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**REFORMING CONTENTMENT:
PASTORAL, SELF, AND WORLD IN ENGLISH RENAISSANCE LITERATURE**

A Dissertation in

English

by

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Abstract

This dissertation offers the first full-length study of Renaissance contentment, the emotional and ethical principle that became the gold standard of English Protestant psychology and a defining feature of English pastoral literature. Scholars have equated contentment with passivity, resignation, and stagnation. However, this dissertation excavates an early modern understanding of contentment as dynamic, protective, and productive. Derived from the Latin *contentus*, which means both contained and satisfied, contentment is an affective state that holds the individual together—a defense against fickle fortune and unruly passions. With roots in classical and medieval philosophy, contentment became newly significant because of the tremendous cultural changes wrought by the Reformation. Christian contentment became the lens through which to view the relationship between self and world more benignly than English Protestantism typically allowed. Through sermons, translations, and treatises, writers represented contentment as a means for the godly individual to endure and engage the outside world. These efforts to reform contentment in turn invited a response from playwrights, poets, and authors of prose romance. The dissertation argues that authors used pastoral to intervene in an extensive Reformation conversation about contentment that related the armature of the self to the architecture of society. Specifically, this dissertation shows that pastoral is the primary literary mode through which Renaissance authors engage contentment, resulting in strikingly different forms of the concept: Sidney's eroticized yet ethical contentment; Spenser's intertextual contentment; Shakespeare's communal contentment; and Milton's anti-imperialist contentment. The dissertation's focus on the pastoral mode and analysis of early modern texts in light of recent affect theory contribute to ongoing studies of literature, religion, and positive affect in the English Renaissance. By

attending to shifts in intellectual, religious, and literary culture, this dissertation charts the rise and fall of a principle of contentment deemed essential to English Renaissance society.

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Introduction

This dissertation offers the first full-length study of Renaissance contentment, the emotional and ethical principle that became the gold standard of English Protestant psychology and a defining feature of English pastoral literature. Literary critics and contemporary theorists have equated contentment with passivity, resignation, and stagnation; however, I excavate an early modern understanding of contentment as dynamic, protective, and productive. While this concept has roots in classical and medieval philosophy and literature, contentment became newly significant because of the tremendous social and intellectual changes that accompanied the Reformation in England, which removed traditional forms of mediation between the individual believer and the Christian godhead even as it subsumed religious authority under the crown. Through sermons, translations, and theological treatises, writers explored contentment as a means to preserve the self in times of crisis, preparing the individual to endure and engage the outside world. They represented contentment as a form of self-fortification, of protecting the godly subject from the external threats of capricious fortune and the internal divisions caused by the passions. These efforts to reform contentment into the ideal Protestant condition in turn invited a response from poets, playwrights, and authors of prose romance. Specifically, I show that pastoral is the primary literary mode through which Renaissance authors like Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton represent and revise concepts of contentment and its role in the Protestant English nation. I argue that English authors used pastoral to intervene in an extensive Reformation conversation about contentment that linked the armature of the self to the architecture of society.

Literary critics have repeatedly rejected contentment as an object for scholarly inquiry, due in no small part to the fundamental depreciation of contentment in modern theory. Despite

the many points of conflict between psychoanalysis and new historicism, both have perpetuated a scholarly suspicion of contentment.¹ Twentieth-century psychoanalysis constructed contentment as a diluted and potentially deluding form of pleasure. According to Freud, the civilizing process requires a renunciation of instincts and the repression or sublimation of desires, frequently leading to a deferral or denial of the pleasure principle and producing “only . . . a feeling of mild contentment.”² As Ronald Huebert notes, an even more cynical view is taken by Lacan, who derides a pleasure that is “merely passive contentment”—a “principle of homeostasis” that, unlike desire, “limits the scope of human possibility”—and instead posits a “jouissance beyond the pleasure principle.”³ *Jouissance* is, of course, the same term Roland Barthes applies to the text of “bliss” or “rapture,” which he distinguishes from *plaisir*, a word that his translator twice renders as “content.” The text of *plaisir* is “the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a comfortable practice of reading”—a practice of reading ostensibly opposed to unsettling, liberating, and orgasmic

¹ See Stephen Greenblatt, “Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture,” in *Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts*, ed. Patricia Parker and David Quint (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 210–24. Also, see Elizabeth Wright, ed., *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), s.v. “materialist critique of psychoanalysis.”

² Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929), trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1989), 25.

³ Ronald Huebert, *The Performance of Pleasure in English Renaissance Drama* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 12–13.

jouissance.⁴ Construed as either a mild, shallow substitute for a greater, genuine pleasure or a potentially paralyzing myth in support of the status quo, contentment has unsurprisingly been disregarded or, with equal frequency, actively vilified in literary scholarship.

In the final decades of the twentieth century, the new historicist project of interpreting texts within and against their political and cultural contexts became coequal to identifying sites of social *discontent*. In Renaissance scholarship, this tendency has been nowhere more apparent than in pastoral criticism. In a series of foundational articles detailing the “pastoral of power,” Louis Montrose argues, “Pastorals that celebrate the ideal of content function to articulate—and thereby, perhaps, to assuage—*discontent*”: pastoral is “an authorized mode of discontent.”⁵ Influenced by William Empson, Montrose reverses a long-standing tradition of pastoral criticism inaugurated by Friedrich Schiller, who centers his category of idyllic poetry on a “poetic representation of innocent and contented mankind,” and later epitomized by Renato Poggioli, for whom “pastoral poets . . . exalt the pauper’s estate . . . because it teaches self contentment,” a pious conjunction of “sensual delight, as well as moral contentment” that Poggioli calls “enlightened hedonism.”⁶ Whereas Montrose joins his predecessors in recognizing the

⁴ Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 14, also 19–20. On *The Pleasure of the Text* and psychoanalytic thought, see Elizabeth Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reappraisal*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1998), 79–80.

⁵ Louis Montrose, “‘Eliza, Queene of Shepheardes,’ and the Pastoral of Power,” *English Literary Renaissance* 10 (1980): 155; and “Of Gentlemen and Shepherds: The Politics of Elizabethan Pastoral Form,” *ELH* 50 (1983): 426–27.

⁶ William Empson famously, if ambiguously, defined the “pastoral process” as “putting the complex into the simple” and emphasized the ideological function of pastoral’s “essential trick” of turning gentlemen into shepherds. See *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935; New York: New Directions, 1974), 11–12, 22. See Friedrich Schiller, *On*

representations of such contentment, he identifies these as the supreme *fictions* of the pastoral mode, evidence of the absence or opposite of any actual contentment. Although various critics have revised or rejected Montrose's political readings, scholars have yet to address the narrow account of contentment on which this interpretive practice largely depends.⁷ As a result, contentment has repeatedly been ironized or ignored, debunked or dismissed, contributing in turn to a larger scholarly emphasis on anxiety, despair, and discontent in early English Protestantism and Renaissance culture overall.⁸

Naive and Sentimental Poetry (1794–95), qtd. in Paul Alpers, *What Is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 32; and Renato Poggioli, *The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 7–9.

⁷ For a recent qualification of Montrose, see Katherine Little, *Transforming Work: Early Modern Pastoral and Late Medieval Poetry* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013). For alternatives to Montrose, see Annabel Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology, Virgil to Valéry* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987); Judith Haber, *Pastoral and the Poetics of Self-Contradiction: Theocritus to Marvell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Susan Snyder, *Pastoral Process: Spenser, Marvell, Milton* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); and Gary Bouchard, *Colin's Campus: Cambridge Life and the English Eclogue* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2000). Recent ecocritics have called for a reevaluation of the representation of nature in pastoral literature, but contentment has not received similar treatment: see Robert Watson, *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Todd A. Borlik, *Ecocriticism and Early Modern English Literature: Green Pastures* (New York: Routledge, 2011); and Ken Hiltner, *What Else Is Pastoral?: Renaissance Literature and the Environment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

⁸ Nor has this scholarly tendency been confined to Renaissance studies. For a discussion of this phenomenon, see Vivasvan Soni, "Trials and Tragedies: The Literature of Unhappiness (A Model for Reading Narratives of Suffering)," *Comparative Literature* 59 (2007): 119–20.

However, in the early modern period, the word “content” had a rich range of significations that have been lost to contemporary theory and criticism. The word ultimately derives from the Latin *continēre*, meaning “to hold together, keep together, comprehend, contain,” and the past participle *contentus*, meaning “contained, limited, restrained, whence self-restrained, satisfied.”⁹ These various meanings are reflected in early modern usages of the noun “content” as either “That which is contained in anything” or “a contented condition.”¹⁰ The dual significance of the Latin adjective as contained and satisfied contributes to early modern understandings of contentment as an affective state which holds the individual together. A condition of satisfaction and self-restraint, contentment helps the subject protect him- or herself from and form proper relationships to the outside world. Contentment provides a fortification against fortune and a means of moderating the potential for passionate self-dispersal.¹¹ Although today contentment is more usually thought of as *passive*, its etymology suggests that it can be actively *protective*. Or more accurately, contentment combines senses of activity and passivity

⁹ OED “contain” v. and “content” adj. 2 and 4.

¹⁰ OED “content” n1.1 and n2.1.a respectively. Shakespeare puns on the meanings of content in Sonnet 1.11, as he does in *As You Like It* 5.4.119. D. Jerry White draws on this etymological connection to argue that characters like Shylock and Isabella use the word to signal their social containment or constraint by others. See “Contentment and Containment in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Measure for Measure*,” *Publications of the Missouri Philological Association* 27 (2002–2003): 9–19. However, this is only one role played by “content” in early modern discourse.

¹¹ Michael Schoenfeldt applies the language of fortification to temperance and the freedom achieved through self-control in early modern physiological thought. See *Bodies and Selves: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), esp. chapter 2. On the self-stabilizing effects of Reformation discourse, see Terry G. Sherwood, *The Self in Early Modern Literature: For the Common Good* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2007).

that we now commonly separate and hierarchize.¹² Contentment consolidates, sustains, and shields the contents of the self, but it is also bound up with the (always ongoing) construction of the self.

Accordingly, “content” had a series of affective, political, philosophical, and theological meanings. The earliest definition for the adjective “content” reads, “Having one’s desires bounded by what one has (though that may be less than one could have wished); not disturbed by the desire of anything more, or of anything different.”¹³ The desires of the contented individual are “bounded” and rendered undisturbing, but they are not eliminated or unrecognizable from the desires of anyone else. In the psychophysiological register, contentment denotes a negative relation to particular, threatening passions and a disciplined regulation and containment of other passions that are more positively construed.

Moreover, contentment challenges overly rigid divisions between “inner” and “outer,” as the boundaries of desire are defined by “what one has.”¹⁴ Contentment is a property of an individual subject defined, in no small measure, by that individual’s relationship to property: inwardness is established in relation to external goods, material conditions, and other selves.

¹² On the passions unsettling an active/passive binary, see Gail Kern Paster, Katharine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson, “Introduction: Reading the Early Modern Passions,” in *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion*, ed. Gail Kern Paster, Katharine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 1–20, esp. 8–12.

¹³ *OED* “content” adj2.A.I.1.a.

¹⁴ On the fluid boundaries between the inner self and the external world, especially with reference to the passions, see Paster, Rowe, and Floyd-Wilson, “Introduction,” 15–18; and Mary Floyd-Wilson and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr., “Introduction: Inhabiting the Body, Inhabiting the World,” in *Environment and Embodiment in Early Modern England*, ed. Mary Floyd-Wilson and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 2–7.

Therefore, contentment can equally suggest a stable emotional state for the individual or a relational principle governing the exchanges between individuals. Similarly, the containment with which contentment was conceptually intertwined is less self-evident in meaning than it may at first appear. “Contain” can connote “comprise, enclose,” “include,” “hold in,” “confine,” “restrain, put restraint on, repress (one’s feelings, passions, etc.),” or “refrain from expressing or yielding to feeling, passion, etc.”¹⁵ However, it could also mean “sustain” or “retain in a certain state or order.”¹⁶ Even as it designates a form of self-containment, contentment does not require the individual to be utterly, stubbornly closed off. Instead, it can privilege specific forms of receptivity and ways of relating to the world. In discussing contentment, early modern authors balance these considerations of containment and connection, protection and permeability, autonomy and interdependence.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, “content” became an operative term in political texts of the period, as it extended from the individual, to the community, to the nation. Admittedly, negative twenty-first-century notions of contentment as passive and conservative have a long history: the *OED* defines “contented” as “willing to put up *with* something” or “not disposed to complain.”¹⁷ By the mid-seventeenth century, the noun “content” was used to signify “acquiescence,” and the phrase “to take upon content” meant “to accept without question or examination.”¹⁸ But “content” could also mean “consenting, willing, ready.”¹⁹ It is in this sense that “content” and

¹⁵ *OED* “contain” v. I.1.a, I.2, II.11.a, II.12, II.11.b, and II.14.

¹⁶ *OED* “contain” v. II.8 and 10.

¹⁷ Respectively, adj.1.a. (first instance 1526) and adj.3 (1597).

¹⁸ n2.2.

¹⁹ adj2.A.I.3.a.

“not content” were used as the terms of agreement or disagreement in the English Parliament, as Sir Thomas Smith explains in *De Republica Anglorum*: “When the Chaunceler hath demanded of them if they will goe to the question after the bill hath beene thrise reade, they saying only content or not content, without further reasoning or replying: and as the more number doeth agree, so is it agreed on, or dashed.”²⁰ Moreover, contentment could be and was attached to all manner of early modern political principles, equally invoked to support absolute sovereignty, limited monarchy, anti-imperialism, and even revolution. Content was considered integral not only to the functioning of individual bodies, but to the operations of the body politic.

These discussions of private and public contentment often built upon classical and medieval philosophy. As scholars have recognized, both Stoicism and Lucretian materialism influenced the intellectual culture of the period in extensive ways.²¹ Stoic philosophers in

²⁰ Sir Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum*, ed. Mary Dewar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 83 (see also 81).

²¹ On Stoicism and early modern literature, see Geoffrey Aggeler, *Nobler in the Mind: The Stoic-Skeptic Dialectic in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998); Reid Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics: Ancient Legacies in Early Stuart Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998); Andrew Shifflett, *Stoicism, Politics, and Literature in the Age of Milton: War and Peace Reconciled* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Danny Campbell, *Reading the Rhetoric of Revenge from Jacobean Drama to Milton* (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 2002). On Epicurean philosophy and Lucretian materialism, see Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics*; Stuart Gillespie, “Lucretius in the English Renaissance,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*, ed. Stuart Gillespie and Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 242–53; Philip Hardie, *Lucretian Receptions: History, the Sublime, Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve* (New York: Norton, 2011); and Gerard Paul Passanante, *The Lucretian Renaissance: Philology and the Afterlife of Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). See also Jill Krave, “Stoicism and Epicureanism: Philosophical Revival and Literary Repercussions,” in *The Cambridge History*

particular had elaborated, if not necessarily invented, key concepts that were of obvious relevance to a principle of contentment, such as tranquility, constancy, and patience. When Elizabeth I translates Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* in 1593, she uses variants of the word "content," but only four times.²² However, when the same work is translated by an unknown J. T. and published in 1609, the term figures far more prominently. The author explains that "nothing is miserable but when it is thought so, and contrariwise, every estate is happie if he that beares it bee content." By contrast, whoever yields himself "to Fortune's sway . . . must bee content with the conditions of thy mistresse."²³ Although scholars have primarily linked Neo-Stoicism to discontent, publications like this one translate Stoic tenets into an English lexicon of contentment and conscript Boethius (among others) into an early modern project of promoting and producing contentedness.²⁴

Consequently, Stoicism functions as an important intellectual tributary to a broader body of thought on Christian contentment.²⁵ Indeed, many English Reformers marshal the resources of

of Literary Criticism: Vol. 3: The Renaissance, ed. Glyn P. Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 458–65.

²² Elizabeth I, trans., *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, in *Elizabeth I: Translations, 1592–1598*, ed. Janel Mueller and Joshua Scodel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 150, 162, 186, and 214. By contrast, Chaucer never uses a form of "content" in his translation.

²³ *Five Books of Philosophical Comfort, full of Christian consolation, written a 1000 yeres since*, trans. J. T. (London, 1609), 49–54.

²⁴ On Neo-Stoicism and discontent, see Shifflett, *Stoicism, Politics, and Literature*.

²⁵ On the relationship between Neo-Stoicism and English Calvinism, see Aggeler, *Nobler in the Mind*, 18–26.

Stoic philosophy to support their arguments about contentment.²⁶ However, they also regularly distinguish themselves from their secular philosophical counterparts. Many of these authors accuse the Stoics (justly or unjustly) of endorsing an overly passive condition. Strikingly, twentieth- and twenty-first-century critics have absolved Renaissance Stoicism from accusations of resignation and hopelessness, the very features still commonly attributed to contentment.²⁷ However, Stoic tranquility, which, as Geoffrey Aggeler explains, “consists of *apatheia* combined with *eupatheia* or benevolent states of feeling,” falls short of a Christian contentment that actively encourages the cultivation of particular positive affects.²⁸ Christian contentment accommodates and absorbs Stoic concepts like quietude, constancy, and self-sufficiency, but it places even greater emphasis on qualitative differences between emotional states, in turn promoting the value of a godly cheer.²⁹

Although physiological, political, and philosophical works were rife with contentment as a term and concept, the Protestant Reformation played a shaping role in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century contentment discourse. Questions of contentment were taken up most directly in religious genres: sermons, explications of biblical passages, theological treatises, and works of religious controversy. In these genres, contentment is often represented by the common variant “contentation,” which had the additional meanings of “The making of satisfaction for

²⁶ Nevertheless, the Stoic tradition offered a number of different and sometimes conflicting views on emotion and the passions, even allowing that not all Stoic texts were equally accessible to or esteemed by early modern intellectuals.

²⁷ See Shifflett, *Stoicism, Politics, and Literature*, 2.

²⁸ Aggeler, *Nobler in the Mind*, 44.

²⁹ On the difference between Stoic *apatheia* and an insensible *anaesthesia*, see Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985, 1990), 1:42.

sin” and “The satisfying of the conscience, of the moral or rational faculty.”³⁰ As such, contentation is readily put into conversation with fundamental Protestant principles of justification and conscience. The religious upheavals and theological dynamism of the English Reformation defined the ways in which early modern authors constructed their concepts of contentment from existing intellectual traditions and available texts.³¹

This is not to say that a Christian contentment was conceptually unavailable before the Reformation. As we will see in Chapter 1, St. Paul in his epistles expressed the importance of pious contentment long before the sixteenth century. However, the Reformation represents a crucial context for English thought on contentment for at least two major reasons. First, the meaning of contentment in early modern England was, in large part, a function of the word itself. As Paul’s Greek and Luther’s Latin were translated into the English vernacular, “content” (and its variants) became a prominent means of articulating Christian theology in the Reformation moment. A new phase in the intellectual history of contentment began, a phase that was distinctly English and Protestant.³²

³⁰ *OED* “contentation” n. 5b and 6.

³¹ As Brian Cummings states, “Without reference to religion, the study of early modern writing is incomprehensible,” just as the corollary is true—“Without reference to writing, the study of early modern religion is incomprehensible.” See *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 6.

³² Scholars such as Christopher Haigh and Eamon Duffy have clearly demonstrated that the Reformation was an ongoing process, by no means immediately or entirely successful. See Haigh, ed., *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400–c. 1500* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). Nevertheless, subsequent scholars have

Second, the English Reformation introduced various cultural exigencies that contentment capably addressed. Scholars have traced the ways in which English Calvinism could precipitate religious despair. Blair Worden claims, “The volume of despair engendered by Puritan teaching on predestination is incalculable.”³³ Similarly, John Stachniewski argues “that Calvinism and puritanism were conducive to despair and that this was both a widely recognized and widespread phenomenon in England at least from the late sixteenth century.”³⁴ According to Andrew Escobedo, despair becomes “a normative aspect of spiritual life” that “conceptually oscillates between irremediable sin and moral awareness,” and thus despair “functions simultaneously as a transparent manifestation of God’s dispensation and as a kind of joint or pivot between paradoxes inherent in Protestant Christianity.”³⁵ Such despair is “a sadness born out of the disproportion between self and world that Protestantism did not create but exacerbated by making Grace at once more personally immediate and implacably invisible.”³⁶ Although Escobedo follows Stachniewski in many respects, he adds the caveat (without further elaboration) that English Protestantism also offered important alternatives to religious despair.

stressed that the Reformation was “a gradual yet profound cultural transformation.” See Peter Marshall, “(Re)defining the English Reformation,” *The Journal of British Studies* 48 (2009): 565.

³³ Blair Worden, review of Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington’s World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London*, qtd. in John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 1.

³⁴ Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination*, 27.

³⁵ Andrew Escobedo, “Despair and the Proportion of the Self,” *Spenser Studies* 17 (2003): 80 and 77.

³⁶ Escobedo, “Despair and the Proportion of the Self,” 88.

Literary critics have only just begun to examine some of the elements of Protestant thought that constitute a positive affective alternative to despair.³⁷ Adam Potkay identifies joy as an important theological concept in the European and English Reformations: “English Protestant writing of the early modern era vividly evokes both joy and, conversely, the threat of joylessness in the Christian life.”³⁸ However, Potkay juxtaposes this joy with (and privileges it over) a more habituated happiness that recognizably overlaps with Renaissance contentment.³⁹ Even more recently, Heather Hirschfeld discusses “satisfaction” as a formal theological term related to penance that remained relevant long after England’s break from Catholic Rome. As Hirschfeld demonstrates, the “general, affect-tinged understanding of the term,” with all its “emotional qualitative associations,” existed alongside and informed more technical meanings in religious, legal, and economic discourses.⁴⁰ Hirschfeld subsumes contentment under the topic of satisfaction as an “economic *disposition* or *affect*,” but this treatment (however appropriate to her

³⁷ An influential early study by Maren-Sofie Røstvig charts the reception of a *beatus ille* tradition of the happy husbandman derived from Virgil’s *Georgics* and, principally, Horace. However, neither Protestant theology nor pastoral literature figure in Røstvig’s account, and she tends to conflate concepts of happiness that, though overlapping, were not synonymous in the English Renaissance. See *The Happy Man: Studies in the Metamorphoses of a Classical Ideal: Volume I: 1600–1700*, 2nd ed. (Oslo: Norwegian Universities Press, 1962).

³⁸ Adam Potkay, *The Story of Joy: From the Bible to Late Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 73. In his earlier work, Potkay focuses on a model of happiness derived from Roman Stoicism and shared by both David Hume and Samuel Johnson. See *The Passion for Happiness: Samuel Johnson and David Hume* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

³⁹ See Potkay, *The Story of Joy*, 2–3, 20–25, and 68–71. Potkay’s distinction between joy and happiness resembles Barthes’s discussion of *jouissance* and *plaisir*.

⁴⁰ Heather Hirschfeld, *The End of Satisfaction: Drama and Repentance in the Age of Shakespeare* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 5.

own study) narrows its range of meanings in the period.⁴¹ Potkay's and Hirschfeld's studies of religious joy and Protestant satisfaction join a growing body of research on pleasure as both the topic and *telos* of early modern literature.⁴² I contend that contentment merits a place alongside these objects of scholarly attention, both because of its prominence in early modern discourse and the ways in which it can complement and challenge our current understandings of the relationships between positive affect, society, and the self.

From Martin Luther onward, Renaissance intellectuals sought to develop a theory of contentment reconcilable with new, rapidly proliferating and ever-evolving religious ideals. Even if Calvin's canon, as Beth Quitslund argues, "has little to recommend in the way of consolation for believers adrift in doubt," writers of the English Reformation set out to address this absence through an abundant literature of contentment.⁴³ "Content" became an important term within a

⁴¹ Hirschfeld, *The End of Satisfaction*, 95–96.

⁴² Greenblatt claims, "the culture in the wake of antiquity that best epitomized the Lucretian embrace of beauty and pleasure and propelled it forward as a legitimate and worthy human pursuit was that of the Renaissance" (*The Swerve*, 8). On pleasure and early modern literature, see Jonathan Hall, *Anxious Pleasures: Shakespearean Comedy and the Nation-State* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995); Huebert, *The Performance of Pleasure*; Joseph Campana, "Boy Toys and Liquid Joys: Pleasure and Power in the Bower of Bliss," *Modern Philology* 106 (2009): 465–96; A. D. Cousins, *Pleasure and Gender in the Writings of Thomas More: Pursuing the Common Weal* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2010); William A. Oram, "Spenser's Crowd of Cupids and the Language of Pleasure," in *Rhetorics of Bodily Disease and Health in Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. Jennifer C. Vaught (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010). 87–104; and Richard Strier, *The Unrepentant Renaissance: From Petrarch to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). See also Frank Kermode, *Pleasure and Change: The Aesthetics of the Canon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴³ Beth Quitslund, "Despair and the Composition of the Self," *Spenser Studies* 17 (2003): 92.

“revolution in theological vocabulary.”⁴⁴ The resulting Reformation constructions of contentment directly addressed the newly Protestant “disproportion between self and world,” instead allowing for more benign articulations of this relationship between self and world.⁴⁵ Many Reformation authors actively seek to realize contentment through language. Even authors who are particularly skeptical of contentment contribute to expanding the emotional knowledge of their age. By elaborating an affective vocabulary, the writers and works examined in this dissertation allowed their audiences to better understand, express, and endure their own experiences, as well as to imaginatively engage in other experiences through dramatic, poetic, and prose fictions.⁴⁶ They *still* allow audiences to do this today. Together, Renaissance writers endeavor to *reform* contentment, refining a concept suitable to the historical circumstances of the Reformation in England.

But literary authors also *re-form* contentment, variously emphasizing aspects of the concept across literary forms, and no literary mode contributes more profoundly to this re-formation of contentment than pastoral. For a variety of reasons, pastoral was widely recognized as a particularly productive mode through which to engage this larger cultural conversation. Although contentment appears in all manner of modes and genres, depictions of contentment are central to Renaissance pastoral. As Nancy Lindheim explains, pastoral is a “tool to think with,” defined by a “stripping down” and a stripping away of life’s complications to examine “the

⁴⁴ Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation*, 11.

⁴⁵ Escobedo, “Despair and the Proportion of the Self,” 88.

⁴⁶ On the methodological importance (and difficulty) of studying individual emotion words to histories of the emotions, see Susan J. Matt, “Recovering the Invisible: Methods for the Historical Study of Emotions,” in *Doing Emotions History*, ed. Susan J. Matt and Peter N. Stearns (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 42–44.

minimal terms of human happiness.”⁴⁷ This imaginative practice proved invaluable for responding to a Reformation discourse that encouraged the godly individual to be content “in whatsoever estate” (Philippians 4:11).⁴⁸ Contentment becomes the lens through which pastoral authors and speakers evaluate their experiences as artists, lovers, citizens, and Christians. Writers repeatedly turn to pastoral in order to represent the contented self in relation to the Renaissance world. Through pastoral, authors solidify contentment’s position as a prominent emotional, ethical, and social principle in literature of the English Renaissance and Reformation.

Methodology and Evidence

This dissertation will excavate an archive of primary source texts that take up the topic of contentment, consider them in light of recent affect theory, and apply this historical and intellectual context to literature composed in or otherwise engaging the pastoral mode. In this way, I aim to illuminate the complex participation of Renaissance authors and their pastoral works within a widespread Reformation conversation on contentment.

An Archive of Contentment

As a main contribution, this dissertation uncovers a diverse body of texts that contribute to understandings of contentment in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the first chapter, I survey and analyze this cultural context through a combination of historicist methodology and intellectual history. By bringing together theological treatises, sermons, martyrologies, and documents of religious controversy, as well as more squarely political and natural philosophical texts, the first chapter presents an eclectic archive to suggest just how pervasive the implications

⁴⁷ Nancy Lindheim, *The Virgilian Pastoral Tradition: From the Renaissance to the Modern Era* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2005), 13 and 11.

⁴⁸ Geneva Bible, 1560.

of contentment could be. The purpose of examining these works is to demonstrate not simply that early modern writers constantly use the word “content,” but also that the concept accrues an urgency in Renaissance England due to the psychological, social, and theological changes precipitated by the Protestant Reformation.

Quentin Skinner writes, “One . . . role for the intellectual historian is that of acting as a kind of archaeologist, bringing buried intellectual treasure back to the surface, dusting it down and enabling us to reconsider what we think of it.”⁴⁹ By bringing discussions of contentment to the surface, I hope to encourage a reconsideration of this emotional concept, the English Reformation, and Renaissance literature. A concerted focus on contentment need not produce overly optimistic interpretations of early modern culture or literary texts, pastoral or otherwise. Rather, the texts collected here display a remarkable diversity of thought about contentment. Some authors suggest that a true, complete contentment is not achievable in this life. Others find a meaningful place for contentment in a world of contingency and suffering, but only with great concession and qualification. By studying a Reformed contentment’s place in the early modern emotional vocabulary, we can observe how these authors continue to challenge our own ethical and political assumptions.

Contemporary Affect Theory and Early Modern Emotions

While maintaining an awareness of the differences between Renaissance and more recent understandings of emotion, I hope to benefit from the insights afforded by contemporary affect theory. This body of theory has recently contributed to the rich interdisciplinary dialogue between literary criticism and cultural histories of the emotions. More specifically, affect theorists often confirm the conclusions of scholarship on the passions and embodiment in early

⁴⁹ Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 112.

modern literature. Indeed, affect theory and historical phenomenology both challenge subject/object distinctions, active/passive binaries, and understandings of the emotions as purely proprietary to the individual.⁵⁰ Recent theorists understand affects as “communicable” and “contagious,” much like the passions in the early modern period.⁵¹ However, affect theory also allows us more fully to recognize certain aspects of contentment that discussions of the passions are prone to overlook or undervalue.

Many affect theorists distinguish affect from emotion, though they at times differ over definitions or attach different ethical and political significances to them. Teresa Brennan defines affect as “the physiological shift accompanying a judgment,” whereas feelings are “sensations that have found the right match in words.”⁵² Brian Massumi equates affect with “intensity” and aligns it with “motion,” rather than “position.”⁵³ While affect is autonomous, emotions are “a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal”: “Formed, qualified, situated perceptions and cognitions fulfilling functions of actual connection or blockage are the capture and closure of affect.

⁵⁰ See Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); *Reading the Early Modern Passions*, ed. Paster, Rowe, and Floyd-Wilson; and *Environment and Embodiment*, ed. Floyd-Wilson and Sullivan.

⁵¹ However, Sara Ahmed cautions that we should not therefore take the effects of affect to be simply automatic, determinative, or somehow non-contingent. See “Happy Objects,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 36.

⁵² Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 5.

⁵³ Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 27 and 3–4.

Emotion is the most intense (most contracted) expression of that *capture*.⁵⁴ If emotion belongs to the individual, affect is, as Megan Watkins puts it, “importantly a relational phenomenon.”⁵⁵ Or, as Sara Ahmed describes, affective economies concern a cultural orientation toward objects, rather than the psychology—or physiology, for that matter—of the single subject.⁵⁶ As we shall see, Renaissance accounts of contentedness often bring together issues of individual, captured experience, on the one hand, with the dynamism and elusiveness of affective relationships, on the other.⁵⁷ In this way, an examination of contentment in the early modern period calls attention to both the usefulness and the limitations of current theoretical distinctions.

In particular, Brennan’s conceptual vocabulary of self-containment and self-possession bears on the current study. In her account, self-containment is an injurious illusion derived from the “foundational fantasy,” through which the infant child unconsciously projects its own negative affects onto the mother.⁵⁸ Left unchecked, this process of projection and introjection results in boundaries between self and world that serve (however ineffectively) to protect the aggressive ego. This “sealing of the heart” bolsters the idea of the autonomous, contained self

⁵⁴ Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 28 and 35; his emphasis. On affect as freer than the Freudian drives, see Patricia T. Clough, “The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomedicine, and Bodies,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Gregg and Seigworth, 219.

⁵⁵ Megan Watkins, “Desiring Recognition, Accumulating Affect,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Gregg and Seigworth, 270.

⁵⁶ Ahmed, “Happy Objects,” 33–35.

⁵⁷ On affective dynamism, see Lone Bertelsen and Andrew Murphie, “An Ethics of Everyday Infinities and Powers: Felix Guattari on Affect and the Refrain,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Gregg and Seigworth, 154.

⁵⁸ Brennan coins the term in *The Interpretation of the Flesh: Freud and Femininity* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

and its proprietary emotions.⁵⁹ As Western society became increasingly invested in the contained Cartesian subject and economic values of self-interest, the individual found it ever more difficult to promote positive affective transmissions and effectively cope with the negative ones.⁶⁰

While self-containment involves unconscious projection and ignores the transmission of affects, self-possession is predicated upon careful discernment and fostered by a cultural awareness of “more permeable . . . ways of being.”⁶¹ Self-possession entails “somehow maintaining equilibrium” despite still “subjecting oneself to eddies or even torrents of affects.”⁶² It requires “evaluations of one’s inner states and evaluations of the origin of the affects,” which can only be achieved through the “brief suspension of the state of projection” and attentive discernment, “an act of sustained consciousness” that promotes healthy habits of affective transmission.⁶³

However, I wish to draw attention to one moment in which the distinction between self-containment and self-possession is less strictly enforced. To clarify what she means by self-possession, Brennan “consider[s] what it is not”: “Projecting is the opposite of discernment because projection directs affects outward without consciously (as a rule) acknowledging that it is doing so; discernment consciously examines them.” Brennan then adds, “Boundaries may depend on projecting, but this is only one route to self-containment. There is another, based on

⁵⁹ Brennan, *Transmission of Affect*, 147. “The Sealing of the Heart” is the title of Brennan’s fifth chapter.

⁶⁰ For the qualitative distinctions between affects, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, “Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins,” *Critical Inquiry* 21 (1995): 496–522.

⁶¹ Brennan, *Transmission of Affect*, 11.

⁶² Brennan, *Transmission of Affect*, 135.

⁶³ Brennan, *Transmission of Affect*, 130, 128, and 126.

discernment.”⁶⁴ That is, while projecting boundaries and discerning affects are opposed processes, they are each of them “route[s] to self-containment.” Here, self-possession is actually a species of self-containment, albeit one quite different in appearance and effect from that based upon projection. Rather than strictly delineating self-containment and self-possession, Brennan suggests that there are (at least) two versions of self-containment: one deluding and destructive and the other ethical and advantageous (not to mention actually tenable), but *both* falling under the conceptual umbrella of self-containment. This fleeting reference to the congruity of projection and discernment as routes to self-containment suggests how very different theories of the emotions and competing models of selfhood can conceptually overlap, however momentarily. Similarly, contentment proves a remarkably flexible concept in Reformation discourse, reflecting aspects of what Brennan identifies as self-containment *and* self-possession.

By emphasizing the boundaries of the subject, Renaissance writers can, at times, construct an ideal of contentment as autonomous selfhood, in which the individual is effectively impervious to outside influences. In this way, contentment becomes almost a precursor concept to Brennan’s self-containment. At the same time, however, authors anatomize contentment’s embodied, transactional, and relational nature. As many recognized, the shored-up selfhood promised by contentment depended on carefully moderating one’s relationships with the world, with the other, and with the divine. Contentment, then, can signal a type of autonomy of the self—a safeguard against fickle fortune or any physical harm that may befall the body—even as it betrays an understanding of the self that cannot be articulated apart from its relationships, with all of the contingencies, desires, and passions those relationships entail. Early modern authors

⁶⁴ Brennan, *Transmission of Affect*, 11.

not only register the different ways in which contentment could be understood, but they exploit a productive tension between the available models.

The Prominence of the Pastoral Mode

This dissertation's analysis of contentment further contributes to studies of early modern emotion by emphasizing the role of a particular literary mode—pastoral—in Renaissance intellectual culture. In *What Is Pastoral?* Paul Alpers defines mode as a “literary manifestation, in a given work . . . of its assumptions about man’s nature and situation”—what he calls man’s “strength relative to his or her world.” Specifically, literary modes incite readers to consider “what notions of human strength, possibilities, pleasures, dilemmas, etc. are manifested in the represented realities and in the emphases, devices, organization, effects, etc. of the work.”⁶⁵ Thus, the literary mode of pastoral enables a range of representations of possible models of selfhood and the relationship between self and world—a range that will differ from those made available by other modes of discourse. Moreover, as Philip Fisher observes, literary forms are largely defined by the passions they represent, so that particular modes and genres can have distinctive affective associations.⁶⁶

As a ubiquitous topic in early modern thought, contentment is represented in all manner of literary texts, from tragedies, which typically suggest the impossibility of contentment in a painfully contingent world, to epyllia, which predominantly feature powerful and transgressive erotic desires. Nevertheless, I maintain that Renaissance authors use pastoral more than any other

⁶⁵ Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* 50. For this definition, Alpers draws upon Angus Fletcher, “Utopian Criticism and the Anatomy of Criticism,” in *Northrop Frye in Modern Criticism*, ed. Murray Krieger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 34–35.

⁶⁶ Philip Fisher, *The Vehement Passions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 8.

literary mode to represent Reformation concepts of contentment. In the name of historicizing pastoral, literary critics in the last three decades have walled off a historical conversation in which pastoral played a significant role. Rather than recoiling from “ideological” pastoral criticism and returning to an earlier “idealistic” model, I demonstrate the crucial critical oversights resulting from the repeated misconstrual of pastoral contentment.⁶⁷ Our revised understanding of pastoral need not be apolitical, reducing the mode to a site of wish fulfillment in which contentment is advocated without qualification or any awareness of pressing historical issues. However, major authors of the English Renaissance do turn to pastoral as a literary mode appropriate for serious consideration of contentment, whatever their various conclusions about the concept may be.

The major authors studied in this dissertation all invite a connection between pastoral and contentment. Sidney weaves a complex lexicon of “content” throughout his pastoral romance *The Old Arcadia*; however, as Judith Haber notes, Sidney removes many passages on the topic as he prepares the more chivalric *New Arcadia*.⁶⁸ That is, Sidney seems to have recognized that pastoral was more appropriate to discussions of contentment than other modes and genres, and he carries out his revisions accordingly. Similarly, though Spenser uses forms of the word “content” throughout his corpus, he does so most densely in the pastoral cantos of *Faerie Queene* VI. Likewise, Shakespeare invokes contentment in most of his plays and longer poems, but it is in the pastoral comedy *As You Like It* that he most fully stages the competition between different early modern models of contentment and most clearly connects contentment to a particular

⁶⁷ On these two categories of pastoral criticism, see Patrick Cheney, *Reading Sixteenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 214–15.

⁶⁸ Haber, *Pastoral and the Poetics of Self-Contradiction*, 180–81 n. 39–40.

literary tradition. Finally, Milton makes content and discontent central to the pre- and postlapsarian relationships between self and world in *Paradise Lost*, particularly passages that exhibit overtly pastoral (and anti-pastoral) imagery. For none of these authors is the marked prevalence of contentment in pastoral literature a purely superficial convention, but rather a horizon of possibility, a point of contact with larger cultural conversations.

By the time it became a dominant literary mode in late Elizabethan England, pastoral had been firmly established as an apt medium for commentary (either overt or oblique as the circumstances dictated) on political, economic, ethical, philosophical, religious, and artistic matters. In his *Arte of English Poesie*, George Puttenham affirmed pastoral's ability to "glance at greater matters."⁶⁹ As critics have shown, these "greater matters" implicated nearly every aspect of early modern existence. Authors like Sidney and Spenser helped to extend the possibilities of pastoral in English as an artistic means to represent and shape their culture. Moreover, while Renaissance literary theory sometimes warned against mixing literary forms, Renaissance authorial practice was far more experimental. Due in part to its popularity in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, pastoral interacted with almost every available literary genre. All of the writers and works in this dissertation, in one way or another, reform and re-form the concept of contentment, but the literary authors in Chapters 2 through 5 re-form *pastoral* contentment across genres and in relation to other modes and discourses. The chapters that follow examine pastoral practice throughout a number of literary forms, including prose romance, eclogue, epic, and stage comedy. Pastoral and contentment alike have often been described as static, but this dissertation will demonstrate how dynamic they both can be.

⁶⁹ George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 127.

Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 investigates the extensive English Reformation conversation on contentment, beginning with translations of St. Paul and Luther in the early sixteenth century and ending with publications during the English Revolution and Interregnum. Although various classical and medieval works informed early modern concepts of contentment, English Renaissance writers transformed this material, resulting in a tremendous textual archive on contentment. My examination of these texts will be guided by a series of questions asked by the authors themselves: What is contentment? What is Christian about contentment? Where does contentment fit into a world of suffering, desire, and discontent? How can contentment be achieved in such a world? What are the consequences of contentment for the individual? for the nation? The first chapter considers how authors address some or all of these questions in differing ways in light of their intellectual and religious commitments, immediate political circumstances, and the influences of other texts. In this way, the chapter establishes the historical and intellectual context for the following chapters and their discussion of particular literary authors who engage reformed concepts of contentment through the pastoral mode.

Chapter 2 charts Sidney's complex use of the term "content" and its variant forms in *The Old Arcadia*. Perhaps more than any other literary author of the sixteenth century, Sidney dwells obsessively on the meaning and value of contentment in the early version of his pastoral romance. In response to Renaissance concepts of contentment and, in particular, representations of Protestant suffering like John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, Sidney develops a simultaneously ethical and erotic contentment. Specifically, the contentment Pyrocles experiences through his consummated relationship with Philoclea educates him in the contented suffering so highly esteemed in Sidney's day. An interpersonal contentment achieved through intercourse begets

individual moral virtue. In the process, Arcadia become a testing-ground for contentment as a psychological, social, and sexual principle.

Chapter 3 focuses on Spenser's representation of pastoral contentment in relation to the Petrarchan mode, particularly its tendency toward violence directed at the self and other. If Sidney is concerned with an interpersonal contentment, Spenser strives toward an intertextual contentment as well. While Sidney couples issues of individual moral virtue and romantic relationships, Spenser introduces an additional meta-literary dimension by emphasizing these same issues as central elements of Petrarchism. Spenser evaluates the self-consolidation and steady satisfaction of pastoral contentment as a corrective to the "self-shattering," hierarchism, and gendered violence of Petrarchan erotic conventions.⁷⁰ More specifically, in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser represents the containing of Petrarchism with pastoral contentment through Calidore's sojourn among the shepherds and his courtship of Pastorella, an allegory of literary modes.

Chapter 4 reads Shakespeare's *As You Like It* in light of the connections between individual and collective contentment. Shakespeare shares the interest in interpersonal contentment exhibited by his pastoral predecessors, but he stages a political contentment that takes full advantage of the concept's intersubjective and communal potential. In his pastoral comedy, contented individuals are unthinkable apart from their relationships with others. Upon this foundation of shared positive affect, Duke Senior builds an Arden society that opposes the political oppression of the court and promotes political virtues of liberty, counsel, and consent. While Shakespeare juxtaposes this representation with Rosalind's powerful desire and Jaques's

⁷⁰ See Cynthia Marshall, *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 4–5 and chapter 2 (on Petrarchism).

isolating discontent, he maintains contentment's political usefulness and exercises the public theater's ability to content his London audiences.

Chapter 5 focuses on the representation of content and discontent in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, with reference to the epic's engagement with the pastoral mode and the Reformation discourse on contentment. Milton's Satan perverts the principle of Christian contentment, along with associated values like constancy, patience, and tranquility. His discontent drives him to spread sinful affect to Eden in imperialist fashion. Such discontent rends humanity's relationship with the world and ruins the literary mode of prelapsarian pastoral. From the earliest descriptions of Satan in Hell to archangel Michael's final instructions to Adam, Milton portrays an anti-imperialist contentment to protest English politics and protect the emotional well-being of his English readers.

The conclusion of the dissertation details the significance of a study of contentment to the late seventeenth century and beyond. While the preceding chapters examine aspects of Reformation contentment that often challenge reigning critical and theoretical assumptions, the conclusion suggests how some of those assumptions may have been formulated in the latter part of the early modern period. In this way, the dissertation not only provides a literary and intellectual history of contentment in the Renaissance, but it also identifies the origins of our own, very different ideas. Just as an emergent Protestant intellectual culture and an outpouring of English pastoral literature precipitated widespread interest in contentment, subsequent shifts in philosophy, science, and artistic sensibilities would lead to a radical reappraisal of contentment. The consequences of this reappraisal, the depreciation of reformed contentment, persist to the present day.

Chapter One

Constructing Contentment in Reformation England

In 1527, Henry VIII would not be content. This very year, the notoriously irascible monarch would first formally appeal to Pope Clement VII to annul his marriage with Catherine of Aragon. But on the eve of Reformation in England, Henry attacked Martin Luther in language that exposes contentment as a distinct problem for Catholic monarchy. In his preface, Henry explains, “with many flaterynge wordes he [Luther] laboreth to haue vs content that he myght be bolde to write to vs in the mater and cause of the gossell.”¹ Later, the king recounts Luther’s offer to publish a book praising Henry “if I were so content.”² Henry recognizes behind this attempt at appeasement an outright manipulation of the monarch. While seeming to yield to social and political hierarchies, Luther hopes the king’s content will have a leveling effect, at least in matters of religious opinion. Furthermore, Henry accuses Luther of a concealed discontent that makes him incapable of reasoned debate: “At your personall beyng at Wormace where ye were by the Emperours maieste condempned in playn parliament ye were ye said content to dispute but ye refused vtterly vppon your dispytions to stande to any mannes iugement.” Henry is less concerned with Luther’s contentment as affect than as affectation. According to the king, Luther professed to be content to debate religious matters but in fact was unwilling to accept the “iugement” of anyone else, specifically “the Emperour” and “the Pope.” Henry resists Luther’s attempts to content him, and he is flabbergasted that other Christians have been “content to gyue

¹ Henry VIII, *A Copy of the Letters, Wherin the Most Redouted & Mighty Prince, Our Souerayne Lorde Kyng Henry the Eight . . . Made Answere vnto a Certayne Letter of Martyn Luther* (London, 1527), A5v.

² Henry VIII, *A Copy of the Letters*, F1v.

... hearynge at all” to the ideas of Luther, a discontent-in-disguise.³ Contentment here is the very precondition for Reformation and revolution, as it enables the spread of Protestant ideas and disarms many of the pre-existing political and religious institutions that could oppose it.

If Henry’s response reflects a deep suspicion of Luther’s rhetoric of contentment during the early years of the Reformation, it also anticipates the importance that contentment would take in his own country after breaking with the Church of Rome. For Henry, contentment is problematic because it suggests that one might be susceptible to influence by someone or something more powerful than one’s self. English Reformation authors refigure this seeming susceptibility into a contentment capable of preserving, protecting, and empowering the self. Over the course of the Renaissance, writers engaged in a concerted effort to construct a contentment appropriate to their historical circumstances. By making individual religious belief and practice a uniquely national concern, the Reformation facilitated new ways of understanding the relationship between subject, sovereign, and salvation. Contentment, the very principle distrusted by King Henry, became a significant means of rethinking such a relationship, of situating and sustaining early modern selves within the material and spiritual worlds. The authors studied in this and subsequent chapters did not invent contentment, but they drew upon available intellectual traditions to reinvent a contentment consistent with Protestant ideals and uniquely suited for their English audiences.

Rather than inevitably evoking despair, from a very early date Protestantism was associated in England with contentment. “Content” entered the English Reformation lexicon with some of the first Protestant translations, and the term would prove invaluable for articulating Protestant views on the emotions, ethics, and politics throughout the Renaissance. Though the

³ Henry VIII, *A Copy of the Letters*, E4v–5r.

concept was widely valued across many discourses, authors sharing fundamental theological and philosophical assumptions could still disagree about the exact nature of contentment. How should the contented Christian comport himself or herself in this life? Can contentment even be fully achieved in the postlapsarian world, filled with sin and suffering? How can a contentment of the mind be located in the physical body? Does social contentment suggest political passivity, active resistance, or a different response altogether?

In this chapter, I identify some of the key Reformation authors and texts that participate in the cultural conversation on contentment in order to reveal how the concept functions over the course of the English Renaissance. First, I trace the notion of Christian contentment to two epistles of St. Paul, which, through William Tyndale's translations, introduce the word into the English Protestant vocabulary. Here I briefly survey responses to 1 Timothy 6:6 and Philippians 4:12 in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sermons and theological treatises, detailing the model of contentment that each writer constructs. Then, I isolate three particular lines of inquiry pursued in such texts to elaborate the complex process of reforming contentment. In the first of these sections, I examine the ways in which authors from Luther forward reconcile contentment and suffering, especially the martyrdoms precipitated by the Reformation. Second, I discuss how concepts of Christian contentment are informed by early modern physiological knowledge and notions of the passions. Third, I move to the social and political implications of the Reformation conversation on contentment. As we shall see, contentment, derided by Henry VIII as a symptom of weakness and malleability, emerged as a prominent Protestant principle of fortifying self and society—a principle that ultimately becomes indispensable to English audiences during the national struggles of civil war.

Pauline Contentment and the English Reformation

Tyndale's translations first Englished 1 Timothy 6:6 and Philippians 4:12 using forms of the word "content," and these renditions would be maintained in both the Geneva Bible and the King James Bible. Tyndale's early efforts as translator effectively introduced "content" into the English biblical vocabulary, and the prominent position of St. Paul's writings in Lutheran theology insured that the language of content would garner attention in the early English Reformation and beyond.⁴ Contentment was understood not only as a psychological condition, but as a relational principle; however, the Pauline letters construct subtly yet significantly different relations between material and spiritual concerns and the selves poised between them. 1 Timothy 6:6 and Philippians 4:12 have rich afterlives in Renaissance religious tracts and sermons that are fundamental to the role of contentment in Reformation England.

In Tyndale's translation of 1 Timothy 6:2–10, Paul connects contentment to godliness as he warns against covetousness: "Godlines is great ryches yf a man be content with that he hath. For we brought nothyng into the worlde and it is a playne case that we can cary nothyng out." Paul continues, "When we have fode & rayment let vs therwith be content. They that wilbe ryche faule into temptacion and snares and into many folysshe and noysome lustes which droune me in perdicion & destruccion. For coveteousnes is the rote of all evyll which whill some lusted after they erred fro the fayth & tanglyd them selves with many sorowes." While Paul does not propose an outright renunciation of personal property, he stresses the dangers that wealth can pose to the soul. The covetous individual becomes "tanglyd" in "sorowes" by pursuing the desire to be

⁴ On the importance of St. Paul in the writings of both Luther and Tyndale, see Carl R. Trueman, "The Theology of the English Reformers," in *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*, ed. David Bagchi and David C. Steinmetz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 163.

“ryche,” and his inability to extricate himself from these cumbersome relationships to riches obstructs the path to heaven, leading instead to “perdition.” Paul sets up a conflict between material wealth and spiritual health, and he defines contentment and Christian identity *against* worldly possessions.

In Philippians 4:11–13, Paul similarly upholds contentment as the exemplary Christian condition, but he mitigates the adversarial relationship outlined in 1 Timothy 6. Paul explains to his audience, “I speake not because of necessitie. For I have learned in whatsoever estate I am therewith to be content. I can both cast doune my silfe I can also excede. Every where and in all thynges I am instructed both to be full and to be hongry: to have plenty & to suffre nede. I can do all thynges thorow the helpe of Christ which strengtheth me.” Paul can be content with hunger and need, as we might expect after reading his first letter to Timothy, but he can be equally content with plenty, fullness, and even excess. Material possessions are not ethically laden in and of themselves, so long as the Christian bears the proper emotional orientation toward those possessions. Certain early modern authors would consider the extent to which the godly individual needs to avoid material goods in pursuit of spiritual riches. Even more importantly, though, 1 Timothy and Philippians provided authors with a Pauline precedent for *multiple* models of contented Christianity. With these New Testament touchstones, Reformation writers invoke contentment to describe a number of ways in which the self could relate to, define itself through, and defend itself from the world around it.

Henry Smith, popularly known as “silver-tongued” Smith and today considered to be “the most popular Puritan preacher of Elizabethan London,” responds to 1 Timothy 6:6 in his sermon

The Benefit of Contentation (1590).⁵ This sermon warns against covetousness, or the “Londoners sinne.”⁶ The godly Christian “hath founde that which the world dooth seeke, that is inough, euery word may be defined, & euery thing may be measured, but *enough* cannot be measured nor defined.” Smith elaborates on this elusive and amorphous “enough”: “when we had no thing, we thought it enough if we might obtaine lesse then we haue: when we came to more, we thought of an other enough: nowe we haue more, we dream of another enough: so enogh is alwaies to come, though too much be there already.” As Smith explains, material things will never satisfy, because “contentation . . . is in the mind, for Godlines is in the mind, and the gaine of Godlines is contentation.”⁷ Smith coaches his audience toward a healthy, pious relationship toward the material world that proves more fulfilling for the self.

Heather Hirschfeld discusses Smith’s account of the “always-receding quality of enough” in relation to the “economic *disposition* or *affect*” of contentation, which, for writers like William Perkins, exists in an area of conceptual overlap between “penitential and commercial exchange.” But while Smith’s contentation certainly serves as an “answer” to “economic ambition,” it does not necessarily assume that “the minimum” is “one’s present condition.”⁸ According to Smith,

⁵ R. B. Jenkins, *Henry Smith: England’s Silver-Tongued Preacher* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983), 1.

Jenkins notes, “By 1610 Smith’s printed sermons had gone through eighty-five or more editions and his fame as a powerful preacher survived him for several decades” (59).

⁶ Henry Smith, *The Benefit of Contentation Taken by Characterie and Examined after* (London, 1590), A1r. On Smith’s text as a possible source for Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*, see Manabu Tsuruta, “‘The Benefit of Contentation’: A Possible Source for *The Merchant of Venice*,” *Notes and Queries* 57 (2010): 366–67.

⁷ Smith, *The Benefit of Contentation*, C1v–2r.

⁸ Heather Hirschfeld, *The End of Satisfaction: Drama and Repentance in the Age of Shakespeare* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 36, 95–96.

Christ does not require rich men “to giue all their goods away to the poore,” as he did of the tax collector Zacchaeus, but rather “forbiddeth vs to loue riches, which makes our riches seeme pouertie.”⁹ By contrast, Smith takes a hard line against wealth and property in a separate sermon, *The Preachers Proclamacion Discoursing the Vanity of All Earthly Things, and Proouing that There is No Contentation to a Christian Minde, but Onely in the Feare of God* (1591). Rather than aligning his concept of contentation with Paul, as he had in the earlier sermon, Smith elaborates Solomon’s statement in Ecclesiastes 1:2: “vanitie of vanities, all is vanitie.” In this sermon, property itself is problematic, rather than a particular disposition toward property. Smith admits a widespread and even natural aversion to the passage in question, but he does little to mitigate such a response. If publication history is any indication, the message and tone of *The Preachers Proclamacion* may not have especially resonated with early modern audiences. *The Proclamacion* was not reprinted, while *The Benefit of Contentation* is collected with two other sermons by Smith in 1609 and continually republished afterwards.

In another extended reading of 1 Timothy 6:6, titled *True Contentment in the Gain of Godliness* (1620), Thomas Gataker maintains the contrast between contentment and covetousness, but he identifies it more broadly as an affective means of preserving and protecting the self. Until “a mans minde is stayed” by contentment, “*all is put . . . into a broken bag, that will hold nothing, or into a bottomless barrell, as the prouerbe is, that is neuer a whit the fuller for all that is put in.*”¹⁰ According to Gataker, the alternative to contentment is the

⁹ Smith, *The Benefit of Contentation*, A3r.

¹⁰ Thomas Gataker, *True Contentment in the Gaine of Godlines, with Its Self-Sufficiencie A Meditation on 1. Timoth. 6. 6* (London, 1620), 51–52. Italics original.

incapacity to hold anything in, a “spirituall loosenesse.” Like Smith, Gataker advocates contentment in response to the impossibility of satisfying material desires:

He that loueth money, saith Salomon, shall neuer haue enough of it. The desire of more groweth, as a mans riches arise. As the Dropsie-man, the more he drinketh, the dryer he is, and those that are sicke of the greedy disease, canina appetentia, the doggish desire, as they terme it, the more they deuoure, the more hungry they are; so the richer men grow, the more commonly they desire, more greedy do they wax ordinarily of the world, then they were when they had lesse of it. As when the fruits of their ground come in abundantly on them, they make their barnes bigger, and their storehouses larger to hold more: so withall they beate out the walls of their hearts to couet more, and inlarge their desire as the Grave, or as Hell; that neuer cryeth, Ho, because it never hath enough.¹¹

The covetous individual is like an ill person, who cannot be satiated by any amount of food or water but grows ever more sickly. As in the earlier passage, a lack of contentment is a failure of filling up. Rather than bounding his desires, the covetous man instead experiences a hellish expansion that perverts the project of self-consolidation suggested by contentment. In turn, discontent is a form of self-division caused by “carking care[s], as euen diuideth the minde in twaine, and cutteth the very soule as it were asunder.”¹² Gataker emphasizes the importance of contentment by counter-example, proposing multiple models for how the unstable individual suffers, as the contents of the self leak out, impiously enlarge, or painfully split apart.

¹¹ Gataker, *True Contentment*, 59–60.

¹² Gataker, *True Contentment*, 74.

Yet another discussion of 1 Timothy 6, Thomas Taylor's *Treatise of Contentment* (1641), lingers over Paul's Greek to elaborate the connection between contentment and self-sufficiency:

The Greeke word here used to signifie Contentment, implies a selfe-sufficiency: and that is a great matter to be affirmed of a creature, especially now after sin admitted, and the wofull desolations and confusions which sinne hath brought. *God alone is properly selfe-sufficient.* But take it with godlines, the Mother of it, as hath been shewed, and then it is no strange thing. A godly man, who hath this great mystery sealed up in his breast, is selfe-sufficient, and needeth not any carnall or sinfull additions to make him blessed.¹³

Taylor admits the apparent impiety of suggesting that a person can be perfectly self-sufficient or content after the fall, but he cites Paul's connection between contentment and godliness.

Strikingly, Taylor says that the "godly man" has this "great mystery," the understanding of contentment derived from Paul's letter to Timothy, "sealed up in his breast," betraying a sense of self that is closed off from the outside world. Taylor earlier claims that "godliness fenceth the heart with contentment," with the verb "fence" suggesting "screen, shield, protect," but also "enclose."¹⁴ Earlier authors like Gataker, Henry Scudder, and Richard Younge had used such metaphors of fortification to describe godliness, peace, and patience respectively—with each of the authors in turn linking those virtues to contentment.¹⁵ However, contentedness becomes itself

¹³ Thomas Taylor, *A Treatise of Contentment Leading a Christian with Much Patience through All Afflicted Conditions* (London, 1641), 142

¹⁴ Taylor, *A Treatise of Contentment*, 70. *OED* "fence" v.2 and 6a.

¹⁵ Gataker, *True Contentment*, 11; Henry Scudder, *The Christians Daily Walke in Holy Securitie and Peace* (London, 1631), 418–19, 426; and Richard Younge, *The Victory of Patience and Benefit of Affliction, with How to*

an armor in Taylor's *Treatise*, and this model of self-sufficiency depends upon a sealing-up within the breast that resonates with what Teresa Brennan calls "the sealing of the heart."¹⁶ Drawing on Paul's warnings about material possessions in 1 Timothy, Taylor suggests that the Christian must close himself off to the outside world altogether. For Taylor, the contented self is sufficient and secure, but it is also sequestered.

St. Paul's letter to the Philippians proved an equally fruitful source for Reformation authors writing on contentment. Calvin himself composed a commentary on Philippians that was translated in 1584.¹⁷ Perhaps unsurprisingly, Calvin exhibits no especial interest in the verses on contentment, but English authors later take up the topic. In 1594, Nicholas Bownd appended his *Short Treatise of a Contented Mind* to a collection of three sermons by John More. The sermon represents contentment as gratitude for God's gifts, noting that the "sinne" of the Hebrews fleeing Egypt was "that they were not contented with that most blessed estate that the Lord had placed them in."¹⁸ Bownd advises his audience that they "must come vnto that whereof the Apostle speaketh, Phil. 4." While More's preceding sermons repeatedly use contentment in a negative sense, attaching it to laziness, vanity, and the temptations of Satan, Bownd recovers a positive Pauline valuation. In particular, Bownd clarifies that contentment in all estates need not indicate an indifference to one's circumstances or a renunciation of all desire. Rather, "it is lawfull for vs to desire and pray for as many things as we want, and God hath promised, but in

Husband it so that the Weakest Christian (with Blessing from Above) May Bee Able to Support Himselfe in His Most Miserable Exigents. Together with a Counterpoysion or Antipoyson against All Griefe (London, 1636), 111.

¹⁶ Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), chapter 5 title.

¹⁷ John Calvin, *A Commentarie of M. Iohn Caluine vppon the Epistle to the Philippians* (London, 1584).

¹⁸ Nicholas Bownd, *A Short Treatise of a Contented Mind*, in *Three Godly and Fruitfull Sermons* (London, 1594),

that maner that he hath promised them.”¹⁹ In fact, not only are these wants and desires “lawfull,” they are unavoidable: “as we must alwaies desire the things here belowe but in that measure that we should, so we must pray vnto God that together with them he would teach vs the right vse of them; & we must not imagine that if we had them, we should be happy and blessed.” Bownd does not say that the godly individual cannot feel happy and blessed, only that this condition should not be a consequence of acquiring the objects of desire. For Bownd, contentment is not equivalent to the satisfaction of worldly desires, though the two can co-exist. At issue here is the subordination of human will to divine will, a prioritization of the spiritual over the material that nonetheless allows for and even encourages particular worldly pursuits, at least in “measure.”²⁰ Desire is not demonized, provided that it is piously oriented and properly bounded. Contentment has qualitative and quantitative implications for desire, but there is no necessary opposition between them.

As the title page to *The Remedy of Discontentment* (1645) indicates, Joseph Hall derives his concept of contentment from Philippians 4:11–12. Hall finds lacking both the tranquility elaborated by Seneca and concepts of moderation and the mean derived from Aristotle, all of which are, however attractive, “hardly attainable by any man”: “true wisdom must teach us so to compose our selves that we may be fit to entertain the discontentments and dangers of those

¹⁹ Bownd, *Short Treatise*, 32.

²⁰ Later, Thomas Fuller’s sermon on 1 Timothy 6:6 identifies contentment as “a willing submission of ours to Gods will in all conditions. . . . In all conditions, patient in adversity, humble in prosperity, thankfull in both; looking neither above our estates with the ambitious man to have it higher; nor beyond it, with the covetous man to spread it broader; nor besides it with the envious man, repyning at the estate of others: but directly on the Portion God hath given us, and fully satisfied with the same.” See *A Sermon of Contentment* (London, 1648), B4.

excesses, and defects, which we cannot but meet with in the course of our mortall life.”²¹

Nevertheless, the language of tempering recurs throughout the text, with Hall noting how God “intermixes favours with his crosses; tempering our much hony, with some little gall,” a mixture in which “[o]ne of them must serve to temper the other; and both of them to keep the heart in order.”²²

Hall’s *Remedy of Discontentment* has much in common with Gataker’s *True Contentment in the Gain of Godliness*, not least its vivid representation of self-dividing discontent. Hall identifies discontentment as “a mixture of anger and grief,” noting that grief is a common cause of suicide, the literal destruction of the physical self, but going on to note that “even where this extremity prevailes not, look about, and yee shall see men that are not able matches to their passions, wofully macerating themselves with their owne thoughtes, wearing out their tedious dayes upon the rack of their own hearts.”²³ To avoid this violence to the self, Hall offers a series of pious considerations—which he at one point refers to as “spirituall Ammunition”—that will help his reader attain contentment.²⁴ Ultimately, the Christian “must confine his desires; and that, to no over large compasse”: “if we would be truly contented, and happy, our hearts can never be enough enlarged in our desires of spirituall and heavenly things, never too much contracted in our desires of earthly.”²⁵ Size matters, but contentment signifies a complex calculus of enlarging

²¹ Joseph Hall, *The Remedy of Discontentment. Or, A Treatise of Contentation in Whatsoever Condition: Fit for These Sad and Troubled Times* (London, 1645), 6.

²² Hall, *Remedy*, 77 and 82.

²³ Hall, *Remedy*, 70 and 75.

²⁴ Hall, *Remedy*, 103.

²⁵ Hall, *Remedy*, 141 and 146.

and contracting in which heavenly and earthly desires are, contra Bownd, apparently at odds. The containment of the self concerns both the objects and degrees of desire.

First published posthumously in 1648, Jeremiah Burroughs's *Rare Jewell of Christian Contentment*, a series of sermons on Philippians 4:12, quickly became the most popular text on contentment since Henry Smith's *Benefit of Contentation* from 1590. The sermons went through seven editions before the Restoration, and then several more before the end of the century. Burroughs was a prominent non-conformist, preaching to Parliament for godly reform in the early 1640s before passing away in 1646.²⁶ In an introductory address "To the Readers," Burroughs is described as an exemplar of contentment: "his study was to finde out a more sublime way, and hidden art of self-sufficiency, then was in the power of all things to contribute or teach: Such a skill as did not onely poyse and compose his spirit in the present enjoyment of all; but might fortifie and furnish him with provision for the future against the loss of all, in times wherein *no man knoweth what evil will be in the earth.*"²⁷ According to the publisher, the model of contentment that Burroughs embodied is a self-sufficiency that conjoins "enjoyment" with fortification, a pleasant protection from "loss" and "*evill.*"

Burroughs's own account of contentment oscillates between passing phrases of almost poetic suggestiveness and rigorous, extensive argumentation. He defines "Christian Contentment" as the "*sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, freely submitting to, and taking complacency in Gods wise, and fatherly dispose in every condition.*" He reiterates, "*Contentment (I say) is a sweet [inward] heart-thing, it is a work of the spirit within doors,*" and elsewhere he calls it "a Soul businesse," in which "the quiet doth come more from the inward

²⁶ Tom Webster, "Burroughs, Jeremiah," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

²⁷ Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* (London, 1648), A2v.

temper and disposition of their own hearts then from any external arguments, or possession of any thing in the world.”²⁸ Contentment, then, does not derive from externals, but it is not necessarily in conflict with them either. Moreover, “[c]ontentment is not merely one act, a flash in a good moode,” but “the habitual disposition of their Soules” and “the constant tenour and temper of the heart.”²⁹ Though Burroughs follows St. Paul to emphasize the inextricable relationship between contentment and godly grace, he also provides an extensive program for attaining contentment, granting individual Christians considerable agency with respect to their subjective state and relationship to God. In this way, the godly subject is able to imitate God, who “is in eternal Contentment in himself.”³⁰

Unique among the authors discussed thus far, however, Thomas Watson explicitly locates himself in a genealogy of English authors writing about contentment. In the opening pages of *Autarkeia, or, The Art of Divine Contentment* (1653), Watson refers his readers to the works of both Gataker and Hall, who had provided extensive discussions of 1 Timothy 6:6 and Philippians 4:12, respectively. In this way, Watson unites his predecessors under a banner of authors preaching Pauline contentment and extends this tradition with his own text. More so than any other early modern author, Watson encourages us to view these and other writers as engaged in an ongoing conversation. And, like Burroughs’s *Rare Jewell*, Watson’s work also proved popular, going through at least ten editions in the seventeenth century.

Watson’s commitment to a tradition of English Reformation thought on contentment is clearly reflected in his *Art of Divine Contentment*. Whereas Burroughs had called contentment a

²⁸ Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel*, 4, 9, 12.

²⁹ Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel*, 13.

³⁰ Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel*, 50.

“Soul business,” Watson notes that the art of contentment requires “holy industry.”³¹ He begins by admitting, “I know there wil not be perfect contentment here in this life, Perfect pleasure is only *at Gods right hand*; yet we may begin here to tune our instrument before we play the sweet lesson of Contentment exactly in heaven.”³² Like Taylor, Watson registers a reservation about locating contentment in the fallen world, but he defends his project by proposing a continuity between postlapsarian life and the Christian afterlife, a continuity in which earthly existence becomes a preparation for the perfect contentment that will be experienced with God in heaven. This sense that heavenly contentment can be rehearsed in this life is consistent with Watson’s understanding of contentment as “an *Habituall* thing,” which “shines with a fixed light in the firmament of the soul”: it is a “setled temper of the heart.”³³ By contrast, discontent can unsettle this firmament of the soul, throwing the self into chaos and inflicting the sorts of violence described by Gataker and Hall. Watson links Paul’s discussion of his own contentment in Philippians to a slightly earlier passage, in which Paul enjoins his audience not to be bothered by anxious cares: “The word in the Greeke [*Carefull*] comes from a Primitive, that signifies, *To cut the heart in pieces*, a soule-dividing Care.”³⁴ Furthermore, “Discontent doth dislocate and unjoynt the soul, it puls off the wheels.”³⁵ While later theorists would think of contentment as stasis, Watson insists that it is discontent that is immobilizing. Indeed, Watson clarifies that divine contentment is “something more then *Patience*; for *Patience* denotes onely submission,

³¹ Thomas Watson, *Autarkeia, or, The Art of Divine Contentment* (London, 1653), 15.

³² Watson, *Art of Divine Contentment*, A4v–5r. The imagery of the instrument is anticipated by Hall, *Remedy*, 14–15.

³³ Watson, *Art of Divine Contentment*, 39–40.

³⁴ Watson, *Art of Divine Contentment*, 2.

³⁵ Watson, *Art of Divine Contentment*, 35

Contentment denotes *cheerfulness*. A contented Christian is more than passive.”³⁶ Instead of Stoic *apatheia* (indifference), Watson insists that contentment is a positive, active affect.

Collectively, these Reformation writers develop contentment into a prominent ethical and affective principle. Building upon Pauline theological teachings, they encourage their English audiences to take ownership of their own emotional conditions. The bounding of desires became a means of binding together the self, enabling the godly individual to relate more piously, pleasurably, and productively with society. Contentment equips the English Christian with the armor and ammunition necessary to confront a world of conflict and contingency. Even if an ideal, unassailable contentment cannot be fully realized in this life, many authors maintain that we should still actively strive toward such stable Christian cheer.

Contentment, Martyrdom, and the Subject of Suffering

Perhaps the most difficult feature of the Reformation discourse on contentment for a twenty-first century audience is the term’s ubiquitous associations with suffering, hardship, and injustice. A connection between suffering and contentment is at best foreign and at worst deplorable to contemporary thought; however, as Brad Gregory and Susannah Monta both suggest, we must attempt to bracket a “hermeneutics of suspicion” and “twenty-first century skepticism” in order to engage early modern martyrologies on their own terms.³⁷ As a principle for relating the self to material and spiritual exigencies, contentment ultimately became inseparable from treatments of the horrifying persecutions endured by men and women for their religious beliefs. Nearly every

³⁶ Watson, *Art of Divine Contentment*, 223.

³⁷ Brad Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 13–14; and Susannah Brietz Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 4.

sermon and treatise on the topic of Christian contentment addresses the issue of suffering, and the issue recurs in each of the literary works that I analyze in later chapters. Almost all of these authors share an investment in contentment as a potential means of preserving the self in the moment of suffering. Scholars have recently emphasized the ways in which the depiction of suffering in martyrological texts can actually produce models of subjectivity, and thereby affirm forms of selfhood.³⁸ I contend that this cultural work was both consistent with and furthered by a Reformation concern with contentment. I do not deny the cross-confessional continuities between early modern martyrologies or the genre's extensive borrowings from medieval predecessors, but I maintain that the description of contented martyrdom participates in a larger reforming of contentment in Protestant England.³⁹

³⁸ On individual identity and subjectivity in John Foxe, see John R. Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom in English Literature, 1563–1694* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), esp. 9; Janel M. Mueller, "Pain, Persecution, and the Construction of Selfhood in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*," in *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*, ed. Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 161–87; Alice A. Daley, "Typology and History in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*," *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism* 25 (2002): 1–29; and Andrew Escobedo, "John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*," in *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature: 1485–1603*, ed. Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 515–20. By contrast, Liz Koblyk argues that "Foxe creates a model of subjectivity for the martyr that would not be recognized as a modern speaking subject, but one that includes the subject as object." See "The Reader's Object in John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*," in *Acts of Reading: Interpretation, Reading Practices, and the Idea of the Book in John Foxe's Actes and Monuments*, ed. Thomas P. Anderson and Ryan Netzley (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2010), 235–53, 249.

³⁹ Brad Gregory's *Salvation at Stake* provides overwhelming evidence for the continuities between early modern martyrologies across nations, languages, and faith traditions, while Daley stresses Foxe's reliance on "the traditions of primitive and medieval martyrology" ("Typology and History," 5).

St. Paul had influentially linked contentment and suffering in 2 Corinthians, when the Lord told him, “My grace is sufficient for the. For my strength is made perfecte thorow weaknes”: “Therefore am I contente in infirmitie, in rebukes, in necessities, in persecucions, in anguishes for Christes sake” (12:8–10).⁴⁰ Paul locates contentment in suffering by means of God’s sufficient grace, a formulation that obviously had important implications for later Protestant theology. In fact, Luther himself elaborates on the Pauline concept of contented suffering, and, in keeping with the Reformer’s theology of the cross, religious persecution becomes the site at which individual contentment is not only most necessary, but also most fully realized.⁴¹ Together with Tyndale’s New Testament, English translations of Luther’s works infused a vocabulary of contentment and the principle of contented suffering into English Reformation theology. These early Reformation concepts of Christian contentment would be put to the test during the Catholic reign of Mary I, and the language of contentment occurs repeatedly in accounts of martyrdoms. Even as the nature of persecution altered radically in the Elizabethan period and beyond, contentment proved compatible with discontent. Rather than discounting contentment, human suffering came to define contentment.

Although scholars have traditionally identified Calvin as the most important continental theologian to English Reformation thought, they have also recognized the influence of Luther, and literary critics have located responses to his works in authors such as Shakespeare, Spenser,

⁴⁰ Coverdale translation, 1535.

⁴¹ See Walter von Loewenich, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976); and Hans-Martin Barth, *The Theology of Martin Luther: A Critical Assessment* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013). Peter Goldman explains: “According to Martin Luther, the only way to know God is through the suffering and violence of the crucifixion.” See “‘The Alien Word’: Violence and Representation in Girard and Luther,” *Renascence* 52 (1999): 57.

Donne, Herbert, and Milton.⁴² Several recent studies of Luther and literature have looked specifically at models of subjectivity and the emotions. According to Adam Potkay, Luther provides English authors with a valuation of religious joy that he defines against an impossible contentment.⁴³ However, whatever Luther's intellectual response to joy or his own biographical experiences of despair, early translations of his texts offered English audiences positive accounts of contentment.⁴⁴ His *Propre Treatyse of Good Workes*, printed by Robert Wyer in the mid-1530s, even links contentment to the preeminent Protestant principle of *sola fide*: according to Luther, his core theological concepts readily produce a state of contentment.⁴⁵ And while Richard Strier locates the Davidic psalms as part of a "Judaeo-Christian tradition . . . that allows for strong, even uncontrolled emotion"—a tradition to which Luther belongs—Luther also

⁴² See Scott H. Hendrix, "Luther's Impact on the Sixteenth Century," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 16 (1985): 3–14. For a survey of scholarship on Luther and literature, see Esther Gilman Richey, "The Intimate Other: Lutheran Subjectivity in Spenser, Donne, and Herbert," *Modern Philology* 108 (2011): 353.

⁴³ Adam Potkay, *The Story of Joy: From the Bible to Late Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), ix–x, 73–78. On the contrast between joy and happiness, under which Potkay subsumes contentment, see 20–25.

⁴⁴ For example, see Martin Luther, *An Exposition vpon the Songe of the Blessed Virgine Mary, Called Magnificat Where vnto Are Added the Songes of Salue Regina, Benedictus and Nu[n]c Dimittis*, trans. John Hollybush (London, 1538), B7r, C1r, D5, and M8r. Potkay does admit that Luther's valuation of joy conflicts with his own spiritual angst (*The Story of Joy*, 78). On Luther's despair, see Stephen J. Chester, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience of Martin Luther: The Impact of Luther's *Anfechtungen* on His Interpretation of Paul," *Biblical Interpretation* 14.5 (2006): 508–36.

⁴⁵ Martin Luther, *Here after Ensueth a Propre Treatyse of Good Workes* (London, 1535?), B5v–6v. On the persistence of the Lutheran formulation of *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, see J. Wayne Baker, "'Sola Fide, Sola Gratia': The Battle for Luther in Seventeenth-Century England," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 16 (1985): 115–33.

figures David as one of the biblical exemplars of contentment, as Hall and Watson subsequently do.⁴⁶ Esther Gilman Richie, equating stability with stasis, denies what Strier sees as the potential for individual empowerment in Lutheran thought, but Luther and his successors construct a contentment that acts as a more dynamic form of self-stability.⁴⁷ Luther's remarks on contentment anticipate and perhaps even directly influence later English treatments of the topic, but I will focus on the connection that Luther and others draw between contentment and suffering.

In his *Propre Treatyse of Good Workes*, Luther explains the important role of contentment in the context of suffering, persecution, and martyrdom,

where soeuer is this faythe and truste towarde god, there is a straunge hert bolde, and without feare whiche graunteth & standeth by ye truthe, whether he lose bodye or goodes whether it be agaynst the bysshoppes or kynges as we se that the holy martyrs haue done, for such an herte is content with the mercy & gentylnesse of god & dyspyseth honoure, fauour, thankes, and ryches of all worldly thyng{is} sufferyng all thyng to go and come, that wyll not last & tary.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Richard Strier, "Against the Rule of Reason: Praise of Passion from Petrarch to Luther to Shakespeare to Herbert," in *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion*, ed. Gail Kern Paster, Katharine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 23–42, here 23. See Luther, *An Expositiō vpon the Songe of the Blessed Virgine*, C7v; Hall, *Remedy*, 152; and Watson, *Art of Divine Contentment*, A8.

⁴⁷ Richey, "The Intimate Other." For her disagreement with Strier, see 344n4 and 349n19. However, for an important reminder of the gap between Lutheran and post-Freudian models of subjectivity, see Barth, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 185.

⁴⁸ *Propre Treatyse of Good Workes*, V2v–3r.

Like a suffering martyr, the contented Christian “suffer[s]” the loss “of all worldly thyng {is} . . . that wyll not last & tary,” a formulation that applies equally to both “bodye” and “goodes.” Luther upholds the literal act of dying for one’s faith as a model for the disposition that every faithful believer should possess.

In *A Very Excellent & Swete Exposition vpon the XXII. Psalme of Dauid*, Luther envisions the connection between contentment and suffering more vividly:

Thou enduest me so plenteously with the exceedynge knowlege of thy good worde, so that thorow the same I haue not onely plenteous consolacion in wardly in my harte: agaynst myne owne euell conscience, agaynst feare and drede of death, and the wrath and iudgement of God but outwardly also thorowe the same worde I am become so valeaunt and so inuincible a giaunt, that al myne enemyes can bryng nothyng to passe agaynst me. The more wroth, madde, and vnreasonable they are agaynst me, the lesse I regarde it. Yet I am so much the more quyete in my selfe, glad & content. And that of none other occasion, saue onely that I haue thy worde. The same geueth me such power and corage agaynst all myne enemyes: So that whan they rage fearsly and are moost madde of all, I am better content in my mynde, then yf I satte at a table where I myght haue all that my harte coulde desyre, meate, drynke, myrthe, pleasure, mynstrelsye, &c.⁴⁹

Contentment not only allows the Christian subject to endure suffering (even to the point of death), but it actually *increases* with the threat of danger, transforming the beset believer into an “inuincible . . . giaunt.” The contentment produced by the individual’s faith in the word of God

⁴⁹ Martin Luther, *A Very Excellent & Swete Exposition vpon the XXII. Psalme of Dauid*, trans. Myles Coverdale (London, 1538), D5.

affects him both “in wardly” and “outwardly,” and it emerges most markedly in adversity, so that it is better to be assailed by enemies than at a pleasant feast. Contentment, then, is not merely an indifference to fortunes but an inversion of them.⁵⁰ While contentment signifies an ability to shore up the self, for Luther, its fullest realization occurs in death.

Luther’s ideal of Christian contentment in the face of persecution would be put on trial with unprecedented severity in sixteenth-century England, as authors repeatedly used the lexicon of contentment to represent martyrdom. *A Soueraigne Cordial for a Christian Conscience*, published in 1554 during the reign of Mary and perhaps written by then-expatriate John Bale, opens with a poem advocating contentment to an audience of endangered Protestants:

Content thi selfe with pacience,
 with Christ to bear the cros of paine
 which can and wil the recompence,
 A thousand fold with ioyes againe
 Let nothing cause thi hart to quail
 Launch out thi bote, hoise vp the sail
 Put from the shore.
 And be thou sure thou shalt atain

⁵⁰ See the earlier passage: “Namelye, that ther is none other meane waye vpon earth for onye man to be delyuered out of all tentations, saue onely to cast all hys burthen vpon God, and to hold hym faste by hys worde of grace, to cleue surelye vnto it, and in no wyse to suffre it to be taken from hym. Who so doth thys, can be content, whether he be in prosperite or aduersyte, whether he lyue or dye. And fynally he can endure, and must nedes prosper agaynst all deuels, the worlde, and mysfortune” (*Exposition vpon the XXII. Psalme*, D2v–3r).

Vnto the port that shall remayne,
 For euermore.⁵¹

The argument plays out familiarly enough: patiently bear your burden in this life in order to experience “A thousand folde” of “ioyes” in the afterlife “For euermore.” Even here, though, the author aligns contentment with an active response to suffering. If Christ takes man’s sins upon himself, the contented believer shares “the cros of paine.” Guided by God’s grace, wayfaring Protestants launch their boats, skillfully navigating material and spiritual concerns to arrive eventually at the heavenly port. Indeed, the document’s title belies the embattled rhetoric of the work as a whole. The author offers more than just a salubrious comfort to his readers; he prepares them for Christian combat set against an apocalyptic backdrop. The text is less medicinal than militant, imaginatively equipping the audience of potential martyrs with the Pauline armor of faith, like Spenser’s Redcrosse Knight, in a war against the “bloudy dragon,” “the whore of Babilon,” and the “popish priest.” “In the mean time,” the author instructs his reader to “abyde in certayne and sure hope cleauing vnto the promises of god, which in their dutime shal be fulfilled, and aquit your selues like men against the enemyes of God in al humblenes of mind, puissaunt in spirite.”⁵² Furthermore, the pious Protestant is to “Cast away al . . . worldly pelf, as the fauour of frendes, feare of men, sensual affection, pouertye, ritches landes, possessions, carnall fathers and mothers, wife & children,” lest any of these objects “abate your zeale, or quenche your loue towards God.”⁵³ Rather than simply advising his reader to be content with whatever she or he has, the author encourages a concerted renunciation of material

⁵¹ *A Soueraigne Cordial for a Christian Conscience* (1554), A1v.

⁵² *Soueraigne Cordial*, A4v.

⁵³ *Soueraigne Cordial*, A6v.

possessions and human relationships in preparation for possible martyrdom. In the face of Marian persecutions and on the edge of apocalypse, the Christian subject must choose between this life and the next.

Widely recognized as one of the most important texts of the English Reformation, John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* immortalizes the concept of contented suffering in the Protestant English imagination.⁵⁴ Steven Mullaney calls the book “not so much the product as the ongoing *production* of the English Reformation”:

Foxe's project, in other words, was not to record or commemorate recent history but to interpellate the affective and ideological parameters of an emergent historical formation. What this means is that, despite its vast historical range, the *Acts and Monuments* is not a retrospective but a proleptic work: less a mass of documentary evidence than a series of sites for the apprehension, affective investment, and reconfiguration of the ideological and political subjects who read it.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ In a fairly representative statement, John King claims that Foxe's work “exert[s] a greater influence on the consciousness of early modern England than any other book aside from the English Bible and Book of Common Prayer.” See *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2. See also Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 253; and Jesse Lander, “Foxe's Books of Martyrs: Printing and Popularizing the *Acts and Monuments*,” in *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*, ed. McEachern and Shuger, 70.

⁵⁵ Steven Mullaney, “Reforming Resistance: Class, Gender, and Legitimacy in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*,” in *Print, Manuscript, & Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England*, ed. Arthur F. Marotti and Michael D. Bristol (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000), 239.

We may add that the “affective . . . parameters” and “investment[s]” of this work are primarily defined by contentment, the affective state that characterizes the represented martyrs and that is extended to an audience of readers through what Susan Felch calls the *Actes*’ “transactional hermeneutic.”⁵⁶ If Foxe’s text produces the English Reformation, then it specifically reforms its English readers into contented Protestants.⁵⁷

Actes and Monuments charts a history of content and discontent over centuries of Christian persecution, with particular emphasis on the violence against Protestants (and their predecessors, like the Lollards) by political tyrants and the Church of Rome.⁵⁸ Foxe repeatedly contrasts the contented acceptance of suffering martyrs with the discontent of their persecutors, who always desire more: more power, more wealth, more pain to be inflicted upon their victims. In fact, Foxe identifies the Roman Church’s failure to remain content as a key factor necessitating religious reformation: “wealth” and “negligence” corrupted the “Church of Rome . . . Who being not contented with the olde foundation and the head corner stone, whiche the Lord by his word had layd, in place therof, they layde the ground worke vppon the condition and

⁵⁶ Susan Felch, “Shaping the Readers in the *Acts and Monuments*,” in *John Foxe and the English Reformation*, ed. David Loades (Aldershot: Scolar, 1997), 55.

⁵⁷ Monta describes this impact on the readers in terms of comfort: “Perhaps it seems odd that a book about people suffering and dying painfully might have been meant for comfort. Nevertheless, Foxe explicitly claims that martyrs’ stories may confirm and comfort readers, for if martyrs could persist amid tortuous flames, then readers may persist through their own more mundane trials of faith” (“Martyrdom and Literature,” 18).

⁵⁸ While each of the six English editions differ significantly from one another, reflecting their immediate cultural context and the influences and interests of many agents beyond Foxe himself, I will limit discussion here to the 1583 2-volume edition—the final edition during Foxe’s lifetime. On the cultural implications of the differences, see Tom Betteridge, “From Prophetic to Apocalyptic: John Foxe and the Writing of History,” in *John Foxe*, ed. Loades, 210–32; and Lander, “Foxe’s Books of Martyrs.”

strength or the lawe and workes.”⁵⁹ The discontent of subsequent popes led the Church further and further from the Word of God and the practices of early Christians, until divine providence offered an alternative in Martin Luther. By Foxe’s account, Luther is not a radical malcontent, as Henry VIII had suggested, but a patient, reasonable, even deferential man, one who describes himself (in Foxe’s words) as “contented to dye” if the pope deemed necessary.⁶⁰ Foxe explains, “Who doth not see by this so humble and honest submission of Luther, but that, if the Bishop of Rome woulde haue bene aunswered with any reason, or contented wyth sufficient meane, he had neuer bene touched any further of Luther. But the secret purpose of GOD had a farther worke herein to do.”⁶¹ Through Luther, God sets off the European Reformation in earnest, with one result being the vast number of martyrdoms out of which Foxe constructs his monumental work.

While Luther describes the connection between contentment and suffering in abstract terms, Foxe chronicles with painstaking detail the contented condition of Protestant martyrs.⁶² In Foxe’s retelling of the martyrdoms of Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, which John King singles out as “the best-known martyrology in the entire collection,” Ridley expertly performs Christian contentment in the face of persecution: “after espying M. Latimer, with a wonderous

⁵⁹ John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (London, 1583), 845 (mislabelled 849).

⁶⁰ Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 845 (mislabelled 849).

⁶¹ Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 846. On Luther’s gradual turn toward seeing the Pope as Antichrist, see David M. Whitford, “The Papal Antichrist: Martin Luther and the Underappreciated Influence of Lorenzo Valla,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 61 (2008): 26–52.

⁶² Koblyk argues, “Whereas the papist bishops move from violent rhetoric to physical violence, the martyrs commit neither physical nor rhetorical violence, but are instead content to suffer for the truth and simultaneously express truth through suffering” (“The Reader’s Object,” 247). For similar claims about the affects described in martyrologies, see Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom*, 82; and Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, 19.

cheerefull looke, [he] ranne to hym, embraced, and kissed hym, and as they that stode neare reported, comforted hym, saying: be of good heart brother, for GOD will either asswage the fury of the flame, or els strengthen vs to abyde it.”⁶³ Elsewhere, Foxe explicitly identifies his martyr-heroes as contented. The French haberdasher Benet Romain was “willing . . . to render accompt of hys fayth, and contented to dye for the same.”⁶⁴ When Thomas Benet’s wife was persecuted on account of her husband, “she was contented to beare the crosse with hym.”⁶⁵ Nicholas Cene and Peter Gaber are threatened with having their tongues cut out before they are burned at the stake: “Which tormentes they being content to suffer for our Sauour Iesus Christ, offered their tongues willingly to the hangman to be cut.” At the time of their brutal execution, the martyrs never despair or cease “to shewe forth infinite testimonyes of theyr fayth & constancy.”⁶⁶ In a letter from the Tower of London, John Bradford advises one woman to “be content therefore to be hewen and snagged at,” a suffering that he codes in pastoral religious imagery: “You are one of Christes Lambes, looke therefore to be fleeced, hayled at, and euen slayne. . . . [T]herefore you must pasture on the bare Common, abiding the stormes and tempests that will fall.”⁶⁷ And in a prayer before his death, Nicholas Sheterden counts himself among those who “fight on his [Christ’s] side, and are content to suffer with hym for his truth when soeuer the world and the deuill shall persecute the same.”⁶⁸ Foxe solidifies a tradition of representing the contentment of

⁶³ John King, “Fiction and Fact in Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*,” in *John Foxe*, ed. Loades, 22. Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 1769.

⁶⁴ Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 925.

⁶⁵ Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 1039.

⁶⁶ Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 920.

⁶⁷ Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 1641.

⁶⁸ Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 1676.

Protestant English martyrs, providing his audience with exemplars of the affect advocated by St. Paul and Martin Luther.

Moreover, Janel Mueller argues that instead of erasing the self, as Elaine Scarry's influential account of pain suggests, "[b]raving torture works to catalyze strong individual identities in the *Acts and Monuments*." Specifically, "displacing the crucial site of human access to divinity from the Mass to the stake, the Marian protestant ontology of presence centered itself in the physical body and agency of the believer. . . . [A]s it burned for failing to believe in the miracle of transubstantiation, the martyr's body experienced just such a miracle."⁶⁹ The text's perpetual reenactment of the Christian subject's death, rather than encouraging the abnegation of individual identity in the interests of English Protestantism, actually founds those interests upon a miraculous affirmation of individual selfhood, to which the affect of contentment is insistently attached.

Of course, by the time that the first English edition of *Actes and Monuments* was published in 1563, Elizabeth was already on the throne and the religious tide had turned once again. The Settlement of 1559 made the Church of England officially Protestant, but the queen famously sought no windows into men's souls, and Mary's heresy laws were repealed. Scholars have debated how immediately impactful Elizabeth's Reformation was on the beliefs of most English subjects, and we should obviously avoid an overly rosy portrait of the period. Many people were executed during Elizabeth's reign, but they died as traitors for political crimes, not as heretics for religious dissent.⁷⁰ Perhaps as a result, discussions of martyrological contentment

⁶⁹ Mueller, "Pain, Persecution," 166, 171.

⁷⁰ Margo Todd, "England after 1558," in *The Reformation World*, ed. Andrew Pettegree (London: Routledge, 2000), 370.

became less common into the seventeenth century, with authors instead elaborating the relationship between contentment and suffering in more general terms that were necessarily more familiar to most English men and women's everyday experiences. In the *Victory of Patience* (1636), Richard Younge tells his audience to be patient in times of hardship, upholding the model of Job, who "was content to eat the crust with the crumme."⁷¹ Taylor's *Treatise of Contentment* makes such suffering instrumental: "troubles in generall not onely *beget* graces, but *beautifie* and cleare them. The same fire which consumeth drosse, purgeth gold. The world is the Furnace, the godly are Gold, Tribulation is the fire." For Taylor, the contented Christian perfects his virtue through a crucible of tribulations.

More so than any of these authors, Joseph Hall discusses how contentment can be forged from discontent. In the *Remedy of Discontentment*, Hall writes, "Those onely know how to want, that have learnt to frame their mind to their estate; like to a skilfull Musitian, that can let down his strings a peg lower when the tune requires it; or like to some cunning Spagirick, that can intend or remit the heat of his furnace according to occasion." The Christian who can comport himself in times of want is both artist and alchemist, skillfully translating the buffets of providence into something sublime. Hall continues:

those that can improve misery to an advantage, being the richer for their want, bettered with evils, strengthened with infirmities; and can truly say to the Almighty, I know that of very faithfulness thou hast afflicted me; Never could they have come out so pure metall, if they had not passed under the hand of the Refiner; never had they proved so toward children, if they had not been beholden

⁷¹ Younge, *Victory of Patience*, 100–101.

to the rod: These are they that know how to want, and to be abased; and have effectually learned to be content with the meanest condition.

Paul in Philippians 4:11–13 explains that he has learned to be content in any state whatsoever, but for Hall “the meanest condition” is clearly the more conducive to attaining contentment, the “happy temper.”⁷² Interestingly, the responsibility of refining in the metallurgical imagery here shifts from the contented Christian to the paternalistic God. In the former passage, the individual believer demonstrates an alchemical ability to purify his own experiences into a particular affect, while the latter passage places the furnace firmly in God’s hands. The repeated but adapted metaphor suggests a continuity, if not quite an equality, between the roles of God and man in the production of contentment.

Hall provides his most extensive consideration of how discontent can produce contentment in section twenty-four, in which he teaches “to inure our selves to digest smaller discontentments.”⁷³ Hall cites the example of a martyr who prepares himself for the stake by burning himself with candles, but most of his discussion features more mundane forms of suffering: “thus, should we be affected upon all occasions; Those that promised me help, have disappointed me: that friend, on whom I relied, hath failed my trust: . . . If I can make light worke of these lesser crosses, I am in a good posture to entertain greater.”⁷⁴ Hall compares such considerations and experiences to someone who takes medicine water, beginning with small doses and working up to larger ones. This comparison between contentment and health communicates an understanding of discontent as medicinal, as a means to arrive at the desired

⁷² Hall, *Remedy*, 14–15.

⁷³ Hall, *Remedy*, 147.

⁷⁴ Hall, *Remedy*, 150–51.

affect. Hall concludes the section, saying, “If therefore it please my God to send mee some little comfort, I shall take that as an earnest of more; and if he exercise me with lesser crosses, I shall take them as preparatives to greater; and endeavour to be thankfull for the one, and patient in the other; and contented with Gods hand in both.”⁷⁵ “Preparative” suggests not only a “preparatory act” or “incitement,” but a “medicinal preparation.”⁷⁶ The relationship Hall posits between content and discontent invites a reconsideration of the text’s very title: *The Remedy of Discontentment; Or, a Treatise of Contentation in whatsoever Condition*. The text is not just a “Treatise of Contentation” insofar as it provides a “Remedy” for the problem of “Discontentment.” As unusual as it may seem, Hall’s text explicitly presents discontentment itself as a remedy that leads to healthy contentment. The preposition “of” may cast discontentment as the starting condition from which the subject seeks to recover, but, for Hall, it just as properly suggests that the “remedy” is a consequence or component of discontent. Thus contentment is not only consistent with discontent, but actually consists of discontent.

Contrary to critical orthodoxies, contentment need not white-wash the often harsh realities of life in the English Renaissance. The Christian contentment advocated by Paul and elaborated by Luther became the preeminent emotional ideal attached to Protestant martyrdom, most powerfully represented by Foxe. In extreme cases, the Reformation imperative to have one’s desires bounded by what one has was translated to a willingness to lose everything one has—not simply a pious submission to, but a cheerful embrace of adversity. Rather than being an ignorance of suffering, contentment is a principled response to suffering in the world, an affective alternative to despair and to the dissolution of selfhood in the face of pain, persecution,

⁷⁵ Hall, *Remedy*, 155.

⁷⁶ *OED* “preparative” n. A.1.b, A.2, and A.1.a.

and even death. But the lessons of contentment were equally translated to less sensational forms of suffering, and the pastoral authors discussed in subsequent chapters consider it in the contexts of unrequited desire, poverty, political injustice, and more.

Contenting the Body, Containing the Passions

Foxe and fellow martyrologists graphically depict the violence inflicted upon the bodies of believing Christians while they construct an ideal of contentment. But what precisely was the relationship between concepts of content and early modern theories of embodiment? Beth Quitslund observes, “On the one hand, the spiritual sin of despair is not, physicians and ministers incessantly repeat, related to the physical disorder of melancholy. On the other, many orthodox writers seem incapable of fully separating them.”⁷⁷ Similarly, Reformation writers have great difficulty discussing a theological contentment divorced from the material circumstances of embodied existence. Indeed, we have already seen how Hall’s instrumental understanding of discontent is articulated through a discourse of bodily health and early modern medicine. Much earlier, though, Renaissance authors attempted to reconcile Protestant contentment with the perturbations of the passions. While contentment could be seen as a cultural imperative to contain the passions by impeding their flow, it most commonly designates a means of sustaining the self by retaining a certain internal affective order without closing oneself off to others.

French Protestant theologian Jean de L’Espine’s *Very Excellent and Learned Discourse, Touching the Tranquillitie and Contentation of the Minde*, translated by Edward Smyth and printed by John Legate in 1592, offered Elizabethan audiences their most extensive anatomy of contentment in physiological terms. Smyth provides a summary for each of L’Espine’s seven books and a dedicatory epistle, in which he describes contentation as, first, a fortification

⁷⁷ Beth Quitslund, “Despair and the Composition of the Self,” *Spenser Studies* 17 (2003): 96.

“against the fierce assaultes of frowarde fortune” and, second, “the desired haven, wherein everie one shoulde harbour him selfe from the tempestuous rage of his owne distempered humours, and . . . all the violent passions wherewith we are tossed.” He continues, “our mindes are incombred with vnstable, and wauering passions: and therefore it is verie expedient, that in the beginning of this treatise we set downe the meanes that may purge vs of these passionate humours.”⁷⁸ Yet neither L’Espine nor Smyth equates content with a Stoic extirpation of emotion, but a desirable defense against immoderate humoral states and seven especially unsettling passions: covetousness, ambition, anger, envy, pleasure, curiosity, and fear. L’Espine repeatedly discusses these passions through a physiological discourse, with anger, for example, resulting from “the vnruely motions of choller” that needs to be purged, just as “If we have eaten poyson, wee seeke forthwith to vomite it vp againe with all speede.”⁷⁹ At the conclusion of his work, L’Espine summarizes his project thus:

my whole scope and purpose hath beene in this discourse, to shewe, what disorder and confusion vnruely desires and vntamed humours haue bred and hatched in all such persons, as haue beene slaues to their owne affections, to the end, that euery one that hunger and thirst after a peaceable and quiet estate, may plainly perceiue, that there is no other meanes to attain their wished end, but onely to curb them

⁷⁸ Jean de L’Espine, *A Very Excellent and Learned Discourse, Touching the Tranquilitie and Contentation of the Minde: Conteyning Sundry Notable Instructions, and Firme Consolations, Most Necessarie for All Sortes of Afflicted Persons in These Latter Dayes*, trans. Edward Smyth (London, 1592), A2r, A4r, and B1r.

⁷⁹ L’Espine, *Very Excellent and Learned Discourse*, 48.

short, and ride them with a sharp bit, for that they are very headstrong and vnruely jades.⁸⁰

L'Espine employs the familiar trope of horsemanship to discuss the successful moderation of the passions. With recourse to Protestant theology, physiological knowledge, and a chronicle of cautionary tales, L'Espine preaches a message of freedom to those who “haue been slaues to their owne affections,” but he never entertains the possibility that psychophysiological contentment requires an elimination of the passions altogether.

Gataker, who equates covetousness and appetite, repeatedly figures contentment through a discourse of consumption and digestion. For example, he explains:

where a man is discontent with his present estate, there is all that he hath, be it neuer so much, rather a burden than any way a benefit vnto him; like meat that agreeth not with the stomacke, lieth in it vndigested, and not only proueth vnpleasant and vnprofitable, affording neither good relish nor sound nourishment, but noysome also and burdensome to the whole bodie. So that where Contentment is not, a man regardeth nothing; and where Discontent is, it infecteth and tainteth all things, and so maketh them, as if some malignant blast had blowne on them, vnsauoury and distastfull to him that so hath them, rather sicke of them, than endowed with them.⁸¹

Whereas contentment indicates a kind of psychophysiological health, discontent resembles a digestive failure that infects the body and turns its own appetite against it. By contrast, “It is that

⁸⁰ L'Espine, *Very Excellent and Learned Discourse*, 107.

⁸¹ Gataker, *True Contentment*, 44.

[contentment] alone that seasoneth all: it is that alone that sweetneth all.”⁸² Gataker’s language of taste, food, and digestion eventually gives way to an explicitly humoral discourse. He insists that the covetous man “must haue that discontent humor of his purged out of his head, that couetous affection of his wrought out of his heart, that is the cause of this his greedy and insatiable desire, ere he can attaine to any true Contentment of minde.”⁸³ The rebalancing of the humors is both analogous to and a necessary antecedent for the attainment of content, which depends, as Paul preaches, on godliness. Such godliness

purgeth the heart of him that hath it: and so bringeth with it a sanctified vse of the creature. . . . So vnlesse a mans heart be seasoned with grace, it polluteth and defileth all that a man dealeth with. . . . *Nothing is pure to them*, saith the Apostle, *because their heart is impure*. As a foule stomacke, stuffed with Choler, turneth all into Choler, euen the finest and daintiest meats soonest of any, by meanes whereof no good nourishment can accrew to the bodie by them, nor it grow to any good plight and health: So a foule heart turneth all into spirituall Choler, a bitter humor and unsavoury, that impaireth and hindreth the health and welfare of the soule as much, yea much more than that materiall choler doth the health and welfare of the bodie.⁸⁴

Like Henry Smith, Gataker seeks to construct a “Contentment of minde,” but his descriptions of spiritual and material choler in the above passage suggest inextricable understandings of mind and body. Moreover, he couples a Renaissance injunction toward physiological self-regulation

⁸² Gataker, *True Contentment*, 48.

⁸³ Gataker, *True Contentment*, 60–61.

⁸⁴ Gataker, *True Contentment*, 66–67.

with a Reformation emphasis on unmerited grace. Through the grace of God, the individual Christian can actively intervene in bodily exigencies to produce spiritual contentment.

In Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), the theological and philosophical dimensions of content and discontent remain, but the physiological import of the concepts become central. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the subject matter, Burton invokes discontent far more frequently than contentment. Indeed, Burton defines the melancholy disposition as that "which goes and comes vpon every small occasion of sorrow, neede, sicknesse, trouble, feare, grieffe, passion, or perturbation of the Minde, or any manner of care, discontent, or thought, which causeth anguish and vexation of the Spirits."⁸⁵ The inclusion of discontent in this list identifies it as one of the sources of melancholy, as do subsequent catalogues.⁸⁶ Elsewhere, however, Burton pairs discontent and melancholy, suggesting an equivalence between the two.⁸⁷ Moreover, Burton diagnoses discontent in physiological language, saying, for example, "what misery and discontent doe they endure, that are in prison, they want all those six non-naturall things at once, good aire, good diet, exercise, company, sleep, rest, ease, &c."⁸⁸ Similarly, those

⁸⁵ Richard Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy What it is. With All the Kindes, Causes, Symptomes, Prognostickes, and Seuerall Cures of It* (London, 1621), 16.

⁸⁶ Here are just some of the lists in which discontent appears alongside other terms as the sources of melancholy: "discontent, care, misery" (144); "discontent, care, and woe" (153); "perpetual slavery, feare, suspition, sorrow, and discontent" (154); "misery, sorrowe, shame, and discontent" (160); "oppositions, dangers, perplexities, discontents" (217); "full of cares, miseries, and discontents" (242); "enmity, open warr, defiance, heartburnings, whisprings, calumnies, contentions, and all manner of bitter melancholy discontents" (517); "anxietie, feare and grieffe, complaints & sighes, suspitious cares & discontents" (602).

⁸⁷ For instances where Burton pairs melancholy and discontent, see *Anatomy*, 210, 211, and 369.

⁸⁸ Burton, *Anatomy*, 201.

who are “very cholericke” are “soon hote, solitary, sad, watchfull, discontent.”⁸⁹ But while discontent comes to itself resemble a passion or humor, contentment remains something more stable. Burton aligns content with “true peace, tranquility . . . and happinesse” and opposes it to covetousness and ambition.⁹⁰ He explicitly draws on the etymology of “content,” saying, “How happy might we be, and end our time with blessed dayes, and sweet content, if we could containe our selues, and as we ought to do, put vp iniuries, learne humility, meeknesse, patience, forget and forgiue, as in Gods word we are inioyned.”⁹¹

For all of its fascinating eccentricities, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* can be understood as participating in a pervasive early modern conversation on the particular model of self-containment that Reformation writers termed “contentment.” And, like so many of his contemporaries, Burton found a biblical precedent for this psychophysiological condition in St. Paul: “*Godlines is great gaine, if a man can be content with that which he hath. 1 Tim. 6.6.*”⁹² Burton sought to better explain a spiritual condition of contentment, a “Soul businesse” as Burroughs calls it, through early modern knowledge of the body. While the passions were understood as perturbations and always potentially unsettling, contentment came to signify a specific cultural model for regulating the flow of passions and thereby sustaining the self. The constancy promised by contentment, then, might be best understood as a recurrently reenacted containment. In this sense, a Christian contentment could signify a stability consistent with motion and could achieve self-sameness without lapsing into solipsism. What distinguishes

⁸⁹ Burton, *Anatomy*, 255.

⁹⁰ Burton, *Anatomy*, 539 and 25.

⁹¹ Burton, *Anatomy*, 140–41.

⁹² Burton, *Anatomy*, 403.

contentment from similar early modern programs of passionate self-regulation was its positive affective inflection and its productive intersection with other discourses like Protestant theology, literary pastoral, and, as we shall examine in the final section, Renaissance political thought.

Contenting the Body Politic, or Civilization and Its Contents

Identifying the place of the passions in a Reformation discourse on contentment necessarily reveals the concept's transactional potential: the self-sufficiency and stability promised by contentment entail passionate exchanges between self and other, subject and object. Because of the humors, the condition of contentment is quite literally more fluid than it might at first appear. But contentment was transactional in ways beyond its physiological dimension, and the affect of contentment accrued considerable social significance. Preachers, theologians, and other Reformation writers explored various ways of balancing the contented stability of the individual subject with the stability of the nation writ large. At the same time, diplomatic letters and royal proclamations alike reveal the ways in which a discourse of contentment helped to define the day-to-day duties and interactions of statesmen, subjects, and sovereigns in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thus the reformation of contentment bears on both Renaissance political theories and practice.

Foxe's valorization of contented suffering in the *Actes and Monuments* instances the incredibly complex relationship between Protestant affect and English nationalism. Patrick Collinson writes, "It is blindingly obvious that in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe religion and nationalism were often opposing forces," and scholars have repeatedly found evidence for such a position in Foxe.⁹³ Richard Helgerson argues that Foxe constructs an

⁹³ Patrick Collinson, "John Foxe and National Consciousness," in *John Foxe and his World*, ed. Christopher Highley and John King (Farnham: Ashgate, 2002), 24.

“English church [with] a strongly oppositional identity, an identity founded on suffering and resistance and profoundly antithetical to the hierarchical order of the English state.” By making “patient suffering rather than bold speaking . . . the means of resistance,” Foxe invests contentment with a counter-national potential.⁹⁴ As Foxe repeatedly depicts, the contentment of Christian martyrs took the form of active resistance to figures of political and religious authority. Content, not discontent, becomes the affect of resistance. Scholars have complicated Helgerson’s privileging of Protestant community over English nationhood, with Andrew Escobedo stressing “the degree to which Foxe permits the national story to assert its presence by *resisting* the narrative ending [of religious apocalypse],” and with Steven Mullaney claiming that Foxe seeks “to produce or at least to help catalyze a corporate national and Protestant body that is as inclusive as possible,” cutting across class, and perhaps less successfully, gender lines.⁹⁵ However, as Mullaney also notes, the text’s ability to generate such community after the Marian persecutions depends upon discouraging the very forms of resistance—and, by extension, the very instantiations of contentment—that it otherwise celebrates.⁹⁶ Therefore, we might view Foxe’s text in its series of editions as, in Jesse Lander’s phrasing, “a constant and nuanced engagement with the problematic of national religious identity.”⁹⁷ If contentment is a principle for relating the self to material and spiritual concerns, then *Actes and Monuments* thrives on the

⁹⁴ Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom*, 8–9.

⁹⁵ Andrew Escobedo, *Nationalism and Historical Loss in Renaissance England: Foxe, Dee, Spenser, and Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 103. Mullaney, “Reforming Resistance,” 242.

⁹⁶ Sarah Covington similarly explores the potentially contradictory status of publishing Protestant martyrdoms in a Protestant nation. See “Foxe’s Villainous Tribunals: Reading the Judicial Examinations in the *Actes and Monuments*,” in *Acts of Reading*, ed. Anderson and Netzley, 201.

⁹⁷ Lander, “Foxe’s Book of Martyrs,” 87.

tensions between them, even as it champions the godliness of content. Foxe's martyrology both realizes the subversive contentment feared by Henry VIII and deploys it to establish a communal identity that would help define the early modern English nation.

Some authors, including Henry Mason in *Contentment with God's Gifts* (1630), would locate a community-building potential in contentment without explicitly tethering it to a particular political agenda.⁹⁸ Others, however, used their constructions of contentment to bolster one of the various political theories of their age. A particularly embattled Elizabethan text on contentment, John Carpenter's *Preparatiue to Contentation* (1597) falls decidedly on the side of monarchical power, political conservatism, and rigid social hierarchy. Carpenter's prefatory poem identifies his audience as "my Countrey-men, / I meane, the English Nation."⁹⁹ In the epistle to the readers, Carpenter makes explicit the *Preparatiue's* political function: "Neither doubt I, but that also the sooner by the force of this *Preparatiue*, the rage and rygour of the Discontented wil be asswaged, the domesticall enemy in part, terrified, the seditious Aduersary of our state quailed, . . . and the forreine foe the better obserued and resisted."¹⁰⁰ As in Hall's *Remedy of Discontentment*, the *Preparatiue* serves not only as a "preparatory act" to individual contentment, but as a "medicinal preparation" prescribed for the body politic.¹⁰¹ According to Carpenter, discontent is a widespread malady, as many English subjects "haue such vnquiet

⁹⁸ Henry Mason, *Contentment in Gods Gifts or Some Sermon Notes Leading to Equanimitie and Contentation* (London, 1630), esp. 79 and 117–18.

⁹⁹ John Carpenter, *A Preparatiue to Contentation: Conteyning a Display of the Wonderfull Distractions of Men in Opinions and Straunge Conceits: And of the Seuerall Discontentations which are Incident to Euerie Particular Vocation and Condition of Men in This Life* (London, 1597), Valetto.

¹⁰⁰ Carpenter, *Preparatiue*, a3.

¹⁰¹ *OED* "preparative" n. A.1.b, and A.1.a.

consciencs, such strange conceits, and are neuer contented with whatsoeuer good thing the Lord God in his mercie enricheth them,” preferring instead “forraine pleasures.”¹⁰² Carpenter here invokes the affective and theological meanings of “content,” and suggests that the absence thereof constitutes a dire political problem.

For Carpenter, the chief affliction threatening the English state lies in the “mal-contented Papist[s],” whose persisting allegiance to “that very Antichrist” endangers the stability of the nation and the life of Elizabeth: “Vnder a cloake of ciuill obedience, they pretende *Caesars* wealth; but yet, reteining in heart their inueterated malice against the Religion, gouernment, and the state of *Caesar*, they do with *Brutus* and *Cassius* contriue shrewd matters, not considering, that God (when it shall please him) will raise vp an *Octavius*, to reward them in the ende.”¹⁰³ Rather than allowing themselves to be content, restraining their seditious desires, and regulating their passions, Carpenter’s papists “retein . . . in heart their inueterated malice,” with the adjective suggesting that the malice is “deep-rooted” and “embittered,” but also like a disease that is “chronic” and “resisting treatment,” thereby continuing the medicinal resonances of “preparative.”¹⁰⁴ The psychophysiological condition of individual English closet-Catholics threatens to unsettle “the Religion, gouernment, and the state of *Caesar*”; discontent breeds rebellion and republicanism, disastrous consequences to Carpenter’s mind. In response, he portends a providential Augustan imperialism, an even greater consolidation of English

¹⁰² Carpenter, *Preparatiue*, 9.

¹⁰³ Carpenter, *Preparatiue*, 12–13.

¹⁰⁴ *OED* “inveterate” adj. A.2.a, 3, 2.b.

sovereignty to contain the “malcontent miscreants.”¹⁰⁵ Citing classical philosophers, biblical passages, and teachings of the Church fathers, Carpenter upholds royal authority with almost absolute deference. If an unjust law affects one’s health or property, “they are to bee yeilded vnto for conscience sake: for all these things, thou maist not thinke, but that the Prince hath power to command and take from thee, as his owne.”¹⁰⁶ The pious, contented Christian can only disobey an unjust law that unduly afflicts the spirit, but even then the outlets for political action are few.¹⁰⁷ Throughout, Carpenter suggests that the stability of the English state will naturally follow from the salving—or, if necessary, squelching—of its discontented factions. As a result, Carpenter turns an individual contentment of self-fortification into the foundation of state security, protecting the monarch and her loyal subjects from internal and external threats.

Staunchly conservative texts like Carpenter’s lead Hirschfeld to identify contentment as the answer to “any kind of ambition . . . that threatened established hierarchies”; however, other authors chart alternative political implications.¹⁰⁸ For example, L’Espine’s array of political

¹⁰⁵ Carpenter, *Preparatiue*, 20. Carpenter twice pairs “content” and “contain,” calling attention to their etymological connection; for example, see *Preparatiue*, 78 and 188.

¹⁰⁶ Carpenter, *Preparatiue*, 156. See also 92 and 146.

¹⁰⁷ “[A]lthough wee neither obserue them, nor resist the power of those that prouide them, yet may we lawfully speake or write against vngodlie lawes: howbeit, with such reuerence and modestie . . . as that thereby the people bee not incenced nor moued against the Prince, the Magistrates, and them that be placed in authoritie: yea, and so, that not so much as anie little occasion be therby ministred to schisme in the Church, or Sedition among the people. But yet the redresse and reformation of those thinges muste wee commit vnto the King of all Kings, who vpon the heartie prayers of the people, will take the matter into his owne hande” (Carpenter, *Preparatiue*, 161).

¹⁰⁸ Hirschfeld, *The End of Satisfaction*, 96. She notes that this is often related to “the doctrine of callings, the socially conservative application of predesetnarian theology that reinforced vocational and class order in the service of a peaceful commonwealth.”

examples in his *Very Excellent and Learned Discourse* gestures towards a politics (or multiple politics) of content that differs considerably from Carpenter's *Preparatiue*. Both authors link the psychophysiological stability of Christian contentment to national politics, but they disagree about what the political consequences of those linkages might be. If contentation results when individual subjects are no longer "slaues to their owne affections"—akin to the personal freedom that Michael Schoenfeldt locates in temperance and proper physiological maintenance—then what, L'Espine invites us to ask, is the corresponding condition for the Renaissance state?¹⁰⁹

L'Espine most often aligns contentment with limited monarchy. He discusses the seven passions opposed to contentment in relation to historical rulers who suffered from them—and who consequently brought about the suffering of their people. Throughout the work, L'Espine repeatedly recounts instances where a sovereign lacking the stability of personal contentation precipitates national instability: "euen from the beginning hath God alwaies shewed notable examples of his wrath & anger against ambitious & proud princes, either by the commotions & rebellions of their subiects, or by the conspiracies of their friends & seruants, or by the losse and deprivation of their dignities, or by some other greater calamities, to the end, that by these miseries, som other considering their harms should take the better heed."¹¹⁰ To avoid such violent correctives, L'Espine proposes a prominent role for counselors, so that they might advise the prince against ambition and similar passions. Rather than advocating contented quietism,

¹⁰⁹ L'Espine, *Very Excellent and Learned Discourse*, 187. Henry Smith earlier linked freedom to contentment, in contrast with covetousness: "A prentise is bound, but for nine yeere and then hee is free: but if the couetous might liue longer then *Methusalah*, yet they woulde neuer be free men, but prentises to the world" (*The Benefit of Contentation*, B2r). See Michael Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), esp. 11–13.

¹¹⁰ L'Espine, *Very Excellent and Learned Discourse*, 34.

L'Espine identifies the political participation of a body of counselors as the means to sustain a contented commonwealth. Contentment is continually reproduced through communal effort. Elsewhere, L'Espine stresses the importance of princely clemency and the prioritization of just laws over royal prerogative for insuring the contentment of citizens and subjects.¹¹¹ L'Espine likens the requisite regulation of the passions to the need for restraining royal authority, protecting freedom, and promoting political participation by (at least some) subjects.

While L'Espine generally seems to suggest an affinity between contentation and limited monarchy, his book on pleasure muddies the monarchical water and complicates contentment's political import. Believing the passion of pleasure to be a particular vulnerability for those in power, L'Espine writes:

the reason why some of our French Kinges have bene dispossesst of their crownes . . . was for that, they loving their ease and pleasures too well, committed the charge of all publicke affaires vnto others For if it happened that either their subiectes rebelled, or their owne domesticall servants conspired any thing against them, or their enemies invaded them with open hostilitie, or any other thing fell out of like importance, they were presently so astonished and vnprovided of Counsell, that they would easily agree vnto any thing that was offered: partly, for

¹¹¹ L'Espine's translator uses the word "citizen" more than a dozen times over the course of the work. For a discussion of "citizen" as a term and concept in the Elizabethan period, see Markku Peltonen, "Citizenship and Republicanism in Elizabethan England," in *Republicanism: A Shared European History*, ed. Martin Van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), *Volume I: Republicanism and Constitutionalism in Early Modern Europe*, 85–106.

that they would not leave their delights and their wonted pastimes, and partly also for that they were so vnacquainted with state matters.¹¹²

Though L’Espine elsewhere admits that pleasure can produce a tyrant, his own nation’s history reflects the opposite problem: uninvolved rulers who overdelegate in order to withdraw from the political sphere altogether, much like Shakespeare’s Prospero. By contrast, the contented sovereign who properly regulates the passion of pleasure will be equally qualified to maintain the well-being of the state and assure the contentment of his or her subjects. Contentment corresponds with increased, centralized control of self and state. Even here, however, L’Espine repeats the necessity for political counselors, noting that overindulgent, lax princes often find themselves “vnprovided of Counsell.” The example serves as a reminder of the crucial difference between a limited monarchy and a weak monarch. L’Espine’s *Discourse* upholds Christian content as a defense against internal and external threats, and Smyth translates this ideal into relevant, if not always entirely uniform, personal and political advice for English audiences in “these latter days” of the Tudor monarchy.

But the politics of contentment was not simply outlined in theological treatises; rather, the language of contentment was put to political use formally and informally in matters of state. In *De Republica Anglorum*, Sir Thomas Smith explains the use of “content” in the English Parliament: “When the Chaunceler hath demanded of them if they will goe to the question after the bill hath beene thrise reade, they saying only content or not content, without further reasoning or replying: and as the more number doeth agree, so is it agreed on, or dashed.” The voting process was registered as content or discontent, such that “If the not contentes be moe,

¹¹² L’Espine, *Very Excellent and Learned Discourse*, 88.

then the bill is dashed, that is to say the lawe is antiquated and goeth no further: If the contentes be the more, then the Clarke writeth underneath: *Soit baille aux commons.*”¹¹³

Furthermore, the discourse of contentment positively litters state papers and political correspondences of the early modern period, including the collection known as the Cecil Papers. The evidence of this archive supports an understanding of early modern politics as an attempt to achieve the contentment of both sovereign and subject. In 1595, the Earl of Essex laments that “many, yea most times of late . . . instead of being a contentment and entertainment to your Majesty’s mind I have been a distaste and disquiet.”¹¹⁴ Sir Henry Unton (1596) tells Elizabeth, “ther is no Man livinge doth more devoutly pray than my self for your Highness Contentment and Preservation in that happy Estate, whearin your Majesty hath continewed these thirty-six Yeares: which Number of Yeares I beseeche the Almighty to double, with the Continewance of that Happyness of Government.”¹¹⁵ Similarly, Sir Robert Ker (1598) suggests a direct causal relationship between the “ease, gain, and contentment to the subjects” and the “peace” and “honour” of their princes.¹¹⁶ Formulations like Unton’s and Ker’s suggest a relation and even reciprocity between the contentment of a country and its queen.

The connection between the contentment of sovereign and state is even more pronounced in accounts of King James’s reign, both in Scotland and England. In 1587, Richard Douglas reports to Archibald Douglas of James VI and Scottish affairs: “All other matters take so good

¹¹³ Sir Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum*, ed. Mary Dewar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 83 and 81.

¹¹⁴ Earl of Essex to Queen Elizabeth, 1595, The Cecil Papers 58/20 (Cal. Ref. Vol 13, p. 549), Proquest.

¹¹⁵ Sir Henry Unton to Queen Elizabeth, 3 February 1596, The Cecil Papers 171/72 (Cal Ref. Vol. 6, p. 44), Proquest.

¹¹⁶ Sir Robert Ker to Sir Robert Carey, 18 March 1598, The Cecil Papers 49/63 (Cal Ref. Vol. 8, p. 86), Proquest.

success as any man could wish, to the great contentment of his Majesty and all his well-affected subjects.”¹¹⁷ Later, when James learns of Elizabeth’s death and his own succession to the English throne, he informs the Privy Council to continue performing their duties, which will help to secure “the happy quietness of the former government”: “In doing whereof ye shall cause the greatest contentment that a King can crave of his best subjects, and so doubling the value of your bypast merits we shall be moved to multiply our princely favours to you accordingly in such sort as all the faithful subjects of the land shall be encouraged by your example to discharge themselves honestly in all things that may concern their duty to the state.”¹¹⁸ The continued service of the counselors will give the King utmost contentment, leading him to show them further favors, an act that will inspire other subjects to be dutiful. James imagines a successful succession as a continuous feedback loop of political action and positive affect. Indeed, Thomas Cecil, Lord Burghley (after the death of his father, William), writes to Robert Cecil in 1603 of the succession, “I dare assure you the contentment of the people is unspeakable, seeing all things proceed so quietly, whereas they expected in the interim their houses should have been spoiled and sacked.”¹¹⁹ According to Burghley, anxiety over an anticipated succession crisis gives way to contentment over national stability.

Many similar accounts can be found in manuscript and print. Sir William Cornwallis (1604) labels the peaceful transition of government as a gift from God that nevertheless would not have been possible without the disposition of James, who “in his whole life, hath approved

¹¹⁷ Richard Douglas to Archibald Douglas, 22 May 1587, The Cecil Papers 15/116 (Cal. Ref. Vol 3, p. 255), Proquest.

¹¹⁸ King James I to the Privy Council, 1603, The Cecil Papers 134/29 (Cal. Ref. Vol. 15, p. 345), Proquest.

¹¹⁹ Thomas, Lord Burghley to Sir Robert Cecil, 27 March 1603, The Cecil Papers 187/11 (Cal. Ref. Vol. 15, p. 10), Proquest.

the happines of the subiect and the flourishing of his Kingdome to be his chiefe contentments.”¹²⁰ Gilbert Dugdale (1604) describes the coronation procession through London, saying, “cost was quite careles, desire that was fearelesse, and content flourisht in abundance.”¹²¹ Reflecting back on the “Solemnities of our Coronation,” James notes how everything was performed with “mutuall contentment, aswell of Vs in the zeale and loue of our people at the performance thereof expressed, as of them in the expectation of our gouernment.”¹²² While Carpenter and L’Espine argue that political problems arise from the discontent of either subjects or sovereigns, respectively, many writers, including James himself, suggest that the contentment of both parties can be mutually reinforcing in a stable polity.

Whatever view we have of the supposed mutual contentment at the beginning of James’s reign, no such claims can be made about the end of the reign of his successor, Charles I. Though treatises on contentment had been written and published in England over the last century, the popularity of such works by Burroughs and Watson exploded as the nation experienced the tumults of the English Revolution. With the state crumbling around them, individual subjects found it increasingly important to learn the lessons of contentment and fortify their sense of self. Early Stuart authors had been able to identify a contentment that could unite selves in a peaceable polis, but a happy equilibrium between self and society became increasingly suspect amid the drastic changes brought about by regicide and the Cromwellian Commonwealth. A

¹²⁰ Sir William Cornwallis, *The Miraculous and Happie Vnion of England and Scotland* (London, 1604), 7.

¹²¹ Gilbert Dugdale, *The Time Triumphant Declaring in Briefe, the Ariual of Our Soueraigne Liedge Lord, King James into England* (London, 1604), B2v.

¹²² James I, “By the King” (London, July 29, 1603), STC 8329. Elsewhere, James describes his 1603 entrance into London and the beginning of his reign as giving him “no small contentment” (STC 8316) and even “great contentment” (STC 8303; STC 8341).

leading republican author like Milton could hearken back to Reformation contentment, but he would have to reinvent the concept radically to make it concordant with his own political, religious, and artistic values. As Renaissance gave way to Restoration, authors would have to construct their own contentment.

Chapter Two

“The Balance of My Contentation”:

Sex, Suffering, and Pastoral Romance in Sidney’s *Old Arcadia*

From the opening sentences of *The Old Arcadia*, Philip Sidney emphasizes contentment as the quintessential Arcadian condition. First, “content” describes the emotional and ethical state of the Arcadian people:

Arcadia among all the provinces of Greece was ever had in singular reputation, partly for the sweetness of the air and other natural benefits, but principally for the moderate and well tempered minds of the people who (finding how true a contentation is gotten by following the course of nature, and how the shining title of glory, so much affected by other nations, doth indeed help little to the happiness of life) were the only people which, as by their justice and providence gave neither cause nor hope to their neighbours to annoy them, so were they not stirred with false praise to trouble others’ quiet, thinking it a small reward for the wasting of their own lives in ravening that their posterity should long after say they had done so.¹

The Arcadians’ “true . . . contentation” is chiasmatically balanced with “the happiness of life,” with the former “following” naturally from “the course of nature” and the latter little helped by the “title of glory.” This immediate pairing of contentation and happiness establishes

¹ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia (The Old Arcadia)*, ed. Jean Robertson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 4. Hereafter cited parenthetically by page number.

contentment as the pastoral romance's most prominent positive affect, but it also introduces its connection to fortune and change, as "happy" was etymologically derived from and conceptually intertwined with "hap." The "moderate and well tempered minds of the people" are reflected in their emotional response to fortune, and, as "principally" suggests, this virtue is more important for the reputation of Arcadia than any natural *locus amoenus*.² Next, the narrator notes that subsequent "learned" men have long been "content" to invoke and "imitate" Arcadians—especially the "very shepherds" and their "high conceits"—in their own pastoral works (4). Because "the muses seemed to approve their good determination by choosing that country as their chiefest repairing place," the contented Arcadians secure a literary afterlife in pastoral. Sidney's *Old Arcadia*, then, begins with both a description of Arcadia and an etiology of pastoral to which contentment is central: pastoral authors are content to compose works representing the actual contentedness of Arcadian shepherds.³ But while Sidney's presentation of contentment is importantly related to his engagement with the pastoral mode, it also participates in the period's redefinition of contentment.

Critics have discussed the prominence of contentment in *The Old Arcadia* as part of a literary history of pastoral, but they have overlooked the broader history of contentment in the Renaissance and Reformation. Robert Stillman examines at length Sidney's "effort to use the

² For a physiological explanation of the climate's role in maintaining the Arcadian condition, see Garrett A. Sullivan, "Romance, Sleep, and the Passions in Sir Philip Sidney's *The Old Arcadia*," *ELH* 74 (2007): 740.

³ Elizabeth Dipple writes, "in the first words of the *Old Arcadia* Sidney establishes his literary arch-image, advertises his locus and controls his reader's reaction." See "Harmony and Pastoral in the *Old Arcadia*," *ELH* 35 (1968): 310.

[pastoral] genre to obtain justice and contentment for himself and his readers.”⁴ According to Stillman, Sidney unites an amoral Italian tradition (Sannazaro) with Christian concerns (Mantuan and Alexander Barclay), but he produces a model of pastoral that is staunchly Stoic.⁵ That is, although Sidney responds to Christian pastoral, the contentment he advocates is aligned absolutely with Stoicism. Like Stillman, Judith Haber notes the role of contentment as a term and concept in *The Old Arcadia*, but she describes Sidney as deconstructing, instead of revising, the pastoral mode.⁶ Haber identifies a repeated wordplay on “contentation” and “contention,” and she argues that this interweaving of “pastoral consolations . . . with their antitheses” acts to

⁴ Robert E. Stillman, *Sidney's Poetic Justice: The Old Arcadia, Its Eclogues, and Renaissance Pastoral Traditions* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1986), 97.

⁵ On Sidney's integration of Italian and Christian pastoral, see Stillman, *Sidney's Poetic Justice*, 69 and 77. On Sidney's Stoic pastoral, see 77, 98, and 105–6. Blair Worden also states that contentment in *The Old Arcadia* depends upon “the Stoic quality of ‘patience.’” See *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney's Arcadia and Elizabethan Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 338.

⁶ Judith Haber, *Pastoral and the Poetics of Self-Contradiction: Theocritus to Marvell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 54. Haber joins those that examine the complex interaction of genres and modes in Sidney's works. See Stephen Greenblatt, “Sidney's *Arcadia* and the Mixed Mode,” *Studies in Philology* 70 (1973): 269–78; and V. L. Forsyth, “The Two Arcadias of Sidney's Two *Arcadias*,” *Studies in English Literature* 49 (2009): 1–15. On Sidney's use and critique of romance in particular, see Clare R. Kinney, “Chivalry Unmasked: Courtly Spectacle and the Abuses of Romance in Sidney's *New Arcadia*,” *Studies in English Literature* 35 (1995): 35–52; Tiffany Jo Werth, “The Reformation of Romance in Sir Philip Sidney's *The New Arcadia*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 40 (2010): 33–55; and Nandini Das, “Romance Re-Charted: The ‘Ground-Plots’ of Sidney's *Arcadia*,” *Yearbook of English Studies* 41 (2011): 51–67. On the generic complexity of Sidney's work resulting, in part, from the various stages of revision, see Regina Schneider, *Sidney's (Re)Writing of The Arcadia* (New York: AMS Press, 2008).

“invalidate” the pastoral mode.⁷ In contrast, I suggest that the pairing of “contentation” and “contention” serves less to repudiate the former than to underscore an early modern understanding of contentedness as a pious response to adversity.

Pastoral offered Sidney an effective means to represent contentment in ways that developments in Reformation thought made timely. “Contentation” is not simply a synonym for “content” that invites meaningful puns. Nor is it a solely Stoic principle. Instead, to use Blair Worden’s phrase, “pagan and Christian virtue” in *The Old Arcadia* “are on friendly terms.”⁸ As we have seen, “contentation” was a variant of “content” with especially religious resonances, such as “making of satisfaction for sin” and “satisfying of the conscience, of the moral or rational faculty; the allaying of scruple or doubt.” Sixteenth-century usages with such theological denotations can be found in Bishop of Salisbury Edmund Geste’s *Treatise Against Masse* (1548), Hugh Latimer’s *27 Sermons* (1562), and John Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments* (1570).⁹ Indeed, as we saw in Chapter 1, well before Sidney began drafting the *Arcadia*, Foxe was chronicling contentment as the exemplary affect of Protestant martyrs and believers, resulting in an influential English model for Christian suffering. Sidney’s well-documented Protestant sympathies made him sensitive to the same emotional exigencies that encouraged the

⁷ See Haber, *Pastoral and the Poetics of Self-Contradiction*, 72–73 and 180–81 n. 39–40. As she notes, many of these passages are excised in the *New Arcadia*. See Michael Everton, “Critical Thumbprints in *Arcadia*: Renaissance Pastoral and the Process of Critique,” *Style* 35.1 (2001): 1–17. For a related reading of *The New Arcadia*, see Tracey Sedinger, “Sidney’s *New Arcadia* and the Decay of Protestant Republicanism,” *Studies in English Literature* 47 (2007): 61–63.

⁸ Worden, *The Sound of Virtue*, 53.

⁹ *OED* “contentation” n. 5b and 6.

reformation of contentment in England.¹⁰ Furthermore, Stillman has recently called attention to Sidney's ties to Philippism, a Lutheran party centered on the thought of Philip Melancthon. As opposed to a card-carrying Calvinist, a Philippist had a "considerably more optimistic account of human agency" and a desired "freedom from dark pronouncements about predestination and election," and thus might be especially receptive to the positively inflected affect of content.¹¹

While Tiffany Werth has shown that Sidney's *New Arcadia* engages in the "Reformation of Romance," I suggest that Sidney's *Old Arcadia* uses pastoral romance to refigure Reformation contentment.¹² Because he writes a narrative romance—as opposed to a sermon, religious treatise, or even a Protestant *ars poetica* like the *The Defence of Poesy*—Sidney does not simply reproduce Reformation concepts of contentment, using a literary text to proselytize an idealized Christian psychology. Instead, Sidney pursues the strategies of romance, including the "wandering," "error," and "trial" described by Patricia Parker, to arrive at counter-intuitive and

¹⁰ Helen Hackett has discussed the relevance of medieval and sixteenth-century martyrologies (including Foxe) to Sidney's *New Arcadia*, but critics have not connected them to the earlier *Old Arcadia*. In fact, Tiffany Jo Werth contrasts *The Old Arcadia* with the *New* on the grounds that the revised version, and not the earlier one, represents the "secular passion" of its heroines through religious discourse. See Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 124–29; and Werth, *The Fabulous Dark Cloister: Romance in England after the Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), esp. 80.

¹¹ Stillman, "Deadly Stinging Adders: Sidney's Piety, Philippism, and the *Defence of Poesy*," *Spenser Studies* 16 (2002): 236 and 234. See also Stillman, *Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008). On Lutheran thought in Sidney's works, see Jane Kingsley-Smith, "Cupid, Idolatry, and Iconoclasm in Sidney's *Arcadia*," *Studies in English Literature* 48 (2008): 65–91, esp. 66.

¹² Werth, "The Reformation of Romance," item title.

potentially scandalizing conclusions about contentment.¹³ Book 5 features Pyrocles as an exemplar of contented suffering, the condition depicted so powerfully in Foxe's martyrology. But much of the preceding books records the romantic escapades of the courtier characters, who enter into Arcadian pastoral with a view of contentation as the attainment, and not the containment, of desire.¹⁴ In many cases, the equation of contentment with erotic fulfillment obviously conflicts with Reformation wisdom and proves disastrous for both desiring subject and desired object. However, Sidney also attempts to reconcile these seemingly contradictory understandings of contentment, so that sensual indulgence and pious action become unlikely bedfellows. By insistently identifying both sexual satisfaction and virtuous endurance with a lexicon of "content," Sidney is not simply setting up a clever contrast, but establishing a complex continuity. Such efforts, I argue, represent Sidney's greatest and most original contribution to the Reformation discourse on contentment.

In this chapter, then, I contribute to current studies of emotion and the passions in Sidney's romance by examining contentment in *The Old Arcadia* and, more specifically, by charting its transformation from sexual satisfaction into a resolute response to suffering, a condition resembling the Christian content prized in Reformation England. I follow recent scholars in understanding Sidney as using literary form for passionate experimentation and developing in the process a sophisticated affective vocabulary.¹⁵ First, I describe how Basilius,

¹³ Patricia Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 4.

¹⁴ Dipple argues that "the harmonic virtue and self-containment of the leading active characters—Basilius, Gynecia, Pyrocles and Musidorus—is broken by sexual incontinence" ("Harmony and Pastoral," 315).

¹⁵ Jennifer C. Vaught outlines a Sidneyan model of masculine heroism that includes the moderate expression of emotion, including passionate displays often gendered feminine in the period. Wendy Olmsted discusses the need

Gynecia, and Musidorus pursue a contentment of erotic fulfillment. Rather than having their desires bounded by what they have, they disregard the boundaries of the self and encroach upon the other. Next, I examine the character of Pyrocles, who, through his relationship with Philoclea, eventually learns to locate contentment in the needs and desires of his beloved. Rather than simply doing lip-service to mutuality, Pyrocles finds his contentment upon emotional connection and compromise. Then, I show how Pyrocles's concept of contentment relates to his response to the trial in Book 5, which Sidney repeatedly contrasts with the response of Musidorus. Insofar as Sidney's work ultimately constructs a contentment compatible with injustice, suffering, and death, *The Old Arcadia* runs parallel to and participates in the English efforts to reform contentment. However, it does not discount the contentedness sought by the (actual and would-be) lovers. Instead, Pyrocles's romantic relationship teaches him how to subjugate his own will and desires to that of another. This is not to say, as Christopher Martin does, that "Sidney's *Arcadia* is fundamentally a tale about social and sexual constraint," but rather that Sidney explores a means of reorienting—without rejecting—erotic passion to make it

for gentle speech to temper manly vehemence in Sidney's ideal friendship. Sullivan focuses on the ways in which Sidney's romance indulges in fantasies of passionate motion (as opposed to rational self-regulation), specifically noting the connection between sleep and the passions and linking the geographical to the characterological. See Vaught, "Men Who Weep and Wail: Masculinity and Emotion in Sidney's *New Arcadia*," *Literature Compass* 2 (2005): 1–16; Olmsted, "The Gentle Doctor: Renaissance/Reformation Friendship, Rhetoric, and Emotion in Sidney's *Old Arcadia*," *Modern Philology* 103 (2005): 156–86; and Sullivan, "Romance, Sleep, and the Passions," 735–57. See also Jacqueline T. Miller, "The Passion Signified: Imitation and the Construction of Emotions in Sidney and Wroth," *Criticism* 43 (2001): 407–21; Daniel T. Lochman, "Friendship's Passion: Love-Fellowship in Sidney's *New Arcadia*," in *Discourses and Representations of Friendship in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700*, ed. Daniel T. Lochman, Maritere López, and Lorna Hutson (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 65–79; and David Houston Wood, "'[A] Deathful Suck': Passions, Potions, and Poisons in Sidney's *Old Arcadia*," *Prose Studies* 28 (2006): 150–67.

compatible with and even productive of virtuous action.¹⁶ I conclude by considering how pastoral romance in particular contributes to these imaginative efforts. I demonstrate that Sidney uses pastoral romance to develop an amatory, erotic contentment that helps to generate the species of ethical affect that his contemporaries label Christian contentment.

Erected Wit, Infected Will, and Erotic Contentment

Duke Basilius never lives up to the contentation assigned to his subjects in the *Old Arcadia's* opening lines. Indeed, Basilius's visit to the Delphic oracle and his subsequent abdication of the throne, explicitly motivated by desire, are in direct opposition to the Arcadian contentment experienced by "moderate and well tempered minds."¹⁷ Instead of concern for his family or state, Basilius is driven by "the vanity which possesseth many who, making a perpetual mansion of this poor baiting place of man's life, are desirous to know the certainty of things to come." After hearing the oracle's cryptic prophecy, Basilius experiences "amazement" and "curiosity—both passions proceeding out of one weakness, in vain to desire to know that of which in vain thou shalt be sorry after thou has known it" (5). Rather than heeding Philanax's counsel—"stand

¹⁶ Christopher Martin, "Misdoubting His Estate: Dynastic Anxiety in Sidney's *Arcadia*," *English Literary Renaissance* 18 (1988): 369. See also Benjamin Scott Grossberg, "Politics and Shifting Desire in Sidney's *New Arcadia*," *Studies in English Literature* 42 (2002): 65.

¹⁷ On similarities between Basilius's consultation of the oracle and the Fall of Adam and Eve—an event frequently linked to discontent, as we will see in Chapter 5—see Clifford Davidson, "Nature and Judgment in the *Old Arcadia*," *Papers on Language and Literature* 6 (1970): 352; and Andrew D. Weiner, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Protestantism: A Study of Contexts* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), 57 and 69. Margaret Dana reads the oracle in terms of Protestant notions of providence. See "The Providential Plot of The *Old Arcadia*," in *Sir Philip Sidney: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, ed. Dennis Kay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987): 83–102.

wholly upon your own virtue as the surest way to maintain you in that you are, and to avoid any evil which may be imagined” (8)—Basilus determines that the best way to avert the oracular pronouncement and continue “in like tenor of happiness” is to flee with his family to the pastoral countryside (5).

By the end of Book 1, however, the contentment Basilus seeks is adulterous sex with Cleophila, the cross-dressed Pyrocles.¹⁸ At their first meeting, Basilus’s desire “burned all other thoughts out of his heart,” and he “felt such a music, as he thought, in her voice, and such an eye-pleasing in her face, that he thought his retiring into this solitary place was well employed if it had been only to have met with such a guest” (35). Despite this pastoral language of pleasure, retirement, and solitude, Basilus experiences not an idealized contentment, but “unquiet contention” as he struggles against his desires (45). This contention eventually quiets into a “selfness of affection,” a “fawning humour of false hope [that] made him take everything to his own best” (133), as he believes that he will be able to bed and wed (in that order) Cleophila.¹⁹ When he appears on the verge of realizing these goals (or the first of them, anyway), “his heart could not choose but yield this song as a fairing of his contentment,” a contentment equated with “Forefelt desire” (226). Lust for someone other than one’s spouse seems an obvious example of

¹⁸ Martin notes the continuity between Basilus’ pastoral withdrawal and romantic pursuit of Cleophila: “The old duke’s anxiety over his royal estate is surely intertwined with a need to confirm his virility” (“Misdoubting His Estate,” 370).

¹⁹ Intriguingly, the *OED*’s first instance of “selfness,” also from Sidney (*Astrophel and Stella* 61), records the opposite phenomenon: “Wholly hers all selfnesse he forebears” (“selfness” n. 1). On the “selfness of affection” in *The Old Arcadia*, see Stillman, *Sidney’s Poetic Justice*, 183–84; and Tom MacFaul, “Friendship in Sidney’s *Arcadias*,” *Studies in English Literature* 49 (2009): 19, 30.

not having desires bound by what one has. However, Sidney insistently uses forms of the word “content” to designate the erotic fulfillment sought by Basilius and other characters.

Gynecia, who sees through Pyrocles’s disguise, also experiences a sexual desire repeatedly registered as “content.”²⁰ Indeed, in her first admission of desire for Cleophila, Gynecia identifies contentment as the fulfillment of that desire. She is tormented by “the terrors of her own conscience,” but she states, “if my desire, how unjust so ever it be, might take effect, though a thousand deaths followed it, and every death were followed with a thousand shames, yet should not my sepulchre receive me without some contentment” (90–91). Like Foxe’s martyrs, Gynecia can imagine a contented death, but one dependent on effecting her own erotic desires. She anticipates a post-coital contentment so strong that it could survive a thousand deaths and shames. Unlike Foxe’s martyrological contentment, though, Gynecia’s envisaged experience of satisfied desire does not preserve a sense of stable identity; instead, this “disastered changeling” at times embraces a philosophy of self-abnegation, believing that “happy be only they which be not” (113). In further contrast to a contentment of bounded desires, Gynecia’s contentment recognizes “no comfort but to be beyond all bounds of shame” (91).²¹ The carnal

²⁰ Martha Craig notes that Gynecia’s “discontent impels her to engage in elaborate machinations of desire that threaten the entire family’s tenuous safety in exile and bring dire punishment upon herself.” See “Negotiating Sex: The Poetics of Feminization in Sidney’s *Arcadia*,” *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 31 (2005): 93. For Sidney’s representation of Gynecia’s troubled mental state, see Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction*, 111–12; and Wood, “[A] Deathful Suck,” 151.

²¹ Cf. her lament when she believes herself responsible for Basilius’s death: “O bottomless pit of sorrow in which I cannot contain myself, having the firebrands of all furies within me, still falling and yet by the infiniteness of it never fallen” (279).

contentment sought by Gynecia, then, continually jostles with the principle upheld in Reformation discourse.

The association between Gynecia's contentment and sexual gratification continues right up to bed-trick in Book 3. When Pyrocles convinces Gynecia that he will satisfy her, "The blood that quickly came into Gynecia's fair face was the only answer she made, but that one might easily see contentment and consent were both to the full in her" (222). More than ready for some pastoral pleasures, Gynecia "went to the cave-ward, guided only by the moon's fair shining, suffering no other thought to have any familiarity with her brains, but that which did present unto her a picture of her approaching contentment." The narrator continues, "Thus with doubled paces she went to the cave, receiving to herself for her first contentment the only lying where Cleophila had done—whose pillow she kissed a thousand times for having borne the print of that beloved head" (224). However, this "first contentment" of kissing pillows is the only one that actually "approach[es]." Basilius, who also expects a romantic rendezvous with Cleophila, arrives and unknowingly commits adultery with his own wife, for which she chastises him in Book 4: "Truly, truly, sir, very untimely are these fires in you. It is high season for us both to let reason enjoy his due sovereignty. Let us not plant anew those weeds which by nature's course are content to fade" (277). The weeds that "are content to fade" through "nature's course" are the very "undecent appetites" that motivate adultery. Though concealing the extent of her own indiscretions, Gynecia suggests that there is something unnatural about seeking contentment between the sheets—not to mention in a cave—at their ages.

However, the older generation hardly has a monopoly on equating contentment and sexual satisfaction, as Sidney's portrayal of Musidorus makes clear. At first, Musidorus is appalled by his companion's lovesickness, and he becomes the romance's spokesperson for early

modern wisdom on the superiority of reason over the passions and the pitfalls of romantic love in particular.²² Recognizing that his arguments fail, however, Musidorus relents, “content to yield to the force of the present stream, with hope afterwards, as occasion fell out, to prevail better with him; or at least to adventure his life in preserving him from any injury might be offered him.” Unlike Gynecia and Basilius, Musidorus initially aims for a selfless contentment, as he hopes ultimately to preserve and support his friend. But the narrator continues, “And with the beating of those thoughts, remained he in the grove till, with a new fullness, he was emptied of them—as you shall after hear” (28). Playing off of etymologically-based connections between contentment and fullness, the narrator notes the instability of Musidorus’s contented condition, with the contents of his thoughts being quickly emptied and supplanted when he encounters the beautiful Pamela.

Almost immediately after Musidorus adopts his shepherd disguise and joins Dametas, the narrator relates the character’s considerable “joy,” stating “that the greatest point outward things can bring a man unto is the contentment of the mind, which once obtained, no state is miserable; and without that, no prince’s seat restful” (44). Katherine Duncan-Jones glosses this remark about contentment as a Renaissance commonplace, but we might recognize here a meaningful tension between the character’s actions and the narrator’s explanation.²³ The narrator invokes the contentment of self-fortification, an affect that defends the self from changing fortune or changeable passions. Musidorus, by contrast, impersonates a pastoral figure in order to indulge the very passion that he recently decried. Musidorus is simply not interested in the kind of

²²According to Olmsted, Musidorus actually “overstates, even parodies, Renaissance views about masculine control of emotion” (“The Gentle Doctor,” 169).

²³ See Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 371, note.

contentment that the phrase commonly applauds. Dorus's new-sprung sexual desires clearly reflect the amorous model of contentment, yet the narrator articulates that contentment in terms of the values of a pious, pastoral model. The rhetoric of a contentment of the mind is appropriated for a sexual contenting of the body, but this particular reworking seems increasingly disingenuous as Musidorus becomes a foil for Pyrocles, who will more effectively wed ethics and eros.

Musidorus's pursuit of erotic contentment comes into focus in Book 2 and its accompanying eclogues. When Pamela addresses Dorus, the narrator relates, "There is no man in a burning fever feels so great contentment in cold water greedily received (which, as soon as the drink ceaseth, the heat reneweth) as poor Dorus found his soul refreshed with her sweetly pronounced words, and newly and more violently again inflamed as soon as she had closed up her delightful speech with no less well graced silence" (103). The contentment he experiences is both powerfully restorative and incredibly fleeting. When the "heat reneweth," Dorus divulges his autobiography to show that his "estate is not so contemptible but that a prince hath been content to take the like upon him, and by that only hath aspired to enjoy a mighty princess" (103). Pamela does not appear offended by Dorus's diction, but the prince-turned-pastor had himself previously taken issue with Pyrocles's desire to "enjoy": "now set you forth the baseness of it [love] since, if it end in enjoying, it shows all the rest was nothing" (23). Musidorus had seen his companion's neoplatonic association between love and virtue as at least in tension with if not utterly undone by the act of "enjoying," implicitly linked to sexual gratification.²⁴ By

²⁴ Cleophila similarly recoils from Basilius's desire for "enjoying those your excellencies wherein my life is upheld and my death threatened"; she scolds, "Enjoying, quoth you! Now little joy come to them that yield to such enjoying!" (115).

invoking the term that he earlier objected to as exposing the “base” physical urges underlying romantic love, Dorus admits that his pastoral contentment depends upon consummating a relationship with Pamela. In the meantime, however, his “sheep are thoughts” that pasture on “fair hills of fruitless love: / On barren sweets they feed, and feeding starve” (107). Until Dorus can enjoy his beloved, pastoral provides him only with metaphors for his unfulfilled sexual appetite.²⁵

In the Second Eclogues, Dicus insists that “A quiet mind none but thyself can lend to thee” (140), but Dorus’s erotic contentment is entirely—and problematically—bound up in the affect and attention of his mistress:

Her only cure from surfeit woes can diet me:
 She holds the balance of my contentation:
 Her cleared looks (naught else) in storms can quiet me.
 Nay, rather than my ease discontentation
 Should breed to her, let me for ay dejected be
 From any joy which might her grief occasion.
 With so sweet plagues my happy harms infected be:
 Pain wills me die, yet will of death I mortify;
 For though life irks, in life my loves protected be.
 Thus for each change my changeless heart I fortify. (141)

²⁵ A quality of contentment extends to Pamela in these exchanges as well; when she sees through his feigned courtship of Mopsa, she “to this scanning of his was now content to fall” and is “contented to urge a little further of him” (87–88). However, these descriptions differ almost as sharply from the account of Musidorus’s contentment as they do from the radical passions of her mother Gynecia.

Dorus claims passivity in his own emotional well-being and instead projects agency onto his beloved. If she alone “holds the balance of . . . contentation,” then he is absolved from any efforts of balancing himself. We might recall that “contentation” can signify “satisfaction” and a “Contented or satisfied condition,” but it can also designate “The action of contenting or satisfying” or “The contenting oneself or one’s mind with what one has.” By thinking of balance as a noun instead of a verb, Dorus denies a processual component of contentment and adopts the subject position of the powerless Petrarchan lover. The proliferation of Petrarchan paradoxes in the closing verses reinforces the sexual suggestions of words like “breed” and “die,” with its early modern pun on orgasm. Moreover, the rhyming structure of the song repeatedly calls into question Dorus’s construction of contentment. The audience’s response to “contentation” is inflected by the almost immediate mention of “discontentation.” The primary effect is not to suggest that contentment can persist in or even result from discontent, as writers like Luther, Foxe, and Thomas Gataker maintain, but to force them both to occupy uneasily the same conceptual space. A similar effect is produced by the rhyming words that precede “protected”; an audience might rightly doubt how protected Dorus’s love can be when anticipated by “dejected” and “infected.” A fortification that recalls mortification—the only two actions that Dorus takes responsibility for in this passage—is equally suspect. Sidney proceeds to expose the dangers of Dorus’s erotic contentment, but in the Second Eclogues the author allows the princely shepherd to articulate (knowingly or not) the complications and contradictions within his own desirous thinking.

Although Sidney repeatedly links Musidorus’s longing for contentment to a desire for sexual fulfillment, in Book 3 Sidney represents that concept of contentment most problematically. The shepherd-prince successfully convinces Pamela to flee with him, but, unlike

her sister, she wants to remain chaste until marriage. Musidorus agrees to respect her wishes, saying, “Your contentment is dearer to me than mine own, and therefore doubt not of his mind whose thoughts are so thrall’d unto you as you are to bend or slack them as it shall seem best unto you” (197).²⁶ Thus far, Musidorus has conceived of contentment as the attainment—not the containment—of his desires, but by privileging his beloved’s contentment over his own, he agrees to submit his desires to her.²⁷

However, this apparently selfless shift in his understanding of contentment is almost immediately undermined by his attempted rape of Pamela. The narrator describes in detail Musidorus’s response to the sleeping princess:

And lest this beauty might seem the picture of some excellent artificer, forth their stole a soft breath, carrying good testimony of her inward sweetness; and so stealingly it came out as it seemed loath to leave his contentful mansion, but that it hoped to be drawn in again to that well closed paradise, that did so tyrannize over Musidorus’s affects that he was compelled to put his face as low to hers as he could, sucking the breath with such joy that he did determine in himself there had been no life to a chameleon’s, if he might be suffered to enjoy that food. But each of these having a mighty working in his heart, all joined together did so draw his will into the nature of their confederacy that now his promise began to have

²⁶ Musidorus’s language of “slacking” here ironizes his very first speech, in which he confronts the lovesick Pyrocles for the “relenting, truly, and slacking of the main career you had so notably begun and almost performed” (13).

²⁷ Gynecia will soon make an ostensibly similar claim to Cleophila that instead has the force of a threat: “I desire but to have my affection answered, and to have a right reflection of my love in you. That granted, assure yourself mine own love will easily teach me to seek your contentment” (203).

but a fainting force, and each thought that rase against those desires was received
 but as a stranger to his counsel, well experiencing in himself that no vow is so
 strong as the avoiding of occasions. (201)

After a brief blazon of Pamela's face, the narrator (with Musidorus) dedicates considerable attention to her breath. Her body becomes a "contentful mansion" and "well closed paradise."²⁸ She is not entirely self-contained, as the "soft breath" "steal[s]" forth, but she is about as close as one can get.²⁹ Indeed, Sidney imagines an anthropomorphized air that "hoped" to be recycled, inhaled back into the "inward sweetness" of Pamela. Though elsewhere in the romance sleep is associated and physiologically coincident with "the ascendance of the passions" in the sleeper, Pamela's passions appear perfectly regulated in this moment of rest.³⁰ However, the peacefulness of Pamela's contented sleep contrasts with and contributes to Musidorus's own emotional transformation. When he had previously claimed to prefer Pamela's contentment to his own, he noted her ability to "slack" his thoughts, but his "will," with the common sexual connotations, is anything but slackened in the heat of the moment. The narrator compares Musidorus's attempt to "suck" in Pamela's exhaled breath to a chameleon eating air, as was conventionally believed and

²⁸ At the close of the second eclogues, Dorus had described his beloved as "a soul closed in a mansion / As sweet as violets, fair as a lily is . . ." (167).

²⁹ John Carey writes, "Breath, incessantly leaving and returning, acts out Sidney's principle of stasis within motion, as does his periphrasis ('contentful mansion' and 'well closed paradise' both meaning the same thing)." See "Structure and Rhetoric in Sidney's *Arcadia*," in *Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Kay, 245–64, 246. This concept of "stasis within motion" aptly captures the apparent paradoxes worked out in early modern treatments of contentment. However, cf. Haber, *Pastoral and the Poetics of Self-Contradiction*, who claims that, for Sidney, "stasis becomes imprisoning; and suspension becomes self-enclosed self-division" (60).

³⁰ Sullivan, "Romance, Sleep, and the Passions," 737.

as Hamlet notes. (3.2.85–86).³¹ But by sucking in her breath, Musidorus intrudes upon Pamela’s cycle of contented containment. The fortification of the self suggested by this tranquil closed system is betrayed by her vulnerability in sleep, which encourages Musidorus’s desire to “win the bulwark” of her “contentful mansion” (201–2).

In attempting to rape Pamela, Musidorus effectively violates contentment. Perhaps this is why Sidney makes contentment an enemy to Musidorus in Book 4, when the attack by “a dozen clownish villains” is finally recounted (202). The narrator describes one of these men, who together “were guided by the everlasting justice to be chastisers of Musidorus’s broken vow” (307), saying, “The only contentment he required was that by their help with his own hands he might put his murderer to some cruel death” (309). The “just punishment of his broken promise” refigures contentment into the fulfillment of revenge against Musidorus (202). For the contentment momentarily realized in Pamela’s sleep to be truly protected, and not merely avenged, the erotic contentment of sexual satisfaction aspired to by various characters and enacted in Musidorus’s near-rape would itself need to be reformed. A contentment of self-fortification must be paired with an alternative model of romantic contentment, one more closely resembling Musidorus’s promise to Pamela, before that promise is broken.

Cross-Dressing Contentment: The Affective Education of Pyrocles

Sidney depicts the kind of amatory contentment that Musidorus professes but fails to perform through the relationship of Pyrocles and Philoclea. Sidney increasingly identifies Pyrocles with an empathetic contentment defined by the desires of Philoclea, and not himself, and his transformation in Book 1 anticipates this development. When Musidorus adopts his shepherd

³¹ *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katharine Eisaman Maus (New York: Norton, 2008).

disguise, he shortens his name to Dorus, an alternate appellation appropriate to the workings of pastoral as a mode that “strips away . . . encumbrances.”³² Musidorus’s name-change enacts the shift from his heroic past of chivalric romance to his present position in pastoral romance. By contrast, Pyrocles cross-dresses as Cleophila, an obvious reworking of his beloved’s name Philoclea.³³ Not only does the narrator shift to using the new name and feminine pronouns, registering the radical transformation, but he also explains this narrative choice as motivated by emotional empathy: “I myself feel such compassion of his passion that I find even part of his fear lest his name should be uttered before fit time were for it” (27).³⁴ Basilius’s “selfness of affection” causes him to misconstrue reality according to his own sexual desires, effectively re-making Cleophila (and everyone else for that matter) in his image. Pyrocles’s name suggests the opposite transformation, in which the lover comes to resemble the beloved.³⁵ This transformation

³² Nancy Lindheim, *The Virgilian Pastoral Tradition: From the Renaissance to the Modern Era* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2005), 4.

³³ Even in the *New Arcadia*, in which Pyrocles takes the name Zelmane, he acknowledges that this name belonged to a woman who died for love of him. See Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction*, 114. On the name change as a challenge to “society’s gender exclusivities,” see Craig, “Negotiating Sex,” 91. However, cf. Bi-Qi Beatrice Lei, “Relational Anti-Feminism in Sidney’s *Arcadia*,” *Studies in English Literature* 41 (2001): 25–48.

³⁴ Hackett describes the narrator’s remark as “a striking implication of participation in Pyrocles’s disguise”: “It may be inferred that the author shares . . . in Pyrocles’s passion” (*Women and Romance Fiction*, 111–12). Such an admission of emotional connection with the character of Pyrocles is markedly different from the narrator’s justification for referring to Musidorus by his adopted appellation: “because such was his pleasure, I am bold to call the shepherd Dorus” (51).

³⁵ For a more negative interpretations of Pyrocles’s name change and transvestism, see Davidson, “Nature and Judgment in the *Old Arcadia*,” 362. Richard A. Lanham calls this moment “a mockery of the typical epic ‘arming-scene.’” See *The Old Arcadia*, 204, in *Sidney’s Arcadia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).

and transvestism would appear to contradict a contentment of self-sufficiency and self-sameness, but the renaming of Pyrocles accords with Sidney's reconfiguration of erotic contentment in the first four Books of the *Old Arcadia*.

Initially, Cleophila's cross-dressing is no less a means to an end of erotic contentment than Dorus's pastoral impersonation. Pyrocles's first invocations of contentment in the text are in service of convincing Musidorus to support his sudden love for Philoclea. Though motivated by romantic desire rather than feminist sentiments, Pyrocles decries the "unmanlike cruelty of mankind," who are "not content with their tyrannous ambition to have brought the others' [women's] virtuous patience under them" but proceed to insult their virtues (21).³⁶ Shortly after, he argues, "poor love . . . is little beholding unto you, since you are not contented to spoil it of the honour of the highest power of the mind (which notable men have attributed unto it), but you deject it below all other passions" (22). In both cases, the not-contentedness of other males (whether Musidorus individually or the entire gender) stands in the way of Pyrocles's erotic agenda. He effectively brings contentment under the banner of his own courtship scheme. Later, when questioned by Basilius in their first encounter, the cross-dressed Pyrocles claims, "I seek no better warrant . . . than mine own conscience, nor no greater pleasure than mine own contentation" (35). Their brief but conventionally pastoral consideration of active versus passive virtue masks the specifically sexual goals of each party.

For much of the first three Books, Cleophila's professions of longing and love-melancholy are consistent with those of the other characters seeking erotic contentment. As Stillman notes, Cleophila even appeals to contentment deceptively to further her sexual scheme.

³⁶ Hackett uses these lines as evidence of "Sidney's disdain for self-satisfied railers against women" (*Women and Romance Fiction*, 115).

Cleophila manipulates both Basilius and Gynecia with promises of satisfaction, as Dorus does with Dametas and Mopsa.³⁷ Cleophila tells Gynecia, “I have found out a way by which your contentment shall draw on my happiness” (213).³⁸ Likewise, in her final exchange with Basilius before the bed-trick, Cleophila states, “if I were never so contented to speak with you (for further never, O Basilius, look for at my hands), I know not how you can avoid your wife’s jealous attendance, but that her suspicion shall bring my honour into question” (220). Clearly, then, Pyrocles/Cleophila exhibits the same desire for erotic contentment—and its attendant problems—as the other characters we have examined. However, Pyrocles also learns to reorient his desires in relation to those of Philoclea and to act upon an empathetic contentment.

Sidney first introduces empathetic contentment through the scene in which Pyrocles reveals his true identity (and gender) to Philoclea. Sent by Basilius to woo Cleophila on his behalf, Philoclea finds the apparent Amazon singing and sobbing over a brook. Cleophila’s “thoughts,” which have been “imprisoned . . . in secret woes, / With flamy breath do issue oft in sound,” but the “echo” forces her song back upon her: “Thus outward helps my inward griefs maintain.” Every attempt to “cast” away her “burd’nous care” recoils against her (118), presumably because, as she will go on to say, “no words can carry with them the life of inward feeling” (120). Rather than offering an outlet for emotional purgation, Cleophila’s pastoral lament registers a self-consuming self-containment resulting from yet-unsatisfied desire for erotic contentment. Cleophila fails to “discharge”—a word that, according to the *OED* at least,

³⁷ Stillman, *Sidney’s Poetic Justice*, 134–36.

³⁸ See also Cleophila’s earlier comment, pretending to submit to Gynecia’s solicitations (206).

did not yet possess an ejaculatory connotation.³⁹ Cleophila tells Philoclea, “if ever you have understood what force it [Love] hath had to conquer the strongest hearts and change the most settled estates, receive here, not only an example of those strange tragedies, but one that in himself hath contained all the particularities of their misfortunes” (119–20). Love’s conquest becomes a failure of self-fortification, and it specifically challenges the “settled” condition typically associated with contentment. Before going on to disclose his princely identity, Pyrocles represents himself as an amalgamation of misfortunate, melancholy lovers. He is not contented. He contains multitudes.

Philoclea’s response to Cleophila’s song introduces a more mutual, intersubjective alternative to the experience of desire so constantly depicted in the text:

Philoclea at the first sight well knew this was Cleophila (for so indeed it was); but as there is nothing more agreeable than a beloved voice, she was well content to hear her words which she thought might with more cause have been spoken by her own mouth. But when Cleophila did both cease to speak and had ended her writing, Philoclea gave herself to be seen unto her, with such a meeting of both their eyes together, with such a mutual astonishment to them both as it well showed each party had enough to do to maintain their vital powers in their due working. (119)

Though she does not yet know herself to be the cause, Philoclea is able to empathize with Cleophila’s desires because she herself experiences them (and, indeed, authored her own verses quite recently [109–11]). Philoclea identifies with the romantic other, and this gives her

³⁹ The earliest example of “discharge” as “ejaculate” listed by the *OED* is from *Whore’s Rhetoric* (1683); “discharge” v. 12. d.

“content.”⁴⁰ Like Pyrocles’s name change, Philoclea’s recognition effectively reverses Basilius’s selfness of affection. This empathetic contentment, observing and not imposing similitude with the beloved, leads to a brief but remarkable representation of mutuality. The cessation of Cleophila’s song is met immediately with a response from Philoclea, who “gave herself to be seen unto her.” Both Philoclea and Cleophila are agents in this act of viewing, in contrast to the text’s frequent blazons. This results in “a meeting of both their eyes together,” a “mutual astonishment to them both” that affects “each party equally.” Cleophila claims that she reveals her disguise at this moment because of “the small opportunity of envious occasion” (119), but I would add that the empathy and mutuality exhibited in this contented occasion distinguishes their relationship from the others in the *Old Arcadia*.

Moreover, their empathetic contentment does not require a rejection or devaluing of erotic desire. Pyrocles’s revelation of his “unused metamorphosis”—his unaccustomed or unusual transvestism—takes on Ovidian force in light of the narrator’s comparison of Philoclea to Pygmalion, a comparison that puts the princess in the position of the desiring male artist (120).⁴¹ The “promise of marriage” accompanies (and very likely follows after) “many such embracings as it seemed their souls desired to meet and their hearts to kiss as their mouths did” (122). The desire for such radical union between loving selves will later be realized in the angelic sex described by Raphael in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. In the *Old Arcadia*, Sidney suggests

⁴⁰ Sullivan describes the ability of song, as a manifestation of emotion and especially love, to traverse “the space between . . . characters, constituting a field of motion that encompasses both bodies and environments” (“Romance, Sleep, and the Passions,” 743).

⁴¹ This is the second time that Cleophila has been compared to Pygmalion’s statue; after Musidorus helps Pyrocles cross-dress, he states, “if I were not fully resolved to submit my heart to these fancies, I were like enough while I dressed you to become a young Pygmalion” (27).

that sexual desire per se is not problematic for contentment, despite the problems encountered or created by other desiring individuals in the text.

To represent a reconciliation between empathy and eros in a singular romantic contentment, Sidney makes content central to the fulfillment—and the fallout—of Pyrocles's and Philoclea's sexual desires. Pyrocles's anticipated intercourse with Philoclea is a consummation devoutly to be wished, and he makes preparations with no less giddiness than Gynecia or Basilius before the bed trick. When Pyrocles is assured that Basilius has left the house, he moves "with stealing steps . . . down to the gate of the lodge, which not content to lock fast, he barred and fortified with as many devices as his wit and haste would suffer him." However, he does not fortify his sense of self near so well as he does the entrance, instead being "rapt from himself with the excessive forefeeling of his near coming contentment" (228). The coming of this contentment is momentarily delayed, as Philoclea, believing that her prince has been unfaithful with her mother, laments, "is thy heart so full of rancour that thou dost desire to feed thine eyes with the wretched spectacle of thine overthrown enemy, and so to satisfy the full measure of thy undeserved rage . . .?" She implores him instead to "be content to take to thyself some color or excuse, that thou didst not know to what extremity thy inconstancy, or rather falsehood, hath brought me!" (233). Pyrocles expects his long-awaited sexual satisfaction, but Philoclea throws "content" back in his face. The "full measure" of his "desire" and "rancour" has resulted in his (apparent) "inconstancy" and "falsehood." The same content that causes him to be "rapt from himself" could cause him to be inconstant to Philoclea, and the etymological connection of "rapt" with "rape" recalls Musidorus's own attempted assault on Pamela's contented mansion. While Philoclea's specific accusations are mistaken, she registers a falling off from their earlier scene of romantic disclosure, in which contentment existed in empathetic identification and

mutual agency. Rather than being rapt, Pyrocles must re-orient his desires with his beloved. He does not need to lose himself; he simply needs to privilege something above himself. By defining his contentment in such a manner, he will be able to remain constant both to himself and to his beloved.

Sidney corrects Pyrocles's contentment post-coitus. The morning after, "Pyrocles awaked, grudging in himself that sleep (though very short) had robbed him of any part of those his highest contentments" (289). Similarly, Philoclea is described as having experienced "the uttermost point of contentment" (292). However, she is awakened by the sobering sound of her lover's attempted suicide, a response to their discovery by Dametas that is intended for Philoclea's protection but is decided on perhaps a bit too rashly to qualify as Stoic resolution. When Philoclea quite understandably asks for an explanation, Pyrocles initiates a bargaining process centered on contentment, a process that takes up the remainder of their exchange before Philanax arrives. He begins, "since you have sufficiently showed you love me, let me claim by that love you will be content rather to let me die contentedly than wretchedly" (295). The repetition of the word "content" within the sentence reinforces the intertwining of their emotional states. Pyrocles implores his beloved to align her contentment with his own, culminating in the prince's self-sacrifice. If she will have her affective response governed by his, then he will suffer to protect her, such that contentment becomes a matter of compromise and mutual (rather than individual) fortification. Pyrocles explains, "I am content to draw so much breath longer as, by answering the sweet objections you alleged, may bequeath (as I think) a right conceit unto you that this my doing is out of judgment, and not sprung of passion" (296). He then embarks on a lengthy defense of his course of action, invoking contentment twice more

before his speech ends.⁴² At the beginning of Book 4, then, contentment is both the lovers' shared experience of sexual satisfaction and the affective lexicon through which they communicate and together decide the prince's fate.

As the scene continues, Sidney further characterizes the couple's contentment as—in contrast to the other concupiscent courtiers—one of trust, empathy, and mutual agency:

Pyrocles, even overweighed with her so wisely uttered affection, finding her determination so fixed that his end should but deprive them both of a present contentment, and not avoid a coming evil (as a man that ran not unto it by a sudden qualm of passion, but by a true use of reason, preferring her life to his own), now that wisdom did manifest unto him that way would not prevail, he retired himself with as much tranquility from it as before he had gone unto it, like a man that had set the keeping or leaving of the body as a thing without himself, and so had thereof a freed and untroubled consideration. (299)

Indifferent to the keeping or leaving of his body, Pyrocles allows his actions to be guided by the “wisely uttered affection” and desires of Philoclea. Their “present contentment” depends upon forsaking his intended act for the sake of what she wants; only by submitting his will to that of his beloved can he encounter what is to come with “a freed and untroubled consideration.”

Therefore, he responds, “most dear lady, whose contentment I prefer before mine own, and judgement esteem more than mine own, I yield unto your pleasure. . . . [M]y humble suit is you

⁴² “[I]ndeed the weak-hearted man will rather die than see the face of a surgeon, who might with as good reason say that the constant man abides the painful surgery for fear of a further evil, but he is content to wait for death itself. But neither is true, for neither hath the one any fear, but a well choosing judgement; nor the other hath any contentment, but only fear, not having a heart actively to perform a matter of pain, is forced passively to abide a greater damage. For to do requires a whole heart, to suffer falls easiliest in the broken minds” (296–97).

will say I came in by force into your chamber, for so I am resolved now to affirm, and that will be the best for us both” (300). Pyrocles “esteem[s]” Philoclea’s “judgement,” so he prioritizes her “pleasure” and arrives at a new “resolve,” a plan that concerns both parties and to which both parties contributed. Preferring the contentment of Philoclea, Pyrocles avoids running rashly into a death that is unnecessary (not to mention detrimental to his beloved), and he is prepared instead to accept death if that is his fortune.

Through his relationship with Philoclea, Pyrocles has developed a new approach to romantic contentment, such that he bounds his desires by those of another. Andrew Weiner writes, “Taking the scene as a whole, then, it is clear that Philoclea does not raise Pyrocles up to educate him; she raises him up because she loves him. . . . Both end the scene as they began it, concerned more with their desire for the other than anything else and subject not to God but their passions.”⁴³ I agree with Weiner about Philoclea’s motivations; however, I would caution against overstating the contrast between learning and loving, God and the passions. The language of contentment on which the characters repeatedly rely is used by early modern writers to address equally issues about God and the passions. Daniel T. Lochman describes Philoclea in *The New Arcadia* as an “increasingly assertive tutor” to Pyrocles, but the seeds of this model of princess-as-pedagogue are already present in *The Old Arcadia*.⁴⁴ Specifically, Philoclea helps Pyrocles to expand his definition of contentment through their conversation and copulation. This amatory education has had the consequence, perhaps unexpected, of teaching Pyrocles how to respond properly to adversity, and it is here that Sidney’s treatment of contentment most meaningfully connects with and elaborates upon Reformation contentment. In Sidney’s pastoral romance,

⁴³ Weiner, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Protestantism*, 80.

⁴⁴ Lochman, “Friendship’s Passion,” 77.

Christian contentment, or the analogous attribute of the pagan characters, develops not only out of adversity, but out of eroticism.

Contented Captivity, or How to Suffer Well

The response of the princes to their trial, imprisonment, and impending executions has often been identified as a Stoic triumph of reason and patience over unruly passions.⁴⁵ When the princes realize that they will likely be sentenced to death, “they like men indeed (fortifying courage with the true rampire of patience) did so endure as they did rather appear governors of necessity than servants to fortune” (370). However, we might question whether this accurately or equally describes *both* characters’ behavior for the full final Book of *The Old Arcadia*. Though critics commonly elide the differences between the princes, Pyrocles repeatedly distinguishes himself from Musidorus in Book 5 by comporting himself in ways related to the contentment he develops with Philoclea. To more fully understand the relationship between suffering, emotion, and ethics at the close of this pastoral romance, we might supplement a critical vocabulary of Renaissance Stoicism with the concept of contentment that Sidney insistently invokes—a concept that in Reformation England is not primarily, let alone exclusively, Stoic.

While the prison contemplations of Musidorus and Pyrocles might resemble a philosophical dialogue, it is helpful to remember that the dialogue is spoken by the same two characters we have followed in the narrative thus far. As the men shore up their resolve,

⁴⁵ Dana diagnoses the princes with a “Stoic resignation” (“The Providential Plot of *The Old Arcadia*,” 97). Stillman claims that they have developed “Stoic fortitude” (*Sidney’s Poetic Justice*, 215). Worden lists their response to the impending trial as evidence that “Stoicism, and Sidney’s fiction, insist that the gains and losses of fortune must be servants, not masters, of virtue” (*The Sound of Virtue*, 337). Relatedly, Olmsted claims that “Stoic and Protestant self-respect sustains Pamela under the pressure of tyrannical treatment” (“The Gentle Doctor,” 183).

Musidorus reflects, “We have lived, and have lived to be good to ourselves and others. Our souls . . . have achieved the causes of their hither coming. They have known, and have honoured with knowledge, the cause of their creation. And to many men (for in this time, place, and fortune, it is lawful for us to speak gloriously) it hath been behoveful that we should live” (371). The narration of the princes’ heroic deeds (provided largely in the eclogues) confirms much of the sentiment here. However, one gets the sneaking suspicion that this self-glorifying account omits their recent romantic escapades (including, in Musidorus’s case, attempted rape). Pyrocles seems to note the omission, saying, “Add this to your noble speech, . . . that if we complain of this our fortune, or seem to ourselves faulty in having one hurt the other, we show a repentance of the love we bear to those matchless creatures, or at least a doubt it should be over dearly bought” (372). Utterly unrepentant, Pyrocles is willing to undergo any “shame,” “torment,” or “death”: he expresses his faithful love of Philoclea by *not* complaining of his fortune, but instead maintains an affect of contentment. As the princes contemplate the nature of their immortal souls and the afterlife, Pyrocles’s closing thoughts give way to a song by Musidorus about the needlessness of fear, the obscuring effects of passions, and “the bliss of peaceful mind” (374). The narrator relates, “As he [Pyrocles] had ended his speech, Musidorus, looking with a heavenly joy upon him, sang this song unto him he had made before love turned his muse to another subject” (373). The “heavenly joy” with which Musidorus considers his likely demise recalls the embrace of suffering for Christ exhibited by Foxe’s contented martyrs, like Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Sheterden. Musidorus will not quite live up to such standards the next morning. For the moment, though, we might note that his love for Pamela, or more specifically his authoring of love songs for her, is registered as an interruption of the condition that this song reflects. For Musidorus to rise above their present circumstances and imagine a peaceful bliss in death, he must hearken

back to a time before his courtship of Pamela. But in Pyrocles's concept of contentment, his relationship with Philoclea represents not a breach, but an expansion.

Throughout Book 5, Sidney juxtaposes the violent anger of Musidorus with the steady contentment of Pyrocles. When Musidorus enters the courtroom, he asks accusingly and "with a loud voice," "is it possible, O Arcadians, . . . that you can forget the natural duty you owe to your princess Pamela? Hath this soil been so little beholding to her noble ancestors?" (378). Whatever his resolution the previous night, Musidorus is far from patient now. By contrast, Pyrocles petitions the judge "with a lowly behaviour . . . like a suppliant," beginning his speech with "Pardon me, most honoured judge" (379). Unlike Musidorus, Pyrocles elicits a response from their judge, which the narrator aligns with contentment: "Euarchus, though neither regarding a prisoner's passionate prayer nor bearing over-plausible ears to a many-headed motion, yet well enough content to win their liking with things in themselves indifferent, he was content first to seek as much as might be of Philoclea's behaviour in this matter" (380). Pyrocles's affect not only yields a positive and productive response, but it actually resonates with the condition of his auditor. The contentment Pyrocles has perfected by learning to submit his desires to Philoclea finds its match in the contented Euarchus, who seeks to win the liking of the Arcadians whom he serves. The parity of contentment exhibited by father and son supports the hereditary thinking of Sidney's age, but however much Pyrocles's contented endurance is expressive of his birth, it is enabled by his love for Philoclea.

Significant, though sometimes subtle differences, persist between the passions of Pyrocles and the malcontented Musidorus. Neither prince is particularly happy with Philanax's often inaccurate speeches against them. However, Pyrocles defends himself with "as much modest humbleness to the judge as despiteful scorn to the accuser" (391). Even his request for

trial by combat, which Philanax, perhaps in a moment of Sidneyan humor, accepts, is phrased as something that he “humbly desire[s]” (394). By contrast, Musidorus responds with the same violence that characterized his first address to the Arcadians. As Philanax speaks, Musidorus considers “whether by any means he might come to have caught him in his arms, and have killed him—so much had his disgracing words filled his breast with rage.” The guards make it impossible for him to “perform his revenge,” but his hand nevertheless continues “trembling with desire to strike, and all the veins in his face swell” (400). Unlike his contented friend, Musidorus can scarcely contain himself—the physiological corollary to his psychological state.

The characters’ final speeches—the last speeches to appear in the romance—confirm their opposing affects. When Euarchus announces his resolve to carry out the sentence impartially, even after the young men’s true identities have been revealed, Musidorus is “stirred up with rage of unkindness” (412). As earlier, Musidorus desperately wants vengeance, hoping his Thessalian people “will revenge my injury and their loss upon thee”: “I hope my death is no more unjust to me than it shall be bitter to thee.” Only after unleashing such invective upon Euarchus about his own sentence does he proceed to plea “for his dear Pyrocles, for whom he was ever resolved his last speech should be.” Musidorus may ultimately keep this resolve to speak finally of Pyrocles, but he struggles against his own desires for revenge, which must first be given voice; quite literally, he puts himself before his friend. Elizabeth Dipple suggests that Musidorus’s response matches the readers’ own, such that “the total effect of Euarchus’s moral bias is discontent, emotional outrage, and intellectual scorn arising from a case partially presented and dimly understood.”⁴⁶ Pyrocles, however, offers a compelling alternative to this discontent, as he does not approve of or emulate Musidorus’s outburst: “Pyrocles (who oft had

⁴⁶ Elizabeth Dipple, “‘Unjust Justice’ in the *Old Arcadia*,” *Studies in English Literature* 10 (1970): 93.

called to him) did now fully interrupt him, desiring him not to do him the wrong to give his father ill words before him, willing him to consider it was their own fault and not his injustice; and withal to remember their resolution of well suffering all accidents, which this impatience did seem to vary from” (413). Not only has Sidney charted a disconnect between Musidorus’s affect before and during the trial, but Pyrocles confronts him for this very falling off. Musidorus has not suffered well.

By contrast, Pyrocles maintains his contented condition from the previous night and humbly offers himself for his friend. Pyrocles, “kneeling down with all humbleness,” implores, “My blood will satisfy the highest point of equity. My blood will satisfy the hardest hearted of this country” (413). Pyrocles’s concern with satisfaction has shifted from a sexual consummation with Philoclea to a fulfillment of Arcadian justice that will cost him his life. He continues, “In me, in me, this matter began; in me, let it receive his ending” (414). Pyrocles’s suit to his father bears a striking resemblance to Milton’s Son appealing to God on behalf of a humanity rapidly approaching the Fall: “Behold mee then, mee for him, life for life / I offer, on mee let thine anger fall; / Account mee man.”⁴⁷ The similarities between these two appeals, registered stylistically through repetition of the first-person object pronoun and a careful rhetorical balancing, is perhaps less the result of direct influence or sheer coincidence, and more a matter of the authors’ mutual participation in a tradition of representing Christian suffering that included Luther and Foxe. Of course, Sidney’s pagan princes are not Christian (and neither, strictly speaking, is Milton’s Christ). Nevertheless, Sidney’s treatment of his characters invokes the crucifixion,

⁴⁷ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Barbara Lewalski (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 3.236–38.

contemporary martyrologies, and Catholic/Protestant debates over the satisfaction for sin.⁴⁸

Sidney establishes a connection, though certainly not an equivalence, between the princes' passions and the passion of Christ. In the admittedly complicated moral universe of the pastoral romance, Pyrocles outperforms Musidorus.

Furthermore, Sidney's text suggests that Pyrocles has also outperformed all of Arcadia. Throughout the romance, various characters have advocated contentment, constancy, self-sufficiency, temperance, patience, and the like. In particular, Arcadian shepherds promoted an invincibility to changing fortunes, commonly designated affectively as contentation. But it is unclear that the pastors' principle corresponds with their eventual response to the apparent death of Basilius and the high-profile state scandals. I do not mean to suggest that the concepts of contentment and grief—the latter of which receives a formal outlet in the primarily elegiac Fourth Eclogues—were irreconcilable in the early modern emotional imagination, or that the presence of one belies the existence of the other.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Sidney sets the passionate public response to Basilius's death against an Arcadian contentation, as the opening sentence of the first Book, with which we began, is recalled and parodied through the opening sentence of the last: "The dangerous division of men's minds, the ruinous renting of all estates, had now brought Arcadia to feel the pangs of uttermost peril (such convulsions never coming but that the life of that government draws near his necessary period)" (351). Instead of proving impervious to declining fortunes and disruptive passions, the Arcadians experience the same "dangerous

⁴⁸ The night before the trial, while Pyrocles and Musidorus are articulating their resolute patience, "the afflicted Gynecia did crucify her own soul" (366). Basilius had previously described his love for Cleophila as a "martyrdom . . . no less painful than manifest" (218).

⁴⁹ Michael Everton, though, argues that the Fourth Eclogues signal an evacuation of pastoral *otium* ("Critical Thumbprints in Arcadia," 7–9).

division of . . . mind” that characterizes the royal lovers in the first three Books. The formal and thematic echoes of *The Old Arcadia*’s first sentence suggest “convulsions” as the corresponding term to the opening condition of “contentation,” with both nouns introduced parenthetically. Though the *OED* identifies no instances of the word “convulsion” that precede Sidney’s composition of the romance (the first example listed is from 1585), the term was, in fact, in use in the sixteenth century, almost exclusively in technical medical senses. The word signified “An involuntary contraction, stiffening, or ‘drawing up’ of a muscle, limb, etc.,” always with a sense of bodily violence.⁵⁰ Sidney begins the Book Five, then, by extending his anatomy of contentment, carried out primarily through insistent wordplay and compelling psychological profiles of his main characters, to a diagnosis of a discontented body politic convulsing and on the brink of collapse.⁵¹ Though contentation is aligned with pastoral from the first page forward, it is neither restricted to it nor, perhaps, fully realized within it. By his own standard and the standard of Arcadian contentation articulated in Sidney’s opening sentences, Pyrocles not only suffers well, but he suffers best.

The most enduring and effective form of contentment in the romance, and the one most readily aligned with the model of contented suffering sensationalized in Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments*, cannot be separated from an identification of contentment with romantic love. It is located finally not in hills and dales, but in a bedchamber and a courtroom. It belongs not to the shepherds or even the prince disguised as a shepherd, but to the only male character to

⁵⁰ *OED* “convulsion” n.2.a.

⁵¹ In this sense, Sidney seems to anticipate the use of “convulsion” to signify “Violent social or political agitation”; *OED* “convulsion” n.3 (first recorded usage 1643).

experience the fulfillment of erotic desire.⁵² For Sidney, the containment of desire proves compatible with the satisfaction of desire, as well as with a concept of Christian suffering. In the Second Eclogues, Dicus tells Dorus, “A quiet mind none but thyself can lend to thee” (140), but Pyrocles’s trajectory, culminating in his response to suffering in Book 5, proves that this is not entirely true. Instead, Pyrocles’s relationship with Philoclea is crucial to his contentedness, an affect that ultimately encompasses both an intimate, erotic contentment and a contented acceptance of imminent death. Through the machinations of romance, of course, Sidney ultimately spares his princes. Their pastoral passions result in royal weddings and legitimate heirs, but not before the narrator makes clear that the revived Basilius “still . . . dearly loved” Pyrocles, “though in a more virtuous kind” (416–17). The duke’s reformed love amounts to an appropriate final response to Pyrocles, whose own contentment conjoined love and virtue so effectively.

Romancing Contentment in the English Reformation

Although Sidney’s contemporaries and imitators also used pastoral to engage the Reformation discourse on contentment, he distinctively exploits the resources of romance to expand the ethical significance of contentment—to connect sex and suffering within his idiosyncratic affective ideal. Werth persuasively argues that “English romance is deeply embedded and engaged in the cultural milieu of the Reformation,” and Sidney plays a foundational role in this

⁵² Sidney does not devote nearly as much text to Philoclea in Book 5; consequently, there is not enough evidence to determine whether her consummated relationship with Pyrocles has similarly prepared her to endure adversity. In light of this gender imbalance, we might consider Lori Humphrey Newcomb’s remark that “Even granting Sidney’s claim that the romance was written for the Countess first and foremost, its confinement to an all-female coterie must have been brief indeed.” See *Reading Popular Romance in Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 39–40.

artistic engagement.⁵³ Moreover, Barbara Fuchs notes that romance literature “often measures excellence in terms of the capacity for suffering.”⁵⁴ Sidney responds to a romance tradition of both valorizing and sympathizing with suffering, and he adapts it to the circumstances of the English Reformation, in which Foxe’s enormously influential text had already set the standard for ethically excellent suffering.

For Sidney, though, the most important feature of romance was perhaps its precarious position in early modern thinking about literature’s moral usefulness. Though Roger Ascham may have been the most vocal English critic of romance immorality, he epitomizes a much broader and longstanding suspicion of such texts. Sidney, of course, defends the moral efficacy of vernacular fiction in *The Defence of Poesy*, claiming that “right poets . . . imitate to teach and delight,” thereby “mov[ing]” men to “virtuous action.”⁵⁵ Scholars have described the narrative delights of Sidney’s romance wanderings as serving just such didactic and civic purposes for the reader; Helen Moore, for example, states that “serious purposes of pleasure are . . . evident in Sir Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia*.”⁵⁶ I would add that while romance pleasures may have serious and ethical purposes for Sidney’s readers, romantic contentation has serious and ethical purposes for Sidney’s characters, or at least Pyrocles. In *The Old Arcadia*, Sidney taps into the potential moral subversiveness of romance to perform and portray ethical thinking more difficult than that encountered within the non-fictional genres of his day. Helen Hackett notes that Sidney does not

⁵³ Werth, *Fabulous Dark Cloister*, 4.

⁵⁴ Barbara Fuchs, *Romance*, New Critical Idiom (New York: Routledge, 2004), 63.

⁵⁵ Sir Phillip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy*, in *English Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 346 and 349.

⁵⁶ Helen Moore, “Romance,” in *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Malden: Blackwell, 2000), 322.

represent Philoclea as “an impure or fallen woman” after her night of passion with Pyrocles, and she infers a “relatively liberal view of female bodily intactness as not essential to virtue [that] recalls the Iberian romances.” Philoclea’s virginity may not be essential to her virtue in the text, but “the truth of their love” and its physical and verbal expression *is* essential to Pyrocles’s virtue, in a positive sense.⁵⁷ The pastoral romance resists a strict ethical schematizing, yet Sidney nevertheless encourages complex moral considerations that connect virtuous action with powerful and at times transgressive passions.⁵⁸

While Pyrocles’s contentment ultimately parallels the affect of exemplary Protestant martyrs, Sidney departs from contemporary reformers by taking desire—especially sexual desire—seriously. Other Renaissance authors would similarly represent Reformation contentment in terms of the difficulty of containing desire, but Sidney alone artistically imagines a sexual satisfaction serviceable to pious suffering. He uses romance to transform pastoral pleasure into Christian contentment.

⁵⁷ Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction*, 124.

⁵⁸ As Julianne Werlin writes, “If it is difficult to formulate the moral of the *Old Arcadia* as a neat proposition, it is because Sidney was not a moral philosopher—he was a poet.” See “Providence and Perspective in Sidney’s *Old Arcadia*,” *Studies in English Literature* 54 (2014): 26.

Chapter Three

Pastoral Contentment and Petrarchan Containment: Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* and *Faerie Queene* VI

In 1592, Gabriel Harvey inaugurated a critical tradition that has defined the study of Edmund Spenser's works to this very day: he called Spenser a malcontent. More specifically, Harvey wrote, "I must needs say, Mother-Hubbard in heat of choller, forgetting the pure sanguine of her sweete Faery Queene, wilfully over-shott her malcontented self."¹ Harvey associates a poetic persona featured in Spenser's works with the author's own (supposedly) discontented condition. Since then, scholars have interpreted Spenser's poetry based on biographical assumptions about the author's own misfortunes and "final disaffection."² This trend has been particularly pronounced in accounts of Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*. Although this book contains 11 instances of the word "content"—more than any other book of the poem—and five instances in canto ix alone, which begins Calidore's stay among the shepherds, critics continue to read it as profoundly embittered, disillusioned, and discontented, with Andrew Hadfield going so far as to classify it as a "pastoral tragedy."³ Such critics have historicized Book VI with reference to a

¹ Gabriel Harvey, *Four Letters, and Certaine Sonnets Especially Touching Robert Greene, and Other Parties, by Him Abused* (London, 1592), 7.

² Patrick Cheney, "Life," in *A Critical Companion to Spenser Studies*, ed. Bart van Es (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 25. Cheney charts the history of Spenserian biography and the way it narrates that "the Elizabethan system of politics and economics broke the greatest poetic heart since Chaucer" (26).

³ Andrew Hadfield, "The *Faerie Queene*, Books IV–VII," in *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*, ed. Andrew Hadfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 135. Richard Neuse sees Book VI as a culmination of

wide range of cultural factors, perhaps most importantly the colonization of Ireland, but their collective emphasis on Spenserian discontent has bypassed the poet's appropriation of the Reformation discourse on contentment.⁴ Like Sidney, Spenser engages this discourse through the pastoral mode, and he even shares Sidney's interest in contentment's ethical and amatory import. However, Spenser's treatment takes on an additional *literary* dimension, as he explores pastoral contentment's viability as a corrective to one of the most prominent issues of his own literary career: the powerful but potentially disruptive influence of Petrarchism.

"the bitter or dark comedy of the last three books," while Maria Philmus calls Book VI "the saddest of them all." Richard A. McCabe writes of Colin Clout's appearance in canto x in particular, "The political discontent of Spenserian pastoral is hereby infused into the heart of Spenserian epic." Katherine Little similarly emphasizes the "bleakness of the *Faerie Queene*'s pastoral episode." See Neuse, "Book VI as Conclusion to *The Faerie Queene*," *ELH* 35 (1968): 333; Philmus, "*The Faerie Queene* and Renaissance Poetics: Another Look at Book VI as 'Conclusion' to the Poem," *English Studies* 6 (1995): 515; McCabe, *Spenser's Monstrous Regiment: Elizabethan Ireland and the Poetics of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 233; Little, *Transforming Work: Early Modern Pastoral and Late Medieval Poetry* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 193.

⁴ On the Irish context of Book VI, see Julia Reinhard Lupton, "Home Making in Ireland: Virgil's Eclogue 1 and Book 6 of the *Faerie Queene*," *Spenser Studies* 8 (1987): 119–45; Anne Fogarty, "The Colonization of Language: Narrative Strategy in *A View of the Present State of Ireland* and *The Faerie Queene*, Book VI," in *Spenser and Ireland: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, ed. Patricia Coughlan and Nicholas Canny (Cork: Cork University Press, 1989), 75–108; Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser's Irish Experience: Wilde Fruit and Salvage Soyl* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), chapter 5; Joan Fitzpatrick, "Pastoral Idylls and Lawless Rebels: Sexual Politics in Books 5 and 6 of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 25 (1999): 87–111; and McCabe, *Spenser's Monstrous Regiment*, 232–51.

The tremendous importance of Petrarchism to Spenser's poetry has rightly received much scholarly attention.⁵ Although "Petrarchism" has proven to be an exceedingly flexible and even (at times) unwieldy category, I will primarily use the term to designate a species of violence underlying various interconnected aspects of Renaissance literary culture.⁶ Throughout Spenser's works, this violence comes to define the language, imagery, and stock situations of the Petrarchan literary tradition, as well as the model of desire that informs it. Cynthia Marshall has examined the Petrarchan penchant for "self-negation" and "psychic fracture," and she argues that the violent language of such poetry "replicates and prolongs the undoing of the ego or self, delivering jouissance through forms of wounding, penetrating, and dissolving and through

⁵ See Heather Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and its Counterdiscourses* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Lauren Silberman, *Transforming Desire: Erotic Knowledge in Books III and IV of The Faerie Queene* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Joseph Loewenstein, "Spenser's Retrography: Two Episodes in Post-Petrarchan Bibliography," in *Spenser's Life and the Subject of Biography*, ed. Judith H. Anderson, Donald Cheney, and David A. Richardson (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 99–130; and Joseph Campana, *The Pain of Reformation: Spenser, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Masculinity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 163–203. For specific discussions of relevant moments of Petrarchism in Book VI, see below.

⁶ Part of the terminological difficulty arises from Petrarch's own conflicting self-presentation and complex model of a literary career, which was variously interpreted by commentators and other authors. See William Kennedy, *Authorizing Petrarch* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); and "Versions of a Career: Petrarch and His Renaissance Commentators," in *European Literary Careers: The Author from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Patrick Cheney and Frederick A. de Armas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 156; Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire*, 5; and Karl Enekel and Jay Papy, "Introduction: Towards a New Approach of Petrarch's Reception in the Renaissance—the 'Independent Reader,'" in *Petrarch and His Readers in the Renaissance*, ed. Karl A. E. Enekel and Jan Papy (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2006), 1–12.

images of bodies in states of undoing.”⁷ Petrarchan poets repeatedly exhibit an orgasmic incapacity for self-containment that subsequently produces pleasure for the reader by allowing them to experience vicariously this “shattering of the self.” However, Marshall identifies Spenser as an outlier among Renaissance authors, based on the romantic fulfillment that closes his 1595 marriage volume, which suggests the possibility that he may be more wary of this poetic pleasure than many of his contemporaries.⁸ As critics demonstrate, Spenser attempts to resist the psychic, linguistic violence of Petrarchism—however potentially pleasing. In this chapter, I shall show that he represents this struggle within his poetry, adapting period concepts of contentment in the process.⁹ More specifically, I suggest that Spenser counters the Petrarchan pleasures of self-shattering, the jouissance of sadomasochism exhibited in Elizabethan erotic poetry, with a pastoral contentment of self-fortification.

As we have seen, contentment was a prominent Protestant ethical and emotional principle governing the relationship between self and world in conjunction with individual acts of affective containment.¹⁰ While the pastoral mode was ripe for fashioning such contentment, the

⁷ Cynthia Marshall, *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 2, 1, and 74. See also Christine Hutchins, “English Anti-Petrarchism: Imbalance and Excess in ‘the Englishe straine’ of the Sonnet,” *Studies in Philology* 109 (2012): 552–80.

⁸ Marshall, *The Shattering of the Self*, book title, 70.

⁹ Campana encourages critics to read along “a middle ground between self-mastering masculinity and obliterated masculinity or, to borrow terms from Stephen Greenblatt and Cynthia Marshall, a middle ground between masterful ‘self-fashioning’ and obliterating ‘self-shattering’” (*Pain of Reformation*, 11).

¹⁰ Contentment overlaps in physiological import with what Nathaniel Smith, following Michael Schoenfeldt, has recently described as Spenser’s attempt to envision artistically “a perfect osmosis between the body and its environment.” In particular, Smith sees Scudamour as a problematically over-permeable body and, by extension, a

Petrarchan mode brought to bear a different set of artistic conventions in which the boundaries of desire and the relationship between self and other were far more problematic. For Spenser, Petrarchan discontent corresponds with a failure to contain oneself, but he represents pastoral contentment as a means to fortify selfhood and to contain Petrarchan excess.

Spenser aims to revise Petrarchism and its place in his own corpus, rather than to reject it outright, and pastoral contentment plays an important role in this revisionary process.¹¹ Though the two literary modes commingle and compete throughout Spenser's poetic corpus, Book VI comprises his most extensive representation of the relationship between Petrarchan failures of self-containment and a pastoral contentment of self-fortification. Spenser's meta-literary critiques of Petrarchism in the second half of Book VI repeatedly foreground the mode's threats to the constitution of the self—threats most evident in the narratives of Mirabella and Serena. These episodes, and the Hermit's prescription of self-containment that precedes them, all lead up to Spenser's representation of contentment in the pastoral cantos in which he allegorizes the containment of Petrarchism with pastoral. As we shall see, Spenser seeks to contain dangerous Petrarchan influences with pastoral contentment in Book VI through Calidore's conversation with Melibee and courtship of Pastorella.¹² By evaluating Calidore's actions according to a

figure for competing understandings of embodiment, emotions, and interiority in early modern England. See "Shielded Subjects and Dreams of Permeability: Fashioning Scudamour in *The Faerie Queene*," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 34 (2008): 71–85, esp. 77.

¹¹ According to Barbara Estrin, Petrarch's own texts anticipate a correction of Petrarchism. See *Laura: Uncovering Gender and Genre in Wyatt, Donne, and Marvell* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 12.

¹² For a corresponding argument on Spenser's characterization of Belpheobe within the "project of tempering Italian [Ariostan] influences with Virgilian restraint," see John Watkins, *The Specter of Dido: Spenser and Virgilian Epic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 114.

standard of contentment, I am not merely suggesting that the knight's pastoral sojourn is an educative process or a refining of his virtue of courtesy, as many critics have asserted; rather, I contend that Spenser prominently features contentment in the interplay between two literary modes.¹³ While decades of criticism have discussed Spenser's poetry in relation to "the transformation of power relations into erotic relations," I examine the erotic relation between Calidore and Pastorella in the final cantos of the 1596 *Faerie Queene* as a figuration for the relationship between literary modes in Spenser's own career.¹⁴

Accordingly, this chapter will use the intertwined principles of contentment and containment as the primary lens for interpreting pastoral and Petrarchism in Spenser's poetry. In the first section, I will discuss Colin Clout's Petrarchan self-shattering in *The Shepheardes Calender* as a crisis of pastoral contentment in order to contextualize the analysis of *Faerie Queene* VI. In the next section, I will show how Spenser's representations of the Hermit,

¹³ Early on, J. C. Maxwell wrote, "Spenser was aware that the Pastorella episode was equivocal—both a truancy and an exemplification of the central virtue of the book." See "The Truancy of Calidore," *ELH* 19 (1952): 146. In spite of the poem's equivocations, critics have long had much to say about the efficacy of Calidore's pastoral experiences: Donald Cheney, *Spenser's Image of Nature: Wild Man and Shepherd in "The Faerie Queene,"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 65; Arnold Williams, *Flower on a Lowly Stalk: The Sixth Book of the Faerie Queene* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967), 11; Humphrey Tonkin, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral: Book Six of the Faerie Queene* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 123; Alice Fox Blich, "Proserpina Preserved: Book VI of the *Faerie Queen*," *Studies in English Literature* 13 (1973): 28; Richard Mallette, *Spenser, Milton, and Renaissance Pastoral* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1981), 188; Theresa Krier, *Gazing on Secret Sights: Spenser, Classical Imitation, and the Decorums of Vision* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 237–39; and Douglas Northrop, "The Uncertainty of Courtesy in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*," *Spenser Studies* 14 (2000): 215–32.

¹⁴ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, 2005), 169.

Mirabella, and Serena in cantos vi through viii introduce an urgent need for self-containment, especially in the face of the pervasive Petrarchism that endangers it. In the final section, I will examine the continuation of Calidore's narrative from canto ix onward. Contrary to influential readings of Book VI, I maintain that the conclusion of Calidore's narrative should be read as continuous with the immediately preceding cantos and their long-acknowledged critiques of sixteenth-century Petrarchan poetics.¹⁵ Therefore, I will analyze Calidore's entrance into Melibee's shepherd community and, in particular, his courtship of Pastorella as an allegory of literary modes, a fictive representation of the author's attempt to contain Petrarchism with pastoral contentment. Theresa Krier argues that "Spenser uses mixed genre to explore disappointment and disenchantment" in the 1596 *Faerie Queene*, but I maintain that, in Book VI's mixing of Petrarchan and pastoral modes, contentment rather than discontent is at stake.¹⁶ In rewriting the relationship between Petrarchism and pastoral from the 1579 *Calender*, Spenser casts contentment as an essential value for writing in the Western literary tradition.

¹⁵ The tendency to isolate the pastoral cantos from the preceding narrative and allegory is apparent in both monographs on Book VI: Williams, *Flower on a Lowly Stalk*, 17; and Tonkin, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral*, 112. See also Patricia Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 101–12. Maxwell labels the entire book's structure "episodic" ("The Truancy of Calidore," 143–44). Like Jacqueline Miller, I contend that the "pastoral interlude . . . actually continues and in fact intensifies what has come before." Nonetheless, while Miller identifies an anatomy of "the falseness and fairness of the language of allegory," I see Calidore's relationship with Pastorella and Melibee's pastoral sermonizing as Spenser's allegorical engagement with the problems of Petrarchism outlined in the earlier cantos. See "The Courtly Figure: Spenser's Anatomy of Allegory," *Studies in English Literature* 31 (1991): 58–59, 52.

¹⁶ Theresa Krier, "The *Faerie Queene* (1596)" in *Critical Companion*, ed. van Es, 195.

Discontent and the Shattered Self: Petrarchan Pastoral in *The Shepheardes Calender*

While critics of *The Shepheardes Calender* have discussed Colin Clout's Petrarchan love-melancholy as a form of self-absorption, we should also consider the extent to which his sense of self constantly threatens to break down and disperse as a result of discontent.¹⁷ Colin may be the "Person" under whom "the Author selfe is shadowed" (Epistle 133–34), but that person is in serious danger of division and dissolution.¹⁸ Spenser represents Colin Clout's Petrarchan plight as a failure of self-containment strictly opposed to the contentment articulated most clearly within the eclogues by Hobbinol, the poet's primary mouthpiece for traditional pastoral values. Spenser does not simply compose a pastoral poem in the Petrarchan mode, as Sannazaro had done before and as many English authors would do after.¹⁹ Rather, Spenser exploits the tensions between the two modes and puts them in competition with each other—a competition that Petrarchism, in this pastoral at least, wins at the cost of contentment.

¹⁷ See Isabel G. MacCaffrey, "Allegory and Pastoral in *The Shepheardes Calender*," in *Critical Essays on Spenser from ELH* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970): 123; Patrick Cullen, *Spenser, Marvell, and Renaissance Pastoral* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 1970), 97–98; and Richard Neuse, "Milton and Spenser: The Virgilian Triad Revisited," *ELH* 45 (1978): 612–13. On Colin's petulance, see Harry Berger, *Revisionary Play: Studies in the Spenserian Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 331. On Colin's "Petrarchan impasse," see Clare R. Kinney, "Marginal Presence, Lyric Resonance, Epic Absence: *Troilus and Criseyde* and/in *The Shepheardes Calender*," *Spenser Studies* 18 (2003): 25.

¹⁸ All citations from *The Faerie Queene* and the *Letter to Raleigh* come from the rev. 2nd ed. of A. C. Hamilton (Harlow, London, and New York: Pearson, 2007), while citations to *The Shepheardes Calender* and other works by Spenser come from *The Shorter Poems*, ed. Richard A. McCabe (London: Penguin, 1999).

¹⁹ See Paul Alpers, "What is Pastoral?" *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1982): 456.

Spenser establishes Colin's discontent and insufficiently contained selfhood in the very first eclogue. Richard McCabe, who links Colin to "the disaffected shepherd Melibeeus rather than the secure and contented Tityrus," describes "the isolation of the central figure whose obsessive self-absorption is conveyed through pathetic fallacy."²⁰ But however fallacious Colin's projection of pathos may be, it suggests an experience of self as radically dispersed.²¹ Colin's rejection by Rosalind, the failure of his Petrarchan relationship—or, more accurately, his realization of the Petrarchan paradigm of unrequited love—has led to a perversion of the relational principle of contentment. Rather than being bounded by what he has, Colin's self recognizes no boundaries. E.K.'s headnote to *Januarye* prepares us for this representation: "fynding himselfe robbed of all former pleasaunce and delights, hee breaketh his Pipe in peeces, and casteth him selfe to the ground" (*Jan arg*). The remark matches quite closely Spenser's own line of verse: "So broke his oaten pype, and downe dyd lye" (*Jan 72*). However, E.K.'s use of the verb "cast" carries with it the possible meaning of "divide or 'throw' into divisions"—an admittedly rare usage before 1579—in addition to the sense of throwing oneself—a reflexive usage of the verb which the *Oxford English Dictionary* designates as itself "not colloq." and for which it provides only two examples before 1600.²² With or without the lexical suggestion of

²⁰ McCabe, ed., *The Shorter Poems*, 520.

²¹ Though the pathetic fallacy certainly existed in the early modern period, that existence is complicated by a more fluid understanding of environment and embodiment and less proprietary concepts of emotions. For these issues in Spenser, see Gail Kern Paster, "Becoming the Landscape: The Ecology of Passions in the Legend of Temperance," in *Environment and Embodiment in Early Modern England*, ed. Mary Floyd-Wilson and Garrett Sullivan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 137–52.

²² *OED* 'cast' v, VIII.46.a and I.5.a respectively.

division, the two parallel actions reflect on each other.²³ At the same time that Colin's discontent has led to a fractured and redistributed self, he has divulged his body of many of its contents. Colin's "drizling teares descend" (41) like the "raine" of "teares" from the "boughes" of "naked trees" (31–35), and his constant sighs have "blowne away, and blasted" the "blossome" that his "braunch of youth did beare" (39–40).²⁴ These combined processes of narcissistic projection and uncontrollable emptying leave Colin, like his pipe, in a state of fissure. Spenser writes that the "pensife boy" leads his sheep home "halfe in despight," not because Colin's other half is jovial or even ambivalent, but because he can no longer be meaningfully described as a stable, unified whole (76, emphasis added). The discontented shepherd-poet has been reduced to half a self, with the other half sighed out, sobbed out, and otherwise shattered across the pastoral landscape.

When we consider the Petrarchan tenor of the *Calender* and its opening representation of Colin's crisis, it is perhaps unsurprising that contentment figures so scarcely in the eclogues, with variants of the word "content" appearing only four times. Hobbinol, known pastoral stand-in for Gabriel Harvey, becomes the *Calender's* foremost spokesperson of contentment, supplying two of the four uses of the word and, more importantly, providing the fullest articulations of the concept. The contrast between Colin and Hobbinol is particularly telling, since Hobbinol is also an unrequited lover of sorts. As Colin explains in *Januarye*, he rejects his friend's "dayly suit" and "disdaine[s]" his "clownish gifts and curtsies": "Ah foolish *Hobbinol*, thy gyfts bene vayne:

²³ Marissa Cull calls the shattering of the pipe "an appropriate symbolic fragmentation of his own poetic identity." See "'Lo Collin, here the place': Locating the World of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calender*," *Comitatus* 41 (2010): 171.

²⁴ On Colin's experience as one of "waste," see Nancy Jo Hoffman, *Spenser's Pastorals: "The Shepherd's Calendar" and "Colin Clout"* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 47.

/ Colin them giues to *Rosalind* againe” (56–60). By first supplying the gifts that Colin will then pass on to Rosalind, Hobbinol actually initiates the sequence of erotic exchange. However, unlike Colin’s markedly Petrarchan heterosexual frustrations, Hobbinol’s unsuccessful suit more closely resembles the homoeroticism of classical pastoral. Hobbinol is both implicated in and distinguished from the *Calender*’s Petrarchism, and, as a result, his failures in love lack the devastating effects that Colin experiences. Although Thenot in *Aprill* claims that Hobbinol “lament[s]” his state (17), Hobbinol describes himself as “content” only a few lines later when he introduces Colin’s political panegyric: “Contented I: then will I singe his laye, / Of fayre *Elisa*, Queene of shepherdes all: / Which once he made, as by a spring he laye, / And tuned it vnto the Waters fall” (33–36). Underscored by the mention of Spenser’s metapoetic signature of the waterfall in the stanza’s concluding line, Hobbinol’s contentedness marks an appropriate precondition for pastoral song.²⁵ Though disappointed in love, Hobbinol maintains a state of contentment, and therefore he does not jeopardize his relationship to pastoral, as Colin with his unrequited love for Rosalind clearly does.

In *September* Hobbinol again invokes contentment to the downtrodden Diggon Davie, whose misfortunes have led to a loss of his very identity; “The iolly shepheard that was of yore” no longer exists (26). Hobbinol advises, “Content who liues with tryed state, / Neede feare no change of frowning fate: / But who will seeke for vnknowne gayne, / Oft liues by losse, and leaues with payne” (70–73). Hobbinol’s more developed account of content here and throughout the eclogue is consonant with Reformation wisdom. Hobbinol’s warning against the pursuit of

²⁵ On the waterfall as Spenser’s signature, acknowledged by many of his poetic contemporaries and successors, see John Hollander, *Melodious Guile: Fictive Patterns in Poetic Language* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 176.

“vnknowne gayne,” together with Diggon’s admission of “vayne desyre” for wealth, identify the initial problem as one of covetousness, which Jean de L’Espine singles out as the principal passion opposed to contentment. Strikingly, Diggon and L’Espine both describe such discontent using the same Aesopian fable: “the Dogge” that “lost . . . the flesh in his mouth” (61).²⁶ In fact, *September* repeatedly contrasts contentment with transgressions of appetite, from the wicked shepherds who “the fat from their beardes doen lick” to the “rauenous” wolf that “would have devoured both hidder and shidder” if only “his wesand bene a little widder” (123, 148, 210–11). The foreign shepherds, who are “full of couetise,” also “casten to compasse many wrong emprise” (82–83). The verb “compasse” suggests that these shepherds “contrive or plot to accomplish” unsavory enterprises, but also that they seek to “encompass” these vices within themselves.²⁷ Rather than bounding their desires, such shepherds attempt to extend themselves beyond the strictures of ethical actions and, as E.K. suggests, the proper limits of their religious authority. Hobbinol advocates a course of action that allows the individual to “endure” the buffets of fortune and the cruelty of men, but his position is a surprisingly flexible one. In the end, it is Hobbinol who allows that “We bene of fleshe, men as other be” and who affirms the need for “chaungeable rest” (238, 240). Ultimately, Hobbinol’s model of contentment is not one

²⁶ Jean de L’Espine, *A Very Excellent and Learned Discourse, Touching the Tranquilitie and Contentation of the Minde: Conteyning Sundry Notable Instructions, and Firme Consolations, Most Necessarie for All Sortes of Afflicted Persons in These Latter Dayes*, trans. Edward Smyth (London, 1592), 6v.

²⁷ McCabe, *The Shorter Poems*, 555. *OED* “compass” v, III. See also the discussion of covetousness in Thomas Gataker, *True Contentment in the Gaine of Godlines, with Its Self-Sufficiencie A Meditation on 1. Timoth. 6. 6* (London, 1620), 59–60 (see Chapter 1 of this dissertation).

of stasis, but of sustainability. But whatever the merits of Hobbinol's arguments, they do not have the intended effect on Diggon, nor do they solve the Petrarchan predicament of Colin.²⁸

In the *Calender*, the Petrarchan erotics of self-shattering seemingly wins out over a pastoral poetics of contentment. To a certain extent, Colin's failures are Spenser's successes, and the *Calender* concludes not with Colin's series of adieus, but with Immerito's triumphant Epilogue.²⁹ Even though this second Chaucerian envoy immediately follows E.K.'s glosses, the poem makes no reference to Colin's discontented renunciation of poetry, and the aspiring Immerito eventually progresses to other modes and genres.³⁰ The problems with Petrarchism are, for the moment, safely contained within the pastoral form of the eclogues, but this has come at the cost of contentment. At a later stage in his literary career, Spenser will foreground a resurgent pastoral in his epic poem to reconsider whether contentment might be too valuable to give up—and whether the dangers of Petrarchism may be even more severe than he had formerly realized.

²⁸ Berger calls *September* “the eclogue most directly concerned with the failure of communication” (*Revisionary Play*, 309), while MacCaffrey considers it the “darkest eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender*” (“Allegory and Pastoral,” 126). For a defense of Hobbinol in this and other eclogues, see Nancy Lindheim, *The Virgilian Pastoral Tradition: From the Renaissance to the Modern Era* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2005), 32.

²⁹ On the distinction between Colin and Immerito, see David Lee Miller, “Authorship, Anonymity, and *The Shepheardes Calender*,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 40 (1979): 233–36; Berger, *Revisionary Play*, 331, 385; Lynn Staley Johnson, *The Shepheardes Calender: An Introduction* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 7–9; Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 236–38, 242; and Kreg Segall, “Skeltonic Anxiety and Ruminant in *The Shepheardes Calender*,” *Studies in English Literature* 47 (2007): 37.

³⁰ On mitigating Colin's despair in *December*, see Miller, “Authorship, Anonymity,” 226; and Segall, “Skeltonic Anxiety,” 49–50. On Spenser's “pastoral of progression,” see Patrick Cheney, “Spenser's Pastorals,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*, ed. Hadfield, 84–97.

Petrarchan Crises of Containment in *Faerie Queene* VI

Nearly two decades after the publication of *The Shepheardes Calender*, Spenser raises issues of contentment and containment in the final completed book of *The Faerie Queene*, making them central to an extended meta-literary fiction that ultimately involves both the Petrarchan and pastoral modes. The meta-poetic nature of Book VI has received considerable critical attention, with Patricia Parker calling the Legend of Courtesy “a highly literary legend” and Humphrey Tonkin a “poem talking about itself.”³¹ In particular, scholars have recognized Spenser’s scrutiny of Petrarchan conventions in cantos vii and viii, which together offer a critique of Elizabethan erotic poetics. Heather Dubrow, for example, describes Mirabella and Serena—the one beset by the allegorical monsters Disdain and Scorn, the other nearly sacrificed by the cannibalistic “saluage nation” (viii.35.2)—as complementary characters, “for the Petrarchan victimizer who scorns her lovers is the alter ego of the Petrarchan victim who represents as well the dangers of idolatry in the religion of love.”³² However, Spenser bookends the narratives of Mirabella and Serena with the Hermit’s prescription of self-containment in canto vi and Calidore’s entrance into Melibee’s pastoral community beginning in canto ix. In this way, Spenser connects the

³¹ Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, 10; and Tonkin, *Spenser’s Courteous Pastoral*, 142. See also John D. Bernard, *Ceremonies of Innocence: Pastoralism in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 141; Elizabeth Jane Bellamy, “Colin and Orphic Interpretation: Reading NeoPlatonically on Spenser’s Acidale,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 27 (1990): 172; Derek B. Alwes, “‘Who Knowes Not Colin Clout?’: Spenser’s Self-Advertisement in ‘The Faerie Queene’ Book 6,” *Modern Philology* 88 (1990): 30; Robert E. Stillman, “Spenserian Autonomy and the Trial of New Historicism: Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 22 (1992): 299–314; and McCabe, *Monstrous Regiment*, 233.

³² Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire*, 259. See also Berger, *Revisionary Play*, 226; and Richard Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 188.

principal problems of Petrarchism with an inability to contain oneself and a crisis of contentment. Only in the final cantos, however, will he demonstrate how the pastoral mode might offer a solution to these problems.

Spenser begins canto vi with a Hermit's prescription of contentment as a remedy for the wounds inflicted by the Blatant Beast. John Bernard calls this remedy "too vague to be useful," but it gestures toward a widespread Reformation discourse that, as we saw in Chapter 1, could be quite specific in its characterization of contentment and its prescriptions for attaining that condition.³³ Spenser's discussion in these stanzas, which conclude with the first description of Mirabella, reflect what Kenneth Gross calls "a crucially ambiguous stance towards inside and outside, private and public."³⁴ Initially, Spenser stresses that the bodily wounds are merely signs and symptoms of the inward damage that the Blatant Beast and "infamy" have wrought upon Serena and Timias (vi.1.3). When the Hermit realizes that the Beast's victims are "past helpe of surgery," Spenser registers the nature of the affliction with an insistent vocabulary of inwardness: "He found that they [the wounds] had festred priuily, / And ranckling inward with vnruely stounds, / The inner parts now gan to putrify" (5.2–4). To "rule the stubborn rage of passion blinde" (8), the Hermit provides "counsell to the minde" (9) and tells his patients that the only remedy, like the illness itself, lies "in your selfe" (7.1). The Hermit's prescription, however,

³³ John D. Bernard, *Spenser Encyclopedia* s.v. "hermits." Mallette calls the Hermit's counsel a "secular homily" in which "God is not acknowledged, even obliquely, as the source of healing" and which "posits a view of human freedom nowhere on the continuum of Reformation . . . judgments about the relation of the individual will to providence" (*Spenser and the Discourses*, 184, 186). Nevertheless, the advice is remarkably consonant with Reformation discourses of contentment.

³⁴ Kenneth Gross, "Reflections on the Blatant Beast," *Spenser Studies* 13 (1999): 109.

consists of ways to moderate their relationship to the outside world. In effect, the Hermit tells Serena and Timias that they must learn to be content:

First learne your outward sences to refraine

From things, that stirre vp fraile affection;

Your eies, your eares, your tongue, your talk restraine

From that they most affect, and in due termes containe. (7.6–9)

The Hermit's instructions invoke the same language of boundaries and boundedness that Reformers use to theorize contentment. To heal the inner contents of the self, the wounded need to exercise their "outward sences" to "containe" their "affection" toward external goods (and evils). The notion that Serena's and Timias's desires have led them to transgress the proper boundaries of the self is anticipated by Spenser's earlier remark that the Hermit could apply "sage counsell" that "could enforme, and them reduce aright, / And all the passions heale, which wound the weaker spright" (3.7–9). A. C. Hamilton glosses "enforme" and "reduce" as "instruct" and "lead back," respectively, but the former word also means "form, shape, . . . put into proper form or order," while the latter has the physical sense of "contract . . . confine."³⁵ The Hermit seeks to re-form his sickly auditors, using his counsel to confine them and teaching them to contain themselves. The Hermit's closing prescription, including the recommendation to "Abstaine from pleasure, . . . / Subdue desire, . . . / [and] Vse scanted diet" (14.5–7), constitutes an ongoing navigation of self and world, internal and external.

Moreover, the elderly knight-turned-hermit through which the poet invokes a psychophysiology of contentment is not only a moral exemplar and conventional character of

³⁵ Hamilton, ed., *The Faerie Queene* VI.vi.3.8n. *OED* "inform" v, II.6.a and "reduce" v2, I.1. The *OED* definition for "inform" provides an example from Spenser's Garden of Adonis.

chivalric romance, but also an author-figure, who recalls Spenser's own professed practices. Consequently, Spenser presents contentment and containment as literary principles, in addition to emotional and ethical ones. When early modern medicine and faery pharmaceuticals fail him, the Hermit uses "the art of words," which he "knew wondrous well," in order to "frame" his "fit speeches" (6.2–3). The Hermit's artful framing of his speech precipitates the formation of his audience, who he hopes to "enforme" and "reduce aright." In the *Letter to Raleigh*, Spenser similarly describes himself as having "fashioned" *The Faerie Queene* in order "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline" (7–8).³⁶ For both the Hermit and Spenser, art represents an ability to make something with words—whether "fit speeches" or a "continued Allegory" (*Letter to Raleigh* 4)—in order to remake readers and listeners. Furthermore, the methods of Spenser and his character reflect broader early modern understandings of poetry as an instrument to manipulate emotional responses for moral ends. In the *Letter*, Spenser explains the use of his "darke conceit" as a means of "pleasing" his readers and producing a "delight" that will encourage them to continue reading (4, 9, 10).³⁷ The Hermit, too, applies his "art of words" for the emotional and moral education of his audience. While Spenser in the *Letter to Raleigh* seems most concerned with provoking pleasure with appropriate

³⁶ However, Corey McEleney argues that the poetic project suggested in the *Letter to Raleigh* does not apply to Book VI. Similarly, Grogan claims, "Spenser's reformatory didactic poetics, as enshrined in the *Letter to Raleigh*, runs aground on the palliative poetics of courtesy of Book VI." See McEleney, "Spenser's Unhappy Ends: The Legend of Courtesy and the Pleasure of the Text," *ELH* 79 (2012): 817–18; and Grogan, *Exemplary Spenser: Visual and Poetic Pedagogy in The Faerie Queene* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 23.

³⁷ On the similarities and differences between Sidneyan and Spenserian didactic poetics, see S. K. Heninger, Jr., *Sidney and Spenser: The Poet as Maker* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989); and Grogan, *Exemplary Spenser*, 3–8, 15–16, and 114–15.

objects of delight, the Hermit's counsel centers on the complementary lesson of emotional moderation. The narratives of the following cantos provide an expanded gloss on the Hermit's prescriptive poetics, as Spenser situates the wounds of the slanderous Beast among problems of Petrarchism and identifies contentment as a defining feature of Melibee's pastoral community.³⁸

The fullest realization of the cruel, willful Petrarchan mistress in Book VI, and perhaps in the entire *Faerie Queene*, Mirabella opposes the Reformation ideal of contented containment articulated by Spenser's Hermit.³⁹ While the Hermit had advised his patient to "bridle loose delight," the young Mirabella seeks only to "loue her owne delight" (VI.vii.30.9). The Hermit had stressed the importance of individual willpower in curing the wounds of the Blatant Beast, but the Petrarchan beloved perverts these qualities into a radical narcissism. The Hermit had hoped to "reduce" Timias and Serena, but Mirabella "*grew* proud and insolent" in self-love (29.1, emphasis added): "She was borne free; not bound to any wight, / And so would euer liue" (30.8–9). Because the "Ladie of her libertie" will not be "bound" (31.5), she recognizes no boundaries. Male attention inflates Mirabella's ego, until she boasts of her beauty's "soueraine might" and the power of her gaze—technically, just the "twinkle of her eye"—to "saue, or spill, whom she would hight" (31.6–8). At her most egregious, Mirabella renders irrelevant the praise of her admiring males, who "languish long in lifeconsuming smart, / And at the last through dreary dolour die" (31.3–4). Mirabella needs no idolaters, as she quite effectively idolizes herself, with stanza 31's description of her lethal, scornful beauty ending, "What could the Gods doe more, but doe it more aright?" (9).

³⁸ On the Hermit's advice as widely applicable throughout Book VI, see Stanley Stewart, "Sir Calidore and 'Closure,'" *Studies in English Literature* 24 (1984): 74.

³⁹ See Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses*, 189.

Unfortunately for Mirabella, the gods answer this rhetorical question, and their punishment provides the sharpest image of her condition as one opposed to content. When Arthur asks about her, she replies:

Here in this bottle . . .

I put the teares of my contrition,

Till to the brim I haue it full defrayd:

And in this bag which I behinde me don,

I put repentaunce for things past and gon.

Yet is the bottle leake, and bag so torne,

That all which I put in, fals out anon;

And is behinde me trodden downe of *Scorne*,

Who mocketh all my paine, and laughs the more I mourn. (viii.24)

Mirabella is sentenced to place her tears and repentance into the bottle and bag, respectively, emptying herself into containers of her sincere penance. However, just as she was ever unwilling to contain herself, the vessels cannot hold the contents of her “contrition.” The same woman who once reveled in her ability to “spill, whom she would,” and would not be “bound,” now must watch as her tears spill out of the leaky bottle and as the bag behind her fails to retain the objects of her repentance. Quite literally, her penance cannot be fulfilled. Thomas Gataker uses very similar imagery to describe the experience of discontent, “when a mans minde is [not] stayed”: “Till that be, *all is put* (as the Prophet speaketh in another case) *into a broken bag*, that will hold nothing, or *into a bottomless barrell*, as the prouerbe is, that is neuer a whit the fuller for all that is put in.”⁴⁰ Though not published until 1620, Gataker’s meditation includes an impressive

⁴⁰ Gataker, *True Contentment*, 51.

marginal apparatus citing earlier sources, including the Bible, classical texts, and the Church fathers. The reference to “the Prophet” is glossed with a citation to the book of Haggai, which in the Geneva Bible translation reads, “ye drinke, but ye are not filled; . . . he that earneth wages, putteth the wages into a broken bag.”⁴¹ Hamilton identifies the biblical antecedent to Mirabella’s penance in Psalm 56:8 rather than Haggai 1:6, but regardless of what particular passage the poet may have had in mind, both Spenser and Gataker engage a body of Judeo-Christian thought that represents transgressions of desire as failures of containment.

In the depiction of Serena and the cannibalistic salvage nation, Spenser builds upon the meta-literary Mirabella episode by interrogating the violent Petrarchan pleasures opposed to a contentment of self-fortification.⁴² The poet presents the victimization of Serena through a horrifying parody of the blazon, with the cannibals gazing at “Her yuorie necke, her alablaster brest, / Her paps,” and so on (42.1–2).⁴³ Spenser lays bare the savagery behind this artistic

⁴¹ Geneva Bible, 1560, Haggai 1:6.

⁴² D. Cheney says the cannibals that assault Serena combine “primitivism” and “Petrarchism” (*Spenser’s Image of Nature*, 116). Alwes writes, “Spenser uses the perversely literal Petrarchism of the cannibals to represent the crowd of courtly versifiers, whose fulsome praise of Queen Elizabeth serves no ulterior social purpose but is purely mercenary” (“Spenser’s Self-Advertisement,” 36). Hadfield takes this further and sees Spenser turning the Petrarchism of Elizabethan court culture against the queen herself on behalf of English colonial subjects (*Spenser’s Irish Experience*, 180). See also George Rowe, “Privacy, Vision, and Gender in Spenser’s Legend of Courtesy,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 50 (1989): 322–24; Jonathan Crewe, “Spenser’s Salvage Petrarchanism: *Pensées Sauvages* in *The Faerie Queene*,” *Bucknell Review* 35 (1992): 89–103; and Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire*, 259–60.

⁴³ See Linda Gregerson, *The Reformation of the Subject: Spenser, Milton, and the English Protestant Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 137–39. On Petrarchan idolatry as undergirded by an Ovidian rhetoric of the body, see Lynn Enterline, *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), chapter 3.

itemization of the female. As Nancy Vickers influentially explains, the Petrarchan division of the beautiful female body—itsself derived from Ovid’s tale of Actaeon and Diana in the *Metamorphoses*—translates the tumultuous emotional experiences of the lover-poet into the corporeal scattering of the beloved.⁴⁴ Although Marshall disagrees with Vickers about the extent to which the poet displaces rather than indulges in an “unsettling of the self,” both critics identify a Petrarchan assault on identity meant to induce pleasure.⁴⁵ By presenting canto viii’s blazon from the perspective of the discourteous cannibals, though, Spenser compels his readers to view this aesthetic and erotic pleasure with suspicion, even as we may participate in that pleasure.

If the Petrarchan problems represented in cantos vii and viii were Book VI’s final treatment of the subject, it might be fair to say that Spenser sought chiefly to undermine the Hermit’s advice of self-containment through counter-examples. Like *The Shepheardes Calender*, Book VI would present contentment buckling under the pressures and pleasures of Petrarchism at the cost of great violence to the self. However, Spenser continues his engagement with Petrarchism in the pastoral cantos, where he actualizes and allegorizes contentment. In matters of disdain and dismemberment, Spenser adapts pastoral contentment into a corrective to violent, destabilizing Petrarchism.

Containing Petrarchism with Pastoral: Allegory and Contentment in Calidore’s Courtship

Although Spenser repeatedly scrutinizes Petrarchism in the cantos preceding Calidore’s pastoral sojourn, and though the generic implications of Pastorella’s name are almost too obvious to bear mention, scholars have not examined Calidore’s courtship of Pastorella as an extended interplay

⁴⁴ Nancy Vickers, “Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme,” *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1981): 265–79.

⁴⁵ Marshall, *The Shattering of the Self*, 68.

between the Petrarchan and pastoral modes.⁴⁶ Many critics add Calidore's pursuit of Pastorella to their long lists of the knight's character flaws and allegorical shortcomings.⁴⁷ Other critics grant that Pastorella plays a role in Calidore's moral education, but they do not connect these aspects of Book VI to the meta-literary concerns about Petrarchism, even as they note verbal or thematic echoes across the cantos.⁴⁸ Spenser does not simply dismiss his own concerns with the troubling figures, language, and effects of Elizabethan erotic poetry that occupy much of the second half of Book VI. Instead, through pastoral, he returns to contented self-fortification in order to address

⁴⁶ In addition to the link between Pastorella and "pastoral," several critics have had more specific insights into the significance of her name. See Michael O'Connell, *Mirror and Veil: The Historical Dimension of Spenser's Faerie Queene* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 173; Helen Cooper, *Pastoral: Mediaeval into Renaissance* (Ipswich: Brewer, 1977), 164; and Patrick Cheney, "Perdita, Pastorella, and the Romance of Literary Form: Shakespeare's Counter-Spenserian Authorship," in *Spenser and Shakespeare: Attractive Opposites*, ed. J. B. Lethbridge (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 121–42.

⁴⁷ For a recent catalogue of Calidore critiques, see Elizabeth Jane Bellamy, "The Faerie Queene (1596)," in *The Oxford Handbook of Edmund Spenser*, ed. Richard A. McCabe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 286–87. See also Neuse, "Book VI as Conclusion," 347–50; Lila Geller, "Spenser's Theory of Nobility in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*," *English Literary Renaissance* 5 (1975): 56; Harry Rusche, "The Lesson of Calidore's Truancy," *Studies in Philology* 76 (1979): 149–61; Grogan, *Exemplary Spenser*, 137–75; and McEleney, "Spenser's Unhappy Ends," 799. However, on Calidore's ethical ambiguity as productive to Spenser's moral fashioning of his readers, see Patricia Wareh, "Competitions in Nobility and Courtesy: *Nennio* and the Reader's Judgment in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*," *Spenser Studies* 27 (2012): 163–91.

⁴⁸ On Pastorella promoting Calidore's virtues, see Tonkin, *Courteous Pastorals*, 122–23; and Blich, "Proserpina Preserved," 15–30. For echoes of prior episodes in cantos ix through xi, see Isabel G. MacCaffrey, *Spenser's Allegory: The Anatomy of Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 372; Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, 104; Hamilton, ed., *The Faerie Queene* VI.ix.10n, 26.4n; and Krier, *Gazing on Secret Sights*, 240.

these issues head-on. Beginning in canto ix with Calidore's entry into the shepherd community, Spenser provides a pastoral fictionalization of contentment, which he explores as a solution to Petrarchan problems. Through this representation of contentment and courtship, Spenser allegorizes a relationship between literary modes.

In particular, Spenser makes contentment central to the pastoral containment of Petrarchism's most troubling features. As Colin Burrow notes, Spenser "expected his readers to recognize the ways in which he continually adapts and alters each of the major genres to which he made a contribution, and to attempt to identify genres and modal variations as they fly past": "*The Faerie Queene* lets different genres encounter, unsettle, and even assault each other."⁴⁹ The sudden reemergence of pastoral in Book VI has been understood as just such an assault upon the reader's expectations of epic—an assault that undermines the project of encomiastic nation-building and humanist didacticism outlined in the *Letter to Raleigh*.⁵⁰ However, though Pastorella perhaps "embodies a genre defined in explicit contrast to epic" more so "than any other figure" in the poem, she also provides Spenser with the means of countering and containing Petrarchism, "the greatest threat to Spenser's own Virgilian ambitions."⁵¹ If Spenser's characters "bring with them distinct generic conventions" that can cause "the poem's mode . . . to shift," then, by extension, the relationships between particular characters can figure a relationship between

⁴⁹ Colin Burrow, "Spenser's Genres," in *The Oxford Handbook*, ed. McCabe, 405, 411.

⁵⁰ McCabe writes, "the unprecedented reversion to pastoral in book six signals no less than a radical reappraisal of the epic enterprise" (*Monstrous Regiment*, 233). See also Leigh DeNeed, "Ploughing Virgilian Furrows: The Genres of *Faerie Queene* VI," *John Donne Journal* 1 (1982): 151–66.

⁵¹ Watkins, *The Specter of Dido*, 176 and 64. Similarly, Dubrow claims that "Petrarchism, as much as pastoral, stands for that which threatens epic action," but I suggest that in Book VI Spenser uses pastoral to contain the excesses and dangers of Petrarchism and proceed with epic (*Echoes of Desire*, 262)

literary genres or modes.⁵² In this case, the characters of Calidore, Melibee, and Pastorella become mechanisms by which Spenser can deploy Reformation concepts of contentment to defuse a literary mode that threatens readers, writers, and pastoral itself.

Spenser prefaces Calidore's courtship of Pastorella with an extended dialogue—one that Paul Alpers says “exemplifies the best of Spenserian and Renaissance pastoral”—about the value of pastoral contentment.⁵³ In fact, the encounter between Calidore and Melibee includes five uses of the word “content” within only twelve stanzas, making it the densest use of the word in the Spenser canon. Just as the Hermit's advice about containment informs the crises of Mirabella and Serena, Calidore's conversation with Melibee provides a standard of contentment by which we can evaluate the knight's subsequent romance.⁵⁴ As night approaches, Melibee invites Calidore to dine with him and his daughter in his home, where they “to it fell / With small adoe, and nature satisfyde, / The which doth litle craue contented to abyde” (ix.17.7–9). The shepherds' contented dining reflects the Hermit's simple dietary advice. Calidore proceeds to praise the pastoral world and the lives of the shepherds, which in turn provides Melibee with an opportunity to elaborate on the nature of their contentment:

If happie, then it is in this intent,
That hauing small, yet doe I not complaine

⁵² Burrow, “Spenser's Genres,” 410.

⁵³ Paul Alpers, “Spenser's Late Pastorals,” *ELH* 56 (1989): 803. However, cf. David Shore, *Spenser and the Poetics of Pastoral* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), 135.

⁵⁴ Several studies have linked the Hermit with Melibee and the shepherd community: Mallette, *Spenser, Milton, and Renaissance Pastoral*, 165, and *Spenser and the Discourses*, 195; and Catherine Bates, *Masculinity and the Hunt: Wyatt to Spenser* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 285.

Of want, ne wish for more it to augment,
 But doe my self, with that I haue, content;
 So taught of nature, which doth litle need
 Of forreine helpes to lifes due nourishment. (20.2–7)

Recalling the contentment they share after the meager supper, Melibee elaborates content through a metaphor of “nourishment.” In contrast to Mirabella, who perpetually empties herself into faulty containers, and Serena, whose body is imaginatively dissected in preparation for religious cannibalism, the shepherds experience their content as a process of filling themselves up, specifically with a small but satisfying supply of food.

As Melibee continues, he tethers contentment to pastoral virtues of simple living, quietness, and piety, while contrasting it with “enuy” (21.1), “pride” (22.3), and “ambition,” which cause “great ones” to “downe themseules driue, / To sad decay, that might contented liue” (22.2–5). By being satisfied with what he has, the contented man maintains what he has, while those who strive for more end up losing their goods and their selves, as Spenser had earlier represented in the plight of Diggon, who was not “Content . . . with tryed state” (*September* 70).⁵⁵ Melibee’s account that “Me no such cares nor combrous thoughts offend” (VI.ix.22.6), resulting in an undisturbed “siluer sleepe” (8), contrasts with the restless night spent by Scudamour at the House of Care, with the Champion of Love described just before as having a “hart” of “gealous discontent” (IV.v.30.7–9). Spenser represents the shepherds’ activities of working, fishing, and hunting as pleasant, productive, and protective (for example, the foxes would otherwise eat their sheep) rather than indulgent or aggressive, and the admirable eating

⁵⁵ Melibee goes on to say, ““fittest is, that all contented rest / With that they hold” because “each hath his fortune in his brest” (VI.ix.29.8–9).

practices suggest more broadly the shepherds' proper relationship to property and the material world.⁵⁶ Melibee's philosophizing results not in a disengaged "dream world," but in a pastoral articulation of Reformation contentment.⁵⁷

Calidore's initial failure to comprehend Melibee's doctrine of contentment stems, at least in part, from his ulterior motive to woo Pastorella; however, rather than interpreting this as a strike against Calidore or Courtesy, we can identify Spenser initiating his allegory of literary modes.⁵⁸ During this conversation, Spenser provides a glimpse at Calidore's interiority:

Whylest thus he talkt, the knight with greedy eare
 Hong still vpon his melting mouth attent;
 Whose sensefull words empierst his hart so neare,
 That he was rapt with double rauishment,
 Both of his speech that wrought him great content,
 And also of the obiect of his vew,
 On which his hungry eye was alwayes bent;
 That twixt his pleasing tongue, and her fair hew,
 He lost himselfe, and like one halfe entraunced grew. (VI.ix.26)

⁵⁶ As Alpers notes, in these stanzas Melibee "defines pastoral content by topoi of golden age poems—the land's self-sufficiency and freedom from foreign trade—but scales them down to a life of conscious simplicity." See *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 188.

⁵⁷ Tonkin, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral*, 292

⁵⁸ On Calidore's misunderstanding, see Bernard, *Ceremonies of Innocence*, 152; Mallette, *Spenser, Milton, and Renaissance Pastoral*, 167–68; and Michael F. N. Dixon, *The Politicke Courtier: Spenser's The Faerie Queene as a Rhetoric of Justice* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 177.

Spenser represents a complex response to the auditory and visual stimuli of Melibee and Pastorella, respectively. Hamilton connects Calidore's "rauishment" and "his hungry eye" to the cannibals of canto viii, deducing that "Unlike Melibee, Calidore is not content with what he has."⁵⁹ If so, why does Spenser specifically use the word "content" to describe Calidore in line 5? Does Spenser simply seek to draw attention to the contrast between Calidore and Melibee, misapplying the word as Calidore himself misunderstands Melibee's position? Perhaps. The stanza's conclusion, with Calidore having "lost himselfe," clearly signals that his "double rauishment" does not match the contentment of self-fortification advocated by either Melibee or the Hermit before him. He more closely resembles Pyrocles in Book 3 of *The Old Arcadia*, "rapt from himself with the excessive forefeeling of his near coming contentment" before being scolded by Philoclea.⁶⁰ Moreover, Calidore in the final line is "halfe entraunced," just as Colin in the *Januarye* eclogue was "halfe in despight," with the ratio signaling a sense of internal division and self-alienation due to powerful emotions. However, Calidore might also be described here as half-contented—an apparent paradox according to Reformation standards, but still half. Spenser's use of the word "content" alongside descriptions of a state that is clearly not contented registers Calidore as precariously poised between two psychophysiological conditions, as well as between two literary modes, the pastoral and the Petrarchan. The shepherd Melibee's pastoral sermon contents Calidore, while the knight's desire for Pastorella has a quite different effect. Calidore's experience is not just a conjunction but a conflict that pulls him apart "twixt his pleasing tongue, and her faire hew." The tensions between Calidore's responses and the

⁵⁹ Hamilton, ed., *The Faerie Queene*, VI.ix.26.4.note.

⁶⁰ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia (The Old Arcadia)*, ed. Jean Robertson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 228.

interaction of the artistic modes that they represent form the spine of Spenser's literary allegory. While Melibee's discussion in canto ix provides Book VI's fullest explicit consideration of contentment, stanza 26 in particular lays out the stakes of Calidore's relationship with the shepherdess Pastorella as a navigation of desire and contentment, a containing of Petrarchism with pastoral.

In the pastoral world, Calidore's armor is inappropriate, unnecessary, and redundant, because Spenser, like many of his Reformation contemporaries, suggests that contentment is its own armor. The first phase of Calidore's courtship of Pastorella is quite brief—a total of two stanzas describe Calidore's amatory disappointments before he decides to change his apparel and approach—but Spenser significantly repeats language and imagery from his earlier treatments of Petrarchism in Book VI. For example, he describes Calidore “feeding on the bayt of his owne bane” (ix.34.4), helpless against “the subtile bands” and “cruell hands” of “the blynde boy” (11.6–8). Equipped only with the aristocratic conventions of Petrarchan love poetry critiqued in the preceding cantos, Calidore decides “To chaunge the manner of his loftie looke; / And doffing his bright armes, himselfe addrest / In shepherds weed, and in his hand he tooke, / In stead of steelehead speare, a shepherds hooke” (36.2–5). In removing his armor, Calidore not only sets aside the sumptuary symbols of epic romance but also shifts away from the Petrarchism that Spenser had identified as so integral to the courtly culture to which the chivalric trappings allude. Camille Paglia argues, “Personality in Spenser is armoured, an artifact of aggressive forging”: “Armour is the Spenserian language of moral beauty, signifying Apollonian finitude and self-containment.” However, Melibee and the Hermit have outlined an alternative means of self-containment that uses contentment as its armor in the perpetual “conflict between definitiveness

and dissolution of self.”⁶¹ Contentment performs the same work of fortifying the boundaries of the self that Spenserian armor does elsewhere. When Spenser turns to the pastoral mode in the final cantos of Book VI, the “Spenserian language of moral beauty” is translated as well, so that the act of removing these knightly symbols of virtuous selfhood lacks the immediate narrative consequences and moral implications exhibited elsewhere in the text. As an external symbol of Melibee’s philosophy of pastoral contentment, the “shepherds weed” functions as a substitute armor, an alternative means of self-fortification.

In addition to Calidore’s wardrobe change, Spenser disarms the male lover, a response to the aggression driving English Petrarchism. Calidore exchanges his “steelehead speere” for “a shepherds hooke,” rendering him considerably less threatening than, for example, the cannibals of canto viii. But this substitution does not leave the courteous hero defenseless. When a tiger attacks Pastorella near the end of canto x, Calidore uses his trusty sheep-hook to decapitate the beast with apparently little effort. Like Sidney’s young protagonists in *The Old Arcadia*, Calidore can prove his valor just as easily in the fields of pastoral romance as in the battlefields of chivalric romance.⁶² As long as Calidore persists in the state of pastoral contentment, he can practice his virtue and strength in ways that are protective without being passive, and his tempered passions pose no immediate threat to Pastorella or to himself.

⁶¹ Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 172–73. The Redcrosse Knight experienced just such a dissolution of the self in Book I; after doffing his armor and making “goodly court” to the still-disguised Duessa, he was “Poured out in loosnesse on the grassy ground” (I.vii.7.1–2).

⁶² See Tonkin, *Spenser’s Courteous Pastoral*, 18–19, 28.

Spenser's revisionary process also challenges the conventional, hierarchical language of Petrarchism that made possible both the discontent of Mirabella and the savage nation's idolatrous desire for Serena. In *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* (1595), Spenser had critiqued such conventions by targeting Queen Elizabeth's Petrarchan courtiers, who "do themselves for want of other worke, / Vaine votaries of laesie loue professe" (765–66). These courtiers wrongly invoke Love's "ydle name," for "him they do not serue as they professe, / But make him serue to them for sordid vses" (789–92). By contrast, Calidore must demonstrate his devotion through actual labor on behalf of his mistress:

So being clad, vnto the fields he went
 With the faire Pastorella euery day,
 And kept her sheepe with diligent attent,
 Watching to driue the rauenous Wolfe away,
 The whylest at pleasure she mote sport and play;
 And euery euening helping them to fold:
 And otherwhiles for need, he did assay
 In his strong hand their rugged teats to hold,
 And out of them to presse the milke: loue so much could. (37)

Sir Calidore must humble himself and perform the chores of a shepherd, not simply dress as one.⁶³ Spenser captures the significance of these simple, loving tasks in the final monosyllabic line, ending "loue so much could." Furthermore, the "diligent attent" with which he keeps the

⁶³ On Calidore's pastoral labor, see Krier, *Gazing On Secret Sights*, 235. Curiously, Little does not discuss Calidore's rural labor in these episodes, instead emphasizing Calidore's dangerously "Arcadian" reading of Melibee's community. See *Transforming Work*, 171–93.

sheep aligns him with the righteous shepherds of the *Calender* and *Colin Clout*. Finally, though Spenser identifies Calidore's labors as a form of "service" to Pastorella (x.32.6), we might note that they are the very tasks that Pastorella herself would normally perform. Content to embrace pastoral life with its "paines" and "perill" (32.7), Calidore labors to establish a more equal relationship between himself and Pastorella.

To highlight Calidore's progress in the contented containment of Petrarchism, Spenser includes Coridon as a rival lover and foil. If Calidore begins as a Petrarchan knight who approaches contentment through pastoralization, Coridon is a distinctly pastoral character whose Petrarchism is increasingly registered in terms opposed to contented self-fortification. Like Melibee, Coridon's name comes directly out of the pastoral tradition, with classical precedents in Theocritus's fourth Idyll and Vergil's second Eclogue. However, the first mention of Coridon in canto ix casts him specifically in the role of the unrequited lover, recalling not only the rejected lover from Vergil but the more immediate Petrarchan lovers of Book VI. Coridon "burnt in" Pastorella's "loue" and experienced a "sweet pleasing payne," causing him to "languish, and his deare life spend," like Mirabella's many deceased suitors (ix.10.3, 5). As Calidore and Pastorella grow closer, Coridon channels his Petrarchan pains into forms of self-cannibalism:

And euer when he came in companie,
 Where *Calidore* was present, he would loue.
 And byte his lip, and euen for gealousie
 Was readie oft his owne hart to deuoure,
 Impatient of any paramoure. (39.1–5)

Coridon's experience of jealousy as eating his own heart recalls the jealousies of the Redcrosse Knight (I.ii.6.3) and Scudamour (IV.vi.7.5)—the latter of whom "gan . . . swell in euery inner

part” when he heard Britomart’s name (4)—while in biting his lip Coridon imitates the allegorization of “gnawing Gealosity” outside the gates of Pluto and the Cave of Mammon (II.vii.22.4–5). Moreover, Coridon perpetuates a violence against himself akin to the intentions of the salvage nation and to the corrosive bites of the Blatant Beast. Coridon is not simply consumed by desire but literally consumes himself, and this Petrarchan self-cannibalism perverts the pastoral associations between contentment and nourishment that litter the interaction between Melibee and Calidore. Consequently, Coridon becomes Book VI’s clearest example of Petrarchan self-shattering, and the masochistic condition is neither enjoyed by the character nor esteemed by the text.

Furthermore, Coridon’s Petrarchan discontent isolates him from the recreative community of pastoral song:⁶⁴

then did they [the shepherds] all agree
That *Colin Clout* should pipe as one most fit;
And *Calidore* should lead the ring, as hee
That most in *Pastorellaes* grace did sit.

Thereat frown’d *Coridon*, and his lip closely bit. (ix.41.5–9)

Although critics tend to remember Colin Clout in Book VI primarily through his presence on Mount Acidale in canto x, our initial images of Spenser’s pastoral persona within *The Faerie Queene* showcase his artistic contributions to the larger shepherd community. When first wooed

⁶⁴ According to Bart van Es, one of the defining features of Spenserian pastoral is “the fellowship of the shepherds” or the “sense of pastoral community.” See “Spenserian Pastoral,” in *Early Modern English Poetry: A Critical Companion*, ed. by Patrick Cheney, Andrew Hadfield, and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 85.

by Calidore, Pastorella “cared more for *Colins carolings*” (ix.35.7), and Colin here pipes for the shepherds as Calidore leads them in dance. Coridon’s lack of romantic fulfillment, however, locks him into gestures of self-cannibalism and a state of discontented misanthropy. The “self-reflexive, idolatrous relationship between the Petrarchan poet and the Petrarchan lady” leaves little room for other relationships.⁶⁵ Colin’s service to the community, at odds with the lovesick shepherd’s boy of the *Calender*, throws Coridon’s discontent into further relief. Coridon has effectively displaced Colin as the narcissistic, unrequited lover, the representative of Petrarchism’s threats to individual subjects and pastoral poetics alike. As much as critics like to stress Calidore’s condescension toward Coridon, it is only through Calidore’s efforts that Coridon is brought back into proper relationship with his shepherd society.⁶⁶ Calidore’s sojourn among the shepherds has repeatedly been described as a process of withdrawal, but Spenser actually integrates the character into a community far more than the conventional dynamics of Petrarchan poetry—or the unusual strictures of his own epic quest—would normally allow.⁶⁷ Through “courteous inclination” (42.1), the pastoralized Petrarchan knight is able to salve the

⁶⁵ Ilona Bell, *Elizabethan Women and the Poetry of Courtship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3.

⁶⁶ See Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* 194; Lindheim, *The Virgilian Pastoral Tradition*, 147; and Michael C. Schoenfeldt, “The Poetry of Conduct: Accommodation and Transgression in *The Faerie Queene*, Book 6,” in *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. by Richard Burt and John Michael Archer (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 159.

⁶⁷ On Calidore’s withdrawal, see Berger, *Revisionary Play*, 240; Mallette, *Spenser, Milton, and Renaissance Pastoral*, 186–87; Bernard, *Ceremonies of Innocence*, 38 and 152; Bellamy, “*The Faerie Queene* (1596),” 285; and Patrick Cheney, *Reading Sixteenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 193. For Spenser’s descriptions of the unusually solitary nature of Calidore’s quest, see VI.i.6.2 and ii.37.

self-inflicted wounds of the increasingly suffering Petrarchan shepherd Coridon, who “earst seemed dead” (9), and to restore his relationship with the contented community.

After Calidore rescues Pastorella, the shepherdess began to “*Coridon* for cowherdize reiect, / Fit to keepe sheep, vnfit for loues content” (37.3–4), a line that Nancy Lindheim recoils from as “simply astonishing” within Spenserian pastoral.⁶⁸ Alpers argues that the “last line in effect renounces pastoral, whose claim on us is precisely the acknowledgment that our condition in love, as in other fundamental human situations, can be represented by keepers of sheep.”⁶⁹ In other words, the “representative anecdote” of the life of herdsmen breaks down, losing its ability to represent broader assumptions about “man’s strength relative to his or her world.”⁷⁰ Alpers proceeds to argue that “Coridon fails to be a pastoral figure (and Spenserian pastoral fails the rustic)” because Coridon does not lead Calidore (nor, presumably, the reader) to “reconsider what he is and what he values.”⁷¹ For Alpers, Coridon is a shepherd sheared of pastoral significance. While Coridon does fail as a pastoral figure, that failure is not a momentary one expressed in these lines, but the conclusion of his process of Petrarchan self-violence, the culmination of his jealousy and discontent. As Alpers explains, Coridon’s successful completion of a rustic activity (“Fit to keepe sheepe”) does not necessarily indicate his success as a literary pastoral figure. Likewise, Coridon’s failures as a lover (“vnfit for loues content”) correspond with his realization of the Petrarchan mode, insofar as Petrarchism is characterized by erotic

⁶⁸ Lindheim notes that the line reflects Pastorella’s perspective, but describes her here as “hardly more than the embodiment of the pastoral ethos that her name suggests” (*The Virgilian Pastoral Tradition*, 147–48).

⁶⁹ Alpers, *What is Pastoral?*, 194.

⁷⁰ Alpers, *What is Pastoral?*, x.

⁷¹ Alpers, *What is Pastoral?*, 194.

frustrations and the lack of fulfillment.⁷² If we interpret line 4 with reference to the larger relationship between pastoral and Petrarchism in Book VI, we can see that the second half of the line not only suggests the failure of a pastoral figure, but it identifies Petrarchism as the cause of that failure. Coridon fails as a pastoral figure insofar as he comes to represent a Petrarchan one, and he consequently cannot experience content. Calidore's Petrarchan features are contained by pastoral, but Coridon loses his pastoral self to Petrarchism. Though Coridon may seem comically inept and ancillary, he serves both as the spiritual successor of Colin Clout's anti-pastoral discontent and as a foil for the containment process enacted by Calidore.

However, Calidore's Petrarchism resurfaces late in canto x with unsettling narrative consequences:

So well he woo'd her, and so well he wrought her,
 With humble seruice, and with daily sute,
 That at the last vnto his will he brought her;
 Which he so wisely well did prosecute,
 That of his loue he reapt the timely frute,
 And ioyed long in close felicity:
 Till fortune fraught with malice, blinde, and brute,
 That enuies louers long prosperity,
 Blew vp a bitter storme of foule aduersity. (x.38)

The mutuality gestured toward during the courtship all but vanishes in Calidore's Petrarchan relapse, where his "humble seruice" becomes little more than the means to fulfill a sexual end.

⁷² Gordon Braden notes that Petrarchism equates "romantic failure and poetic success." See "Beyond Frustration: Petrarchan Laurels in the Seventeenth Century," *Studies in English Literature* 26 (1986): 11.

“Till” in line 7 indicates not only temporality but causality. The romance language of “fortune” should not prevent our recognition of Spenser’s causal language of allegory: the brigands arrive and destroy the pastoral community because of Calidore’s discontented sexual desires.⁷³

Pastorella becomes the “spoile” of both Calidore (x.35.8) and the brigands (40.7). The Petrarchan significance of the brigands is especially evident in the character of the criminal captain, whose “barbarous hart was fired, / And inly burnt with flames most raging whot” upon seeing Pastorella with his “lustfull eyes” (xi.4.1–2, 3.7). As a figure of pastoral poetry, Pastorella can contain the dangerous desires of the captain and preserve herself from rape and murder, with the captain himself defending her from the merchants and brigands who fight “as a sort of hungry dogs” (17.1). The brigands externalize Calidore’s Petrarchism, which ravishes the shepherds, distances him from Pastorella, and threatens the very fabric of pastoral poetry. Calidore’s inability to contain his desires in the contented manner described by Melibee proves to be pastoral’s undoing.

Sort of. Critics have rightly emphasized the devastation of the pastoral world in these final cantos.⁷⁴ The description of Pastorella “couered with confused preasse / Of carcasses” (xi.20.1–2) is certainly one of the most disturbing images in the entire *Faerie Queene*. Melibee and his wife are killed, and almost everyone else with them. We can only hope that Colin was

⁷³ In this reading, I differ from Little, who claims that “this figurative storm (the attack of the brigands) reads less as punishment for love of a woman than punishment for love of the pastoral world,” even as she suggests that “these two loves are inseparable” (*Transforming Work*, 185).

⁷⁴ See Maccaffrey, *Spenser’s Allegory*, 358; Cooper, *Pastoral*, 165; Shore, *Spenser and the Poetics of Pastoral*, 166; Alwes, ““Who Knowes Not Colin Clout?”” 37–38; Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser’s Irish Experience*, 184, and “*The Faerie Queene*, Books IV–VII,” 135; and John D. Staines, “Pity and the Authority of Feminine Passions in Books V and VI of *The Faerie Queene*,” *Spenser Studies* 25 (2010): 152.

still on Acidale at the time of the attack. However, I suggest that Calidore's Petrarchan relapse and the confrontation that follows is productive within Spenser's allegory of literary forms. The episode allows the author to maintain the value of contentment, even as he admits the powerful persistence of desire. Spenser does not suggest that he can extract himself from the pervasive Petrarchan tradition, or even that it would be entirely worthwhile to do so. Through Calidore's defeat of the brigands and his rescue of Pastorella, Spenser represents the hero's confrontation with his own Petrarchism and completes Book VI's enduring engagement with its conventions that began in cantos vii and viii. According to Douglas Northrop, Calidore "must fight through his brigandine desires to possess and to benefit from Pastorella in order to get beyond his self-seeking retreat from duty."⁷⁵ If we view these brigandine desires in literary terms, we can see that Spenser must successfully contain Petrarchism with pastoral in order to move forward with his epic project. As a product of epic, Petrarchism, and now pastoral, Calidore keeps alive Melibee's ideal of contentment and carries it with him into other literary modes. Indeed, Melibee himself taught that contentment is not specific to any single location or manner of living, nor is it confined to a particular apparel or literary mode.

Calidore does not forever forsake his epic obligations or his Petrarchan heritage, but he does supplement them with the values of pastoral poetry, becoming a more courteous lover, free from the dangers of Elizabethan erotic verse and fortified with Melibee's lessons of contentment, however imperfectly learned.⁷⁶ To rescue his beloved, Calidore conceals his knightly accoutrements under his shepherd's garb. With courtly Petrarchan armor underneath his pastoral

⁷⁵ Northrop, "The Uncertainty of Courtesy," 229–30.

⁷⁶ D. Cheney recognizes a parallel process in Calidore's combination of shepherd and warrior wardrobes (*Spenser's Image of Nature*, 237).

attire, Calidore shares a certain affinity with Colin Clout's artistic creation on Mt. Acidale, a pastoral world with a deep and powerful eros at its very center, signaled by the presence of Colin's beloved among the Graces. But unlike Colin's vision, which Burrow describes as one of the epic romance's "fragile and private myths of seclusion," and which is ostensibly isolated to this paramount locus poeticus—even if Colin himself is not—Calidore with his armor and shepherd's weeds is able to go out into the world and resume his epic role, saving Pastorella and completing his quest.⁷⁷ Instructed by both Melibee and Colin Clout, with whom he passed "Long time" in courteous conversation "With which the Knight him selfe did much content" (x.30.2–3), Calidore is finally able to convert this private vision into public virtue, to translate individual self-fortification and an ethic of pastoral contentment into martial valor on behalf of his beloved and a species of action more appropriate to epic poetry. In this way, Spenser both reinforces pastoral contentment as a counter to Petrarchism and makes it instrumental to the completion of his epic narrative.

Reviving Contentment, Revising Tradition

Calidore's imperfect understanding of Melibee's words, his succumbing to desire, and his nominally praise-worthy resumption of the quest all suggest that Spenser qualifies the very value of contentment that he has salvaged. If Spenser corrects contentment's failures from the *Calender*, he also admits its limitations.⁷⁸ Yet Spenser and his contemporaries knew well that

⁷⁷ Burrow, *Epic Romance: Homer to Milton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 100.

⁷⁸ This qualification of contentment is consonant with what Carol Kaske has recently described as Spenser's concessions to pragmatism in Book VI. See "Chivalric Idealism versus Pragmatism in Spenser and Malory: Taking up Arms in a Wrongful Quarrel (The Kathleen Williams Lecture, 2010)" *Spenser Studies* 27 (2012): 1–22, esp. 2. On Book VI's shift away from the abstractions and cold ideals of Book V, see Gordon Teskey, *Allegory and*

hardship underlies the importance of contentment. The poem does not invalidate the Hermit's prescription for self-containment, Melibee's philosophy of contentment, or the larger Reformation discourses that they engage. Spenser depicts contentment as an ideal that may not be fully realized by individuals—and that itself perhaps cannot contain the full range of human experience or literary representation—but translating an ideal into a guideline is not the same as forsaking it.

Spenser exhibits such qualified contentment in Calidore's mixed success with the Blatant Beast. Now that Spenser has countered the problems of Petrarchism with pastoral contentment in order to proceed with epic, Calidore can muzzle the Blatant Beast and restrain him in "a great long chaine" (xii.34.8). Insofar as the Beast's method of attack recalls the cannibal nation and the hungrily doglike brigands, and its wounds resemble the effects of love in this and other poems, the monster relates not only to slander but also to a desire linked in Book VI to Petrarchan poetics.⁷⁹ At the same time, he is Aesop's discontented dog, a most monstrous realization of Hobbinol's warnings in the *September* eclogue. This discontent can be contained, but it cannot be utterly eliminated.⁸⁰ Of course, the monster eventually escapes, threatening even *The Faerie Queene* in its conclusion. But even if the Blatant Beast escaped through the "fault of men" (38.8), Spenser attributes no blame to Calidore in these closing stanzas. If history has the

Violence (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 176. See also Northrop's discussion of uncertainty in "The Uncertainty of Courtesy."

⁷⁹ See Gross, "Reflections," 106.

⁸⁰ By linking the Blatant Beast to Petrarchism and discontent, I do not mean to discount or downplay its significance as a figure for slander. Stillman calls the Blatant Beast an "inverted version of Mcgruff the Crime Dog whose every bark speaks to fundamental breaches in the customary code" ("Spenserian Autonomy," 305)

potential to repeat itself, and Spenser's epic may be subject to "venemous despite" and "a mighty Peres displeasure" like the author's "former writs" (41.1–6), then it is equally possible that the Beast can be contained once more and contentment can win the battle, if not the war. Spenser dedicates a significant portion of Book VI to representing how just such a victory might be achieved. Spenser and Calidore have done their parts, and the poet leaves it to his readers to do theirs.

Ultimately, in the process of containing Petrarchism and its pleasures, Spenser has also qualified pastoral by showing that, even among shepherds, life can be poor, nasty, brutish, and short, though only in some cases solitary. Yet pastoral is not totally lost. The shepherd community persists with Coridon and his surviving sheep. More importantly, Calidore has incorporated characteristics of pastoral into his literary identity and begun training himself in contentment. Desire may still cry out for food, and Spenser may even admit the inevitability of a Petrarchan snack from time to time, but this only makes the need to "Vse scanted diet" all the more pressing, lest it consume the self and other entirely. Through the allegory of literary modes in the closing cantos of Book VI, Spenser reconciles the cultural modes of pastoral and Petrarchism, acknowledging the strengths, shortcomings, and seductions of each. In the process, he uses the relational principle of contentment to figure more benign exchanges between literary traditions—exchanges dependent on the recognition and respect of boundaries, as opposed to Petrarchan tendencies to consume and shatter. Many Renaissance authors explore contentment in distinctly literary ways, exploiting the formal features of their works to represent the topic in manners unavailable to other discourses. Spenser shares in these efforts to reform contentment, but he also engages in the process from the opposite direction and considers the potential of contentment to reform literature.

Chapter Four

The Politics of Contentment: Passions, Pastoral, and Community in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*

In Act One, scene three of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, Celia claims that it was Duke Frederick's "pleasure" to exempt Rosalind from the banishment that her father faced years ago (1.3.64).¹ As the scene progresses, it becomes clear that there is no distinction between the usurping Duke's "pleasure," his "sentence" (79), and his "doom" (77). All are equally arbitrary and equally oppressive for his innocent subject and niece, who cannot withstand the tyrant's absolute authority. The various figures exiled from Frederick's court must find an alternative to the oppressive pleasures of the state and instead "go . . . in content" to the forest of Arden (131). Rather than being subjected to the pleasures of another, the refugees collectively seek the freedom of contentment within the pastoral world of the play. Through these characters and their pastoral pursuits, Shakespeare stages a response to Renaissance and Reformation concepts of contentment, exploring in particular their political potentialities.

In recent decades, critics have increasingly read *As You Like It* as responding to the political and economic circumstances of Elizabethan England. Louis Montrose describes the pastoral comedy as "both a theatrical *reflection* of social conflict and a theatrical *source* of social conciliation," the play serving to "mediate the ideological contradiction between spiritual

¹ All references to Shakespeare's plays come from *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katharine Eisaman Maus (New York: Norton, 2008). However, I use the spelling Arden, rather than Ardenne, throughout.

fraternity and political patriarchy, between social communion and social hierarchy.”² Richard Wilson argues, “No Shakespearean text transmits more urgently the imminence of the social breakdown threatened by the conjuncture of famine and enclosure.”³ Andrew Barnaby sees the play engaging “in debate concerning the crises points of late-Elizabethan culture,” specifically “problems of conflict over land-use rights, the enclosure of common land and its attendant violence, poverty and vagrancy.”⁴ Most recently, Chris Fitter describes *As You Like It* as a “protest play” that exposes and indicts a “hardening prosecutorial climate driven by oligarchic vestries.”⁵ While these critics have contributed to our understanding of the play within its original context, they have characteristically presented contentment as a pastoral idealization overthrown by the play’s treatment of troubling historical realities. Those critics who have discussed contentment more positively tend to do so fleetingly and only in relation to the conventions of Virgilian pastoral, and they rarely extend the concept to broader Renaissance intellectual history.⁶ However, Shakespeare’s depiction of contentment demonstrates a greater

² Louis Adrian Montrose, “‘The Place of a Brother’ In *As You Like It*: Social Process and Comic Form,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 32 (1981): 54 and 41.

³ Richard Wilson, “‘Like the old Robin Hood’: *As You Like It* and the Enclosure Riots,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 43 (1992): 3–4.

⁴ Andrew Barnaby, “The Political Conscious of Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*,” *Studies in English Literature* 36 (1996): 374–75.

⁵ Chris Fitter, “Reading Orlando Historically: Vagrancy, Forest, and Vestry Values in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 23 (2010): 114–15.

⁶ See John Shaw, “Fortune and Nature in *As You Like It*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 6 (1955): 45–50, esp. 46–48; R. P. Draper, “Shakespeare’s Pastoral Comedy,” *Etudes Anglaises* 11 (1958): 7, 11; Harry Morris, “*As You Like It*: Et in Arcadia Ego,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 26 (1975): 270; Charles Frey, “The Sweetest Rose: *As You Like It* as Comedy

nuance than these approaches allow, as he joins other early modern authors in representing content within a world of contingency and suffering, and in locating political value in such contentment.

When *As You Like It* was first written and performed in the late Elizabethan period, the concept of contentment continued to prove remarkably flexible in its political valences. Authors who agree that contentment is attainable, desirable, and perfectly pious still commonly diverge on the political form that content should take. Some Reformation writers, like John Carpenter, invoke individual contentment as a means of shoring up the existing social order under a banner of absolute monarchical power. By contrast, Jean de L'Espine likens a contented regulation of the passions to the need for restraining royal authority, protecting freedom, and promoting political participation by (at least some) subjects. For his part, Shakespeare pushes the implications of contentment even further, finding in it a psychophysiological potential for reimagining the political order—for uniting individual bodies within a more benevolent body politic. Availing himself of the pastoral possibilities explored previously by Sidney and Spenser,

of Reconciliation,” *New York Literary Forum* 1 (1978): 180; Judy Z. Kronenfeld, “Social Rank and the Pastoral Ideas of *As You Like It*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 29 (1978): 347; Linda M. Vecchi, “No Way Out of the Garden: An Interpretation of the Pastoral Mode in Shakespeare and Marvell,” *Selected Papers from the West Virginia Shakespeare and Renaissance Association* 7 (1982): 46–53; Dale G. Priest, “*Oratio* and *Negotium*: Manipulative Modes in *As You Like It*,” *Studies in English Literature* 28 (1988): 284; A. Stuart Daley, “Calling and Commonwealth in *As You Like It*: A Late Elizabethan Political Play,” *Upstart Crow* 14 (1994): 30–31, 34, 41; Paul J. Willis, “‘Tongues in Trees’: The Book of Nature in *As You Like It*,” *Modern Language Studies* 18 (1998): 68; and Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004), 441.

Shakespeare represents an interpersonal, political contentment in the popular public space of the London stage.

While Grace Tiffany is correct in claiming that Shakespeare leads his characters in *As You Like It* “from isolated solipsism into relationship,” I argue further that the playwrights articulate these relationships according to sixteenth-century concepts of contentment, which in turn contributes to their political import.⁷ Paul Cefalu has recently discussed contentment in *Othello* with reference to twentieth-century cognitive and psychoanalytical approaches. For Cefalu, Iago’s “constitutional *discontentedness*” involves “thinking too much about what others are thinking.” Meanwhile, Othello’s “enviable sense of contentment,” his “most valued and self-proclaimed quality,” provides “peace of mind to the degree that . . . [he is] not bothered too much to mind the business of others.”⁸ Although Cefalu’s theoretical model elucidates the tragedy of *Othello*, the pastoral comedy *As You Like It* invites a more historicized account of contentment, one that pertains not only to the psychology or physiology of the single self but to the relationship between selves. The state of collective contentment enables subjects to withstand outside forces, including political oppression, and it provides an affective foundation for sustainable communities, as in Duke Senior’s pastoral society. Moreover, while contentment ostensibly suggests a passive state, Shakespeare’s characters themselves affiliate it with active

⁷ Grace Tiffany, “‘That Reason Wonder May Distinguish’: *As You Like It*, Androgyny, and the Theater Wars,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 57 (1994): 225–26. See also Mark Bracher, “Contrary Notions of Identity in *As You Like It*,” *Studies in English Literature* 24 (1984): 225–40.

⁸ Paul Cefalu, “‘The Burdens of Mind Reading in Shakespeare’s *Othello*: A Cognitive and Psychoanalytic Approach to Iago’s Theory of Mind,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 64 (2013): 269, 266.

political virtues of liberty, counsel, and consent.⁹ For twenty-first-century readers, a connection between contentment and meaningful social change seems counter-intuitive at best. However, Shakespeare's *As You Like It* effectively engages the prominent period discourse of contentment to think the prevailing political order differently. In a historical moment beset by "factionalism, self-interest and instability," Shakespeare invests communal contentment with a deep political significance.¹⁰

In the following section of this chapter, I demonstrate how Shakespeare represents contentment as politically meaningful and efficacious in ways similar to and different from his Elizabethan contemporaries. For Shakespeare, contentment becomes political by bridging the gap between individual subjectivities, and I trace the ways in which the interpersonal, pastoral content promulgated by Duke Senior becomes associated with values of liberty, counsel, and consent. In the next section, I consider how Rosalind and Jaques both challenge and elaborate the play's communal contentment. In a final section, I discuss how to weigh conventions of genre and mode in the play's concluding act with considerations of contentment's political possibilities apart from those literary conventions. Shakespeare does not naively rhapsodize contentment,

⁹ Scholars have discussed the political virtues of liberty, counsel, and consent together using the divisive term "republican." For republicanism in Shakespeare's works, see Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), and "Republicanism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur Kinney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 587–603. For a recent discussion of republicanism and environmentalism in *As You Like It*, see Todd A. Borlik, *Ecocriticism and Early Modern English Literature: Green Pastures* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 165–204.

¹⁰ John Guy, "Introduction: The 1590s: The Second Reign of Elizabeth I?" in *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade*, ed. John Guy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1.

community, or pastoral, but he does explore the merits of each for his artistic engagements with the political theories and realities of Renaissance England.

Collective Contentment in Shakespeare's Arden

Shakespeare emphasizes the centrality of contentment to his pastoral comedy by foregrounding the term within the debate between Corin and Touchstone over the merits of country and court. The play's most conventional pastoral figure twice valorizes the virtue of contentment. In a witty dramatic revision of conventional pastoral dialogues, Touchstone prompts Corin to defend "this shepherd's life" with the question "Hast any philosophy in thee, shepherd?" (3.2.11, 19). Corin responds, "No more but that I know the more one sickens, the worse at ease he is, and that he that wants money, means, and content is without three good friends" (20–22). The listing of "content" alongside matters of health and wealth serves as a reminder that Shakespeare's Arden, for all its idyllic qualities, does not float free of the material concerns of embodied existence. Soon after, Corin asserts, "Sir, I am a true labourer. I earn that I eat, get that I wear; owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness; glad of other men's good, content with my harm; and the greatest of my pride is to see my ewes graze and my lambs suck" (63–66). Corin identifies contentment as the ideal reaction to adversity—one that stabilizes and improves the emotional life of the subject without barring the possibilities for gladness and pride. Corin's remarks take on particular weight in relation to his predicament in the preceding act. When Corin is first encountered by Rosalind and Celia, he cannot offer them food due to his own socioeconomic position; as "shepherd to another man" (2.4.73), he is alienated from his labor. Katherine Little claims that this earlier speech is an anomaly within the play, which Corin's later conversation

with Touchstone “seems to correct.”¹¹ But Corin’s passing allusions to poverty, illness, and “harm” suggest more of a continuation than a correction. According to Corin, contentment is compatible with trials and tribulations. Touchstone’s mockery admittedly qualifies our sympathy with Corin’s position; however, as critics have noted, Touchstone does not necessarily win this contest in any simple sense, nor is his satire aimed solely at country life.¹² By staging this confrontation between a stereotypical shepherd of pastoral and an urbane, skeptical clown, Shakespeare encourages his audience to think critically about different characters’ constructions of contentment, as they examine the concept to both comic and serious effect. In *As You Like It*, Shakespeare founds the pastoral communities of Arden upon a collective, rather than an individual, contentment.

Each major pair of exiles sets out for Arden with the explicit goal of attaining or maintaining “content.” After Duke Frederick’s daughter and niece plan their escape, with the clown Touchstone as “a comfort to our travel” (1.3.125), Celia claims, “Now go we in content, / To liberty, and not to banishment” (131–32). Like L’Espine, Celia affiliates liberty and contentment through her apposition, and she does so specifically in the context of political persecution. Furthermore, Celia states that this contentment precedes a sense of freedom: she and Rosalind go *in content to* liberty, so that contentment is at least prior to if not a pre-condition of

¹¹ Katherine Little, *Transforming Work: Early Modern Pastoral and Late Medieval Poetry* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 198–99.

¹² For Shakespeare’s undermining of Touchstone in this scene, see Draper, “Shakespeare’s Pastoral Comedy,” 7; Rosalie Colie, *Shakespeare’s Living Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 256; and Kronenfeld, “Social Rank,” 345–47. On Touchstone’s mockery of both court and country, see Albert Russell Ascoli, “Wrestling with Orlando: Chivalric Pastoral in Shakespeare’s Arden,” *Renaissance Drama* 36/37 (2010): 303–8.

their experience of liberty, and not the other way around. Finally, Celia's speeches throughout the scene suggest that this contentment and liberty would not be possible for one individual like herself, but only through the relationship between characters. In defiance of her tyrannical father, Celia insists upon the union between herself and Rosalind:

If she be a traitor,
 Why, so am I. We still have slept together,
 Rose at an instant, learned, played, eat together,
 And wheresoe'er we went, like Juno's swans
 Still we went coupled and inseparable. (66–70)

Touchstone will later demonstrate that there is “much virtue in ‘if’” (5.4.92), and Celia's speech is no exception. In the context of the scene, Celia clearly intends to dissuade her father of Rosalind's supposed treachery, as she implies that her cousin cannot be a traitor because she herself is not one. Technically, however, Celia claims only that the political status of both young women (i.e., whether or not they are traitors) is an extension of their close personal relationship, the fact that they have been “coupled and inseparable.” Celia tells Rosalind that her love has taught her “that thou and I am one” (1.3.91). This uninhibited identification with the other entangles their emotional and political states, turning Rosalind's misfortune into Celia's own, but also opening the possibility for collective contentment.¹³

¹³ Laurie Shannon discusses this scene between Rosalind and Celia as a premier example of the notion of friendship as a “mirroring of selves.” However, while Shannon stresses the difficulties for extending such friendship dyads in early modern discourse, an attention to contentment provides a way of recognizing how such ideals can be applied to larger communities. See *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), esp. 4–5 and 18.

Celia's contentedness contrasts not only with Duke Frederick's tyrannical pleasure but also with a model of contentment that Shakespeare articulates earlier in *The Taming of the Shrew*. In this earlier comedy, Baptista Minola hopes to sequester his younger daughter Bianca from suitors until the elder Katherine is wedded—a plan twice compared to the caging of a bird at 1.1.87–89 and 177–78. Of course, neither daughter likes the plan, but Bianca responds, “Sister, content you in my discontent. / Sir [Baptista], to your pleasure humbly I subscribe” (1.1.80–81). As Bianca puts it, the pleasure of her father and the content of her sister come at the cost of her own discontent, however humbly accepted. Pleasure is an exertion of patriarchal authority (as in the first act of *As You Like It*), but content and discontent provide the terms of conflict between the play's most prominent female characters. Though they are both subject to the will of Baptista, an asymmetrical experience of contentment (real or imagined) only heightens the adversarial sibling relationship. This troubling connection between “content” and homosocial struggle recurs in *Taming*'s concluding scene, when Hortensio twice answers “content” to confirm his assent to Petruccio's wager (5.2.71, 77)—a wager that once again pits Katherine and Bianca against each other. Yet Celia and Rosalind construct a contentment that both sustains the individual self and unites the self and other peaceably and profitably. For these characters, contentment is a matter of interpersonal connection, instead of familial contest. Elsewhere in *As You Like It*, contentment extends from such friendship dyads to become a kind of social glue: beneficial to the individual, but foundational to the community.

In a scene that complements the flight of Rosalind and Celia, Orlando similarly uses the language of contentment to plan an escape from his own “tyrant brother” (1.2.255). Upon hearing about Oliver's murderous plot against him, Orlando says to his trusty servant, Adam, “We'll go along together, / And ere we have thy youthful wages spent, / We'll light upon some

settled low content” (2.3.67–69).¹⁴ Orlando’s prediction that they will “light upon” contentment reflects an openness to the workings of fortune; as both Carpenter and L’Espine agree, the truly contented individual has nothing to fear from fortune. Orlando associates his imagined contentment with lowness and poverty. Rather than asserting his “gentility” or “the gentle condition of blood” that he shares with Oliver, as he had done in the play’s opening scene (1.1.17, 38), Orlando forsakes the lifestyle promised in his father’s will. The adjective “settled” denotes a state of both fixity and emotional sobriety, again suggesting a difference from his condition in the first scene, in which he claims, “the spirit of my father, which I think is within me, begins to mutiny against this servitude” (18–20).¹⁵ However, in addition to replicating widespread Renaissance characterizations of contentment as self-restraint, satisfaction, and stability, Orlando’s lines recall Celia’s identification of contentment in companionship. After spending the first part of his speech gratefully praising Adam, Orlando uses the pronoun “we” three times in the final three lines, characterizing contentment as a plural and not a singular state. Moreover, Adam’s name links him to contented piety, as the biblical Adam features prominently in several early modern texts on contentment, in which the prelapsarian state of content contrasts with the discontents that attend life in the fallen world.¹⁶ This association with contentment,

¹⁴ On the benevolence of masters and the voluntarism of servants in Arden, see R. W. Maslen, *Shakespeare and Comedy*, Arden Critical Companions (London: Thomson Learning, 2005), 178. For a more skeptical reading of this relationship, see Fitter, “Reading Orlando,” 127

¹⁵ *OED* “settled,” adj. 1a and b.

¹⁶ For example, see John Carpenter, *A Preparatiue to Contentation: Conteyning a Display of the Wonderfull Distractions of Men in Opinions and Straunge Conceits: And of the Seuerall Discontentations which are Incident to Euerie Particular Vocation and Condition of Men in This Life* (London, 1597), a3 and 10; and Thomas Gataker, *True Contentment in the Gaine of Godlines, with Its Self-Sufficiencie A Meditation on 1. Timoth. 6. 6* (London,

however, does not prevent Shakespeare's Adam from voicing a compelling criticism of the social order, in which "what is comely / Envenoms him that bears it" (12–15) and a "house is but a butchery" (28). Denied the "place of a brother" in Oliver's house until it "is no place" at all (1.1.16, 2.3.28), Orlando must turn elsewhere to seek contentment alongside Adam.

Instead of next depicting a satisfied Orlando and Adam, Shakespeare displays these characters starving in the forest, with the old man ostensibly on the brink of death. Adam's state recalls Celia's severe hunger and Corin's inability to offer food only two scenes prior; again, Shakespeare's Arden is far from wholly idealized, with several characters' first experiences of the pastoral world emphasizing their material deficits and suffering. Orlando, however, gives his loyal servant one last set of orders in this scene: "Live a little, comfort a little, cheer thyself a little" (2.6.3–4). The phrase "cheer thyself a little" elaborates the "settled low content" of the earlier scene, and this psychological condition, according to Orlando, becomes a pre-condition for Adam's very survival: "Thy conceit is nearer death than thy powers. For my sake be comfortable. Hold death awhile at the arm's end" (6–8). While Orlando does not deny the body's need for sustenance, he proposes contentment as a means to ward off death until those needs can be met. Many Renaissance authors represented contentment as a state of the mind, but Orlando amplifies this and grants the mind considerable power over the body. Without dismissing the urgencies of material reality or advocating an escapist withdrawal into one's own interiority,

1620), 47–48. On Milton's representation of prelapsarian psychology in *Paradise Lost* reflecting ambivalent early modern attitudes toward the passions, see Michael Schoenfeldt, "'Commotion Strange': Passion in *Paradise Lost*," in *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion*, ed. Gail Kern Paster, Katharine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 43–67. See also Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Orlando suggests the importance of content, or a little cheer, in the face of dire circumstances. Orlando promises to obtain food for Adam by whatever means necessary, but Adam must contribute to his own continued existence by shoring up his psychophysiological health. Here, the subject's state of content is and must be prior to an improvement of one's situation. Contentment serves as a principled response to suffering in the world, rather than a willful ignorance of it. Even when the stakes for the individual self are at their absolute highest, however, Shakespeare avoids representing contentment as a private experience, as Orlando asks Adam to act "For my sake." Not only does Orlando act to preserve Adam, but Adam acts on behalf of Orlando. If contentment designates a particular, pious way of sustaining the self from internal and external threats, then this process, for Shakespeare, cannot be successful when divorced from other selves.

Reading this scene in isolation, we might be tempted to consider Orlando's speech as little more than an affectionate attempt to reassure a dying friend. Indeed, in contrast to his prescription for Adam, Orlando is anything but emotionally "settled" when he, sword drawn, confronts Duke Senior and his companions. However, the exiled Duke swiftly rejects this passionate violence: "Your gentleness shall force / More than your force move us to gentleness" (2.7.101–2). Thus far, Orlando has been disinherited and driven out by his brother, but Duke Senior immediately and unreservedly satisfies his needs.¹⁷ By holding onto a little cheer, Orlando and Adam endure and enter into the play's pastoral community.

¹⁷ Borlik discusses Duke Senior's response to the desperate Orlando as a "non-violent resolution to the enclosure conflict" in Elizabethan England through the belief in "the land as the common treasury of all, or, more accurately, all who can exhibit certain marks of civility" (*Ecocriticism*, 184).

In the play's first description of Duke Senior's forest society, Charles the wrestler emphasizes the emotional lives of its subjects and the relationships between subjects and (former) sovereign: "They say he is already in the forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England. They say many young gentlemen flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world" (1.1.99–103).¹⁸ By this account, Duke Senior's ever-growing community consists of "merry men" like the "three or four loving lords [that] have put themselves into voluntary exile with him" at the personal cost of "lands and revenues" (88–89). These lords freely choose to leave courtly society and be with one another, just as Celia and Adam depart, respectively, with Rosalind and Orlando. The voluntary exile of the loving lords replicates on a larger social scale the desire for contentment in companionship articulated by those other characters. If the bond between Rosalind and Celia constructs contentment in relation to friendship, then the mass migration of merry men reveals the emotional basis of a larger community. While the contentment attained or imagined between two individuals has political consequences within the play, such as the experience of freedom from tyranny, the proliferation of positive affect around Duke Senior's court suggests an alternative political order altogether, rather than just a benign band of outlaws, as Charles describes.

Duke Senior provides one of the play's most prominent articulations of the value of contentment in his introductory lines, which vindicate much of Charles's characterization, but, more importantly, are the first in the play to be spoken within Arden itself—a declaration of

¹⁸ Robert Leach takes a cue from Charles's allusion and reads the play in relation to a tradition of Robin Hood games, finding in this connection an endorsement of "inclusiveness." See "As You Like It: A 'Robin Hood' Play," *English Studies* 5 (2001): 393–400, esp. 400.

contentment from within the pastoral world, rather than a projection onto that world by an outside courtier. The rightful duke proclaims,

Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,
 Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
 Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
 More free from peril than the envious court? (2.1.1–4)

The “brothers” are united not only by their political “exile,” but by their shared ways of relating to the world. Duke Senior does not deny that the “painted pomp” of the court has its own sweet pleasures, but, in the current “envious” regime, the pleasures are inseparable from “peril.” Envy was not only commonly identified as one of the primary passions opposed to contentedness, as in L’Espine’s *Excellent and Learned Discourse*, but it was also, as Lynn Staley Johnson notes, “frequently singled out as the vice most seriously threatening to the social fabric.”¹⁹ In his *Essays*, Francis Bacon classifies “Publique Envy” as “*Discontentment*,” explaining, “It is a disease, in a State, like to Infection. For as Infection, spreadeth upon that, which is a sound, and tainteth it; So when Envy, is gotten once into a State, it traduceth even the best Actions thereof, and turneth them into an ill Odour.”²⁰ Celia earlier describes her father as having a “rough and envious disposition” (1.2.207). However, by associating envy with the court itself, Duke Senior suggests that this discontent, though originating with the envious usurper, has infected the entire

¹⁹ Lynn Staley Johnson, *The Shepherdes Calender: An Introduction* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 30n.

²⁰ Francis Bacon, *The Essayes of Counsels, Civill and Morall*, ed. Michael Kiernan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, 2000), 30.

duchy. In order to eliminate envy and its dangers to both subject and state, the court would require both a change in leadership and the adoption of a politics of contentment.

Duke Senior actively produces contentment as a political category in the forest of Arden. While the “humorous” Duke Frederick “misconsters” everything according to his discontented “condition” (1.2.231–33), Duke Senior can, in the words of Amiens, “translate the stubbornness of fortune / Into so quiet and so sweet a style” (2.1.19–20).²¹ Rather than warping the actions of his subjects into imagined assaults upon his own authority, as Frederick does when Orlando wins the wrestling contest, Duke Senior models a contented capacity to transvalue “the uses of adversity” (11), and he explicitly incorporates his followers into this psychological state. The objective accuracy of Duke Senior’s account of Arden is ultimately less important than its performative function of uniting individual subjects under a banner of positive affect.²² Whereas Bacon describes discontent as an affective contagion of public envy infecting the commonwealth, Duke Senior seeks to spread an opposite contagion of contentment. In light of this, his later efforts to assuage Orlando’s discontent take on an almost emblematic force: in the healthy body politic, the sovereign is the source of contentment.

Duke Senior’s realization of communal contentment differs sharply from the relationship between politics and affect in Shakespeare’s early history plays. In *2 Henry VI*, the king juxtaposes a monarch’s personal contentment with his public responsibilities:

Was ever king that joy’d an earthly throne,

²¹ Paul Alpers calls this formulation one of the play’s two pastoral “mottos.” See *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 72.

²² Borlik reads the Duke’s language as contributing to “the status of Arden as a classless, republican society” (*Ecocriticism*, 181).

And could command no more content than I?

No sooner was I crept out of my cradle

But I was made a king, at nine months old.

Was never subject long'd to be a king

As I do long and wish to be a subject. (*2 Henry VI* 4.8.1–6)

King Henry laments his lack of opportunity to develop an identity distinct from his political position. He can command his subjects (for the time being), but he cannot command his own contentment. This discrepancy is born out in *3 Henry VI*, as Henry is deposed and apprehended:

My crown is in my heart, not on my head;

Not decked with diamonds and Indian stones,

Nor to be seen: my crown is called content:

A crown it is that seldom kings enjoy. (*3 Henry VI* 3.1.62–65)

Henry asserts the very affective autonomy that he denied in the preceding play. However, he still constructs contentment in opposition to kingship (it is neither evident in his royal trappings nor common for a king to possess). In fact, he can only claim this contentment when he is forcibly removed from political power, as the Second Gamekeeper's undercutting remarks make clear: "Well, if you be a king crown'd with content, / Your crown content and you must be contented / To go along with us" (66–68). In Shakespeare's first tetralogy, then, the ruler's contentment conflicts with his status as a ruler; the existence of one jeopardizes or even precludes the other. Moreover, Henry VI's construction of contentment as an individual, exclusively inward phenomenon makes such a conflict almost inevitable. By contrast, in *As You Like It* Duke Senior establishes a continuity between individual and communal contentment, rather than setting up overly rigid—and potentially oppressive—boundaries between private and public. Consequently,

his status as rightful ruler is confirmed, not contradicted, by the contentment he fosters in the forest. Contented and would-be contented pairs enter pastoral Arden, where they are integrated into a political community through the affective agency of Duke Senior, who both exemplifies and engenders contentment for and in his subjects.

Characters repeatedly register the phenomenon of collective contentment within Duke Senior's pastoral counter-court in terms of Elizabethan political values such as freedom, counsel, and consent. His own characterization of life in Arden as "sweet" and "free" parallels and supports Celia's affiliation of "content" and "liberty" in the previous scene. In the span of five lines, two separate characters associate Arden with freedom. Moreover, when Duke Senior imagines the "icy fang / And churlish chiding of winter's wind" and other natural afflictions as wise "counsellors / That feelingly persuade me what I am" (2.1.7–8, 10–11), he views his pastoral position as consonant with both L'Espine's ideal of national contentation and Renaissance humanism more broadly, within which political counselors were central.

When Orlando and his brother are reconciled in the final act of the play, their discussion of Oliver's swift engagement to the still-disguised Celia associates contentment with consent. Orlando first questions Oliver as if he were the sole agent: "Is't possible that on so little acquaintance you should like her? That but seeing, you should love her? And loving, woo? And wooing, she should grant? And will you persevere to enjoy her?" (5.2.1–4). Oliver replies, "say with me, 'I love Aliena'; say with her that she loves me; consent with both that we may enjoy each other" (7–9). Derived from the Latin *consentire*, most literally meaning "to feel together," "consent" captures the Shakespearean emphasis on contentment as a communal condition.²³ Indeed, if we take Oliver's words literally, then he wants his brother to repeat the words "I love

²³ OED "consent" v.

Aliena,” thereby making his own romantic love, ostensibly the most private of emotional experiences, into a shared state. Oliver understands his upcoming marriage as a mode of mutual enjoyment characterized by consent and with consequences that radiate beyond the couple itself.²⁴

Significantly, consent was one of Duke Frederick’s greatest fears during his reign. When he first learns of his daughter’s flight, he rails, “Can it be possible that no man saw them? / It cannot be. Some villains of my court / Are of consent and sufferance in this” (2.2.1–3). Before his spontaneous religious conversion and abdication of political power, Frederick cannot construe the collaboration of his subjects as anything other than villainous. Though he certainly does not mean the term positively, his invocation of “sufferance” characterizes the consenting courtiers as capable of patient forbearance, recalling both the dialogue of Duke Senior and Amiens in the previous scene and Frederick’s own earlier distrust of Rosalind’s “patience” (1.3.72). When faced with a challenge to his absolute authority, Frederick imagines this resistance in the form of consent and content. Nor is this combination without political precedent, as we may recall from Smith’s *De Republica Anglorum* that the English Parliament actually used the word “content” to voice their consent during the voting process. In contrast to Duke Frederick, Orlando eagerly embraces Oliver’s appeal to consent and grants his request: “You have my consent. Let your wedding be tomorrow. Thither will I invite the Duke and all’s contented followers” (5.2.12–13). Orlando’s response unites consent and content within a public, pastoral marriage overseen by Duke Senior. While Shakespeare in *As You Like It* affiliates period concepts of content with a discourse of liberty and counsel, it is the principle of consent that

²⁴ On mutuality in the Oliver-Celia relationship and the play overall, see Nathaniel Strout, “*As You Like It*, *Rosalynde*, and Mutuality,” *Studies in English Literature* 41 (2001): 277–95, esp. 287.

most comes to define the contentment upon which the play's social, erotic, and political bonds are ultimately founded.

Testing Boundaries: Desire and Discontent

If Duke Senior serves as the primary spokesperson of pastoral communal contentment in *As You Like It*, Rosalind and Jaques affect the greatest stain on the concept, albeit in different ways. Through these characters, Shakespeare takes up two of the most compelling challenges to contentment as it was conceived in Renaissance England: the potentially unsettling effects of erotic desire and the evident persistence (and even attractiveness) of discontent. As a result, these characters contribute uniquely to Shakespeare's attempt to represent and revise contentment's cultural functions.

Although, as Gail Kern Paster notes, "it is the weight of Rosalind's sadness that immediately greets us in her first appearance onstage," Rosalind very quickly doffs this particular emotional state.²⁵ Instead, it is her acute and repeatedly articulated desire for Orlando that seems most at odds with the play's presentation of contentment elsewhere. Contentment is defined as "Having one's desires bounded by what one has," but Rosalind's desires put considerable pressure on the boundaries of contentment. Moreover, Rosalind's emotional experiences and erotic desires overlap with her cross-dressing and play-acting. Contentment characteristically suggests self-sameness and stability, even among authors who admit that contentment depends upon necessarily contingent relationships between self and other. Yet Rosalind masterfully shifts her identity as the occasion demands. Though Rosalind as Ganymede

²⁵ Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 118. For Paster, Rosalind's emotional transformation is connected to a "biological warming . . . within a 'natural' paradigm of femaleness" represented repeatedly by Shakespeare (88).

goes on to play the role of “Rosalind,” this circular form of self-sameness seems quite far afield of that associated with contentment. At the same time, other aspects of Rosalind’s characterization accord with contentment, and Shakespeare allows these various aspects to coexist. In certain respects, Rosalind may remind us of Sidney’s Pyrocles, who similarly engages his beloved in a cross-dressed disguise. In the *Old Arcadia*, Sidney renders an experience of romantic mutuality and sexual fulfillment instrumental to Pyrocles’s eventual contentment (see Chapter 2). Rather than making erotic desire serviceable to contentment, Shakespeare proves more interested in anatomizing both and exploiting a productive tension between the two. Through Rosalind, Shakespeare evaluates the meaning of contentment without evacuating it.

Rosalind may not always perfectly embody Duke Senior’s pastoral ideal of contentment, but she expertly performs the virtues of affective community to which it is tethered in the play.²⁶ Rosalind displays a remarkable ability to unite individuals and restore communities. She invokes contentment twice: once to the palpably sarcastic Touchstone when they first arrive in Arden (2.4.13–15), and again in her list of promises to the pairs of lovers in the play’s final act (5.2.107–8). Moreover, critics have understood Rosalind as the play’s great icon of the “inclusive self” that “alters itself to accommodate the uniqueness of everything it encounters,” enabling her to recognize, accept, and embrace another human being in companionate love.²⁷

²⁶ On the similar functions of Duke Senior and Rosalind, see A. Stuart Daley, “Where are the Woods in *As You Like It?*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 34 (1983): 180. Thomas Parrott makes Rosalind, not Duke Senior, the source of positive affect, saying, “Of all the heroines of Shakespearean comedy, Rosalind in Arden . . . is the happiest.” He adds, “This atmosphere of happiness breathes through all the scenes in Arden.” See *Shakespearean Comedy* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1949, 1962), 173.

²⁷ Bracher, “Contrary Notions of Identity,” 223. Margaret Boerner Beckman describes Rosalind as “a seemingly impossible reconciliation of opposites” who “brings contrarities together and harmonizes them.” See “The Figure

These features of Rosalind are evident in her interactions throughout the play, and they especially resonate with her efforts to engineer the multiple marriages presided over by Duke Senior, which solemnize a communal contentment within the pastoral polity. Rosalind enacts the bridging of subjectivities that Shakespeare locates at the heart of collective contentment and the play's political purview.

Consequently, Rosalind rejects the constraining conventions of Petrarchan poetics. When Rosalind rebuffs a love letter from the shepherdess Phoebe, she claims, "She Phoebes me. Mark how the tyrant writes" (4.3.39). The Norton editors gloss Rosalind's first remark as "Addresses me as Phoebe would—that is, in a disdainful manner."²⁸ However, the line also suggests that Phoebe turns Ganymede into another Phoebe. Phoebe remakes Ganymede in her own image, or, perhaps more accurately, into the image of the Petrarchan beloved that Silvius had applied, rightly or wrongly, to Phoebe. If Rosalind educates Orlando, then Phoebe effaces Ganymede. Rosalind is able to alter, accommodate, and seek contentment in relation to the romantic other, but Phoebe tyrannously rewrites her beloved according to a literary tradition that she herself decried for describing women as "tyrants, butchers, murderers" (3.5.14).²⁹ Phoebe, who clearly

of Rosalind In *As You Like It*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 29 (1978): 41. See also Edward I. Berry, "Rosalynde and Rosalind," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 31 (1980): 52; and Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998), 205, 203, and 211.

²⁸ 4.3.39.n, page 1669.

²⁹ According to Tiffany, Petrarchism "traps the speaker in a condition of separateness and discontent, an isolated melancholic stance mirroring that of the satirical reformer" ("That Reason Wonder May Distinguish," 228). See also Barbara J. Bono, "Mixed Gender, Mixed Genre in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*," in *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, ed. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 189–212.

would have sympathized with Spenser's Mirabella, identifies a potentially sinister strain in Silvius's courtship that links her with the unjust abuses of power perpetrated in the play's opening acts by Duke Frederick and Oliver—both the “tyrant Duke” who threatens to kill Rosalind if she does not flee the court and the “tyrant brother” whose “house is but a butchery.” Yet when Phoebe seeks to woo Ganymede, she reproduces the conventions of Petrarchan erotic verse so antithetical to the operations of the forest community. Through Rosalind's rejection of this literary tradition, which had a continued cachet in the Elizabethan court long after the queen's marital prospects were a pressing issue of international affairs, the play comments, albeit obliquely, on English political culture. By refusing the gendered violence and rigid hierarchies of Petrarchism, Rosalind becomes an author of contentment within the play's pastoral world.

To recognize the full effect of Shakespeare's depiction of Rosalind, we may recall the character's originary English namesake, Spenser's Rosalind, first described (though never appearing) in *The Shepheardes Calender*. By following Lodge and naming his heroine Rosalind, Shakespeare evokes the significances of the Spenserian original.³⁰ In the *Calender*, Rosalind functions as the object of Colin Clout's Petrarchan discontent, which (as we saw in Chapter 3) fractures his connections to both shepherd society and pastoral poetics. Spenser would later mount challenges to the Petrarchan tradition in the *Amoretti* volume, *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, and *The Faerie Queene*, but Shakespeare puts a rejection of Petrarchism into Rosalind's

³⁰ Clare R. Kinney writes, “Lodge's revision of the gendered dynamics of Spenserian Petrarchan pastoral grants a voice to the silenced Rosalind of Spenser's work, in turn providing a prototype for the talkative Rosalind of *As You Like It*. . . . Lodge's Rosalynde usurps E.K.'s role as informed commentator on a new poet's makings; Shakespeare's Rosalind becomes E.K. with an attitude.” See “Feigning Female Faining: Spenser, Lodge, Shakespeare, and Rosalind,” *Modern Philology* 95 (1998): 292, 304.

own mouth—albeit his own Rosalind. The scapegoat for Colin Clout’s melancholic solipsism becomes *As You Like It*’s exemplar of contented communion with others.

The various qualities of Rosalind’s character—specifically, the extremity of her desire versus her instrumentality to a communal contentment opposed to Petrarchism—lend themselves to multiple interpretive conclusions. On the one hand, Shakespeare’s portrayal of Rosalind may reveal the author approaching an especially capacious definition of contentment, one that can accommodate quite a lot of desire within its boundaries, similar in several respects to the simultaneously erotic and ethical contentment of Pyrocles in the *Old Arcadia*. On the other hand, Shakespeare may present Rosalind’s frenzied disposition as an alternative to the contentment she at other moments seems to possess and produce, an example of the playwright’s uncanny ability to hold multiple perspectives in suspension.³¹ In neither of these cases, however, does the persistence or the power of Rosalind’s desires demand a rejection of contentment.

While Rosalind qualifies the contentedness described by other characters, Jaques compellingly contests the ideal of contentment.³² However, I contend that the author’s portrayal of Jaques also confirms certain aspects of content’s social and political function in the play overall. By making Jaques such a show-stealing character, Shakespeare communicates the seductiveness of discontent, even if he must ultimately bracket it from the play’s prevailing

³¹ On the play’s perspectivism, see Colie, *Shakespeare’s Living Art*, 243–67, esp. 261. On Rosalind in particular as “the epitome of that fusion of irony and idealism which forms the pastoralism of Arden and the comic basis of *As You Like It*,” see Draper, “Shakespeare’s Pastoral Comedy,” 15–16. See also Robert B. Pierce, “The Moral Languages of *Rosalynde* and *As You Like It*,” *Studies in Philology* 68 (1971): 176.

³² According to Draper, Rosalind and Jaques “have a particularly close connection with the pastoralism of Arden,” representing “respectively the proper and the improper use of the ‘freedom’ of Arden, the realization and the frustration of the play’s central ideal” (“Shakespeare’s Pastoral Comedy,” 12).

social vision. Critics have long described Jaques as discontented, but they have done so primarily with reference to the stock dramatic character type of the malcontent or various Renaissance theories of melancholy, while the period discourse on contentment has gone unremarked.³³ Indeed, the character is first named by one of Duke Senior's attendant lords as "melancholy Jaques" (2.1.26), and Jaques diagnoses himself with a traveler's melancholy while talking with Rosalind (4.1.10–33), directly countering Rosalind's earlier approval of Touchstone's maxim, "travellers must be content" (2.4.13–14). Perhaps most memorably, Jaques boasts, "I can suck melancholy out of a song like a weasel sucks eggs" (2.5.11–12). Undeniably, Jaques serves as a source of considerable humor, but his own humors put him at odds with the pastoral comedy's key value of contentment. Moreover, Jaques defines his state as a "melancholy of mine own" (4.1.14–15), both an individual and an isolating condition and, therefore, opposed to a collective experience of contentment. Jaques insists that his affect is purely a private possession, rather than a transaction or an accord between selves. Consequently, he flees Duke Senior's company in the forest, and he indirectly mocks the community-building process in which the Duke is affectively

³³ See Elmer Edgar Stoll, "Shakespeare, Marston, and the Malcontent Type," *Modern Philology* 3 (1906): 281–303; Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 95; Robert B. Bennet, "Reform of a Malcontent: Jacques and the Meaning of *As You Like It*," *Shakespeare Studies* 9 (1976): 183–204; and Chris Fitter, *Radical Shakespeare: Politics and Stagecraft in the Early Career* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 226–27. Judy Z. Kronenfeld traces a trajectory of pastoral melancholics from Sanazzaro's Sincero, to Sidney's Philisides, to Shakespeare's Jaques. See "Shakespeare's Jaques and the Pastoral Cult of Solitude," *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 18 (1976): 451–73. For accounts of Jaques and the wounded stag that emphasize the character's melancholy, see Myrddin Jones, "Gray, Jaques, and the Man of Feeling," *Review of English Studies* 25.97 (1974): 39–48; and Winfried Schleiner, "Jaques and the Melancholy Stag," *English Language Notes* 17 (1980): 175–79.

engaged with his own “duc dame,” “a Greek invocation to call fools into a circle” that parodies the sung pastoral invitation “Come hither, come hither, come hither” (2.5.52–53, 5). Unlike the other characters, Jaques indulges an emotional state articulated solely in terms of the self, and his individualistic and irremediable discontent has political consequences.

Shakespeare demonstrates the problematic political implications of discontent when Jaques declares himself “ambitious for a motley coat” (2.7.43). Duke Senior immediately consents to Jaques’s request (44), in contrast to the strict regulation of fools in Duke Frederick’s court.³⁴ But Jaques’s ambitions raise additional difficulties as he continues: “I must have liberty / Withal, as large a charter as the wind, / To blow on whom I please, for so fools have” (47–49). At first, the invocation of liberty and the desire to counsel Duke Senior’s forest court as an allowed fool would seem to align him with the play’s larger portrayal of political community. In reply, Duke Senior observes that Jaques “hast been a libertine / As sensual as the brutish sting itself” (65–66). The shift from “liberty” to “libertine” lessens the audience’s ability to consider Jaques a serious candidate for a political advisor.³⁵ The Duke does not deny that fools and social satirists valuably contribute to the health of a commonwealth, but he questions Jaques’s appropriateness for the role. As described by the Duke, Jaques’s hypocrisy in “chiding sin” of

³⁴ Celia warns Touchstone that he will “be whipped for taxation one of these days” (1.2.70–71) and observes that “since the little wit that fools have was silenced, the little foolery that wise men have makes a great show” (1.2.74–76). As editors note, this may be an allusion to the Bishops’ Ban of 1599.

³⁵ On Duke Senior’s choice of the word “libertine” and a possible religious resonance with the Familists and Seekers, see Robert Schwartz, “Rosalynde Among the Familists: *As You Like It* and an Expanded View of its Sources,” *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 20 (1989): 69–76. On the connection between Libertines and anarchy in Elizabethan theological debates, see Helga Duncan, “‘Headdie Ryots’ as Reformations: Marlowe’s Libertine Poetics,” *Early Modern Literary Studies* 12.2 (2006), 38 paras.

which he himself is guilty refuses the social ties of contentment because it both betrays an inaccurate sense of self and results in a further distancing of self from other. Some critics have viewed the Duke's lines as a false characterization of Jaques, but Jaques himself does not deny the accusations, instead defending his ambitions on other bases.³⁶

Our reading of the Duke's response will be based, in part, upon our interpretation of an earlier line, when he says, "I love to cope him in these sullen fits, / For then he's full of matter" (2.1.67–68). The *Norton Shakespeare* quite reasonably glosses "cope" as "contend with." However, the *OED* lists other definitions of "cope," meaning, "To meet, meet with, come into contact (hostile or friendly) with" or "to meet with; to come into contact, touch, or relation with," attributed first to Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and *Rape of Lucrece*, respectively.³⁷ These possible meanings temper the adversarial edge: the Duke wants to engage with Jaques. This sense of "cope" is consistent both with Shakespeare's representation of contentment as a relational principle between individuals within a community and with the Duke's affective and political *modus operandi*. Instead of exploiting Jaques's discontent for his own pleasure, the Duke may, in fact, be trying to assuage Jaques's condition and integrate him more fully into his forest society. But as Jaques knows, "misery doth part / The flux of company" (51–52).

Jaques may be "full of matter," but he is unable to contain himself like the other characters, and his discontent is both a cause and consequence of his isolation from the community. Jaques departs from the play's concluding celebrations, saying, "So, to your pleasures; / I am for other than for dancing measures" (5.4.181–82). Unlike Duke Senior's merry

³⁶ See Schwartz's discussion on the critical response to Duke Senior's remarks ("Rosalynde Among the Familists," 70).

³⁷ *OED* "cope" v2.III.7 and II.5, though the entry suggests that the latter is only used intransitively.

men, who go into “voluntary exile” to join the pastoral collective, Jaques chooses to remove himself from that same society. Shakespeare takes seriously the malcontent’s ability to expose injustice and generate compelling critiques of the political order—as in Jaques’s lament for the deer—and he underscores the attractiveness of this discontented passion, which has captivated readers and theatergoers alike.³⁸ At the same time, however, Jaques undermines the affective bonds on which the play’s communities are built, and he is unable to persist even in the role of social critic. Rosalind’s libidinal excess can be tempered through marriage in accordance with contentment, but Shakespeare does not identify a similar, socially-sanctioned outlet for the lackluster wedding guest. Jaques’s rejection of contentment ultimately renders him incapable of participation in pastoral community or the fulfillment of any civic role whatsoever, and his apparent incapacity for happiness keeps him outside the comic commonwealth.³⁹

At the same time, Jaques’s self-imposed exile may be understood as a kind of preemptive public service, especially when we compare him to other Shakespearean malcontents, such as Iago and Don John. Like Jaques, Iago is defined by his “*constitutional* discontentedness,” which Cefalu connects to his “overstimulated mentalizing”: “Iago’s outsider status derives from thinking too much about what others are thinking.” Iago is “too involved in the secret lives of others.”⁴⁰ Paradoxically, this very “hyperattunement to others” alienates him from and makes

³⁸ As Borlik notes, “Jaques frames his assault on hunting by appealing to republican principles,” which recasts the benevolent counter-court as a tyrannical regime built upon the subjugation and suffering of animals (*Ecocriticism*, 181–82). However, I would maintain that Jaques’ characterization elsewhere complicates any straightforward connection between him and what Borlik identifies as republicanism.

³⁹ See Frye, *Natural Perspective*, 92–93, 95; Priest, “*Oratio and Negotium*,” 273; and Fitter, *Radical Shakespeare*, 227–28.

⁴⁰ Cefalu, “The Burdens of Mind Reading,” 269, 286.

him hostile toward society.⁴¹ Although Jaques is obviously far less destructive and vicious than Iago, his discontent leads to a moment of similarly obtrusive involvement in the lives of others when he bafflingly intervenes in the wedding of Touchstone and Audrey. In the earlier *Much Ado About Nothing*, Don John, whose “sadness is without limit” (1.3.4), “make[s] all use of” his “discontent” to meddle with the marriage of Hero by persuading Claudio and Don Pedro that she has been unfaithful (30–31), anticipating Iago’s machinations.⁴² Unlike his discontented counterparts, however, Jaques actually helps to solemnize this pastoral marriage through his interference. Touchstone wants Sir Oliver Martext to preside over the ceremony, providing “a good excuse for me hereafter to leave my wife” (3.3.75–76). Over the course of the scene, Jaques shifts from being an eavesdropper to a participant in the ceremony before finally hijacking it altogether. Jaques forces the fool and his shepherdess to take part in the very same public ritual that he cannot bear to celebrate. Cefalu’s discussion of Iago’s discontent as an excessive concern with others helps us reconcile Jaques’s anti-social tendencies with his frankly nosy interference. But the comparison also underscores the fundamental differences between the characters and the genres of their respective plays. In *Othello*, Iago’s attempt to achieve contentment through cruelty ends with Desdemona’s death, followed by his own exposure and subsequent profession, “From this time forth I never will speak word” (5.2.310). By removing himself from the community, Jaques effectively silences himself, but before his discontent could affect more

⁴¹ Cefalu, “The Burdens of Mind Reading,” 266.

⁴² Don John’s account of his “mortifying mischief” reads like the antithesis of Corin’s description of himself as a “true laborer” (see above): “I must be sad when I have cause, and smile at no man’s jests; eat when I have stomach, and wait for no man’s leisure; sleep when I am drowsy, and tend on no man’s business; laugh when I am merry, and claw no man in his humour” (1.3.10–14).

drastic consequences or prey upon the content of others. Instead, by appending Touchstone and Audrey to the assemblage of marriages in the final act, Jaques makes a token contribution to the contentment of the community, even if his own isolating condition makes it impossible for him to share in that experience.

In their own ways, both Rosalind and Jaques help to reproduce communal contentment, though Jaques's participation in that community is limited (and eventually ended) by his anti-social affect. While Shakespeare juxtaposes the play's presentation of contentment with desire and discontent, he nevertheless affirms content's social function. By addressing alternatives to contentment, he maintains its political usefulness without succumbing to pastoral idealization.

Contentment, Convention, and the Community of the Theater

In the play's final acts, contentment enables the resolution of romantic and political tensions, most obviously through the efforts of Rosalind. Rosalind explains in the person of Ganymede, "I am in a holiday humour, and like enough to consent" (4.1.59–60). Her consenting is obviously integral to her marriage with Orlando, but she also makes arrangements to secure Phoebe's consent to a marriage with Silvius. As Rosalind parses out the play's complicated couplings and prepares the lovers for the next day's matrimony, she promises Orlando, "I will content you if what pleases you contents you, and you shall be married tomorrow" (5.2.107–8). Through Rosalind, pleasure is successfully contained by content, transformed into a pleasure commensurate with collectivity and realized in marriage—specifically, a marriage to the daughter of the once and future duke. When Hymen inexplicably arrives, the marriage god begins the ceremony saying, "Here's eight that must take hands / To join in Hymen's bands, / If truth holds true contents" (5.4.117–19), punning on the two meanings of "contents": both "those

who are satisfied” and “that which is contained.”⁴³ Shakespeare encourages the audience, with Duke Senior, to “trust” that “these rites” will “end, in true delights” (186–87).

Offstage, Duke Frederick forsakes authority the moment he enters the forest, at the very “skirts of this wild wood” (5.4.143), as if the tyrant dissolves upon contact with contentedness in Shakespeare’s apparent submission to generic convention. Unlike Jaques, Frederick is not immune to Arden’s affective contagion. His terribly convenient conversion follows fast upon the romance intrusion of a lion, as narrated by Oliver, and the aforementioned appearance of Hymen, a series of events that suggest literary convention trumping realism. However, these moments of implausibility, examples of what W. Hutchings deems the play’s “outrageous artificiality,” do not undo the intellectual work performed by the first four acts.⁴⁴ By making concessions to comic conventions so self-consciously, Shakespeare encourages his audience to think critically—but not dismissively—about the happy, contented ending. Furthermore, the relocation from court to country projected after the play’s conclusion does not signal a rejection of Arden’s contented community. In Elizabethan England, the authors debating contentment do not limit its

⁴³ On the incredible range of meanings in Hymen’s line “If truth holds true contents,” see Malcolm Evans, *Signifying Nothing: Truth’s True Contents in Shakespeare’s Text* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 143–91.

⁴⁴ W. Hutchings, “‘Exits and Entrances’: Ways in and out of Arden,” *Critical Inquiry* 21 (1979): 4. Susan Carlson notes a “formal tension between his [Shakespeare’s] agenda for social change and his generic constraints,” but Martha Ronk argues that “only by means of artifice . . . does the play wrap up and stop the endless play of poses, speeches, dresses, redresses, and meanings.” See Carlson, “Women in *As You Like It*: Community, Change, and Choice,” *Essays in Literature* 14 (1987): 154; and Ronk, “Locating the Visual in ‘As You Like It,’” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52 (2001): 268. See also Albert R. Cirillo, “*As You Like It*: Pastoralism Gone Awry,” *ELH* 38 (1971): 19–39.

political value to utopian thought experiments; they mine the concept for its relevance to and usefulness for the English court and the English nation. The departure from pastoral at the end of *As You Like It* is not equivalent to the denial of contentment; it constitutes the realization of contentment's political purpose.

Critics have recently suggested that Shakespeare's works might be of use in recovering a "space of *political community*" that has been lost in twenty-first-century thought. My reading of *As You Like It* offers one way in which Shakespeare used sixteenth-century concepts of contentment to imagine just such a political community, along with "the necessity and inherent difficulties with reconciling individuals and their bodies with the good of a community."⁴⁵ Even if the play withholds a prescription for specific political action, it represents the psychophysiological condition most conducive to political community and most productive of political freedom. Aligning contentment with a constellation of political virtues, including liberty, counsel, and consent, Shakespeare depicts a commonwealth founded upon the bonds between individual subjects. Shakespeare's pastoral representation of community foregrounds the affective relationships that may make such a state possible, even as the play brings audience members together in the shared experience of comedy, united by Rosalind's epilogue in a collective applause. Momentarily, at least, the play incorporates individual theatergoers into a contented community—a Globe microcosm of a possible English polity. Shakespeare does not produce an unqualified encomium of pastoral contentment, but he commits himself to a

⁴⁵ Bernard J. Dobski and Dustin Gish, "Shakespeare and the Body Politic," in *Shakespeare and the Body Politic*, ed. Bernard J. Dobski and Dustin Gish (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 4–5. The edited collection as a whole is dedicated to recovering "an appreciation of the political community *as a body* worth preserving" through the works of Shakespeare (5).

thoughtful exploration of contentment's political potentials and social consequences, and he invites us to consider these ideas as we like it.

Chapter Five

Satan and His Discontents: Pastoral and Imperial Affects in Milton's *Paradise Lost*

Discontent was originally a character in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. At least, Milton lists "Discontent" as such in the Trinity Manuscript's preliminary notes for the dramatic work that would one day become *Paradise Lost*. Discontent appears alongside other allegorical personifications such as Labor, Sickness, and Ignorance, as well as more positive figures like the three theological virtues.¹ Obviously, Discontent and his (or, possibly, her?) associates did not make the final cut, with only Sin and Death present as allegorical figures in the published poem. Nevertheless, Milton diffuses discontent throughout the text because he, like many early modern thinkers, understood it as a cause and consequence of sin, including "Mans First Disobedience" (1.1) and "the mortal Sin / Original" (9.1003–4). In place of Discontent, Milton creates the character of Satan, perhaps the greatest malcontent in all of Western literature, and explores how Adam and Eve lose the contentment of pastoral Eden.

Scholars have discussed representations of emotion and the passions in *Paradise Lost*, but they have not recognized how Milton reshapes the Reformation discourse on the emotional principle of contentment.² John Steadman has claimed that Milton "attempt[s] (as far as possible)

¹ *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Don M. Wolfe et. al., 8 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 8:554–55.

² Laura Knoppers discusses Milton's response to a "politics of joy" that was related to royal spectacles in the early reign of Charles II. Michael Schoenfeldt draws on concepts of the passions to explicate Milton's ambivalent representation of the emotions. Richard J. DuRocher examines Milton's debt to Virgil and argues that "far from denying, avoiding, downplaying, or explaining away the epic tradition's reliance on the passions, Milton designed

to depict the ideals of earthly and celestial happiness literally,” and contentment was one of the primary categories by which such happiness was understood in the early modern period.³ Like many of his literary antecedents, Milton explores the concept of contentment through pastoral, a mode that critics have long recognized as central to the depiction of Eden.⁴ While Milton had earlier experimented with pastoral in works like the *Nativity Ode*, *Epitaphium Damonis*, and *Lycidas*, he suffuses his unfallen world with pastoral because, for him, the mode retains some vestige of innocent, godly contentment.⁵ Furthermore, Milton thoroughly interweaves his

his epic to accentuate it.” See Knoppers, *Historicizing Milton: Spectacle, Power, and Poetry in Restoration England* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 68; Schoenfeldt, “‘Commotion Strange’: Passion in *Paradise Lost*,” in *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion*, ed. Gail Kern Paster, Katharine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 43–67; DuRocher, “‘Tears Such as Angels Weep’: Passion and Allusion in *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Studies* 49 (2009): 124. See also Maggie Kilgour, “Satan’s Envy and Poetic Emulation,” in *Their Maker’s Image: New Essays on John Milton*, ed. Mary C. Fenton and Louis Schwartz (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2011), 47–61.

³ John Steadman, *Milton and the Renaissance Hero* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 186.

⁴ John R. Knott calls the poem “an epic with a pastoral center.” See *Milton’s Pastoral Vision: An Approach to Paradise Lost* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), xii. See also Donald Rosenberg, *Oaten Reeds and Trumpets: Pastoral and Epic in Virgil, Spenser, and Milton* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1981); Richard Mallette, *Spenser, Milton, and Renaissance Pastoral* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1981); Barbara Lewalski, *Paradise Lost and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 173–95; Barry Weller, “The Epic as Pastoral: Milton, Marvell, and the Plurality of Genre,” *New Literary History* 30 (1999): 143–57; and Jeffrey S. Theis, “‘The purlieus of heaven’: Milton’s Eden as a Pastoral Forest,” in *Renaissance Ecology: Imagining Eden in Milton’s England*, ed. Ken Hiltner (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2008), 229–57.

⁵ As Lewalski explains, Milton deploys specific modes “to characterize the various orders of being” (*Rhetoric of Literary Forms*, 19). Elsewhere, Lewalski describes Milton’s association of literary pastoral with Christian

pastoral with georgic elements to portray prelapsarian contentment. Appropriately, the discontented Satan becomes the despoiler of pastoral, as he provokes Eve to sin and causes the couple to break “happiness entire” through disobedience (6.741). Milton’s Satan simultaneously parodies the Reformation principle of Christian contentment and endangers Edenic pastoral contentment.

While Milton’s depictions of content and discontent are in many ways consistent with those of his Protestant predecessors, he recognizes that the language of containment through which authors typically constructed contentment had limited applications for his yet-unfallen subjects. In their blissful garden, Adam and Eve need not fret over now-familiar forms of self-containment because their inner selves interact freely with their external environment.⁶ However, sin fundamentally changes the relationship between self, world, and God. Satanic discontent reconstitutes the experience of selfhood as a space removed from and defined in opposition to the outside world.⁷ Such discontent, in turn, promotes the oppressive imperial politics so often

perfection and heavenly paradise in *Lycidas*, which “transforms the genre of pastoral elegy as it enacts the collapse of pastoral,” and concludes with “Lycidas/King enjoying the perfection of pastoral in heaven.” See “Milton and the Culture Wars,” in *Visionary Milton: Essays on Prophecy and Violence*, ed. Peter E. Medine, John T. Shawcross, and David V. Urban (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2010), 31.

⁶ James Kuzner describes the unfallen pair as “critically disciplined but affectively open, indeed disciplined to better enjoy open being.” See “Habermas Goes to Hell: Pleasure, Public Reason, and the Republicanism of *Paradise Lost*,” *Criticism* 51 (2009): 120.

⁷ Ken Hiltner connects Milton’s monist materialist treatment of place to early modern ecological concerns. See *Milton and Ecology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). See also Mary Fenton, *Milton’s Places of Hope: Spiritual and Political Connections of Hope with Land* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006); Diane Kelsey McColley, *Poetry and Ecology in the Age of Milton and Marvell* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007); Maura Brady,

emphasized by recent critics. Adam and Eve emulate a diabolic discontent and therefore subject themselves and their pastoral world to Satanic imperialism. Even if *Paradise Lost* reflects deep ambivalences—Milton’s own, and his culture’s—about imperialism, it unequivocally locates a distinctly postlapsarian discontent at the heart of earthly empire.⁸

In this final chapter, I argue that Satan spreads his defining characteristic of discontent to Eden in imperialist fashion, severing man’s contented connection with creation and precipitating the fall of pastoral. First, I contextualize Satan’s discontent and identify it as an imperialist affect. By refusing to have his desires bounded by what he has, Satan perverts the Reformation principle of contentment and consequently finds it impossible to relate to the world around him in any way other than as a conqueror. Second, I discuss the contented permeability experienced in prelapsarian Eden, which Milton represents by conjoining the pastoral and georgic modes. Third, I examine how the sinful discontent propagated by Satan introduces a rupture between self and world. For Milton, the production of postlapsarian psychology coincides with the loss of

“Space and the Persistence of Place in *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Quarterly* 41 (2007): 167–82; John Gillies, “Space and Place in *Paradise Lost*,” *ELH* 74 (2007): 27–57; and Andrew Mattison, *Milton’s Uncertain Eden: Understanding Place in Paradise Lost* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

⁸ David Quint and David Armitage identify Milton as firmly anti-imperialist. See Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 308–24; and Armitage, “John Milton: Poet against Empire,” in *Milton and Republicanism*, ed. David Armitage et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 206–25. Subsequent critics, however, have stressed the complexity and ambivalence in Milton’s thinking about imperialism. See J. Martin Evans, *Milton’s Imperial Epic: Paradise Lost and the Discourse of Colonialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 28. For a collection of essays that variously trace Milton’s response to imperialism, see *Milton and the Imperial Vision*, ed. Rajan Balachandra and Elizabeth Sauer (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1999).

pastoral contentment, ultimately giving rise to epic and empire. Finally, I consider how Milton's presentation of contentment applies to the archangel Michael's famous identification of a "paradise within" (12.587) and the poem's concluding response to its political moment. By revising the Protestant discourse on contentment and the English pastoral tradition, Milton marshals the resources of Renaissance and Reformation to endure, lament, and resist the Restoration.

Diabolic Discontent: The Affect of Empire

Scholars have long recognized despair as one of Satan's defining characteristics.⁹ However, concepts of despair and discontent were thoroughly intertwined in early modern discourse, and Milton repeatedly identifies Satan and his fellow rebels as discontented.¹⁰ At the same time, though, Satan upholds a model of self-containment not unlike that imagined by early modern theorists of contentment. His ideal of contained autonomy reflects in perverse fashion the patience, self-sameness, and self-mastery conventionally associated with contentment in the

⁹ The most extensive recent study of Milton's Satan is Neil Forsyth's *The Satanic Epic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). See also Lewalski, *Rhetoric of Literary Forms*, 64; Danny Campbell, *Reading the Rhetoric of Revenge from Jacobean Drama to Milton* (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 2002), 177–99; Anthony Low, *Aspects of Subjectivity: Society and Individuality from the Middle Ages to Shakespeare and Milton* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2003), 159; Fenton, *Milton's Places of Hope*, 39; and DuRocher, "Tears Such as Angels Weep," 140.

¹⁰ Two recent studies prominently describe Satan as "malcontent" and "discontented": Campbell, *Reading the Rhetoric of Revenge*; and Bernard J. Paris, *Heaven and Its Discontents: Milton's Characters in Paradise Lost* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2010). However, Campbell reads Satan solely within the stage tradition of revenge tragedy malcontents, and Paris uses a vocabulary of discontent in a purely colloquial sense. Neither critic connects their term to the a Renaissance, Reformation, or Restoration conversation on contentment.

period. This Satanic species of discontent has consequences radiating far beyond the self, however, as it contributes to distinctly imperialist relationships between self and world.

Well before *Paradise Lost*, Reformation writers associated Satan with discontent and identified him as the cause of man's discontent in the fallen world. John Carpenter (1597) calls the devil the "Authour of all Discontentation," and he goes on to list "the horrible rage and furie of that damned and discontented divell" as one of the primary obstacles to the Elizabethan Church and, more broadly, "that eternall peace which the Son of God hath purchased for his Saintes."¹¹ Thomas Gataker (1620) makes Satanic discontent central to the Fall: "no sooner had the Diuell sowen this vnhappy seede of Discontent (the very first sinne of theirs, as I take it with some other Reuerend) in their hearts, but they began presently to deeme themselues poore and in want, because they had not what they would."¹² Gataker parenthetically chimes in on a long-standing theological debate about the respective significance of evil action and evil will in original sin, a debate in which Augustine played a shaping role.¹³ Gataker maintains that man's

¹¹ John Carpenter, *A Preparatiue to Contentation: Conteyning a Display of the Wonderfull Distractions of Men in Opinions and Straunge Conceits: And of the Seuerall Discontentations which are Incident to Euerie Particular Vocation and Condition of Men in This Life* (London, 1597), A1v and 6.

¹² Thomas Gataker, *True Contentment in the Gaine of Godlines, with Its Self-Sufficiencie A Meditation on 1. Timoth. 6. 6* (London, 1620), 47–48. See also Richard Younge, *The Victory of Patience and Benefit of Affliction, with How to Husband it so that the Weakest Christian (with Blessing from Above) May Bee Able to Support Himselfe in His Most Miserable Exigents. Together with a Counterpoyson or Antipoyson against All Griefe* (London, 1636), 88: "For as man delighteth when two Dogs, or two Cocks are a fighting, to encourage them and prick them forward to the combate. Even so doth Sathan deale with us; controversies like a paire of Cudgels are throwne in by the Devill, and taken up by male-contents, who baste one another while he stands by and laughs."

¹³ William Poole, *Milton and the Idea of the Fall* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), esp. 4–5, 21–39.

first sin was discontent, sown by Satan, and that this discontent resulted in their transgression of God's one command.¹⁴ Adam and Eve sinned by not having their desires bounded by what they had, even though what they had included "all earthly happinesse" and dominion over "the whole world" and "all the Creatures." He concludes, moralizing, "Ye see, that a man may be in Paradise, (I might well say, in heauen too, as the Diuell once was) and yet not be happy, if he haue not a contented minde."¹⁵ While Gataker's passage resonates with Milton's narrative, Thomas Watson's *Art of Divine Contentment* (1653) even more effectively anticipates a Miltonic psychology of sin. He bewails, "O this *Divel of discontent*, which whomsoever it possesseth, it makes his heart a little hel."¹⁶ Discontent here is not simply produced or propagated by the devil, but is itself likened to the devil. Like a demonic possession, discontent takes over and transforms the individual. Watson's concept of an interior, private hell overlaps considerably with Milton's portrayal of diabolic discontent. However, Milton also taps into broader, recurring concerns about the relationship between the contented inner self and the contingent outside world. From Book 1 onward, *Paradise Lost* represents discontent as a fraught relationship between self and world that is ultimately generative of Satanic empire.

Milton's Hell is an environment imbued with negative affect. Through the "darkness visible," Satan "discover[s] sights of woe, / Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace / And rest can never dwell, hope never comes / That comes to all" (1.63–67). The "doleful shade"

¹⁴ Edward Leigh similarly lists discontent among the sins involved in original sin. See *A Systeme or Body of Divinity Consisting of Ten Books, Wherein the Fundamentals and Main Grounds of Religion are Opened* (London, 1662), 382.

¹⁵ Gataker, *True Contentment in the Gaine of Godlines*, 47–48.

¹⁶ Thomas Watson, *Autarkeia, or, The Art of Divine Contentment* (London, 1653), 4.

without “rest” parodies the pleasant shades of pastoral landscapes, the conventional scene of classical *otium*.¹⁷ Beelzebub refers to Hell as “the gloomy Deep” (152), and Satan singles out as one of the more inviting spots a “dreary Plain, forlorn and wilde, / The seat of desolation” (180–81). He contrasts Hell with Heaven’s “happy Fields / Where Joy for ever dwells” and calls it instead “this unhappy Mansion” (249–50, 268). Our first glimpse through the eyes of Satan conflates the affects of habitat and habitant: “round he throws his baleful eyes / That witness’d huge affliction and dismay / Mixt with obdurate pride and stedfast hate” (56–58). The functional ambiguity of the word “witness’d” implicates both self and world in this description. First, the eyes are “a sign, or mark of” Satan’s own dismay, pride, and hate; they “make evident” Satan’s own psychological state.¹⁸ At the same time, the eyes are “spectator[s]” that “experience by personal . . . observation.”¹⁹ When Satan opens his eyes, he observes dismay, pride, and hate. Since Satan does not notice his fellow fallen angels for another twenty lines, this second sense of “witness” attributes the negative emotions to the setting itself, rather than its new inhabitants. The characteristics of Satan and Hell blur together in Milton’s introductory descriptions.

Despite this parity between Satan’s inner state and the external environment of Hell, Satan famously asserts his affective autonomy, and it is here that the character frighteningly but fraudulently reflects the early modern discourse on contentment. Satan claims to possess “A

¹⁷ The conventional valuation of pastoral shade is maintained even in Milton’s Eden. In describing their sleeping (and lovemaking) place, the narrator notes, “In shadier Bower / More sacred and sequesterd, though not feignd, / *Pan* or *Silvanus* never slept, not Nymph, / Nor *Faunus* haunted” (4.705–8).

¹⁸ *OED* “witness” v. 1.c and d.

¹⁹ *OED* “witness” v. 4a. As the definition goes on to clarify, “In early use said mainly of the eyes or the ears. (In loose writing often used merely as a synonym of ‘see.’)”

mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time. / The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n" (1.253–55). Stephen Fallon, Ken Hiltner, and Stephen Hequembourg agree in identifying the substance of Satan's Cartesian claim as impossible within the monist materialist universe of Milton's poem.²⁰ Satan boasts to have "realized the subjectivist's dream" (as Hiltner puts it), and does so in nightmarish fashion.²¹ But in this Satan also radicalizes a strain of Reformation discourse on contentment that aims toward an impenetrable, contained self, as in Thomas Taylor's *Treatise of Contentment* (1641). Satan's sense of self-containment manifests a fun-house form of contentment that Cartesianism made more conceptually available. Unfortunately for Satan, and importantly for Milton, this omits a sense of contented satisfaction and tranquility.

Satan's claims to a mind unaffected by changes in time, place, and circumstance correspond with the devilish, philosophical contentment glimpsed in Book 2. While listing the various activities of fallen angels after the parliament at Pandaemonium, Milton describes those who "apart sat on a Hill retir'd / In thoughts more elevate" (2.557–58). Their physical removal from the society of others and the elevation of the thoughts themselves indicate their attempt to foster a life of the mind that transcends their bodily suffering and hellish surroundings. Lost "in wandring mazes" through exercises of "Vain wisdom" (561, 565), they argue their way into a

²⁰ See Stephen Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 194–222; Hiltner, *Milton and Ecology*, 20–25; and Stephen Hequembourg, "The Poetics of Materialism in Cavendish and Milton," *Studies in English Literature* 54 (2014): 182–86.

²¹ Hiltner, *Milton and Ecology*, 22. See also Marcia Landy, "'Bounds Prescrib'd': Milton's Satan and the Politics of Deviance," *Milton Studies* 14 (1980): 117 and 121.

philosophical space removed from the dreary plain below them.²² Indeed, their efforts “with a pleasing sorcerie could charm / Pain for a while or anguish, and excite / Fallacious hope, or arm th’ obdured brest with stubborn patience as with triple steel” (566–69). Engaging their fallen faculties, they counterfeit contentment.

Like these would-be contented philosophers, the rebel angels had earlier invoked—and contrasted—pain and patience after the first battle in Heaven. Nisroc complains,

Sense of pleasure we may well
Spare out of life perhaps, and not repine,
But live content, which is the calmest life:
But pain is perfect miserie, the worst
Of evils, and excessive, overturnes
All patience. (6.459–64)

Nisroc can square contentment with an absence of pleasure (though his “perhaps” signals some hesitation), but this newly discovered pain opposes patience and contentedness alike. The devilish contentment articulated by Nisroc (and uncontested by Satan in his reply) circulates around familiar poles of “pleasure” and “pain” that were central to classical models of virtue and

²² Russell M. Hillier writes, “This devilish Academy or Lyceum entangles and perplexes itself in labyrinthine and meandering threads of philosophical musing. However, the chiasmic pattern or ring structure delineating their topics of debate indicates that the devils reject one key term, or at least allow the same term to drop. That term is ‘Providence.’” See “‘A Happy Rural Seat of Various View’: Eve’s Mirror Poem and Her Lapse in *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Quarterly* 48 (2014): 8.

happiness (Aristotelian, Stoic, Epicurean, and others).²³ But this version differs sharply from the Reformation concept of contented suffering depicted, for example, in John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* (see Chapters 1 and 2). Unlike its diabolic parody, Christian contentment is a principled response to adversity, rather than an avoidance or ignorance of it. It is defined and refined by hardship, not overturned by it. Nisroc and his fellow warriors, however, cannot reconcile a contentment of the mind with the pain inflicted upon their angelic bodies. To make the sinfulness and suffering of the fallen angels intelligible, Milton encourages his audience to measure these characters against the prominent Protestant principle of contentment.²⁴

Furthermore, Satan's claim to eternal self-sameness perverts the stable selfhood suggested by Christian contentment. Before the War in Heaven, Satan asserts, "We know no time when we were not as now," after which he describes himself and fellow angels as "self-begot, self-rai'd" (5.859–60). Satan utters a radical claim about self-continuity in order to justify a discontinuation of angelic obedience to God. In soliloquy, however, Satan confesses that "Pride and worse Ambition" led him to misconstrue his relationship to God:

lifted up so high

I sdeind subjection, and thought one step higher

Would set me highest, and in a moment quit

²³ Evans explains that in the characters of the fallen angels (and Belial's council in particular) "the great classical and Christian virtue of patience degenerates into a cowardly reluctance to take any action at all" (*Milton's Imperial Epic*, 37).

²⁴ Cf. Diana Treviño Benet, who argues that Milton's treatment of pain generates sympathy for the fallen angels and, at moments, subverts his theodicy. See "God's 'Red Right Hand': Violence and Pain in *Paradise Lost*," in *Visionary Milton*, ed. Medine, Shawcross, and Urban, 89–108.

The debt immense of endless gratitude,
 So burthensome, still paying, still to ow;
 Forgetful what from him I still receivd,
 And understood not that a grateful mind
 By owing owes not, but still pays, at once
 Indebted and dischargd; what burden then? (4.49–57)

Repeated words like “debt,” “pay,” and “ow” demonstrate that Satan misapplies an economic model of relating to God that pertains only to creation after the Fall, when the Son offers his life as satisfaction for man’s sin.²⁵ The passage resonates with Henry Smith’s *Benefit of Contentation* (1590), which discusses the problem of an ever-elusive “enough” associated with falsely seeking satisfaction in material objects (see Chapter 1).²⁶ Just as important to Milton’s lines, though, is Satan’s repetition of the word “still”: “still paying, still to ow,” “still receivd,” “still pays.” The apparent immensity of Satan’s debt has already been undercut by his earlier admission that “What could be less than to afford him praise, / The easiest recompence, and pay him thanks, / How due!” (45–47). But this still leaves him with the problem of perpetual “still”-ness, a continuity and constancy from which he recoils.

²⁵ Burrow describes Satan’s struggle to “transcend the idea of ignominious financial obligation.” See *Epic Romance: Homer to Milton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 254. On Milton’s commitment to an understanding of atonement that required the Son’s death on the cross, see Samuel Smith, “Milton’s Theology of the Cross: Substitution and Satisfaction in Christ’s Atonement,” *Christianity and Literature* 63 (2013): 5–25.

²⁶ Henry Smith, *The Benefit of Contentation Taken by Characterie and Examined after* (London, 1590), C1v-2r. See Heather Hirschfeld, *The End of Satisfaction: Drama and Repentance in the Age of Shakespeare* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 36.

Moreover, Satan's most powerful expressions of discontent invert the species of self-fortification attached to contentment in Reformation discourses. When Satan "Begins his dire attempt," the "birth" of it "boiles in his tumultuous brest, / And like a devillish Engine back recoiles / Upon himself" (4.15–18). This emotional turmoil internalizes the War in Heaven, with all the "devilish Enginrie" and "deep throated Engins" used by the rebel angels (5.553, 586). Satan's interiority is not a bulwark but a battlefield upon which he endlessly wages war against himself. He despairs, "Which way I flie is Hell; my self am Hell; / And in the lowest deep a lower deep / Still threatning to devour me opens wide, / To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n" (4.75–78). The same threat of "still" that provoked him to rebel now appropriately looms in his punishment. A sense of Hell as place coexists with a sense of Hell as identity. If Satan *is* Hell, then the lower deep within the lowest deep is, itself, within him and a part of him. This lowest of psychological depths, still deepening like a sinkhole, threatens to devour him *from within*. Resembling Spenser's jealously discontented Coridon in *Faerie Queene* VI, Satan's psychological torment becomes a form of inward self-cannibalism. Perhaps more so than any early modern image of spilling out or breaking open, Milton's verses in the mouth of Satan realize the antithesis of contented fullness and fortification.

Because the malcontented Satan refuses "still"-ness, he cannot be "still" in the sense of "unperturbed in mind" and "calm."²⁷ While Satan soliloquizes,

each passion dimm'd his face
 Thrice chang'd with pale, ire, envie and despair,
 Which marrd his borrow'd visage, and betraid
 Him counterfet, if any eye beheld,

²⁷ *OED* "still" adj and adv, 4d and 5a.

For heav'nly mindes from such distempers foule
Are ever cleer. (4.114–19)

Unlike the loyal subjects of God, Satan is subject to unsettling passions. Uriel observes him “disfigur'd, more then could befall / Spirit of happie sort” (127–28). Earlier, when Uriel had been deceived by the cherubic trickery, he unwittingly spoke the truth about the unseen Satan. He praised the angel's desire “To witness with thine eyes what some perhaps / Contented with report hear onely in heav'n” (701).²⁸ Although Uriel does not recognize his interlocutor, he recognizes that he is, unlike the other unfallen angels, in some way not content.²⁹ Satan's inevitable inability to contain the Hell within and maintain his heavenly figure evinces his radical, diabolic discontent. This same sinful affect leads him and his cohort to practice an imperial politics.

The first fallen angel that Milton explicitly contrasts with contentment is not Satan but the “horrid King” Moloch (1.399).³⁰ The narrator recounts the scope of Moloch's earthly influence, stretching from “*Rabba*” and “*Argob*” to “*Basan*,” and beyond (397-98):

Nor content with such

²⁸ Uriel's response seems to contradict Raphael's advice to Adam not to seek excessive knowledge but be “Contented that thus farr hath been reveal'd / Not of Earth onely but of highest Heav'n” (8.177–78). See also 7.118–30. In any case, Uriel clearly (but blamelessly) glosses the cherubic Satan's lack of content incorrectly.

²⁹ Later, Milton explicitly identifies the loyal angels as contented, saying, “I might relate of thousands, and thir names / Eternize here on Earth; but those elect / Angels contented with thir fame in Heav'n / Seek not the praise of men” (6.373–76).

³⁰ However, Satan is the first within the *chronology* of the poem to be identified as such. God tells the Son, “such a foe / Is rising, who intends to erect his Throne / Equal to ours, throughout the spacious North; / Nor so content, hath in his thought to try / In battel, what our Power is, or our right” (5.724–28).

Audacious neighbourhood, the wisest heart
 Of *Solomon* he led by fraud to build
 His Temple right against the Temple of God
 On that opprobrious Hill, and made his Grove
 The pleasant Vally of *Hinnom*, *Tophet* thence
 And black *Gehenna* call'd, the Type of Hell. (399–405)

While the primary action associated with the worship of Moloch (just before this quoted passage) is child sacrifice, the primary affect associated with Moloch himself is non-contentedness. Importantly, Milton's brief characterization links the diabolic affect to physical locations. Moloch does not have his desires bounded by what he has, or, more specifically, does not restrict his sinful desires to the political and geographic boundaries of cities and towns that worship him. The earthly epilogue to his rebellion in Heaven, Moloch's challenge to God's reign—he has “His Temple right against the Temple of God”—manifests as a territorial dispute. Although Milton differentiates the fallen angels from one another through biblical details of the pagan gods, his description of Moloch takes on a representative force, since he is the first figure listed in the epic catalogue. Moreover, the implications of this account apply especially to Satan: Moloch's name, the Hebrew word for “King,” resonates with the opening Books' recurrent images of Satan as ruler of Hell, of which “*Gehenna*” is only a “Type.” Satan's bid to seduce mankind and conquer earth takes an imperialistic form similar to Moloch's land-grab, and Milton makes clear that Satan's efforts correspond with his discontent.³¹ That discontent leads him to claim “new Worlds” even as it warps the ties between himself and the world (650).³²

³¹ Knoppers, describes Satan's “imperial mission to destroy Adam and Eve, launched in hell explicitly to disturb divine joy and regain joy for himself” (*Historicizing Milton*, 80). See also Fenton, *Milton's Places of Hope*, 52.

In Book 4, Satan tethers his imperial designs to his discontented affect. He concludes his first soliloquy:

So farewell Hope, and with Hope farewell Fear,
 Farewell Remorse: Good to me is lost;
 Evil be thou my Good; by thee at least
 Divided Empire with Heaven's King I hold
 By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign;
 As Man ere long, and this new World shall know. (4.108–13)

In order to reaffirm his commitment to the imperial project outlined in Books 1 and 2, Satan evacuates the remainder of his pious affects: the theological virtue of hope, a fear of God and his just punishments, and remorse for sins committed and still to come.³³ By expelling the last of his “Good” affects, just as he has been “outcast, exil’d” (106), Satan earns and expands an “Empire” of “Evil.” As he explains, “Honour and Empire with revenge enlarg’d, / By conquering this new World, compels me now / To do what else though damned I should abhorre” (390–92). Having emptied himself of any possibility to contentedly bound his damnable desires, Satan acts instead upon an affect of imperial expansion.

Milton’s representation of the suffering brought about by discontent is as vivid as anything in Sidney, Spenser, or Shakespeare. At the same time, Satan professes a dark parody of contentment, a sense of self as contained and separate from the world, but deprived of

³² As McColley puts it, “Satan assumes the right to exploit and destroy the creation from which he exempts himself” (*Poetry and Ecology*, 206).

³³ Admittedly, even before this moment Satan’s hope was not a pious affect. He describes his rebellious “Ambition” as an “unbounded hope” that ultimately led to “Infinite wrauth, and infinite despaire” (4.60–61, 74).

satisfaction, stability, or fortification. Fallen from Heaven and detached from Hell and Earth in equal measure, Satan truly has “no place / Left for Repentance” (79–80). Instead, Satan, Moloch, and the other fallen angels only have places to plunder, conquer, and rule.

Contentment Before Containment: Edenic Pastoral and the Prelapsarian Self

In representing Adam and Eve, Milton faces the unique problem of reimagining what contentment could mean in a world where the containment of the self, in physiological terms at least, was not strictly necessary. For fallen readers, the shared etymology of “contentment” and “containment” offers only a reminder that we cannot experience the former without the latter. Adam and Eve, by contrast, relate happily, harmoniously, and unselfconsciously with their Edenic surroundings. They recognize distinctions between their selves and their world, but the boundaries between them are more honored in the breach than in the observance. Instead of requiring a careful regulation of the economy between inner and outer, prelapsarian contentment is an uninhibited interchange between self, other, and environment, which Milton represents through the pastoral and georgic modes.

Renaissance English representations of pastoral contentment were by no means unequivocally idealizing, as we have seen, but Milton’s “happy rural seat of various view” is pretty damn close (4.247). In between the groves of trees, “Flocks / Grasing the tender herb, were interpos’d, / Or palmie hilloc” (252–54). As Milton’s description continues, Eden accrues particular resonances with Spenserian pastoral:

mean while murmuring waters fall
Down the slope hills, disperst, or in a Lake,
That to the fringed Bank with Myrtle crownd,
Her chrystal mirror holds, unite thir streams.

The Birds thir quire apply; aires, vernal aires,
 Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune
 The trembling leaves, while Universal *Pan*
 Knit with the *Graces* and the *Hours* in dance
 Led on th' Eternal Spring. (4.260–68)

As we saw in Chapter 3, the waterfall was recognized by contemporaries and successors as Spenser's poetic signature. Birds had a similarly metapoetic significance for Spenser, as Patrick Cheney has demonstrated.³⁴ In the *June* eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender*, Hobbinol notes the union of waterfall and birdsong in the pastoral locus amoenus (7–8).³⁵ However, the convergence appears again in the metapoetic Bower of Bliss canto (II.xii.71), which provided Milton with a foil for Adam and Eve's "blissful Bower" (4.690).³⁶ In Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, the seamless blending of sounds into a single seductive song epitomizes the artistic problem posed by the Bower as a whole: a confounding of categories that, however delightful, renders moral judgment impossible.³⁷ Though no less aesthetically pleasing or sensuously inviting, Milton's Eden differs from the deceptive artifice of Acrasia: "In shadier Bower / More sacred and sequesterd, though not feignd, / *Pan* or *Silvanus* never slept, not Nymph, / Nor *Faunus*

³⁴ Patrick Cheney, *Spenser's Famous Flight: A Renaissance Idea of a Literary Career* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993). For a discussion of the birds in the Garden of Eden as an extension of the landscape itself, see Mattison, *Milton's Uncertain Eden*, 77.

³⁵ Edmund Spenser, *The Shorter Poems*, ed. Richard A. McCabe (London: Penguin, 1999).

³⁶ Spenser's conjunction of the birds and waterfall recurs in the equally metapoetic description of Mt. Acidale (VI.x.6–7). *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton. 2nd edition (Longman: Harlow, London, and New York, 2007).

³⁷ See Paul Joseph Zajac, "Reading through the Fog: Perception, the Passions, and Poetry in Spenser's Bower of Bliss," *English Literary Renaissance* 43 (2013): 234–35.

haunted” (705–8). This pastoral paradise thrives on permeability, as Eden and its contents exhibit individuality without isolation, differentiation without separation. Milton’s intertextual engagement with Renaissance pastoral traditions participates in this contented intermixture of the prelapsarian world.

Milton further adapts the resources of literary mode to represent Edenic contentment by interweaving pastoral and georgic.³⁸ Pastoral labor was hardly a contradiction in earlier English works; as we have seen, *Faerie Queene* VI and *As You Like It* depict the responsibilities and difficulties attendant upon shepherdly life. Nevertheless, Milton makes labor absolutely central to life in Eden, as well as Adam and Eve’s unique positions as the only human subjects.³⁹ Their identities are derived not only from their relationships to God (being made in His image) and one another (their marriage), but also from their stewardship over the natural world. Moreover, their obligations center almost exclusively around tending the plant life in Eden. Obviously, unfallen

³⁸ On the importance of georgic to *Milton’s Paradise Lost*, see Anthony Low, *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 310–22; Stella P. Revard, “Vergil’s *Georgics* and *Paradise Lost*: Nature and Human Nature in a Landscape,” in *Vergil at 2000: Commemorative Essays on the Poet and His Influence*, ed. John D. Bernard (New York: AMS Press, 1986), 259–80; and Seth Lobis, “Milton’s Tended Garden and the Georgic Fall,” *Milton Studies* (2014): 99–126. On the interaction of pastoral and georgic in *Paradise Lost*, see Lewalski, *Rhetoric of Literary Forms*, 19; and Weller, “The Epic as Pastoral,” 144. For the relationship between pastoral and georgic in Renaissance literature more broadly, see Alastair Fowler, “Georgic and Pastoral: Laws of Genre in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England: Writing and the Land*, ed. Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), 81–88; Mattison, *Milton’s Uncertain Eden*, 25–26; and Stephen Dobranski, *The Cambridge Introduction to Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 38.

³⁹ See J. Martin Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 242–71.

Adam and Eve do not need wool to make clothing, so shepherding as such is not an obvious career path. Consequently, their employment in the pastoral paradise most closely resembles georgic labor. However, Milton blurs even this distinction between prelapsarian pastoral and georgic, particularly in the account of the sixth day of creation, as narrated by Raphael.

Hequembourg points out, “Rather than having the creatures simply appear on the pronunciation of the divine words, . . . Milton everywhere inserts natural intermediaries,” with images of a motherly Earth “Op’ning her fertile Woomb” and birthing animals (7.454).⁴⁰ We might note, though, Raphael’s specific phrasing for the creation of sheep: “Fleec’t the Flocks and bleating rose, / As Plants” (472–73). The simile in Raphael’s passing narration relates the sheep explicitly to plants, of which Adam and Eve will soon be caretakers. The passage, instead of representing an exclusive correspondence between pastoral sheep and Eden’s botanical labor, suggests the broader continuity of created life before the Fall. Relatedly, it is unnecessary, if not impossible, to parse the differences between prelapsarian pastoral and georgic. Only once paradise has been lost are pastoral and georgic separated out and opposed (violently) to each other.

Pastoral’s contented coexistence and comingling with other literary modes artistically enacts the unencumbered relationships between self, world, and romantic other, all of which, for Milton, express the relationship between self and God. Containment is unthinkable in Eden, and it is certainly not a precondition for contentment. Garrett Sullivan describes the opening of Book 5 as the poem’s premiere representation of the similitudinous relationship between man and nature before the Fall, the harmony between habitat and habitant.⁴¹ Nor is such harmony

⁴⁰ Hequembourg, “The Poetics of Materialism,” 182.

⁴¹ Garrett Sullivan, *Sleep, Romance, and Human Embodiment: Vitality from Spenser to Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 99–130.

exclusive either to human subjects or the Garden of Eden alone. As the example of 4.260–68 above has already demonstrated, nature mixes with itself. Satan notices a similar phenomenon earlier in the paradisaical landscape beyond the borders of Eden—more specifically, its winds:

And of pure now purer aire
 Meets his approach, and to the heart inspires
 Vernal delight and joy, able to drive
 All sadness but despair: now gentle gales
 Fanning this odoriferous wings dispense
 Native perfumes, and whisper whence they stole
 Those balmie spoiles. (153–59)

Here, Milton pairs the “aire” that “inspires” agreeable emotions like “joy” (and expels negative ones) with the “gales” that “dispense / Native perfumes,” carrying with themselves the scents of creation and dispersing them to other areas. The same environmental agent performs the pleasant diffusion of nature and produces positive affect. Though Milton locates these airs outside Eden, these same processes doubtless occur within as well. Excepting one divine prohibition, boundaries are meaningless, as unprohibitive as the walls which Satan leaps.

Adam most clearly articulates his sense of the benign exchanges between interior self and external world in responding to Eve’s discontented dream. Satan had induced this dream using “his Devilish art,” hoping either “to reach / The Organs of her Fancie, and with them forge / Illusions as he list” or to corrupt “Th’ animal Spirits that from pure blood arise / Like gentle breaths from Rivers pure, thence raise / At least distemperd, discontented thoughts, / Vaine hopes, vaine aimes, inordinate desires” (4.799–809). Satan seeks to engender discontent in Eve,

as Milton provides a physiological account of how demonic influence might work.⁴² Adam tells Eve he does not “like / This uncouth dream, of evil sprung I fear,” but asks, “Yet evil whence? in thee can harbour none, / Created pure” (5.97–100). Adam grants Eve a space of interiority, still pure like his own, and he recognizes that the evil source of the dream must reside outside of her. His own discussion of faculty psychology and dream theory does not explain the cause of Satan’s “addition strange,” but he comforts her all the same, saying, “Evil into the mind of God or Man / May come and go, so unapprov’d, and leave / No spot of blame behind” (116–19). Admittedly, Milton allows us to wonder whether Adam is entirely correct about this. In the opening cantos of *The Faerie Queene*, Archimago’s dream temptation of the Redcrosse Knight almost immediately precedes his forsaking of Una and his dalliances with Duessa. Milton adds Raphael’s visit to the biblical account; four books of *Paradise Lost* intervene between Eve’s dream and her disobedience, but only several hours pass within the narrative chronology. Consequently, the efficacy of the dream remains something of an open question. Even so, Adam’s assertion reveals something important about his own concept of the interactions between self and world. Adam admits the existence of external evils and their ability to enter “into the mind.” However, even this intrusion is entirely harmless and sinless. Adam does not suggest that they can do anything to seal themselves off from these outside influences, or even that it would be desirable to do so. In paradise, permeability is taken for granted, and a perfectly innocent contentment flourishes apart from strict regiments of self-containment.

⁴² Schoenfeldt states, “‘Organs of Fancie’ is a wonderful phrase, encapsulating the tense blend of psychology and physiology that subtends early modern moral philosophy” (“‘Commotions Strange,’” 57). On the relevance of Eve’s gender as a factor in her dream temptation, see Reid Barbour, “Liturgy and Dreams in Seventeenth-Century England,” *Modern Philology* 88 (1991): 239–42.

Importantly, the permeable boundaries of the self allow for contented communion between selves. When first asking God for Eve, Adam reasons, “In solitude / What happiness, who can enjoy alone, / Or all enjoying, what contentment find?” (8.364–66). While Satan will struggle to make the autonomous mind the vehicle of individual happiness, Adam concludes that contentment depends upon companionship. Misery may or may not love company, but contentment requires it. Later, a fallen Eve will call Adam’s “Love” her “sole contentment” (10.973). God can be “sufficiently possest / Of happiness,” though “alone / From all Eternitie” (8.404–6)—and we might recall Jeremiah Burroughs’s claim that God “is in eternal Contentment in himself—but Adam and Eve were created to find contentment with each other, to be “Imparadis’t in one anothers arms” (4.506).⁴³ Satan refers to their marriage as “The happier *Eden*,” and notes that they “shall enjoy thir fill of bliss on bliss” while he experiences “fierce desire . . . / Still unfulfill’d with pain of longing pines” (507–11). The couple’s loving relationship becomes the perfect synecdoche for the contented exchanges of Edenic pastoral. Similarly, the angels “enjoy / In eminence” a sexual experience that models what perfect human love might be if they remain obedient: “Easier then Air with Air, if Spirits embrace, / Total they mix, Union of Pure with Pure / Desiring; nor restrain’d conveyance need / As Flesh to mix with Flesh, or Soul with Soul” (8.626–29).⁴⁴ Milton introduces angelic intercourse as the epitome of

⁴³ Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* (London, 1648), 50.

⁴⁴ Joad Raymond describes this as “total interpenetration for pleasure.” See *Milton’s Angels: The Early-Modern Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 280.

unfallen intersubjectivity to demonstrate the extent to which prelapsarian contentment opposes an ethic of self-containment.⁴⁵

Crucially, Satan's discontent causes him to misconstrue pastoral contentment and imagine an Edenic crisis of containment. In a soliloquized invitation to Adam and Eve, he says:

Hell shall unfold,
 To entertain you two, her widest Gates,
 And send forth all her Kings; there will be room,
 Not like these narrow limits, to receive
 Your numerous offspring. (4.381–85)

Satan, who suffers more in his own mind than in the physical spaces of Hell, transforms pastoral paradise into its own kind of prison, a space too confining to sustain future generations of humanity.⁴⁶ Ironically, his emphasis on the "limits" of Eden glosses over his mention of Hell's "Kings," a pointed contrast with humanity's "Dominion" over the animals (430). In addition, Satan denies God the creative power to expand Eden or plant another, and he indirectly insults the rest of Earth's landscape, which seems pretty pleasant before Sin, Death, and climate change work upon it. Most importantly, Satan applies a fallen logic that presupposes a different, disharmonious relationship between man and land than what actually operates in Eden. According to Adam, God has promised that their offspring will "fill the Earth," not overfill it (733). Instead, Satan's remarks more closely correspond to his own procreative experiences described in Book 2. To escape from Hell, he promises his daughter-lover Sin and son-grandson

⁴⁵ On intersubjectivity in *Paradise Lost*, see Susannah B. Mintz, *Threshold Poetics: Milton and Intersubjectivity* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), 33–174.

⁴⁶ For a consideration of future generations in Eden, see Hiltner, *Milton and Ecology*, 27–28.

Death the fruits of his invasion of earth: “ye shall be fed and fill’d / Immeasurably, all things shall be your prey” (2.843–44). Satan justifies the “uncouth errand” of his imperialism with his child’s insatiable appetite (827); then he appeals to his would-be victims regarding their eventual offspring’s quality of life in Eden. As long as Adam and Eve live in contented balance with their pastoral environment, Satan’s offer is laughably unsuited to prelapsarian circumstances.⁴⁷ Only after the Fall does the relationship between interior and exterior become adversarial and containment becomes problematic.

Satan’s desire to despoil contentment, to evoke “discontented thoughts” and spread sinful empire, appropriately transforms him into a ravisher of Edenic pastoral. Milton first evokes the process in a simile through which Satan is likened to “a Vultur on *Imaus* bred” who seeks “To gorge the flesh of Lambs or yeanling Kids / On Hills where Flocks are fed” (3.430, 434–35). The imagery of pastoral predation recurs in Book 4, when Satan enters the Garden of Eden,

As when a prowling Wolfe,
Whom hunger drives to seek new haunt for prey,
Watching where Shepherds pen thir Flocks at eeve
In hurdl’d Cotes amid the field secure,
Leaps o’re the fence with ease into the Fould. (4.183–87)⁴⁸

Soon after, the narrator describes Satan sitting “like a Cormorant” on the tree of life (196). While the distinction between poetic comparisons and actual animal transformations begins to break down, the line clearly recalls Book 3’s simile of the flock-feasting vulture. Because of the same

⁴⁷ Any such laughter, of course, is turned to horror when a fallen Adam reconsiders God’s injunction to procreate (10.728–32).

⁴⁸ See Knott, *Milton’s Pastoral Vision*, 130.

discontent that Satan experiences as psychological self-cannibalism, he acquires an appetite for pastoral contentment. He even makes his initial escape from Uriel's watchful eye "under shade" (572), corrupting the conventional *umbra* of pastoral for his hellish purposes. Satan's success ruptures the contented relationship between human self and created world, and it precipitates the fall of pastoral.

Pastoral Lost and the Tyranny of Discontent

Though contented permeability characterizes the relationship between prelapsarian self and world, the Fall introduces a separation between the experience of inwardness and external reality, including nature.⁴⁹ Human experience comes to resemble Satanic sinfulness, with similar consequences for the individual and society. In his treatise on contentment, Watson writes of "Adam in Paradise dashed upon the rock of discontent (which some Divines conceive was his first sin)."⁵⁰ While Watson is hardly unique in identifying the original sin with discontent, his metaphor, that of being dashed upon the rocks, resonates with the postlapsarian emergence, in Milton, of an adversarial relationship between individual and environment. Sin disrupts the continuity of inner and outer spaces, and this phenomenon parallels a gradual devolution from pastoral contentment to epic conflict and imperial conquest. In the final books of *Paradise Lost*,

⁴⁹ Mattison notes that a "seamlessness of perspective has become anxious" after the Fall, which introduces "a disunity of perception" (*Milton's Uncertain Eden*, 123). However, he emphasizes the ways in which this is necessary and productive for postlapsarian humanity.

⁵⁰ Watson, *Art of Divine Contentment*, A6. Jung writes, "Eve in the garden of Eden could not rest content until she had convinced Adam of the goodness of the forbidden apple." Qtd. in Joseph E. Duncan, "Archetypes in Milton's Earthly Paradise," *Milton Studies* 14 (1980): 41. See also Rosenberg, *Oaten Reeds and Trumpets*, 236–37.

Milton presents discontent as simultaneously a psychological, a poetic, and a political problem originating with original sin.

Adam and Eve evidence their discontented disconnect with the pastoral world of Eden as they clothe themselves after the Fall:

Thus fenc't, and as they thought, thir shame in part
Coverd, but not at rest or ease of Mind,
They sate them down to weep, nor onely Teares
Raind at thir Eyes, but high Winds worse within
Began to rise, high Passions, Anger, Hate, Mistrust,
Suspicion, Discord, and shook sore
Thir inward State of Mind, calm Region once
And full of Peace, now tost and turbulent. (1119–26)

After the poem's climactic moment of disobedience, Milton includes this climatic discussion of fallen emotional experience. The association between the "high Passions" and weather—and "Winds" in particular—was commonplace, but this passage marks the point of origin for such metaphorical language. The forecast has changed for humanity's "inward" landscape of the self, previously a "calm Region" that was "full of Peace." Significantly, Milton pairs this first "turbulent" storm of passions with Adam and Eve's invention of the clothing that "fenc'd" them. Milton repeatedly explains that they use the fig leaves because they are ashamed of their nakedness after the Fall. However, "fence" suggests not only the covering of their naked bodies, but an attempt at fortification and enclosure.⁵¹ Thomas Taylor uses the verb in this sense when

⁵¹ *OED* "fence" v. 2a, 5, 6a.

he claims that “godliness fenceth the heart with contentment.”⁵² Though the characters’ motivations stem from shame, the poet’s representation of their actions registers a schism. By fencing themselves, Adam and Eve introduce a new degree of separation between themselves and their world. Such fortifying apparel would indeed protect them from inclement weather, but not the inner winds of the passions. Drastic environmental change has not yet occurred; we have to wait until Book 10 for the Fall’s full effects on the pastoral landscape. The Earth’s wound (9.782–84, 1000–1004) and its “sad drops” (1002) can be taken as a token of sympathy with man, anticipating the raining “Teares” of Adam and Eve, such that a bond remains between them, even if they cannot perceive it. But correlation is not necessarily connection. The Earth’s “sad drops” equally parallel the “natural tears they drop’d” when they “Through *Eden* took thir solitarie way” (12.645, 649). If tears indicate sympathy, they also accompany separations and farewells. Either way, Adam and Eve don’t seem to notice the pangs.

In a series of discontented speeches inspired by the changes in nature, Adam registers both his new likeness to Satan and his distance from a previously pastoral selfhood. With an altered relationship to the external world, Adam perceives no “hope / Of refuge” (10.838–39), no fortification from the forms of suffering he has introduced into creation. Adam considers himself “Beyond all past example and future, / To Satan only like both crime and doom” (840–41), and he most resembles Satan in his hellish experience of inwardness: “O Conscience, into what Abyss of fears / And horrors hast thou driv’n me; out of which / I find no way, from deep to deeper plung’d!” (842–44). Instead of observing nature’s degradation and focusing on those external phenomenon, Adam is drawn deeper inward, articulating a solipsistic separation from

⁵² Thomas Taylor, *A Treatise of Contentment Leading a Christian with Much Patience through All Afflicted Conditions* (London, 1641), 70.

the outer world.⁵³ Crucially, Adam concludes his lament, before instead inveighing against Eve, by retrospectively identifying himself as a pastoral poet. After realizing that “Death comes not at call,” he cries out, “O Woods, O Fountains, Hillocks, Dales and Bowrs, / With other echo late I taught your Shades / To answer, and resound farr other Song” (10.858–62).⁵⁴ Death’s failure to respond to his desires contrasts sharply with a once responsive nature in the contented communion of pastoral Eden. Adam represents the consequences of his sin as an expulsion from Edenic bliss into the isolation of discontented selfhood and as a fundamental change in his status as pastoral poet. When Adam and Eve fall, pastoral falls with them.

Consequently, the final books of *Paradise Lost* record the painful division of pastoral and georgic. The complementary role of these literary modes had been one of Milton’s most powerful artistic instantiations of Edenic harmony and contentment. Eve hopes to retain their way of life despite their transgression—“What can be toilsom in these pleasant Walkes? / Here let us live, though in fall’n state, content” (11.179–80)—but this is precisely the contentment that she and Adam have forsaken. Michael explains, “longer in this Paradise to dwell / [God] Permits not; to remove thee I am come, / And send thee from the Garden forth to till / The ground whence thou wast tak’n, fitter Soile” (11.259–62). The expulsion from the garden is part and parcel with the curse of the georgic, or rather a curse of the georgic as an independent

⁵³ Low writes, “The inner life, potentially a way up to salvation, is also potentially a way down into bottomless perdition. The dizzy, nauseous, disorienting falls of Satan and Adam alike plunge them into the solipsistic void of the self” (*Aspects of Subjectivity*, 168).

⁵⁴ Mattison calls this passage “as frankly pastoral as any in *Paradise Lost*”: “it is practically a quotation from the first *Eclogue* [of Virgil]” (*Milton’s Uncertain Eden*, 143).

phenomenon stripped of the pastoral pleasures experienced in Eden.⁵⁵ Indeed, the very first vision Michael shows Adam in Book 11 and 12's whirlwind tour of biblical history is set within the now separated landscapes of georgic farmland and pastoral grazing fields: "His eyes he op'nd, and beheld a field, / Part arable and tilth, whereon were Sheaves / New reapt, the other part sheep-walks and foulds" (429–31). Michael has set the scene, of course, for the story of Cain and Abel. Though Milton adds to the biblical account by identifying Cain's gift as less pleasing to God than Abel's "Firstlings of his Flock / Choicest and best" because it is "not sincere" (436–37, 443), the story also establishes a violent opposition between pastoral and georgic. The anonymity of the farmer and shepherd—as in the rest of the narration that follows, neither Milton nor Michael names the biblical figures, and Adam needs to be told that they are his sons, "come / Out of thy loyns" (454–55)—makes them emblematic for their respective artistic modes. Just as Eve is sentenced to bear her children with suffering, pastoral births georgic painfully into the world, and the result is nothing less than the first human death.

The breakdown of a unified Edenic pastoral into different modes of living, which in turn correspond with different modes of literature, continues in Book 12, and Michael explicitly contrasts this process to contentment. First, though, an ever so brief intermission recalls the contentment of which man was once capable. According to Michael, georgic and pastoral will be temporarily reconciled after the Great Flood.⁵⁶ Both forms of rural laborers—those "Labouring

⁵⁵ See Theis, "The purlieus of heaven," 248. However, Lobis notes a single conjunction between fallen pastoral and georgic at 9.1104–10 ("Milton's Tended Garden," 118).

⁵⁶ Knott claims, "The few peaceful scenes in the last two books reflect a feeling for biblical pastoral that Milton shared with Du Bartas, who identifies the patriarchs with the goodness of country life" (*Milton's Pastoral Vision*, 157).

the soile, and reaping plenteous crop” and others who “from the herd or flock, / Oft sacrificing Bullock, Lamb, or Kid”—will learn to coexist profitably and “Shal spend thir dayes in joy unblam’d, and dwell / Long time in peace by Families and Tribes / Under paternal rule” (12.18–24). Cain’s fratricide and the myriad forms of miserable death that immediately followed in the vision are, for a time, forgotten. But however many generations such harmony might persist in future human history, the fleeting respite lasts for Adam only a few lines of blank verse. The possibility of this postlapsarian content will be all but squelched when

one shall rise

Of proud ambitious heart, who not content
 With fair equalitie, fraternal state,
 Will arrogate Dominion undeserv’d
 Over his brethren, and quite dispossess
 Concord and law of Nature from the Earth,
 Hunting (and Men not Beasts shall be his game)
 With Warr and hostile snare such as refuse
 Subjection to his Empire tyrannous. (24–32)

As in Foxe and Jean de L’Espine, tyranny results when man cannot be content. The ambition of the malcontent—in this case, Nimrod—is realized through imperial conquest and ends in kingship, flouting the “law of Nature” according to which “human [was] left from human free” (71). Despite the intervening centuries, including those of relative ease and peace, Nimrod’s military campaign “Marching from *Eden* towards the West” becomes a direct consequence of the Fall, for which Adam and Eve themselves are about to march out of Eden very shortly (40). The

same sinful discontent implicated in their disobedience leads their descendants from pastoral paradise to the fields of battle.

Furthermore, in light of the immediately preceding invocations of pastoral and georgic, the violence of “Warr” and the chronicles of “Empire” take on an epic significance. But here as elsewhere, Milton treats traditional epic as something less than laudable, continuing his rejection of “Valour,” “Heroic Vertu,” and “the highest pitch / Of human Glorie” as defined by the warrior culture of the Giants in Book 11 (11.690, 693–94). Naturally, Nimrodian epic entails a different relationship between self and world than either pastoral or georgic. Instead of working with, on, or even against the land, Nimrod simply seeks to conquer as much of it as he can. Appropriately, his epic discontent leads him to a hell on earth—“The Plain, wherein a black bituminous gurge / Boiles out from under ground, the mouth of Hell” (12.41–42)—upon which he attempts to build the Tower of Babel. The confusing proliferation of languages—“a jangling noise of words unknown” and, to the angels’ mocking perspective, a “hubbub strange” (55, 61)—as punishment for Nimrod’s ambition parallels the confusion of literary modes that occurs as pastoral continues to fall. While the uncompleted Tower stands as a “Ridiculous” monument to tyrannical discontent (62), the diverse human languages and literary modes reflect and record the discordant, discontented experiences of postlapsarian life.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Knott explains, “Pastoral could serve Milton in *Paradise Lost* as a means for representing the period of true human innocence, but the continuing struggle with evil in the world demanded another mode” (*Milton’s Pastoral Vision*, 123).

The proximity of pastoral, georgic, and epic in this passage also evokes, in order to critique, the Virgilian *rota*, the poet's strategic progression through those three literary forms.⁵⁸ The georgic farmer Cain had slain his pastoral shepherd brother Abel, and the epic tyrant Nimrod, with his "proud ambitious heart," hunts all manner of rural laborers. Here, epic is not the culmination of pastoral and georgic, but rather their ruination—a debasement instead of an upward progression. Classical *cursus* turns into biblical bloodshed. While Spenser strives to make pastoral romance serviceable to epic romance through his representation of contentment, Milton identifies a lack of pastoral content as the precondition of epic in the postlapsarian world. Discontent disrupts pastoral and georgic through epic war, as Milton reveals the classical and Renaissance *rota* as an inherently fallen phenomenon, and not a fortunate one at that.

This is not to say that Milton utterly rejects the Roman career model. He famously begins *Paradise Regained* with an imitation of the *Aeneid*'s opening lines (as they appeared in Renaissance printed editions, as well as copies of the poem dating back to the first century): "I who e're while the happy Garden sung, / By one mans disobedience lost, now sing / Recover'd

⁵⁸ John Coolidge stresses the importance of the Virgilian *rota* to Milton, but he identifies a Christian humanist revision of the classical career model. Richard Neuse sees Milton adapting the Virgilian *rota* along specifically Spenserian lines. Kilgour argues that both Virgil and Ovid provided Milton with models throughout his career, which concludes with *Samson Agonistes* turning "the Virgilian *rota* to review and make sense of his career." See Coolidge, "Great Things and Small: The Virgilian Progression," *Comparative Literature* 17 (1965): 18–23; Neuse, "Milton and Spenser," 608–11, 622–35; and Kilgour, "New Spins on Old Rotas: Virgil, Ovid, Milton," in *Classical Literary Careers and Their Reception*, ed. Philip Hardie and Helen Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 196.

Paradise to all mankind, / By one mans firm obedience fully tri'd."⁵⁹ With these lines, Milton appropriates the Virgilian career model and retrospectively applies it to *Paradise Lost*. But his willingness to construct his own authorial image as Christian poet through post-Virgilian genre patterning does not absolve Virgil's poems—or Milton's own, for that matter—from the sinful tinge of discontent. Rather, Milton's roll call of pastoral, georgic, and epic in the introduction of Nimrod produces a sense of now ubiquitous discontent, with Restoration resonances. Not only epic but every mode of artistic production and every aspect of human life is in some way touched by the Fall, colored by discontent.⁶⁰

Finally, Michael's discussion of Nimrod's tyranny, the poem's last instance of the word "content," connects back to Milton's introductory description of Moloch, which had included the poem's first instance of the word. King Nimrod, who is "not content / With fair equalitie, fraternal state," becomes a type of the "horrid King" Moloch, who is not "content with such / Audacious neighbourhood" as the pagan provinces that already worship him. The loss of life in unjust warfare, brought about by one who "from Rebellion shall derive his name, / Though of Rebellion others he accuse" (12.36–37), is no better than the "blood / Of human sacrifice" offered up to Moloch (1.392–93). William Walker writes, "critics who, on the basis of the graphic presentation of suffering in the final books, claim that Milton presents history as having

⁵⁹ *Paradise Regained*, 1–4, in John Milton, *The Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. Stella Revard (Malden: Blackwell, 2009), 382–450.

⁶⁰ As Danielle St. Hilaire, argues, "the act of writing poetry—and epic poetry in particular—is a distinctly fallen activity, not because it is somehow evil, but because the language in which poetry speaks is a product of the Fall." See *Satan's Poetry: Fallenness and Poetic Tradition in Paradise Lost* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2012), 3.

a tragic shape or pattern, are thus mistaken, since they fail to acknowledge this tripartite structure of human experience that Michael insists upon by continually interrupting his description of human suffering with references to the second coming.”⁶¹ Walker may be correct about Milton’s presentation of happiness and human history, but the circumstances are quite different for the poet’s presentation of contentment. Milton’s use of the word begins with Moloch and ends with Nimrod, both of whom lack the condition. In both cases, the discontented individual, whether human tyrant or fallen angel, will not allow his desires to be bounded by what he has and therefore transgresses the laws of God and nature to usurp dominion over other lands and peoples. The failure to contain oneself corresponds politically with an imperial struggle for territorial expansion. Milton effectively brackets the poem’s portrayal of an Edenic pastoral contentment of permeability with exemplars of a sinful discontent of invasion and expansion. Through this bracketing, the poet interposes a separation between reader and contentment, just as sin has separated humanity from a contented harmony with the world.

The examples of Nimrod, Moloch, and, of course, Satan belie the social ideal of mutual contentment shared by subject and sovereign that littered political rhetoric in the late Elizabethan and Jacobean period. Carpenter had called for a consolidation of monarchical power along Augustan lines as a countermeasure to English malcontents, especially crypto-Catholics and other enemies of Protestantism. Publishing in the wake of a failed republic and a restored monarchy, Milton inverts this formulation: imperialism is not a corrective to discontent, but an instantiation of it, as well as an incitement to further discontent. For Milton, the loss of pastoral

⁶¹ William Walker, “Reassessing Milton’s Republicanism: History, Machiavelli, and *Paradise Lost*,” in *Uncircumscribed Mind: Reading Milton Deeply*, ed. Charles W. Durham and Kristin A. Pruitt (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2008), 192.

contentment and the consequent experience of alienation from the material world leads one to assert control over that world and its inhabitants in imperialist fashion.

Happier Far, Contented Less?

As I have suggested, Milton's linking of earthly tyranny and diabolic discontent has implications for the author's response to the Restoration, especially at the historical moment when Charles II relied on public spectacles of celebration, and, as Laura Knoppers demonstrates, joy was "a politicizing construct, the shaping of the bodies and minds of loyal subjects." However, to expose monarchy and empire as products of, punishments for, and contributors to discontent does not close the issue. If "attempts to restore joy on earth are perverse, misguided, and even Satanic," then where exactly does that leave contentment, the emotional and ethical principle over which so much ink was spilled in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?⁶² With paradise lost and harmonious Edenic pastoral splintered into a cacophony of literary forms, can contentment be regained for a post-epic England? Or, more immediately, how does a knowledge of Milton's engagement with the early modern concept of contentment help us to interpret the archangel Michael's promise of a "paradise within" in relation to the vision of an activist Milton now widely accepted by critics (12.587)?⁶³

My understanding of the paradise within qualifies David Quint's reading, with significant consequences for Milton's post-Revolution views of literature, society, and the self. According

⁶² Knoppers, *Historicizing Milton*, 75, 68.

⁶³ Lewalski articulates the current consensus: "quietism . . . is not Milton's prescription or attitude in these two poems [*Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*], or ever." See "Milton's Paradises," in *Renaissance Ecology*, ed. Hiltner, 16. See also Gordon Teskey, *Delirious Milton: The Fate of the Poet in Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1.

to Quint, “*Paradise Lost* suggests . . . that individual choices of conscience, themselves the product of complicated psychological processes, can have far-reaching, indeed world-historical consequences. Private life is thus continuous with the public, political world; personal actions in one sphere reveal states of mind that have implications for an impact upon behavior in the other.”⁶⁴ I agree that the “psychological processes” of the “individual” can have “world-historical consequences”; the discontented imperialism of Satan, Moloch, and Nimrod clearly demonstrates this fact. Satan cannot contain his desires, and consequently he spearheads a campaign of expansion, invasion, and subjugation. In this sense, private life is continuous with public politics. However, it is unclear that the relationship operates equally in both directions; more specifically, it is unclear that Michael is advocating a model of private psychology that depends at all upon public contingencies. By encouraging Adam and Eve to cultivate the paradise within, Michael necessarily discourages the imperialist affect that would lead them to assault or assimilate the paradise without. But in order for the individual to achieve a politically useful happiness, he or she must preserve it, insofar as possible, from oppressive social realities. Michael’s instructions serve simultaneously to critique an imperialist politics and to imagine a kind of emotional autonomy. In the process, Milton uses poetry for affective and political ends even as he imagines an affective independence from politics.

After praising Adam’s “summe / Of wisdom” (575–76), Michael enjoins

onely add

Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add Faith,

Add vertue, Patience, Temperance, add Love,

By name to come call’d Charitie, the soul

⁶⁴ Quint, *Epic and Empire*, 283.

Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath

To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess

A paradise within thee, happier farr. (581–87)

“Deeds” compose a remarkably small portion of this crucial passage, with most of Michael’s concluding speech dedicated to a catalogue of virtues, classical and theological alike. There are several possible explanations. For starters, the apparent dearth of deeds could reflect a conventionally Protestant prioritization of faith over works; indeed, “Faith” takes priority of place in the list of abstractions. One might also object that these are not abstractions at all for Milton, that the listed virtues provide a gloss on and are realized within deeds. However, these plausible attempts to increase the emphasis on deeds are difficult to reconcile with the contrast Michael sets up between the “paradise within” and the “Paradise” that Adam and Eve are leaving. Consequently, Milton gives little reason to interpret Michael’s “then” as “causal” rather than as merely “temporal.” Adam’s deeds and his inward paradise will coincide, but the latter does not clearly depend upon the former.

Milton’s paradise within does not correspond to passivity, but it does not result from activity either, political or otherwise. As we saw in Chapter 4, Shakespeare had been able to stage a politically meaningful form of contentment. In *As You Like It*, Duke Senior models pastoral contentment and promotes a number of positive political virtues, not least of which was the freedom that would become so vital to Milton. For his part, Milton can maintain the value of contentment and the need for continued action in a postlapsarian political world, but he cannot quite make ends meet. People continue to have ethical, environmental, and political responsibilities after the Fall, and they can lead happy lives in anticipation of the Final Judgment. But sin and discontent have introduced a separation (real or simply felt as real) between affect

and action, between private emotion and public life. For Adam and Eve, the separation is an unfortunate one; something really is lost when one paradise is replaced with the other. But after the Restoration, the separation may have been a convenient one for Milton.

The paradise within challenges seventeenth-century imperialism while offering a compensatory individual psychology that nevertheless parts ways with the contentment idealized by Protestant Reformers and pastoral authors. While many Reformation writers concede that contentment in this life can only approximate the pure contentment experienced in either Edenic or heavenly paradise, Milton makes clear that whatever contentment can be achieved by fallen man is of a radically different nature. A paradise within is a contained paradise, a phenomenon different altogether from prelapsarian contentment. Postlapsarian content is not, strictly speaking, subpar—after all, it is “happier farr”—but it is a substitution. The paradise within is the consolation of postlapsarian life, but it is not a contentation. By situating this inner paradise between Satanic imperial discontent, on the one hand, and Edenic pastoral contentment, on the other, Milton protests, and protects against, undesirable political circumstances of his day. In this way, the conclusion of *Paradise Lost* carefully balances triumph with tragedy.

Conclusion

The Fall of Contentment: Descartes, Pastoral, and Private Emotion

In this dissertation, I have studied how English Renaissance authors use the pastoral mode to engage the Reformation conversation on contentment, an individual emotional ideal and a moral model for relating self and world. Writers repeatedly invoke concepts of Christian contentment to connect the affects of the single subject with the preservation and perfection of society. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, English Reformers wrestle with St. Paul, continental theologians, and the often troubling circumstances of their own historical moment to identify the best ways to attain and act upon godly contentment. Consequently, a distinctly English Protestant discourse of contentment comes to pervade nearly every aspect of early modern writing, from philosophical and physiological texts, to diplomatic letters and royal proclamations, to literary works of prose, poetry, and drama.

The literary authors discussed in this dissertation adopt the pastoral mode to anatomize different aspects of Reformation contentment, and they therefore arrive at different conclusions about that contentment. Sidney shares his contemporaries' investment in content as an emotional disposition that enables the ethical endurance of suffering and injustice. However, he particularizes the contented relation between self and world as an amatory, erotic relationship between self and other. Spenser similarly conjoins contentment and romantic love and in turn makes both consistent with virtue, but he arranges these issues into the spine of a meta-literary allegory. For Spenser, contentment serves as a relational principle for moral individuals and for the cultural modes of pastoral and Petrarchism. Shakespeare shifts focus from such contented pairings to consider how contentment might function as a more broadly communal, political

phenomenon. For Shakespeare, contentment is only possible when it bridges the gap between selves, uniting individuals into a collective, and ultimately producing a more benevolent, more egalitarian social order. By comparison, Milton uses the character of Satan to portray an ethically vacuous and politically dangerous discontent, resulting in empire. Though Milton's prelapsarian pastoral features a radically uninhibited relationship between self and world—a condition completely opposed to containment—Adam and Eve, once subjected to Satan's sinfully invasive affect, must settle for a far different inner life. Humanity must resist the discontented compulsion to conquer and oppress, but they will not readily locate contentment in relation to the fallen world either.

The arguments of the preceding chapters individually and collectively evidence a model of contentment that challenges the historical and theoretical assumptions of contemporary literary criticism. Although scholars have understood contentment as conceptually shallow, the authors and texts examined in this dissertation represent a robust, complex body of thought that cannot be reduced to any single ethical, philosophical, political, or artistic perspective. Nevertheless, I have focused in particular on the aspects of Renaissance contentment most foreign to our own preconceptions—specifically, content's active, affirming, and empowering potentials, as opposed to passive resignation or apathy. Instead of a purely individual and interior phenomenon with no positive significance for society, Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton all artistically imagine a contentment that concerns the individual but that has a profound influence on (and is influenced by) his or her ongoing relationship to the world: the romantic other; competing cultural modes and artistic traditions; political communities; other countries; and the deity. By studying these literary works and the Reformation discourse with which they engage, I hope to have demonstrated the extent to which contentment was constructed as a

viable, valuable affective alternative to Calvinist despair and the consequences of that alternative for early modern English society. Unlike other positive affects that have recently been the object of critical attention, however, the discourse of contentment is inextricable from the proliferation of pastoral in the period. Consequently, a historicized understanding of contentment influences the way we think about Renaissance religious culture, English politics, and literary history.

More generally, this dissertation resists a strain of scholarship that unreflectively equates critical rigor with cynicism, on the one hand, and an investment in positivity or optimism with naïveté, on the other. We need not set up an absolute opposition between the belief in positive affect and the existence of social problems. Contentment, satisfaction, happiness, hope: such things do not simply vanish in the face of suffering. Nor do the experiences of them somehow render us incapable of recognizing and remedying the flaws, failings, and outright injustices of the world in which we live. To commit ourselves to the contrary not only skews our interpretation of early modern intellectual history but also leaves us with a bleak vision of our own historical moment.

While we might well revise the reigning concepts of contentment in Renaissance literary scholarship, Reformation studies, and theoretical discourses, I believe that the argument of this dissertation also illuminates at least one way in which those concepts may have come into being, a long history that we can trace back to the mid-seventeenth century. As I have suggested in the final chapter, Milton's *Paradise Lost* is ultimately ambivalent about the Reformation contentment he inherits from his Protestant and pastoral predecessors. More specifically, Milton parses out the two potential significances of contentment in the early modern period: an ideal of emotional independence and a principle for relating to the world. Throughout the poem, Milton insistently attaches the former to Satanic discontent, while he radicalizes the latter in the

harmonic anti-containment of Eden. However, Milton resists an explicit identification of human contentment in the postlapsarian world, and even the “paradise within” diverges from reformed contentment by troubling the relationship between self and world.

As scholars have noted, Milton wrote his epic in response to Descartes, and I suggest that contentment may have reeked too much of the philosopher’s autonomous mind, a free-floating *cogito* instead of a deeply dynamic, embodied experience, inextricable from both spiritual and material circumstances. That is, Milton’s poem seems to record the stripping away of contentment’s relational dimension, such that the concept becomes unpalatable, inapplicable to the Restoration context. In other words, however much Milton resists Cartesian philosophy, he also documents (begrudgingly, and perhaps presciently) the extent to which its gaining of ground changes the early modern intellectual landscape. As Cartesianism gains widespread acceptance and a distinction between mind and body becomes the default, containment is the baseline, not an ideal—a starting condition, not something to be strived for. Increasingly, individual contentment could be taken for granted and, more to the point, considered in isolation from cultural, economic, and political contingencies. The already-contained subject may have to work at contentment, but this was an exclusively private project.

Of course, this is only a part of the story. While Cartesian dualism transformed thoughts about contentment, which had previously been considered with quite different assumptions about body and mind, other factors undoubtedly contributed to the gradual revaluation and devaluation of the concept. A fuller understanding of contentment in the English Renaissance and Reformation (and beyond) would require an attention to all manner of literary and non-literary discourses. This dissertation has shown how authors deployed pastoral to represent contentment across various genres and in relation to other literary modes. Pastoral literature was largely

defined by its continual (re)construction of contentedness, but that mode had no monopoly on the subject. Nor did pastoral retain its status among the main modes of literary production. Georgic literature and country-house poetry became increasingly common as the seventeenth century progressed. Even Marvell's "Mower" poems exist uneasily alongside their more markedly pastoral predecessors. Intriguingly, the apparent privatization of contentment coincides with a relative decline in the prominence of pastoral literature, though it is equally important to note that pastoral far from disappeared. Pastoral never quite lost its social significance, but pastoral contentment did.

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Studies in Philology (forthcoming): MS 42 pp.

“Suckling’s *Fragmenta Aurea* and the Construction of Cavalier Authorship.” *Studies in English Literature* 55.1
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“Reading through the Fog: Perception, the Passions, and Poetry in Spenser’s Bower of Bliss.” *English
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