the overheard conversation. It is in the prison, that the diverging accounts of Dogberry, the watchmen, and two culprits are symbolically “disciplined” into a coherent narrative, and it is only then that the sexton can comprehend the parallels between those petty reports and the larger crisis that has stricken in Messina. When called on to act as the accuser in Act V, scene i, Dogberry again falls in a stalled verbosity, this time mimicking the humanist propensity for generating numberless expressions for the same situation. Thus, Dogberry accuses the arrested men for committing false reports, speaking untruths, slandering, belying a lady, verifying unjust things, and lying (211-15). Instead of producing a sequential narrative, Dogberry is overwhelmed by his own propensity for Renaissance *copia*. Don Pedro, on the other hand, requests a legal narrative of what was done, the nature of the offence, the reason for committing it, and the suggested measure (216-19). Borachio’s immediate confession at this point is surprising, but one possible way to account for it is his desire to spare himself another bout of Dogberry’s excessive and meandering verbosity. The full narrative clarifies the difference in agency amongst the participants in the unfortunate night scene and thus distinguish between the villains, instigators, as well as the clueless, innocent participants like Claudio or Margaret. By naming the agents, this narrative also dispenses with the more abstract notions of fortune and false appearances which seize to be so vague and assume the shape of concrete character. Where virtue is not sufficient to prevail over the proverbial

turns of fortune, reason – and writing – are evoked to dispel fortune, institute order, and most importantly establish agency which is the case with both the examination report and the writing presented to Beatrice and Benedick at the end.

This form of writing that privileges the narrative of events as well as the identity of the agent or the author competes with the other forms of discourse featured in the play: the lively but also frivolous exchange of courtly witticisms on one hand, and then the innocuous but also compulsive commonplaces which in fact not only completely fall out of place but also delay and distract the narrative. Yet, if the latter two offer occasion for dalliance or delay, it is only the proper narrative language of ‘truth’ and agency, the language of ‘who done it,’ that is granted a role in the plot as it provides a swift resolution to the series of mistakes and misrecognitions in the play.

In *Much Ado about Nothing*, the discourse of causality and agency, with its origins in legal discourse, ceases to be merely a cultural marker of a character’s speech, as courtly wit and common precept are, and is incorporated as a plot-driving element. But that can happen only if the “reading and writing” have already entered the category of the natural – in the way in which a bastard’s jealousy or a disgraced father’s disproportionate grief need no justification and explanation and merely happen in the plot. Courtly wit and humanist precept are both given exaggerated, affected air by the play. As such, they become markers of a slight degree of social aberration, as in the case of Beatrice, Benedick, or Dogberry, whose language and verbal tics consciously or

unconsciously refuse to settle on a definite position or a factual statement. The legal language of agency and causality, on the other hand, appears neutral and natural, perhaps precisely because it lacks the cultural and class associations of the other two.

In this context, the play contributes to the debate between humanist education and courtly wit that defines much of the romance prose written in the late decades of the sixteenth century. In *The Elizabethan Prodigals*, Richard Helgerson describes a whole generation of writers like Lyly, Greene, and Lodge, who took the plot of prodigality in order to stage an ongoing dilemma for the writers coming from the Tudor education system.<sup>24</sup> On one hand, they were trained in a system that drew on humanist precepts and postulated the goal of civic duty, but on the other hand, many of these writers also experimented with less reputable themes of romance and courtiership. In many respects, the major conflict in *Much Ado about Nothing* echoes the major elements of the prodigality story, posing elderly patriarchs against boisterous youth. Yet, the prodigality story seem to have undergone some modifications by 1598-1599 when *Much Ado* was written, as the play's chief concern lies in the problem of truth and appearance, a typical Spenserian theme from his *Faerie Queene*, from which Shakespeare also borrows the story of Philemon and Phedon on temperance. Yet, if Phedon's story is remedied by having Fury and Occasion (another name for fortune) bound and gagged, the implicit

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<sup>24</sup> Richard Helgerson, *The Elizabethan Prodigals* (Berkeley: University of California, 1976).

lesson in *Much Ado about Nothing* is concerned with containing language, fashion, and appearances rather than disruptions of the balance in the inner realm.

The major addition to Spenser's plot of Phedon and Philemon introduced by Shakespeare is the presence of the father figures, Leonato and Antonio, and the dual pair of Don Pedro and Don John whose titles place them at the level of the governor of Messina in spite of their single status and probably younger age. The heavy emphasis on father authority renders the play an intervention to prodigal son plot from the prose romances from the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as Richard Helgerson has summed up its features and social significance in *The Elizabethan Prodigals*. The prodigal plot that defines much of the writerly production and biographical life patterns of figures such as John Lyly, George Gascoigne, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, and even Philip Sidney, repeatedly poses the humanist imperatives of duty and social obligations against the temptations of courtly romance, foreign travel, and the rhetoric of beauty, poetry, and courtly wit. For Helgerson, the prodigal narrative constitutes the particular expression of the frustrated social and artistic ambitions of the generation of writers who were produced by the Tudor educational system with its emphasis on thrift, duty, and perseverance but were denied entry into the administrative apparatus of the state. The youthful attempts of many of these writers in the genre of prose romance, poetry and Euphuism could be interpreted as gestures of rebellion and dissent from a humanist foundation and the official form of literacy marshaled by the state and such figures of

authority as Burghley. In this book as in his 1992 *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England*, Helgerson chooses to read romance plots as inherently subversive of genres and styles associated with centralized government, but he ignores the use of the pastoral genre in this literary confrontations and staged clashes between humanist precept and courtly wit that he described in *The Elizabethan Prodigals*. When he writes about Robert Greene, for example, he identifies Greene's use of the pastoral in Pandosto as an escape in "to an Arcadian world of the pure aesthetic," or "a realm of pure beauty and pure accident" derived from the Greek romance and the Italian novella.<sup>25</sup> The withdrawal of Greene's Fawnia and Dorastus in the world of the shepherds represents a sacrifice of the prince's authority and public role and thus:

[...]an image of the deprivation of identity. To win Fawnia, Dorastus must abandon the outward signs of his rank and assume the dress of a shepherd. But, unlike the usual prodigal, who changes in appearance, as in mind, without realizing it, Dorastus constantly suffers from the impropriety of his new guise."<sup>26</sup>

Helgerson's passing remarks on the pastoral genre create the impression that the pastoral functions as a mere temporary evasion of the very generational conflict staged in the prodigality plot. Yet, for Helgerson, the prodigality plot operates between the extreme, inflexible poles of a masculine humanist sense of duty and the more feminine appeal of romance.<sup>27</sup> This rigid binary prevents him from seeing the pastoral genre as an

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<sup>25</sup> Helgerson, 84.

<sup>26</sup> Helgerson, 89.

<sup>27</sup> Helgerson, 49.

alternative solution and a separate symbolic space that allows those Elizabethan authors to reinvent a gentlemanly masculinity that goes beyond the more conventional gender role expectations deriving from the Tudor education system or the rhetoric of courtship. As I have argued in the preceding chapters, the versions the late sixteenth century pastoral enact precisely such a reconciliation between humanist precepts and poetry, thrift and pleasure, rural labor and courtly pursuits. The coexistence of these elements is often jarring to the ears of critics interested in the formal features and structure of the pastoral, such as William Empson, or in the class position adopted by the pastoral, such as Raymond Williams, but this very coexistence – as fraught with contradictions as at it is—is a stable feature of the pastoral genre at the end of the sixteenth century in England. Thus, Dogberry’s remark on the opposition between fortune and nature is to be found again and again in the prodigality narrative – and in Shakespeare’s most pastoral romance, *As You Like It*, and its textual predecessor, Thomas Lodge’s *Rosalynd* (1590).

The reader is perhaps wondering at this point because the initial discussion on Marx and Dogberry is suddenly taking a sharp turn towards the pastoral, but Shakespeare’s *Much Ado about Nothing* bears very little resemblance to the more conventional takes of the pastoral genre. The connection may become clearer if we turn to the character of Orlando from Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* who presents us with the following rather amusing dilemma, namely the inconsistency between his lack of

education and his sudden propensity for writing love poems. One of the major objections of Orlando against his older brother Oliver is that Orlando has been deprived of the gentlemanly upbringing he deserves by virtue of his blood and has been turned into a household servant. Orlando's rebuke to his older brother deserves to be quoted in full length since it captures a whole cluster of contemporary attitudes about education, labor, and idleness.

My brother Jaques he keeps at school, and reports speak goldenly of his profit. For my part, he keeps me rustically at home, or, to speak more properly, stays me here at home unkept; for call you that keeping for a gentleman of my birth, that differs not from the stalling of an ox.

(I.i.5-10)

Besides this nothing that he so plentifully gives me, the something that nature gave me his countenance seems to take from me: he lets me feed with his hinds, bars me the place of a brother, and, as much as in him lies, mines my gentility with my education. (I.i.15-20)

My father charged you in his will to give me good education: you have trained me like a peasant, obscuring and hiding from me all gentleman-like qualities. (I.i.63-66)

Oliver's description of Orlando, nor surprisingly, draws on the conventional depiction of ambitious young men seeking to subvert the social order:

it is the stubbornest young fellow of France, full of ambition, an envious emulator of every man's good parts, a secret and villanous contriver against me his natural brother. (I.i.139-143)

Lacking education and the skills to “make anything” in fact subject Orlando to a form of “idleness” or useless and simultaneously condemn the younger son to a life of servitude. This form of deprivation is more appropriate as a punishment for prodigality which Orlando rejects: “What prodigal portion have I spent, that I should come to such a penury?” (I.i.37). Education figures out as a form of capital commensurable with landed estate and both occupy an important place in the claim to gentility. Illiteracy, on the other hand, is synonymous with menial labor, dependence on a master, and outright slavery that condemns the rustic to a life of unskilled labor.

In his influential reading of *As You Like It*, Louis Montrose has elaborately described the dire social prospects faced by second sons in early modern England that inform so much of Orlando’s situation. Yet, Montrose assumes that the law of primogeniture and conflict over inheritance lie at the root of the larger structural clashes in the play. He mentions Orlando’s demand for learning only in passing and sees the pastoral genre as a primary remedy for material inequalities: “Shakespeare uses the machinery of pastoral romance to remedy the lack of fit between deserving and having, between Nature and Fortune. Without actually violating the primary Elizabethan social frontier separating the gentle from the base, the play achieves an illusion of social leveling and of unions across class boundaries.”<sup>28</sup> Citing Rosalind’s remark about “this

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<sup>28</sup> Louis Adrian Montrose, “The Place of the Brother’ in *As You Like It: Social Process and Comic Form*,” *SQ* 32, no. 1 (Spring, 1981): 33.

working-day world”(I.iii.12), Montrose reads the forest of Arden as temporary suspension into a fantasy world far from oppressive social realities.

The most striking feature of Orlando, I would like to claim, is not his prowess and even his attachment to the old Adam. The most perplexing moment in Orlando’s venture in the forest is when this youth, deprived of manners, proper learning, and any training in the arts, immediately gives himself to love poetry and its ‘publication’ around the forest of Arden. We know from an earlier remark by Oliver that Orlando possess an admirable character: “he’s gentle, never schooled and yet learned, full of noble device”(I.i.162). Right after he’s adopted in the retinue of the exiled Duke Senior, Orlando proceeds to publish his love for Rosalind around the forest:

O Rosalind! these trees shall be my books  
And in their barks my thoughts I’ll character;  
That every eye which in this forest looks  
Shall see thy virtue witness’d every where. (III.ii)

Montrose calls Orlando a “Petrarchan lover”(49) at this point, but Petrarchan lovers are not born such and do not learn that art while serving in the household. The desire to celebrate Orlando’s transcendence over his penury and his newly found freedom in the realm of verse is natural, but this is precisely the source of irony in Dogberry’s remark on the natural gifts of reading and writing. Rosalind and Celia also play at the meaning of fortune and nature, with Rosalind noting that “Fortune reigns in gifts of the world, not in the lineaments of Nature”(I.ii.41-42), thus assigning the gifts of character under Nature. John Shaw also draws our attention to the centrality of the pair

of Nature and Fortune for understanding the play, but Shaw tends to equate Nature with Sapientia, prudence, and stoic reason, manifested by graceful acceptance and equanimity in the face of fortune, which is also a chief pastoral theme.<sup>29</sup> Orlando's character certainly draws on the pastoral tradition in more than one way, but his affiliation with the figure of Nature and its gifts of wit and natural propensity for love poetry deserve a further analysis.

The single property of wit bestowed on second sons has survived in a passage from John Earle's *Micro-Cosmography* (1628), where Earle describes the second son as a social type: "Nature hath furnisht him with a little more wit upon compassion; for it is like to be his best revenew."<sup>30</sup> This is in fact a negative restatement of the 'natural gift' of reading and writing since professions such as law, medicine and teaching seem to be the chief gentlemanly alternative for those second sons. What is a necessity dictated by birth and available social venues for advancement is given a natural character, as a matter of "compassion." Love poetry, however, is not exactly the most advantageous or even appropriate literary effort for young sons looking for employment as Helgerson notes in *The Elizabethan Prodigals*. Orlando's knack for versification does not fit seamlessly the stereotype of the romance hero either, as he is equally foreign to the aggressive

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<sup>29</sup> John Shaw, "Fortune and Nature in *As You Like It*." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (Winter, 1955): 45-47.

<sup>30</sup> Montrose, 31.

masculinity of Gamelyn, his fourteenth century literary predecessor, and to the diversions of courtly wit.

## 5. Pricing the Pastoral in Milton's *Comus* (1634) and *Paradise Lost* (1667)

### 5.1 Commerce and Dispensation in Milton's *Comus*

The opening verses to George Chapman's *Ovid Banquet of Sense* (1595) present us with the following allegory of estate management and poetic genius:

Vngratefull Farmers of the Muses land  
That (wanting thrift and iudgment to imploy it)  
Let it manureles and un(f)enced stand,  
Till barbarous Cattell enter and destroy it:  
Now the true heyre is happily found out  
Who ((f)raming it t'inritch posterities)  
Walls it with spright-fild darkness round about,  
Grafs, plants, and sowes; and makes it Paradise.  
To which without the Parca\*s golden bow,  
None can aspire but stick in errors hell;  
A Garland to engird a Monarchs brow,  
Then take some paines to ioy so rich a Jewell  
Most prize is graspt in labors hardest hand,  
And idle sonles can nothing rich command.<sup>1</sup>

These verses supposedly written by some "Richard Stapleton to the Author" are inserted in between the introduction signed by George Chapman and the "Argument" that sums up the occasion and setting where the poetic narrative takes place. Given the shared themes and grand sentiments expressed in both the introduction and the verses that follow, we can safely assume that they were written either by Chapman himself or in close collaboration with him. To sum it briefly, *Ovid's Banquet of Sense* is a narrative

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<sup>1</sup> George Chapman, *Ovids banquet of sence. A coronet for his mistresse philosophie, and his amorous zodiacke*...London: 1595, 3. Available from: <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/>.

poem about the encounter between Ovid and his muse Corynna, another name for Julia, the daughter of the Roman emperor Augustus. Ovid approaches secretly Corynna while she is bathing in the Garden of the Emperor, and each of his five senses – hearing, vision, smell, touch, and taste – is subsequently animated into a poetic frenzy by Corynna’s song and her body. Acting as a frame to the narrative, the introductory verses pose Chapman himself as the true heir of Ovid and a new master of the amatory Muses. After Ovid’s death, love poetry “hath still a Maister mist... but now his waking soule in *Chapman* liues.”<sup>2</sup> In case someone has missed the now revealed persona of Ovid’s heir, the last verse from this sequence clarifies Chapman’s claim as Ovid’s reincarnation:

Shee [the Muse] makes (in thee) the spirit of Ouid moue,  
And calles thee second Maister of her loue.<sup>3</sup>

The true heir from the third verse above then refers to Chapman’s assumption of the place of Ovid’s heir. The farming labor alluded to in the allegory of the Muses’ land above is purely metaphorical, and yet, the force of the allegory draws precisely on the distinction between the tenant farmers merely renting the land and the heir who encloses and improves the realm of the Muses. In retrospect, it is the act of enclosure, fencing, and full employment of the land which testifies to the rightfulness of Chapman’s claim to his inheritance and place in this classical lineage of love poetry.

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<sup>2</sup> Chapman, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Chapman, 4.

Being intended for the enrichment of posterity, his labor excludes any venal desires for personal profit or commercial gain and stake a claim on literary immortality conceived in the terms of an older patriarchal economy of inheritance and lineage.

The “barbarous Cattell” putting the farm to waste easily evokes Chapman’s example of literary barbarisms from the introduction where he defends his use of “[o]bscuritie in affecttion of words, & indigested concepts” as a more advanced and sophisticated expression compared to the “barbarism” of “plaine” poetry. Plainness is like “a confection” not made to last and a thing obtained with little endeavor which, in Chapman’s words, “euery Cobler may sing to his patch.”<sup>4</sup> He has declared straight in the introduction, “[t]he profane multitude I hate,” and his objection to plainness becomes an occasion for him to express his loathing of any rhetoric or activity intended for a broader, common use. This multitude is made of those “wandering like passportles men” whose most defining characteristic is “willfull pouertie of iudgements,” a lack of discernment and taste that makes these plain poets in a dangerous mix the low with the high, thus making the “Asse runne proude of his eares” and doing away with the strength of the lion. Conceited poetry, for Chapman, upholds by default the distinction between sacred and profane, where plainness, “cleereness of representation” and “perspicuous deliuery” are too inclusive and permissive of all kinds of passportless men and cattle that desecrate poetry. The crucial difference between the “ungrateful” tenant

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<sup>4</sup> Chapman, 2.

farmers and the true heir is then the lack of judgment and knowledge. The 'thrift' in the passage above refers no longer to the household ideal of prudent spending and management of resources, but rather to the possession of a specialized, elite, and exclusive knowledge that sets the poet above the rabble of the common poets.

The fencing and enclosure of the farm is particularly interesting since it effectively describes the construction of an allegory. The enclosed farm, walled "with spright-fild darkness," corresponds to Chapman's propensity for allegory – "that d(a)rkness... I still labor to be shadowed," as he says in the introduction – that effectively serves to sift the elite of poetic understanding from the common rabble. Some of the language in the introduction, particularly Chapman's praise of shadows and nuances in portraiture echoes a similar passage in Arthur Golding's Preface to his translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1565) where the joy of the discovery of hidden meanings exceeds the discovery of gold (Pref. 124-34). Golding's metaphor of gold mining offers a pun on his own name and also provides a certain model of allegorical reading now that the reader needs to dig deeper in the text in order to decode it. Chapman paraphrases the mining metaphor in his introduction, but where Golding seeks to excite the curiosity of his reader with the prospect of discovery, the enclosure metaphor of Chapman posits an exclusive authorial ownership and profit. The shadowed purposed of his allegory is not hard to detect -- Corynna's body

approximates an “Elisian grace”<sup>5</sup> which is a likely reference to the now aging Queen – Corrynna herself remains rather passive in comparison with the poet’s senses which are endowed with an exclusive power to move the mind, mediate, and transmit the muse’s graces across the ages. It is not surprising when the speaker conceives of his own hand as the foremost of all senses, “King of the King of Sences...Wealth of the laborer...Lord of exercise...worthy to be well employde.”<sup>6</sup> Older and less reliable notions of invention or fancy as the domain of poetry have been supplemented by the valorized image of the hand as a tool of carrying over and transmitting beauty.

Yet, the distinction between careless farmers and the rightful heir, between tenancy and noble patrimony, seeks to establish a relationship of direct lineage but, rather unwittingly, testifies to a logic that derives from the growing importance of trade for agrarian farming, or the logic of improvement. The discourse of improvement itself rests on the assumption that improvement is the application of specialized knowledge and understanding not available to the hired labor employed on the farm. The distinction between tenancy and patrimony helps Chapman to elucidate his use of inaccessible language and allegorical conceits, but, in the context of English agrarian history, the necessity for improved techniques and practical knowledge is a direct consequence of the pressure of the market.

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<sup>5</sup> Chapman, 13.

<sup>6</sup> Chapman, 19.

Andrew McRae has studied the ways in which improvement literature and husbandry manuals from the sixteenth and seventeenth century reinforced the “ordered patriarchal structure” of the manor house as improving landlords increasingly drew enthusiasm for improvement from classical authors like Xenophon, Varro, and Columella, but at the same time the culture of improvement also introduced distinctly modern elements in the realm of land management, such as the emphasis on surveyorship and the possession of specialized knowledge. Husbandry advice encouraged gentleman farmers to employ their curiosity and seek practical experience in farming, but that experience hardly implied anything like rolling up their sleeves and getting their hands dirty with sowing or plowing.<sup>7</sup> The discourse of improvement encouraged the practice of thrift and the optimization of land use, but this thriftiness was to be achieved at the level of better supervision and closer surveillance over the farm. Thus, Sir Anthony Fitzherbert’s *First Booke of Husbandrye* (1523) places an emphasis on the daily activity of writing and keeping records of the farm and advises the gentleman farmer to: “go aboute his closes, pastures, feeldes and specyally by the hedges, and to have in his purse a payre of tables, and whan he seeth anythyng that would be amended, to wryte it in his tables... And whan he cometh home... at nyghte,

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<sup>7</sup> Andrew McRae, “Husbandry Manuals and the Language of Agrarian Improvement,” in *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England: Writing and the Land*, ed. Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (Leicester: Leicester UP: 1992), 35. For a discussion of the sixteenth century readership of classical texts on agriculture in England, see Joan Thirsk, “Making A Fresh Start: Sixteenth Century Agriculture and the Classical Inspiration,” 15-34, from the same volume.

than let hym call his bayly... and to shewe hym the defautes, that they may be shortly amended. ... and thus let hym use dayly, and shorte space he shall sette moche thynges in good ordre.”<sup>8</sup>

The farmer sets upon making profit by carrying on him writing utensils while surveying the farm and by keeping a careful record that is to be compiled during the day and then used as an administrative tool for changes and improvements. The rightful tool of the improver is his pen and the “payre of table,” and his relationship with the field is that of abstracting his observations into commands to be implemented by his bailiff, here, most likely an officer supervising the whole manor. Improvement demands knowledge of agrarian practices, but this knowledge remains confined to the realm of intellectual endeavor and transmission that excludes the population of largely illiterate smaller farmers and hired labor. Heresbach, for example, fashions his entire book around dialogues where other farmers exchange with one another their specialized knowledge. Failure to maintain a farm is attributed to the lord’s lack of knowledge in his estate. Richard Surfleet’s translation from French, *Maison Rustique, or The Countrie Farme* (1600), also begins with a qualification of its audience which is not to be “ordinarie husbandmen, the fonde and ignorant sort...but of renowned men which have loved and caused to flourish the life and exercises of the countrie house.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> McRae, 37-8.

<sup>9</sup> McRae, 38.

During the 1607 debates about enclosures, the author of the memorandum on Enclosures and Depopulation declared that the balance between land allocated for grain and wool should be best left to the discretion of farmers in the following terms: “[t]he good individual is the good general: for corn being dearer than cloth or meat comparatively, the husbandmen will plough, since his only end is profit.”<sup>10</sup> The improvement on individual farms transfers to a notion of abstract, general utility only when mediated by the market. Yet, the profit to be gained by aligning agrarian production with the changing flows of supply and demand has not acquired full acceptance as the most naturally logical, rational course, and John Norden finds it necessary in *The Surveyors Dialogue* (1607) to deploy the persuasive powers of the Surveyor against the Bayly’s skepticism and against the more “common” and “peevish” course of husbandry where farmers “onely try what the earth will do of it selfe.”<sup>11</sup> The Surveyor’s observations derive from his position of an overseer and traveler who has been able to generalize particular practices and present them in the form of expertise: “It is most necessary for a *Surveyor* to remeber what he hath obserued, and to consider well the natures and qualities of all kinds of grounds, and to informe the Lord, of the meanes

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<sup>10</sup> “A Consideration of the Cause in Question between the Lords touching Depopulation,” 5 July 1607, in *Seventeenth Century Economic Documents*, ed. Joan Thirsk and JP Cooper (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 108.

<sup>11</sup> John Norden, *The Surveyors Dialogue* (1607), 224. Available from: <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/>. See also Thirsk, 111.

how to better his estate by lawfull meanes, especially in bettering his own *demeisnes*.”<sup>12</sup>

This passage is succeeded by a dialog about the advantages of a meadow whose cultivation appears less optimal when compared with meadows from diverse other regions of England. Improvement, thus, rests in the hands of those able to conceive agrarian production in abstract and generalized terms and respectively disseminate this knowledge.

At a time when the ideal of good husbandry has come to mean improvement for profit, the self-sufficiency, ease, and scorn of worldly gain that characterized the Elizabethan courtly pastoral have lost their relevance. The moral economy that dominates popular discourses in the sixteenth century and the belief in the need for common responsibility of alleviating hunger and grain shortages has served as a way of regulating the social costs during economic crises, but only while agricultural techniques were primitive. Yet, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, landlords and husbandmen begin changing their ways of farming with a view towards productivity: enclosing, ditching, draining, irrigating, rotating and planting of new crops. The competition for rents makes it possible to dislodge the English peasantry from their old ways. The nobility are adopting entrepreneurial ways that disrupt the countryside, dissolving the coherence between religious and economic life, reflected in the laws regulating the grain trade and in popular representations of grain as a commodity.

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<sup>12</sup> Thirsk, 113.

Previously, popular tracts defending the poor man's right to bread in times of dearth have emphasized the sustaining, nourishing quality of grain. Once productivity is boosted and grain comes to be viewed as a profitable export, the question of hunger fades altogether, and grain is now conceived as a commodity exchangeable with other commodities, ready for new markets. Farmers, themselves, seek to extricate themselves from the older corporal structure of the manor house and the responsibilities it entails to the larger community, and begin to adopt language championing the liberty and freedom of the subject.<sup>13</sup>

In the pages to follow, I would like to consider some of the ways in which John Milton's oeuvre, and the *Comus* masque and *Paradise Lost* in particular, confront the discourse of commerce precisely as a discourse and a competing model of knowledge and production of certainty. Milton's various positions on the status of intellectual and public labor have been the subject of a long-standing debate among literary critics and historians. Christopher Kendrick, for instance, has argued that Milton's privileging of an autonomous subject over the narrative itself should be read as a symptom and a symbolic response rather than a solution to the alienating effects of commercialization.<sup>14</sup> In two related articles on *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*, John Guillory also suggests that Milton's elevation of poetry and writing to the level of the sacred should be read as

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<sup>13</sup> The literature on the changes in English countryside during the seventeenth century is prodigious, but I here I have summarized the more general picture described by Joyce Oldham Appleby in *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

<sup>14</sup> Christopher, Kendrick, *Milton: A Study of Ideology and Form* (New York: Methuen, 1986).

an accommodation of conflicting economic realms and notions of work.<sup>15</sup> David Hawkes, approaching the same problem from a different vantage point, insists that Milton's iconoclasm offers a critique of autonomous representation, and thus indirectly of the epistemology that underlies commercial exchange.<sup>16</sup> Hawkes shifts the brunt of his analysis away from the undecidable question of agency and looks instead at issues of representation and production of value at the textual level. I adopt this approach as I attempt to describe some of the ways in which Milton's poetry itself reads and articulates the exigencies of its historical moment.

Comus, the evil magician and spirit of debauchery in John Milton's Ludlow masque (1634), scorns his captive Lady for defending her chastity and temperance by imputing on her the foolishness of those ones of stoic conviction who abstain from pleasure and "nothing wear but freise"(722), where "freise" denotes a course woolen fabric produced chiefly for domestic use rather than for export. According to his logic, beauty, as well as all bounties and wealth of the earth, are in fact a form of liquid currency prone to expire quickly in time, whose chief use consists in circulation and

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<sup>15</sup> John Guillory, "From the Superfluous to the Supernumerary: Reading Gender into Paradise Lost," in *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus (Chicago: Chicago University Press: 1990), 68-88. Guillory suggests that Milton stages a clash between contradictory economic modes until they produce a purified metaphysical unity, which is also the line of analysis that informs Guillory's "The Father's House: *Samson Agonistes* in its Historical Moment," in *John Milton*, ed. Annabel Patterson, 202-225 (New York: Longman, 1992).

<sup>16</sup> For a biographical study of Milton, see David Hawkes, *John Milton: A Hero of Our Time* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2010). For a study of the intersections between mercantilism and charges of idolatry in the seventeenth century, see Hawkes's *Idols of the Marketplace: Idolatry and Commodity Fetishism in English Literature, 1580-1680* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

consumption. Comus accuses the Lady of hoarding her charms and beauty, “those dainty limms which nature lent/ For gentle usage”(681). He has confronted the Lady with the offer of an exchange – a surfeit of pleasure in exchange for her own concession to partake – but he is suggesting that in her refusal to trade, she is also depriving her own self and inverting the conditions on which her own beauty has been lent to her by Nature. The Lady, then, is acting “like an ill borrower” bound to waste her loan if she fails to reinvest it back into circulation. Further on, Comus refers to beauty as “natures coyn, must not be hoorded/ But must be currant”(739-40). Beauty and appearance, according to him, are little different from coin and money as everything turns out to be comprised of pure exchange value, without any use value for those who cannot enter an exchange.

I would like to argue in the following section that Milton mobilizes a version of the Spenserian pastoral in order to exorcise an evil force associated with commerce and human degeneration, but he does so not by seeking the withdrawal and self-isolation characteristic for the genre, but rather by using the pastoral as an authorization of a mode of hearing, of listening to the preceding tradition in a historical mode. John Guillory has already made a similar argument about the particular way – “transumptive allusion,” a term that Guillory borrows from Angus Fletcher and Harold Bloom – in which Milton draws on and relies on a literary tradition but only to the point that this tradition paves the way to truth and learning, but without identifying tradition with

truth itself.<sup>17</sup> Guillory describes Milton's peculiar relationship with the Renaissance tradition as a stance of listening to the text – rather than simply imitating or rewriting it – and respectively hearing it and hearing the literary, figurative elements of a text apart from the moral or didactic intentions in it.<sup>18</sup> While truth remains an ideal residing the eternal realm of the metaphysical, inherited images and figures are irrevocably historical and fragmented, and Milton would rather sound and test their fragmentation than contemplate them as given wholes. In the context of *Paradise Lost*, for example, the spoken word and vocal power of Protestantism is brought to the epic – as mimetic sounds or dissonances – in order to syncopate and arbitrate between competing genres and rhetoric. *Comus*, written and performed on September 29, 1634, also draws on a similar impulse, actively calling to its audience to attend to sounds, words, imprints as opposed to yielding to the visual spectacle commonly associated with the masque.

In the manner of the courtly masque genre, Milton's *Comus* stages a crises or confrontation presented by typological or allegorical characters which is then resolved by a higher force: here, the evil magician Comus traps a lost lady in his castle, an Attendant Spirit summons the lady's two brother to assail and drive away Comus, and when the lady still remains immobilized by the evil magic, the Spirit summons a virgin

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<sup>17</sup> John Guillory, *Poetic Authority: Spenser, Milton, and Literary History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), and particularly "Miltonic Authority," 94-145.

<sup>18</sup> Christopher Kendrick makes a similar observation about Milton's critical use of traditional genres, "a way of practicing genre as if from a distance, or in the prevalence of what is effect a certain *kind* of genre, the *meta-genre*," which Kendrick interprets as a distance which privileges an individual, autonomous subject over a collective narrative. See Kendrick, 72.

river nymph, Sabrina, to bring the Lady to life. Blair Hoxby has noted how the debate between Comus and the Lady reflects the terms of the current economic debates about the decay in trade and the scarcity in coin that faced England in the beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>19</sup> The writings of Thomas Misselden and Gerard de Malynes from the 1620s show the political stakes of the debate for the sovereignty of monarch. While Malynes blamed the merchants from the shortage of coin and argued for the ultimate authority of the king to determine the value of English coin, Misselden, on the other hand, argued that the scarcity of commodities should determine the exchange rate. He advocated a rise in the denomination of coin (debasement) that would allow for readjustment between the domestic and the foreign currencies of England's trade partners, and in general favored the granting liberty to the market to regulate money's purchasing power.<sup>20</sup> Reading this debate in the context of a longer history of economic thought, Joyce Appleby has argued that Misselden, in *The Circle of Commerce* (1623), challenged the commonly assumed boundary between the natural and the social, and asserted that certain human responses possessed a uniformity and consistency that merited consideration as a separate natural phenomenon.<sup>21</sup> According to Misselden, commerce followed its own cycles of development independent of social hierarchies as the commonwealth or the monarch. Or, to put in different terms, private wealth

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<sup>19</sup> Blair Hoxby, *Mammon's Music: Literature and Economics in the Age of Milton* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 1-24.

<sup>20</sup> Edward Misselden was a member of the Merchant Adventurers.

<sup>21</sup> Appleby, 47.

becomes internally constitutive, in the strongest sense of the word, of the commonwealth, as an oft-quoted passage from Misselden notes: "And is it not lawful for merchants to seek their Privatum Commodum in the exercise of their calling? Is not gain the end of trade? Is not the public involved in the private, and the private in the public? What else makes a common wealth, but the private-wealth..."<sup>22</sup> By the end of the seventeenth century, the imperative to invest money and grow one's property have become a commonplace: "That man is richest, whose Estate is in a growing condition, either in Land at Farm, Money at Interest, or Goods in Trade," writes Dudley North in his *Discourses Upon Trade* (1691).<sup>23</sup>

Blair Hoxby has rightly noted the unusual significance that Milton's masque bestows on economic discourses of the day, but, surprisingly he leaves out from his discussion Milton's engagement with one of the central terms of the economic debate, that of coinage and lending. Giving full, free reign to commerce implies that everything, wealth and human virtue alike, becomes subject to exchange, and Milton's grave objections to Comus's theory of consumption as some sort of a natural law are not difficult to detect. What is more peculiar, however, is that the discourse employed by Comus is not precisely that of commerce and trade but of usury and lending. Merchants possess a title to the goods they sell, but this title means only a possession of the

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<sup>22</sup> As quoted in Jacob Viner, *Studies in the Theory of International Trade*, Ch. 2 (New York: Harper, 1937). Available from: <http://www.econlib.org>.

<sup>23</sup> Isaac Rubin, *A History of Economic Thought* (London: Ink Links, 1979), 60.

exchange value of commodities. While no hindrance exists to stop them from consuming privately their wares, merchants in early modern England (unlike farmers!) are predominantly selling what they have purchased on credit and thus their title remains liquid and conditional. The more limited practice of usury then appears as an abbreviated form of commerce, or almost the same thing if one removes the actual material commodities from the equation of exchange. If Milton's analogy between usury and commerce may have appeared somewhat unwarranted and gratuitous initially, a product of the poet's suspicion of related practices, the perspicuity of its logic vies only with the elaboration of the theory of use and exchange value during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

If commerce is an extension of usury, indeed, the former becomes subject to the far more politically sensitive discourse of unnatural reproduction or 'breeding' of money and, additionally, to the charge of idolatry, as David Hawkes has studied the intersection of puritan iconoclasm and mercantilism in his *Idols of the Marketplace*.<sup>24</sup> In Protestant England, the religious accusation of idolatry, or worship of false deities, became a code word for a certain autonomy of representation that transferred the power or authority of the thing or institution represented to the iconography or modes of its representation. The language of idolatry, according to Hawkes, was the historical discourse that early modern England used in order to come to terms with an emergent capitalist economy and its attendant effects in all spheres of social experience. Religious

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<sup>24</sup> See Hawkes, *Idols of the Marketplace*.

or romish idolatry, debasement of coin, usury – these rather disparate practices all carried the brand of idolatry as they made visible the volatile nature of value which suddenly became dislodged from any necessary attachment to physical substance or essence. In that context, value came dangerously close to what Luther had called appearance and accident, the non-essential elements of Aristotelian essences.

Appearances like images or money, on the other hand, which belonged to the class of artificial, man-made and thus also accidental things, on the other hand, were perceived as usurping the status of natural, self-evident essences.

The Lady insists on a certain freedom to refrain from exchange, which Comus counteracts with the argument that what she refuses is only temporarily in her hold, only a loan. Possession does not even carry the tentative status of a land lease or a copyhold where the payment of rent or fees grants a temporary form of possession, but is framed in the exacting, strict terms implied of usury that evaporate all essences or inherent properties. The Lady correctly resorts to an argument insisting on her chastity, a virtue that partially belongs to another temporal scheme, that of heaven, and thus remains outside the passage of profane time. Chastity, or as the elder brother calls it “virgin purity” (427), also evokes while also surpassing the mundane purity of golden, non-debased coins. Whether that virtue could indeed survive a forceful exchange and a physical, material fall into the realm of brutes and beasts is a question that Milton will leave for Adam and Eve to answer in *Paradise Lost*. The proximity between the Lady and

the object of pure gold is further developed in the dialogue between the two brothers as they are debating the possibility that their lost sister might have been harmed or 'degraded' while wandering in the dark night. Critics somehow miss the fact that the economic discourse informs not only the captivity scene but also the musings of the brothers. The older brother, stoically-minded and versed in the antiquity of Greece, insists that his sister is guided by "her own radiant light"(374), thus remaining in full possession of herself, while the younger brother fears that she, like a tree laden with "blooming gold" may fall prey to "outlaws"(499) or thieves outside the law precisely because of her purity. Numerous critics have noted the possible allusions to a case of a recent rape scandal in an arranged aristocratic marriage or the more metaphorical rape of wild areas caused by colonial settlement.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the sister's "unowned"(407) or unmarried status also make her a bait for rapacious forces. Curiously, for the context of the seventeenth century where unmarried women were considered to be in the custody of a father, brother, or older relative, this younger brother thinks of his sister as "unowned" thus releasing her from the more enslaving aspects of blood relationships, a freedom she appears to share with the anonymous status of pure gold.

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<sup>25</sup> For different interpretations of this argument see Debora Shuger, "'Gums of Glutinous Heat' and the Stream of Consciousness: The Theology of Milton's Masque," *Representations* 20 (Autumn, 1991): 1-21, Catherine Belsey, *John Milton: Language, Gender, Power* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1988), and Christopher Kendrick, "Milton and Sexuality: A Symptomatic Reading of Comus," in *Re-membering Milton: Essays on the Texts and Traditions*, ed. Margaret Ferguson and Mary Nyquist, 43-73 (New York: Methuen, 1987).

After citing her chastity, a virtue that fails to act as a deterrent to Comus, the Lady, quite correctly, deploys the argument of even distribution of wealth. If Comus complains that the bounties of nature are wasted in vain without being consumed, she replies back that the real waste and encumbrance lies with those who have monopolized its abundance. Nature has provided more than a plenty so that all men could live by moderate means:

Natures full blessings would be well dispenc't  
In unsuperfluous even proportion,  
And she no whit encomber'd with her store.

This refutation carries a far stronger force than it has been recognized. Taken to its logical conclusions, the Lady's answer implies that the anxiety about temporal lapse, limited use and the accretion of interest would disappear if only wealth were distributed proportionately. While the "moderate, and beseeming share"(769) allotted to every man by the Lady is not exactly a call for leveling the social hierarchies, it suggests a far more radical hope, which is the cancellation of time experienced as a necessity constantly driven by the contingency of things. Comus treats time as a natural "unexempt condition,"(685) which does not spare any mortal being, but in the context of usury and lending, time is often the name given to the ever-nagging necessity to extinguish the debt. Time, in other words, is the living experience of a market-driven imperative to produce, store, or repay. The Lady's "unsuperfluous even proportion"(773) is then a

secular alternative to the fall: it does not transcend mortality but proposes to cancel out the debilitating effect of a scarcity-driven time.

At the turn of the seventeenth century, however, it is precisely the vision of a free and unimpeded commerce that has come to be seen as the universal solution to the trade imbalance and a crucial factor for maintaining England's economic and political stability and power. By 1634, Milton's insistence on an older version of a moral economy seems outdated and conservative, but he is going to demonstrate time and again that his reason at its sharpest in the moments when history renders his convictions painfully untimely and unpopular. The lady's "well dispenc'd" (772) nature of even proportion is not simply a negation of the market but contains a very present and positive content, that of a household management. The notion of dispensation for the early modern reader implies the divine arrangement of the world, but it is also means the administration of household expenditures which also the first meaning given by OED to the word: "action of dispensing or dealing out; distribution or administration to others; expenditure, spending, or disbursement (of money); economical use or disposal (of anything)."<sup>26</sup> Dispensation is the task of the spenser, that is the butler or steward of a household. Against the usury of commerce, Milton proposes an alternative and quite viable economic model which, as a closed structure taken by it self, does not have any place for hoarding, selling, or lending at interest. This household model could possibly

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<sup>26</sup> "Dispensaton," in *Oxford English Dictionary*. Available from: <http://dictionary.oed.com>.

explain why the Lady famously substitutes chastity for charity next to the pair of hope and faith from her first song: within the economy of the household, chastity is essential, unlike the virtue of charity which becomes superfluous. Blair Hoxby described the Lady's economic alternative is static rather than dynamic,<sup>27</sup> but its statism is there for a reason and not for Milton's inability to conceptualize fully this new form of a dynamic economy regulated solely by demand and supply. The dispensation model, both in the masque and the real economy, is insufficient to prevail against commerce, but it nonetheless gives a serious bolt to Comus and shakes him out of his over-confident posture.

The more obvious signal that Milton is very aware of the economic debates from the preceding decade is the close homonymy between Comus and commerce, which should have been heard during the masque's performance given its inordinate emphasis on hearing and listening.<sup>28</sup> The narrative takes place in the dark night when eyes are likely to err, but the sense of hearing remains a chief source of meaning. Comus denies the very relevance of the notion of sin in his nocturnal realm since sunlight never

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<sup>27</sup> Hoxby, 21.

<sup>28</sup> The homonymy between Comus and commerce, indeed, is less interesting than the sense of urgency attached to hearing. The homonymy itself can be easily dismissed once registered since the arguments where Comus champions the logic of pure commerce possess a clarity and force of their own. Unlike Chapman who uses allegory and classical allusion in order to establish exclusive and excluding property over his claim to the muses, Milton makes the classical allusion work as it sets in motion a mode of reading and indeed of hearing the masque, after which the allusion becomes more or less superfluous.

reaches in his abode to reveal the distinction between virtue and sin. Yet, in this realm of darkness and illusory appearances, hearing is still unimpaired and the aid of a finely tuned ear becomes the tool of discerning truth and meaning. The presiding darkness evokes the sense of allegorical shadow in Chapman's image of the enclosed, dark farm. The realm of Comus, son of Pan and Circe, shares enough with the classics in order to grant the poet the badge of poetic sophistication, but simultaneously Milton is acutely aware of the costs of such obscurity as he also provides the audience with an unusual key for discerning in the darkness, that of the ear. Having lost herself in the woods, the Lady can rely only on her hearing, as she acknowledges, "if mine ear be true, My best guide now"(170-71). The story that the Attendant Spirit relates to the two brothers also presents a lesson on listening carefully as he recounts how he found their sister by the guidance of his ear (570). Merely guarding oneself against evil words is not sufficient, and both the Lady's captivity and her brothers' failure to take the magician's wand point to a lapse in hearing or heeding to what they have already been told. When she is first approached by Comus, the Lady claims that his praise is powerless against her "unattending ears"(272), but her mistake might have been precisely the haste and lack of attention she shows at first. Had she listened more carefully, she might have noticed that "the swink'd hedger" from the rural scene drawn by Comus is no typical shepherd talk, but the use of a new word, a "literary coinage" as Michael Wilding has observed, and

effectively a reference to Mammon's mention of "swinck and sweat" in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (II.vii.8).<sup>29</sup>

Even the anonymous 'stoic' proponents of abstinence that Comus inveigles against are "men that lend their eares" to Stoic doctrines. His exasperation at the 'stoics,' however does not – by virtue of Comus's own depravity -- automatically translate in a favorable notion of the Puritanism and righteous abstinence they are associated with. Stoic doctrines taught by the "budge doctors of the stoic furre" (707), implies a reference to an emaciated scholasticism that, nonetheless, appears to bear traces of animal ferocity that is not that removed from Comus's own bestial nature. The Trinity manuscript of the masque reveals that Milton first wrote "stoice gowne" – an apparel that visually completes the aura of strictness around the "doctors," be they church ecclesiasts or men of letters – which he subsequently crossed out and changed to "furre," an animal coat that invokes the brutes and bestial figures of Comus's own realm.<sup>30</sup> In that context, the righteousness of "lean and sallow Abstinence" hosts another form of bestial insatiability, this time driven by its own self-induced hunger and deprivation. The younger brother also imagines his lost sister confronted with the double danger of "Savage hunger, or of Savage heat" (358). The opposite pole of consumption, that of abstinence, now appears much more closely related to Comus than he himself would probably admit. By lending

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<sup>29</sup> Michael Wilding, "Comus, Camus, Commerce: Theatre and Politics on the Border," in *Dragon's Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 64.

<sup>30</sup> John Milton, *A Maske*, 1634, Trinity MS. Available from: <http://mith.umd.edu/comus/final/TMS.htm>.

their ear to ascetic precepts, those men have not only mortified their senses but also have become the slaves of a doctrine whose ferocity is no less inhuman than the transformations Comus inflicts on his own victims. This second mention of lending the ears invokes another set of tightly woven knots and connections. It harkens back to the earlier mention of the Lady's "limms" or limns, "by nature lent" (680), making the notion of lending and the discourse on usury a tool for parsing out a subjective economy of cultural practices and beliefs.

Comus is a textbook example of a courtier dressed up as a shepherd, and his mythical lineage as Circe's son endows him with the arts of magic and dissemblance. The shepherd guise undertaken by Comus so that he "shall appear som harmless villager/ Whom thrift keeps up about hi country gear" (165-66),<sup>31</sup> presents us with the familiar narrative of courtly pleasures domesticated in a rustic garb. The Lady on the other hand, fears "the rudeness and swill'd insolence" (178) where such revelries are imagined in grotesquely animalistic imagery, as merriment stirred up "amongst the loose unletter'd hinds" (174). The readers of this passage must have been startled by the unusual, counterintuitive qualification of the hinds, and William Shurenberger thus adds "unfettered" to associative links in the image.<sup>32</sup> These fears already anticipate the

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<sup>31</sup> John Milton, "A Masque," *The Complete Poetry of John Milton*, ed. John Shawcross (New York: Anchor Books, 1990). All references to Milton's masque will be drawn from the Anchor edition and designated by internal citations of line.

<sup>32</sup> William Shurenberger, *Lady in the Labyrinth: Milton's Comus as Initiation* (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemond Press, 2008), 116.

Spirit's description of the rowdy wolves and tigers in Comus's den and the beastliness and lost humanity Comus inflicts on his human prey:

The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,  
And the inglorious likeness of a beast  
Fixes instead, unmoulding reasons mintage  
Character'd in the face (527-530)

The earlier image of the "unletter'd hinds" becomes more ominous since it ceased to imply simply the lack of training or domestication and now appears as the result of a violent seizure of the reason and humanity imprinted on the face like "mintage character'd in the face." Yet, the mould and characters or letters of wisdom also signal a humanity that is detachable or alienable from the human face, a material transformation that corresponds to an inner state of unmolding, effacing a humanity that is less a stable, immutable essence and indeed a likeness, a form of a stamp, mintage, an assemblage of letters and characters that can be disjoined, in the manner in which the wand of Comus can "unthred thy joynts" (614). The passage also speaks directly to the issue of coin debasement, but it transposes the economic discourse outside its own domain to into the world of human subjectivity where the mintage of reason, not unlike the sovereign's power to issue new coin, is suddenly dislodged and alienated from the human face.<sup>33</sup> Yet, unlike other masques that invoke the figure of the sovereign as the ultimate mediator and remedy for crises, Milton resorts to the power of

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<sup>33</sup> On the political threat associated with counterfeit money during the regime of Henry IV, see Paul Strohm, "Counterfeiters, Lollards, and Lancastrian Unease," 128-152, in his *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422* (Glasgow: Bell and Bain, 1998).

writing and hearing to break the spell of the visual elements that constitute the very genre of the courtly masque. As she finds herself alone in the dark night, the Lady complains of her "unacquainted feet" (180) and bemoans the lack of she lacks "the sure guess of well-practiced feet" (310). The traditional courtly masque would mention 'feet' in the attending songs only to direct the attention of the audience to well-formed aristocratic calves and the spectacle of dance, but Milton neutralizes that form of visual referentiality and draws the reader's ear away from the dances and songs in the masque to the different meters, 'feet', and the free verse used in the text. The water nymph Sabrina, herself of Spenserian origin, possesses "printless feet" (896), the feet of a song which imposes no stamp of authority and leaves no mark on the hearer.

The shepherd-Spirit tries to alleviate the two brothers' fears by telling them the story of Haemony, a medicinal flower that renders the magician wand useless, but the story itself is about the exchange of arts and knowledge. Commentators trace the name of Milton's "Haemony" to the Greek *haimon* meaning "skillful"<sup>34</sup> and this meaning certainly corresponds to the description of the unknown lad as "well skill'd in every virtuous plant and healing herb" (620-21). The other likely origin of Heamony is that of "bloody" from the Greek *haima*, and the character of Sophocles's Haemon accommodates these two meaning as Haemon is equally a dutiful son and the voice of

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<sup>34</sup> Sacvan Bercovitch, "Milton's 'Haemony': Knowledge and Belief," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, (August, 1970): 351.

reason in *Antigone*. In the words of Thyrsis, himself speaking in the guise of a hired shepherd, his own anonymous fellow has disclosed to him the secret of the flower in a gesture that denotes the sharing of knowledge and writing:

And in requitall ope his leathern scrip,  
And shew me simples of a thousand names  
Telling thir strange and vigorous faculties; (624-26)

The “leathern scrip” is used in the sense of “small bag, wallet, or satchel, *esp.* one carried by a pilgrim, a shepherd, or a beggar,” as given in the OED, but it brings with it the complimentary sense of writing, leather parchment, and scripture.<sup>35</sup> The meaning of “scrip” as a metaphorical gift of writing is confirmed in the lines where the bag is open to display a wealth of names and their powers, and “simples” refers to medicinal plants and their simple properties. The anonymous shepherd is sharing horticultural secrets, but also possibly knowledge of foreign countries, as the flower itself is “not in this soyl.”(633). This is scene of exchange where the pleasant songs of Thyrsis are recompensed back with specialized knowledge, but this is also an exchange bound by mutual appreciation and trust associated with using the herb which is “of soveran” or singular use (639). The shepherd in a sense lends his knowledge to Thyrsis and engages

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<sup>35</sup> “Scrip.” In *Oxford English Dictionary*. Available from: <http://dictionary.oed.com>.

a commitment from his which concerns the proper use of the plant but leaves the choice and the gift of the plant in the hands of Thyrsis. This is, of course, a fictional story narrated by the Attendant Spirit disguised as Thyrsis, but it carries an important lesson both about exchange of art and knowledge.

Both the Attendant Spirit and Comus appear in the human world in the guise of rustic shepherds whose simple words are loaded with meaning which is not immediately available to their human audience, and their two personae almost come to stand for two different version of the pastoral that Milton means to distinguish carefully from one another. *Comus* is akin to the magicians and pastoral revelries that populate the Stuart courtly masque and his figure shares a proximity with Pan, a sylvan deity that the masque genre associated first with James I and then with Charles I. Yet, Milton returns to the classical roots of the pastoral genre as he makes the Attendant Spirit, who is simultaneously a guardian and a poet, adopt the shepherd name of Thyrsis, one of the two contesters in the singing match from Virgil's *Seventh Eclogue*. The elder brother recognizes Thyrsis as their "fathers shepherd" (493), which in retrospect makes them descendants of Virgil, if not in blood, then certainly in learning, as confirmed by the older's brother familiarity with Greek antiquity. In a strange reversal of the pastoral tradition, the figure of the shepherd approaches the noble, learned lads in order to

prepare them confront an alien, but clearly a modern, historical force while arming them with the stories of antiquity.<sup>36</sup>

Thyrsis is clearly a shepherd for hire, who is nonetheless a poet known for his “artful strains” and “madrigal” (494-95), and is thoroughly familiar with the classics, “the sage poets taught by th’ heav’ly Muse/ Storied of old in high immortal vers” (515-16) as well as with the medicinal knowledge of foreign herbs. Thyrsis again appeals to a literary canon that fuses the classics and Spenser when he invokes Melibaeus’s story of Sabrina, thus referencing Spenser’s own version of Melibaeus and Sabrina from *The Faerie Queene*.<sup>37</sup> The genre of the courtly masque then becomes a vehicle of reviving an Elizabethan form of the pastoral whose propensity for stoicism, prudence and solid moral foundation has become unfashionable and have been supplanted -- on its own ground, the pastoral mode – by the spectacle of royal entertainments or the bounties of the country house poem, or the country sports championed by James I and Charles I in an attempt to counteract or at least divert the growing restlessness and economic power within the city.<sup>38</sup> Milton writes a masque that exorcises the spirit of the courtly waste,

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<sup>36</sup> In a sense, Milton performs a similar gesture in “Lycidas” where the speaker invokes the pastoral in order to give expression to contemporary private and public woes and finds the very landscape in a state of silence and untimeliness.

<sup>37</sup> Maureen Quilligan has made a similar point about Milton’s debt to Spenser’s appeal to a female sovereign authority, in her *Milton’s Spenser: The Politics of Reading*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 209-212, 233-237 .

<sup>38</sup> Lea S. Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvel and the Defense of Old Holiday Pastimes*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

but, in the same vein, is reaching for the older Elizabethan pastoral of stoicism and temperance that has become a host and hostage to the masque.

Another source of dispensation by virtue of his very name, Spenser proves to be a felicitous weapon against the unproductive fashions in poetry patronized and encouraged by the Stuart regime, and he is a central source of trials of chastity and temperance, but while Spenser does not hesitate to torture on occasion Amoret or Guyon, Milton is more interested in the process of recuperation and renewal, ideally, in the paths of breaking the initial spell of enchantment and captivity which, in *Comus*, is achieved through the revival of the senses. Sabrina's own immortality has been achieved through the revival of the senses as she has been washed in a nectar bath:

And through the porch and inlet of each sense  
Dropt in Ambrosial oils till she reviv'd (849-50)

The operation of reviving the Lady entails a similar operation of appealing to each of the five senses, as Sabrina first announces her presence with a song, she implores the Lady to look at her, sprinkles water on her – thrice upon the Lady's "finger tip" and "rubied lip"(914-915) – and applies a cool touch to the heat of the seat where the Lady has been trapped by the spell of Comus. Instead of lending her ear and other sense to doctrines of commerce or abstinence, the Lady is called for to use her senses, to act by and through them, as in Sabrina's gentle command, "look on me," asking the lady to use her sense rather than lending them.

Spenser is also a central teacher on reading the difference between essences and false appearances, but if Spenser insists on the presence of a character who captures the essence of true, singular church or monarch, Milton is not interested in using such essences and does not hesitate to put the guiding Spirit under an equally fake guise of a shepherd as long as the Spirit's own literary ambitions and interest in the classics – a moment that seems to belong to the Spirit independently of the captivity narrative – correspond to the literary ambitions of the pastoral shepherds. The ideal of pure gold and pure virginity is indispensable as a spirit and a hope, but renewal and revival is a matter of the senses, where songs and art are being called for. The Spirit's own aspirations in guiding the two brothers and freeing the Lady correspond to a sense of poetic calling rather than some heroic mission. Thus, his speech before embarking on his task falls very short of a boastful invocation of the epic muse:

I was dispatcht for their defence, and guard;  
And listen why, for I will tell ye now  
What never yet was heard in Tale or Song  
From old, or modern Bard in Hall, or Bowr. (42-45)

The Attendant Spirit's major interventions are literary in character, as he invokes the classics in order to prove the predatory character of Comus, he cites the knowledge in herbs he has gained from the tales of a fellow shepherd, and further 'quotes' a story from the old Melibaeus, which is a paraphrase of Spenser. If he is returning to and

reviving an older form of the pastoral, Milton also insists on the power of learning and joy of literary creation that defines that older form

The Ludlow Masque was written and performed in 1634, a period of intense legal debates in and outside the Parliament about the ship-money tax that Charles I attempted to impose on the Parliament, a controversy bound to lead to an irreconcilable split between monarch and Parliament. The genre of the Stuart courtly masque registered these new political realities in a timely manner as many specimen from the period began to use the legal trial plot as the basis for constructing a fantasy of political wish-fulfillment and social harmony presided over by the monarch – indeed, the chief ideological function of the courtly masque. Thus, Thomas Carew's *Coelum Britannicum* (February 18, 1634), the masque presented to Charles earlier in 1634, imagines the reign of Charles as a radical transformation and innovation of the laws of England, where the conjugal oath of the Jupiter persona ushers on a political fantasy of a new, reform era: “[m]onopolies are called in, sophistication of wares punished, and rates imposed on commodities” (200, 238-40).<sup>39</sup> Carew's *Coelum*, a dialogue between the characters of Momus and Mercury, easily interpreted as collaboration between money and knowledge, offers an extensive description of a new legal situation and makes the ever-present task of deciding what constitutes heroic virtue the subject of arbitration by legal

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<sup>39</sup> Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

trial. By 1638, such solutions by trial appear to have exhausted their creative potential, as Davenant's *Britannia Triumphans* (1638) against attempts to define modern heroic virtue in a lengthy mock trial and ridicule of Merlin, the figure of Imposture, and some ludicrous characters of a chivalric romance before Britanocles can be offered as the compromise between the old chivalric notion of heroic virtue and a more modern one in service of the nation. Milton's masque, on the other hand, makes sure that it releases its characters from the very architectural space of the masque – the night setting and the castle – and returns them to the open spaces of rivers and blooming gardens.<sup>40</sup>

## **5.2 Pastoral Labor in *Paradise Lost***

The beginning of Book IX signals a break and change in style and genre: "No more of talk" (IX.1) between man and spirits and no more of "Venial discourse unblamed" (IX.5).<sup>41</sup> The late conversation about angelic love that ends Book VIII suggests the sensual love and connection with Venus retained in the etymology of "venial" rather than the modern, fallen sense of "venial" as "pardonable". In this transition from the amorous to the tragic, Milton follows the common epic convention of privileging the heroic subject over that of amorous dalliance and discourse, and, on the surface, it may

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<sup>40</sup> For an argument about the relationship of spatiality and temporality in the garden from the masque's epilogue, see Nancy Lindheim, "Milton's Garden of Adonis: The Epilogue to the Ludlow Masque," *Milton Studies* 35 (1997): 21-41.

<sup>41</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Norton Critical Edition, ed. Scott Elledge (Norton: New York, 1993). All references to *Paradise Lost* will be drawn from the Norton edition and designated by internal citations of book and line.

appear that Milton is following the Virgilian progression of pastoral, to georgic, to epic. The heavenly rage and wrath invoked in the beginning of the book are no less awe-inspiring than the outbursts of injured Achilles or Turnus. Milton's introduction of the "tragic" (6) note and the "heroic song" (25) puts in a new perspective the genres of the Garden which now appears as the locus of ease and repose to be superseded by the grave subject of the fall and man's alienation from heaven, that lend themselves to Virgilian *rota* or wheel, a Christianized version of a prophetic Virgil which located the moment of fall in the *Georgic* and the subsequent rise in the *Aeneid*.<sup>42</sup> According to this narrative model, the nomadic, carefree time spent in shepherding and singing from the *Eclagues* is superseded by the toil and force of necessity in the *Georgics*, which is to find a true poetic recuperation in the political age of epic and war. The epic of the *Ennead* is posed both as a completion and a resolution of the world of hard labor and necessities of *The Georgics*.

As Kurt Heinzelman has argued, the lack of popularity of the georgic genre with the Romantics in the eighteenth century testifies to the aesthetically unsatisfying premises of Virgil's *Georgics*, where the famous georgic passage "*labor omnia vincit*" remains "unremitting," not to be redeemed in the beauty of the pastoral or the expansive vistas of the epic. The didactic tone and routine of sheep-rearing or bee-keeping takes precedence over formal, poetic considerations in the organization of the

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<sup>42</sup> Anthony Low, *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985), 4.

text.<sup>43</sup> This middle genre sits uneasily stranded and overshadowed by the disarming beauty of the pastoral and the grand sway of the epic: on one hand, the subject of manual agrarian labor remains inadequate in comparison with the play and artistry of the pastoral, and on the other hand, the genre appears to serve only as a prolepsis for the epic, as the first mark of difference against the lyricism of the eclogues, a confrontation of lyric with the material necessities of mundane existence, only to find its resolution in a higher poetic flight towards expansion and empire building. Kevis Goodman has insisted on the importance of the georgic mode for writers in the eighteenth century who borrowed elements of the georgic genre in order to make room for unpleasurable feeling and affective dissonance without necessarily articulating that dissonance at the level of the narrative.<sup>44</sup> If Goodman is right and the georgic mode in the eighteenth century indeed served as a vehicle for the accommodation of dissonance in poetry, this analysis then testifies to some inherent discomfort of 'proper' poetry with the subjects of quotidian, repetitive, and unheroic labor.

These are the terms in which, I would insist, Eve introduces the georgic with her "first thoughts" on the efficiency of their gardening endeavors in the beginning of Book IX. Milton does not spare his descriptions of the various gardening tasks Adam and Eve set for themselves, and yet, prior to book XI, all references to human labor evoke the

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<sup>43</sup> Kurt Heinzelman, "Roman Georgic in the Georgian Age: A Theory of Romantic Genre," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 33 (1992): 186-189.

<sup>44</sup> Kevis Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4-32.

lyric domain of the pastoral that knows no distinction between effort and delight. Thus, in Book IV, the task of pruning is the natural consequence of Adam and Eve's gratitude for the Garden. As Adam notes: "following our delightful task/ To prune these growing plants, and tend these flow'rs,/ Which were it toilsome, yet with thee were sweet"(iv.437-38). The construction of "delightful task" and the pair of "toilsome" and "sweet" evoke a Petrarchan language of contraries, and at the same time, it also speaks back to Adam's description of God's ban on the tree of Knowledge as an "easy charge" and an "easy prohibition" where the ease and delight that accompany mankind in this unfallen state remain unmistakably pastoral, seemingly aristocratic in their dismissal of necessity or constraint, but also shared and common. Later, Adam speaks about the dignity of "pleasant labor" that sets mankind above the "unactive"() animals who "[r]ove idle unemployed"(616-625), and whose presence remains of "no account" to God (622). The nature of their gardening tasks, however, is unusually concerned with regulating a superfluous flora and arresting the profuse growth of profuse leafage and verdure, and at this point any resemblance with the more aristocratic pastoral and manor house poem ends. Adam and Eve do indeed appear as the sole masters of a countryside estate, a "happy rural seat of various view"(iv.427) and they indeed accept Gabriel with all the rites of hospitality in the fashion established by country house poetry, but the language that describes their labor takes us to a distinct humanist and Puritan ethos of frugality and control of "wanton growth," a reform of "branches

overgrown," the removal of "blossoms [and] dropping gums,/ That lie bistrown  
unsightly and unsmooth [...] if we mean to tread with ease."(625-633). The end of their  
gardening efforts is in fact ease, not accumulation. Commenting on this and similar  
passages on the Edenic nature of superfluity and surfeit, John Guillory describes the  
human economy in *Paradise Lost* as "a practice of expenditure designed to minimize  
waste". The pairing of the complimentary principles of abundance and frugality, for  
Guillory, ceases to be a purely theological concern about the fall and in turn testifies to  
the coexistence of different economic principles: an older, feudal one and a new  
principle based "on the rational dispensation of goods, time and labor."<sup>45</sup> Yet, the  
coexistence of these two different economic principles and the inherent tension between  
them indeed define genre of English pastoral since its courtly emergence in the 1580s.  
The courtly pastoral fantasies of authors like Spenser and Sidney posit realms where  
pleasure and delight coexist with the routine of daily work, and the Garden of Eden  
owes the initial harmony between these two principles to the earlier, Elizabethan  
conventions of the pastoral.

What has to be noted, however, is that the ideal end of tending the garden is  
again "ease" rather than sustenance as their work consists in the maintenance of  
promenades and clearing off of pathways and thus resembles landscaping rather than

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<sup>45</sup> John Guillory, "From the Superfluous to the Supernumary: Reading Gender into *Paradise Lost*," in *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*, eds. Elizabeth D. Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus (Chicago: Chicago University Press: 1990), 78.

the domestic work of keeping a kitchen garden. In Book IX, Eve speaks of dressing the Garden, a phrase that closely follows the formulation from King James's Bible where the grant of the garden implies to "dress and keep" (Genesis 2:15), and dressing here evokes the earlier sense of "make straight; to erect, set up",<sup>46</sup> but there is no suggestion of use or production. In Eve's words, the "wanton growth derides" their work "tending to wild" (ix.211-12), echoing Adam's earlier observation from Book IV that the prolific branches and springs "mock [their] scant manuring" (iv.628). This floral superfluity also happens at night and appears void of any particular use which associates the garden with the idle roving animals mentioned by Adam in Book IV. The abundance of garden mocks and laughs at mankind's claim on the dignity of labor, and this green "arrogance" renders it closer to tropic landscapes of travel narratives instead of the obedient manorial landscape of the country-house poem where nature appears to exist solely for the honor and comfort of the landlord.

The garden of Eden is thus reminiscent of the early courtly pastoral realms of Sidney and Spenser, with the qualification that labor and pleasure are both predicated on the commonality that Adam and Eve bring to the garden and require no further explanation or qualification such as the learning granted to the shepherds in Sidney's *Arcadia* or the noble birth of Spenser's Pastorella. Labor constitutes the pinnacle of human dignity, and human gratitude finds expression in a natural effusion of eloquence

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<sup>46</sup> "Dress," in *Oxford English Dictionary*. Available from: <http://dictionary.oed.com>.

and verse when Adam and Eve say their morning prayers: “[i]n various style,” “in fit strains,” with “such prompt eloquence,” “in prose or numerous verse” (V.146-150). If the popular view held labor as a moral corrective to sin that “destroys vice ... nourishes virtues... provides necessaries [and] gives alms,” in the words of one Ralph of Acton,<sup>47</sup> Milton does not posit labor as a post-lapsarian condition but rather as the chief distinction that elevates human nature above the animal world. This moment in particular flatly turns the tables on an older brand of high humanism that posed manners and learning and intellectual exertion as a guard against the ever present threat human degeneration into animal depravity. This fundamental distinction between human culture and animal passions, however, holds true only in a fallen state and becomes irrelevant in Milton’s Garden where work and delight coexist in a pastoral, non-contradictory fashion. A fifteenth-century sermon traces the fall precisely to the state of idleness and plenitude in Paradise: “For yf Adam and Eve had ben occupied wyth labour, the serpent had not overcum them: for ydulnesse ys the devylles dyssyr,”<sup>48</sup> but Milton shows no interest in the more conventional view of plenitude as a threat to human integrity where idleness needs to be warded off by suffering and sweat. Neither is Milton’s notion of edenic work the heroic toil of the georgic genre as the mocking

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<sup>47</sup> Brian Vickers, “Leisure and Idleness in the Renaissance: The Ambivalence of Otium,” *Renaissance Studies* 4, no. 2 (1990): 107-154.

<sup>48</sup> Vickers, 110.

laughter of luxurious nature renders Adam and Eve's effort always insufficient and short of any mastery of the garden.

Louis Montrose calls Milton's notion of work "unalienated labor" and he suggests that such scenes should be read in the context of a faith in the revolutionary dignity of labor espoused by the social revolutionaries of the seventeenth century (426), but the idiosyncratic treatment of labor in Milton's epic calls for a further qualification, and I would like to paraphrase Montrose and suggest that Milton is also making a case about a revolutionary appeal and dignity of both labor and pleasure. Eve's plea for more efficient division of work in Book IX constitutes the first genuinely georgic moment in the garden as it drives a wedge between the pastoral leisure of the conversations and friendly exchanges in the preceding book and the nature of their daily tasks of tending the garden. The fall in Book IX emerges as a possibility precisely when labor takes precedence over delight, and the common tasks shared by Adam and Eve appear as choice between labor and the distraction of looks, smiles, and "[c]asual discourse" (IX.221-25). Early in her speech, Eve is already confusing the notions of choice and necessity, suggesting to Adam to go "where choice/ Leads thee, or where most needs" (215), and further on, she again emphasizes the voluntary, negotiable nature of her proposal: "Our tasks we choose" (221). Yet, Eve has already reduced a fundamental condition of free choice to a choice of tasks imposed on them by necessity. Adam, thus, would rather choose "sweet intercourse of looks and smiles" (238-39), noting that the

condition of lonely labor deprived of company amounts to "irksome toil"(242). If physical labors is necessary for their sustenance, so are discourse and shared joy which Adam calls respectively "Food of the mind" and "of love the food," and their necessity is predicated both on the emotional and intellectual sustenance they deliver as well as on God's grand design for mankind since "smiles from reason flow, To brute denied"(239-40). Human dignity as opposed to the animal world, then, obtains both in their purposeful, appointed labors as well as in their shared discourse and ability to take delight in each other's presence. Discourse and the use of reason do indeed ward off the wilderness around since the faculty of reason affirms man's standing above the brute, and in that sense discourse does not bestow any less dignity on man than the physical exertion in the garden. Not surprisingly, Satan's own reaction to the pastoral stroll of Eve in the garden remains "[s]tupidly good"(ix.465), that is devoid of reason, regardless of the delight and pleasure he experiences at the sight of Eve. Satan's vision has switched into a distinctly classical pastoral mode as the description of the garden veers into classical mythology, and the familiar references to the garden of Adonis, the Hesperides, and the garden of Solomon. The pastoral mode abstracts Satan from his own evil, and we may also say that it abstracts him from his own fallen temporality, but right after the comparison with the classical gardens, Milton's own voice intervenes, as if to restore the voice of reason, and reminds his readers that true bliss of such a vision is only granted to those who have been exiled from it, the urban dwellers of the cramped

city of London trapped in the poisonous air of sewage (445-46). Milton straps the pastoral scene from the conventions of classical timelessness and plants right in the middle of it the unmistakable smell of London.

Adam's reply also probes further the notion of necessity adduced by Eve and reminds her that their labor is only necessary to the extent that it makes their walks around the garden easier and more pleasurable. The ultimate purpose of pruning and propping up the abundant verdure is thus far from making use of its superfluity or earning humankind's right to it, let alone justifying their supper, but rather the provision of more ease and enjoyment:

These paths and bowers doubt not but our joint hands  
Will keep from wilderness with ease, as wide  
As we need walk. (IX.244-46)

Yet, such mode of "communing" and discourse interferes with Eve's understanding of their duty in the garden:

Looks intervene and smiles, or object new  
Casual discourse draw on, which intermits  
Our day's work brought to little, though begun  
Early, and th'hour of supper comes unearned? (IX.222-25)

Eve is effectively making a case for abstract labor, or labor time, in Marx's vocabulary, where labor is measured by the time spent. This motion of abstraction where labor ceases to be applied to the particular task at hand and becomes an indifferent, homogenous unit of time, also renders their shared joys and pastimes another unit of

time, “th’hour of supper,” that has to be earned and legitimized through the effort applied during the day. The anxiety about spending one’s time thus puts an exchange value on the very evening hours intended for rest and refreshment.

According to Maureen Quilligan, this rift makes visible the difference between Adam’s notion of sacred vocation and Eve’s more literal understanding of efficient work. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse offer a Foucauldian reading of the scene where they read Eve’s concern with practical use and frugality as a corrective logic for Adam’s propensity for aristocratic “extravagance.”<sup>49</sup> This frugality and anxiety about one’s profitable use of time, I would like to add, has a humanist origin which was all too easily absorbed in the popular discourse of improvement during the seventeenth century. Eve is seeking to earn her hour of supper, thus objectifying the unfallen time of Paradise into hours, or units of wage labor, not simply earning her supper but also the very hour or occasion for it. If we apply Locke’s theory on property, Eve is staking a claim on property by mixing her labor with what Nature hath provided.

### ***5.3 The Logic of Improvement***

The practice of improvement is driven by a pressure from the market, the specific English market of land rents and leases, and the increasing dependence of England on

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<sup>49</sup> Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Imaginary Puritan: Literature, Intellectual Labor, and the Origins of Personal Life* (Berkeley: University of California, 1992) 111.

revenues from foreign trade. Thus, the brief seventeenth century utopia produced in imitation of its more famous humanist processors, *Description of the Famous Kingdome of Macaria* (1641), likely written by Gabriel Plattes and published by Samuel Hartlib, completely dispenses away with the notion of inheritable property of land and instead makes improvement the sole condition of possession. According to the laws of the perfect kingdom of Macaria, “if any man holdeth more land than he is able to improve to the utmost, he shall be admonished, first of the great hinderance which it doth to the Common-wealth... and if he doe not amend his Husbandry within a yeares space, there is penalty set upon him... till his lands be forfeited, and he banished out of the Kingdome, as an enemy of the common-wealth.”<sup>50</sup> In this ideal kingdom, failure to optimize the use of landed property and subject it fully to the demands of the market threatens to deprive the farmer not only of his property but also to turn him into a permanent exile and alien.<sup>51</sup> Property is then not understood simply as the possession of a title but exclusively as the labor directed into the production of surplus value. Improvement literature on farming from the period distinguishes between what nature produces by itself and the surplus achieved by application of human ingenuity and skill. Thus, for example, the Bayly from Norden’s *Surveyor’s Dialogue* (1607), describes the

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<sup>50</sup> Samuel Hartlib (now attributed to George Plattes), *A Description of the Famous Kingdome of Macaria*...London: Francis Constable, 1641. Available from: <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/>.

<sup>51</sup> This proposal recalls the importance of landed property during the Putney debates where the faction of the moderate Grandees argued about the equivalence between property and a political “permanent fixed interest” in the kingdom, but Plattes’s proposal further radicalizes the connection between possession and political rights in the direction of complete commercialization of both property and political rights.

worst husbandman: “who onely try what earth will do of it selfe, and seeke not to helpe it with such meanes, as nature hath provided; whereas if men were careful and industrious, they shuld find that the earth would yeeld in recompence for good husbands trauell and charge, *Centum pro cento* without corrupt usurie.”<sup>52</sup> The earth, to be sure, does not ‘yield’ for itself or any other entity, but this distinction sufficiently mirrors the difference between a humble income that suffices to sustain the farm and producing for the market. The pithy category of what “nature hath provided” corresponds to wage labor – a return that does not exceed the initial investment and is consumed immediately. The improvement portion is the surplus value or the revenue received in excess of what has been consumed during production. The discourse of improvement, however, conceives of surplus value as the application of care and industry. If we recall the earlier discussion of Plattes’s passage on property, property implied improvement which really means producing for market profit. Improvement, as we saw, was conceived in terms of labor but measured only retrospectively, in terms of return on investment. In other words, improvement means producing surplus value. To paraphrase Plattes, the only property in Macaria is the property that reproduces wealth for the market. Plattes already anticipates Locke’s notion of property as the application of one’s labor where labor really means the labor of improvement and a fully naturalized exchange value and already presupposes the existence of a market. What

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<sup>52</sup> Norden, 226.

Locke's formula cannot comprehend is the realm of household labor where the tasks of housekeeping are not intended for exchange.

## **5.4 Gift-giving**

Pierre Bourdieu has suggested that the only two identifiable features of gift-exchange in "local culture" are the delayed return of the gift and the imperative to return something which is different from the first gift. John Milbank translates this version of the gift, characterized by delay and non-identical return, into the discourse of the New Testament and describes the gift that results from the new covenant as marked by a prophetic delay and non-identical repetition. Repaying the gift of Christ means to accept it as an already existent interchange (between Father and Son), which binds the soul to a global and ever-going act of gift-giving, as well as to accept the delay in the return of this gift.<sup>53</sup> For one to give (love) freely, beyond practical considerations, one has to assume that the physical world around is given to us as a gift, that it is the product of divine charity, which in turn makes conceivable our own ability to give without reserve. The cycle of repetition which is inherent in the gift of Christ also implies that we can only receive it by giving it away. One can give unconditional love only because one must have already received it, but on the other hand one can receive it only by giving it

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<sup>53</sup> John Milbank, "Can a Gift Be Given: Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysic," *Modern Theology* 11, no. 1 (January, 1995): 119-161.

away, via the world of beings, towards Christ. Love is the new debt which overrides the old ones accumulated under the law (Romans 13:8),<sup>54</sup> and thus it arises out both of gratitude and a sense of new plenitude.

This justification of the possibility for reconciliation through faith seems alluringly simple and convincing, and yet it is bound to an ever-present state of instability and lack of closure which, on one hand, keeps open the flow of love, but, on the other hand, creates an clearing, a space where the flow of charity could be deflected or broken down. The only difference between an ordinary gift and an exchange which participates in the chain of love-exchange is the very faith in the possibility of a gift which transcends the contingent world, but once this belief has been questioned, the very sense of indebtedness, of being a vessel for the love of God, turns into a sense of lack and deprivation. But how can one think finitude as a state of grace, when the very process of reasoning is bound to that finitude? And if that state of joyful debt comes through faith and the very tangible active exchange of love, as Milbank suggests, then how could one narrate the story of an event which remains barely thinkable and whose existence at the same time has to be presupposed and yet kept unfinished, a pure project? Milbank stages his argument through and against Derrida, Heidegger, and Jean-Luc Marion, but, leaving this 'thinking at the margins of language' aside – can a familiar story of debt and loss turn out to be also about bounty and charity?

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<sup>54</sup> Milbank, 149.

This is the quandary that tortures Satan in his opening speech in Book IV of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Bemoaning his debt of "burthensome" subjection, Satan acknowledges that "a greatful mind/ By owing owes not, but still pays, at once Indebted and discharged" (iv.55-7). These words come from the great equivocator in the epic, but, at the same, it is both Satan's deceptions and self-deception that reveal an allegorical truth, a truth which is still recoverable in a fallen state, that of the general condition of mankind and the historical moment Milton inhabits. In his speech, Satan contemplates a prelapsarian state of free indebtedness and payment where the obedience and love that proceed from that state are also the natural state of the creatures of Paradise. Debt is also plenitude, which, however, cannot be perceived or accepted without reflecting it back to itself and its creator. In practical terms, Satan's credit status is no different from that of any inhabitant of Paradise. Both angels and demons are still paying and still owing, as does every other creature in the world, but Satan, by refusing his state of givenness, his own being as a gift to himself, cannot partake in the exchange that sustains Paradise. He is not stingy of gifts, but his gifts are meant to foreclose and stifle exchange, to offer an illusive state of self-sufficiency and finality which would render the primary gift of love superfluous.

But, the apple is only one of the various gifts and objects that are exchanged in this narrative of the Fall. Eve's creation, and then subsequent temptation, Adam's own foolhardy plunge into the Fall, the Son's sacrifice for the redemption of man which is

also a gift proceeding from the Father, these all involve very real and tangible acts of exchange, of rituals of gift-giving and receiving, and result in economies which tend to transform the very terms of the exchange.

The turn of the sixteenth century England produced a discourse of deep moral degeneracy and indebtedness characteristic of the Pietists within the Presbyterian movement.<sup>55</sup> Drawing on Luther's notion of unpayable and incommensurable gift of Christ, the Pietists translated the limited, imperfect of nature of human beings into a state of irremediable moral corruption, not amenable by any form of human obedience or merit, which imposed constant discipline, self-surveillance, and a painstaking attempt to account for every particular sin. The Elizabethan Presbyterians, unhappy with the settlement of 1559, sought further reformation and the imposition of religious discipline now directly on the mass of citizens, who "are not so precise, but follow their owne desires." Presbyterians, in what later on evolved as Pietism, could not rest with avowed Puritan reliance on *sola fide* and had developed a strict system of prayer, repentance and watchfulness in order to sustain the "exacte [and uniform] paterne off Discipline," in an all-encompassing effort to curb ungodly thought on every level of daily existence and interaction. The imperative becomes to "work precisely, not exactly."<sup>56</sup> Exactness and precision become crucial terms in keeping track of one's sinfulness and indebtedness to

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<sup>55</sup> Theodore Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion & Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina, 2004).

<sup>56</sup> Bozeman, 30.

God. The Pietist soul is drawn into a vicious spiral of self-examination and dwelling ever more and more on the varieties of sin and transgression, but the idea here of a “freely lavished gift” never implies any sense of plenitude. The Pietist’s activity of constant mastering and mortifying one’s sinful thoughts that binds one, in a paradoxical way, to sinfulness and depravity. In his *Guide to Godlynesse* (1622), John Downname frames the practical side of moral reformation to the merchant’s balance sheet: “For if Merchants... haue [their] bookes of accounts, which containe the maine matters of their estates, what they... owe, and what is owing to them;... [why] should wee thinke such care too much,... for the...discharge and cleering of our debts unto God, which if they be found upon our account at the great Audit of Gods last Iudgement, shell neuer be forgiuen.”<sup>57</sup>

In Downname’s version of the Judgment, God appears as the great auditor and debt Collector. This metaphor hides a trap: a merchant’s balance sheet is neutral in respect to the transactions and the flow of money and commodities recorded on it, and it assumes a universal convertibility of objects into money and vice versa.<sup>58</sup> The crucial moment in this compulsive self-questioning is that human agency and responsibility is displaced from the temporality of the sin and now be exercised only retroactively, after the fact. The only hope for reconciliation granted to the sinner is the obsessive tracing and

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<sup>57</sup> Bozeman, 149.

<sup>58</sup> Bozeman summarizes this moment emphatically, as “The complete confession in Protestant dress!”, 150.

accounting for more and more instances of sinfulness. Here, the application of the merchant method to a debt that could never be discharged can result only in "a catalogue of sins," a Puritan sub-genre which derived from the very obsession with sin that the Puritans decried in principle.<sup>59</sup>

In Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Eve occupies the peculiar double position of a gift to Adam and a gift-recipient of God's grace. Eve is the outcome of Adam's request for a companion: "Thy wish, exactly to thy heart's desire" (viii.450). Here, the 'exactness' of Eve offers a response to the obsession with precision that tortured the Pietists of the early seventeenth century: God is perfect and not liable to mistakes, but the 'exactness' of human beings is only finite, marked by both excess and lack, as Adam observes about Eve. The definition of the gift that John Milbank offers in his take on Bourdieu, opens parallels which suggests that some 'exactness' is structurally inherent to any free gift-exchange: the gift as such is a "non-exact mimesis,"<sup>60</sup> which, after the coming of Christ, would mean "to repeat differently, in order to repeat, exactly [what he did]."<sup>61</sup> Thus Eve arrives as a repetition of a desire which already exists, but at the same time she introduces difference and becomes a new host of desires and a new opening for the workings of cheerful indebtedness. Unlike the merchant's balance sheet of the Pietists that accrues more and more sins in order to account for debt, this model of gift-exchange

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<sup>59</sup> Bozeman, 150.

<sup>60</sup> Milbank, 125.

<sup>61</sup> Milbank, 150.

through repetition produces plenitude through an inherent sense of finitude and a desire that, as we learn from the first frustration of Adam, cannot be fulfilled completely but also should not, in order not to foreclose the possibility of love. In this context, then, the repetitions and the multiplications of divine likeness constitute repetition, once, but also an act of gift-exchange. In this context, Satan's mistake is his compulsive desire to imitate and repeat God, to strive for exactness.

To return to Adam, his desire for a companion is bound of an inherent need for exchange, it is "fit and meet" and in full accordance with the foreknowledge of God. Adam is mistaken to assume that the gift of Eve would compensate fully for his own finitude. In the ideal Miltonic world, bounty could easily coexist with lack and finitude, but Adam is disturbed initially, as he confessed to Gabriel. Once his wish has been realized in the realm of the physical world, Adam has to face his own desire standing outside of him and acting out of its own will. This is nothing less than objectification and alienation, but not a moment of exchange since the lack of equivalence, in a paradoxical way, triggers a desire for exchange without ever fulfilling it. After all, Eve appears complete and absolute because she has been created both as a fit, necessary complement, but also a gift. Her 'exact' equivalence to Adam's desires brings his own autonomy and integrity into question. Gabriel reproaches Adam for being enticed and transported by "an outside" (viii.567), but he is not completely fair or 'precise' for that matter because she already inhabits a paradoxical inside-out relation to Adam: once as the rib he has

donated for Eve, once as an “other self” granted by God, and then also as the exact replica of his own well-reasoned desire. To be sure, a gift does not differ significantly from an exchange, but it avoids the moment of abstraction.

Writing then is a gift by default, precisely because it resists the calculations of exchange.

Eve’s anxiety about the profitable use of time echoes a very long humanist tradition of employment of time and in fact constitutes a recurring theme in Milton’s poetry where the very labors of the poet always appear insufficient. David Hawkes reads Milton’s literary anxieties and sense of unfulfilled vocation in a direct relationship with Milton’s primary sources of income, his father’s support and the practice of usury,<sup>62</sup> but the deployment of humanist education and literary skills has long presented men of letters with similar questions, as I have noted in the previous chapters. In “On His Being Arrived to the Age of Twenty-Three”(1631), the poet writes:

My hasting days fly on with full career,  
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew’th.

Milton attributes his education to his father’s gifts and traces his store to the muses, as he writes in *Ad Patrem*, urging his father to accept the poem as a pledge: “Nevertheless this page displays my resources, and all my wealth is set forth on this paper; but I have nothing save what golden Clio has given me, what dreams have

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<sup>62</sup> Hawkes, *John Milton*, 75.

brought me in the distant caves of sleep, and what the laurel copses of the sacred wood and the shades of Parnassus bestowed." At this stage, learning for Milton, however, contains higher aspirations than what a public office could offer: he rejects the vocation of "the bar ... the laws of the nation so ill observed," "the dull rabble," and the wealth "of the Peruvian realm." Classical learning and fluency in Greek and Latin, in fact, appear as testimony for a higher calling that has ceased to correspond to a gentlemanly social rank or the security of a patrimony. Patrimony, on the other hand, is envisioned as the poetic immortality to be achieved by preserving the name of the father for future ages: "a father's name rehearsed in song as an example to a distant age." David Hawkes reads the poem as a repayment of the son's debt by bequeathing the father's name to posterity,<sup>63</sup> but Milton is also reworking the notion of patrimony. Unlike the model of profligate son that Helgerson describes, Milton does not hesitate to honor the father and the wealth of learning, but that honor does not automatically translate into notions of thrift or the need to assume public duty. Milton is faced with the material impossibility of making "a just return," but even in this private context of a father-and-son relationship, he insists on a fundamental choice of vocation and refuses the notions of exchange and repayment on the terms of the "easier" "gain" available as an office or trade. *Ad Patrem* is then an act of honoring and consigning the father to a form of public memory. It reframes Milton's filial obligations as a debt whose repayment is postponed

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<sup>63</sup> Hawkes, *Milton*, 75.

indefinitely and obtains precisely by serving as an “example,” an inexact imitation of a father’s generosity and a filial obligation.

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