From Campus to *Campus*: English University Life and the Renaissance Pastoral

Gary M. Bouchard
*Saint Anselm College*

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rmmra

Part of the Comparative Literature Commons, History Commons, Philosophy Commons, and the Renaissance Studies Commons

**Recommended Citation**


Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rmmra/vol12/iss1/7

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Quidditas by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
From Campus to *Campus*:
English University Life and the Renaissance Pastoral

by

Gary M. Bouchard
Saint Anselm College

LITERARY CRITICS have relied increasingly upon what we know of the particular goings-on at the court of Queen Elizabeth to explain all things we call Elizabethan, including a vast corpus of poetry. Pastoral poetry in particular, long regarded as an allegorical embodiment of court politics, is seen now more than ever as a product of social and political power struggles. I argue instead that the pastoral poetry of Renaissance England has to do with the academic world as much as, if not more than, with the ancillary world of the court. For although the English pastoral furnished entertainment for the court, it was born of the academy, where Edmund Spenser and others encountered the classical pastorals of Theocritus and Virgil. In initiating the pastoral as an English genre, Spenser looked to these poets to see how to write, but like them he relied upon his own experience to teach him what to write. The recollection and depiction of pastoral delights returned Spenser not only to his first readings of Virgil and Theocritus but also to the place where he first encountered his classical pastoral predecessors. In the classical models Spenser found the shepherd's *campus*; in his own recollections he found a student's campus. In his pastorals, as well as the pastorals of those who followed him in this genre, the two campuses combine to form a poetry whose ingredients distinguish it from its classical origins.
GARY M. BOUCHARD

From Theocritus's first eclogue forward, pastoral poetry has always been born of the backwards glance. Recent focus upon the pastoral as a courtly construct has ignored this essential reflective quality of the pastoral.

Granted, *The Shepheardes Calender*, along with Spenser himself, was fashioned for a world beyond the confines of the collegiate cloister. Yet, the world of the *Calendar*, wherein reside "the delights of youth generally," shares more in common with the enclosed gardens of the poet's personal past—Pembroke College—than with the political world where he had begun to forge his poetic future. We come nearer the English pastoralists' imagination, I believe, by doing as they themselves did: turning our attention from the complexities of the court back to the safer haven of the university. There in its chapels, lecture halls, gardens, and bedchambers three poets—Edmund Spenser (Pembroke College, 1569–1576), Phineas Fletcher (King's College 1600–1615), and John Milton (Christ's College, 1625–1632)—discovered their own poetic talent, as well as a pastoral tradition that gave it form.

**COLLEGIATE LOSS**

The loss that initiates Virgil's *Eclogues* is the loss of the pastoral world itself. Meliboeus, who must flee the "sweet fields" and "abandon home," addresses his companion Tityrus, whose fortune allows him to remain behind. Recollecting all that he must now leave, Meliboeus pastoralizes the land where he has lived:

Lucky old man! here by familiar streams  
And hallowed springs you'll seek out cooling shade.  
Here for you always, bees from the neighboring hedge,  
Feeding on willow blossoms, will allure  
To slumber soft with their sweet murmurings.  
The hillside pruner will serenade the air;  
Nor will the throaty pigeons, your dear care,  
Nor turtledoves cease moaning in the elms.  
(1.51–58)

Whether or not Meliboeus ever inhabited such an ideal world, he most certainly leaves behind an imagined one. Likewise, whether or not Tityrus's
future days will be spent enjoying the cooling shade and nature’s perpetual serenades is irrelevant: the pastoral world of Eclogue I is the product of Meliboeus’s nostalgic imagination, and as such it belongs more to him than to Tityrus.

Edmund Spenser’s *Shepheardes Calender* is the product of just such Meliboean recollection. Having recently moved to Kent from Pembroke College, where his closest companion, Gabriel Harvey, remained behind, Spenser fashioned himself as Colin Clout and Harvey as Hobbinol and turned his former residence into a pastoralized paradise from which he was unhappily removed. As Meliboeus addressed Tityrus, so Colin addresses Hobbinol:

> That Paradise hast found whych *Adam* lost.  
> Here wander may thy flock early or late,  
> Withouten dreade of Wolves to bene ytost:  
> Thy lovely layes here mayst thou freely boste.  
> But I unhappy man, whom cruel! fate,  
> And angry Gods pursue from coste to coste,  
> Can nowhere fynd, to shroude my lucklesse pate.  
> ("June," 10–16)

As Colin, Spenser recollects the less complicated days of his youth: “I, whilst youth, and course of carelesse yeeres” ("June," 33). Forgetting the accompanying miseries of his college days—as we are all wont to do—he re-creates not only a perfect place and time for song but also the perfect companion with whom to sing. This recollection, as Harvey will point out, has no more to do with the world in which Harvey actually lives than does Meliboeus’s sorrowful depiction of the residence he had formerly shared with the fortunate Tityrus.

Mired in the particularly antipastoral enterprise of battling for academic rank, Harvey challenges his friend’s intoxicated recollection. Taking the occasion of a pastoral revelry of his own—“at myne hostisses by the fyresyde being faste heggid in rownde abowte on every side with a company of honest good fellowes, and reasonable honeste quaffers”—Gabriel Harvey sets to dispelling his friend’s idealistic descriptions of past and present golden worlds:
You suppose the first age was the goulde age. It is nothinge soe. . . . You suppose us students happye, and thinke the aire præcferid that breathithe on thys same greate lernid philosophers and profonde clarke. Would to God you were on of there men but a sennighte. I dowbte not but you would sweare ere Sundaye nexte, that there were not the like wofull and miserable creaturs to be fownd within ye cumpas of the whole worlde agayne.⁵

This is a far cry from the opening lines of the June Eclogue in which Hobbinol declares, "Lo Collin, here the place, whose pleasunt syte / From ot h ers shædë hath weand my wandring mynde." The Hobbinol who proclaims this is, like the locus he describes, the product of the pastoralist's imagination—of a Colin Clout who perceives as idyllic the world that he no longer inhabits. This paradise is not Kent, nor merely "the south­ partes," but the poet's reimagined Pembroke, an irretrievable time as place, a locus amoenus for which Colin is no longer suited and where his closest companion remains behind. Louise Schleiner, in her recent article "Spenser's 'E. K.' as Edmund Kent," describes the circumstance perfectly:

The effect for Harvey as he read the printed Calender must have been stirring: a recognition that his student and devoted friend had now outgrown him. By continuing their friendship in this new situation, he justifies his place in the locus amoenus of "June" as definer of the young scholar-poet's earlier paradise of expression and learning.⁶

While a collegiate reading of The Shepheardes Calender relies in part upon the elaborate construct of E. K.'s gloss, the Piscatory Eclogues of Spenser's imitator Phineas Fletcher are explicitly academic. Nowhere more than on Fletcher's "River Cam" are the academic and pastoral campuses so overtly connected. Like his father, Fletcher was denied the privilege of being a fellow at Cambridge, and his eclogues record both of their academic misfortunes. As with Virgil's and Spenser's before him, Fletcher's idyllic world springs from the recollections of a departing swain, Thirsil (Phineas Fletcher), addressing his dearest companion, Thomalin (John Tompkins), who remains behind in that world:
Farewell ye streams, which once I loved deare;
Farewell ye boyes, which on your Chame do float;
Muses farewell, if there be Muses here;
Farewell my nets; farewell my little boat;
Come sadder pipe, farewell my merry note:
My Thomalin, with thee all sweetnesse dwell;
Think of they Thirsil, Thirsil loves thee well.
Thomalin, my dearest deare, my Thomalin farewell.

(Ec. 2, st. 24)

In what amounts to a piscatory rendition of Colin Clout's "adieu delights," Thirsil simultaneously catalogues the academic and pastoral joys his companion, but not he, may enjoy.

The most famous companionless shepherd in English pastoral poetry is the uncouth swain of Milton's "Lycidas," who comes forth alone and recollects, like Meliboeus, Colin, and Thirsil before him, the world and the friendship he and his companion, Edward King, had formerly shared:

For we were nurse upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill.
Together both, ere the high Lawns appear'd
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
We drove afield, and both together heard
What time the Gray-fly winds her sultry horn,
Batt'ning our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the Star that rose at Ev'ning, bright
Toward Heav'n's descent had slop'd his westering wheel.

("Lycidas," 23-31)

The imbedded academic allegory in this passage caused Samuel Johnson to complain: "We know that they [Edward King and Milton] never drove a field, and that they had no flock to batten." John Milton was no shepherd. He was, however, a student at Cambridge with Edward King, as David Masson explains: "The hill . . . is, of course, Cambridge; the joint feeding of flocks is companionship in study; the rural ditties on the oaten flute are academic iambics and elegiacs." Like Phineas Fletcher and John Tompkins before them, and Edmund Spenser and Gabriel Harvey
even earlier, Milton and King shared an irretrievable time and place that, though far less than idyllic, could be recollected and re-created in pastoral poetry.

COLLEGIATE FRIENDSHIP

As Thomas Rosemeyer has indicated, out of Virgilian pastoral come two essential ingredients for pastoral happiness: “first, a thorough understanding of the workings of the universe; and, second, a life of simple good fellowship, with a company of like-minded and unambitious friends.” ¹⁰ Both of these ingredients were fundamental to the academic world of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England: an understanding was the common pursuit, and the fellowship provided the ideal circumstance for that pursuit. Such lofty sights and circumstance, like the common clothing and language of the pastoral world, while explicitly anticourt, were certainly not antiuniversity. Fellowship, in fact, was the central ingredient of both the pastoral campus and the university campus. Neither the swain nor the student was alone in his world, nor in his understanding of the world.

In the world of both the pastoral and the university, freedom depends upon a circle of friends. Peaceful association with one’s peers was as much a necessity as a privilege for both swain and student, as is evidenced in the plight of Gabriel Harvey, whose appeal for his degree of Master of Arts was refused because “he was not familiar like a fellow and did disdain every man’s company.” ¹¹ The members of Pembroke College complained that he “needs in al hast be studding in Christmas, when others were a plaing, and was then whottest at [his] book when the rest were hardist at their cards.” ¹² Harvey, whose degree was eventually granted by the intervention of Master Young, claimed for his part that at usual and convenient times, as after dinner and supper, and commenti fiers, yea and at other times too, if the lest occasion were offrid, I continued as ani, and was as fellowli as the best. What thai cale sociable I know not: this I am suer, I never avoidid cumpani: I have bene merri in cumpani: I have bene ful hardly drawn out of cumpani.¹³
This example illustrates how much was to be gained or lost by the company of one’s peers. A circle of the right friends yielded not only the benefit of company but also, perhaps, advancement. As in the court, students with political or literary aspirations would benefit themselves by being part of a particular clique.

One reason for Harvey’s purported lack of social ability may be due to the value he placed upon more private friendships with the likes of Edmund Spenser. Describing how Spenser and Gabriel Harvey conspired in the creation of the Calendar’s “E. K.” construct, Louise Schleiner claims that “an idealized Kent is clearly the Calendar’s mental locale.”

The academic in-game Professor Schleiner describes, however, between “Edmund of Kent” and “Aulus Pembrochianus Socius” belongs not to the countryside of Kent but to the idealized locus of Pembroke College, where the two men had resided together, where the rules for such games were developed, and where Spenser acquired his “sundry studies and laudable partes of learning, wherein how our Poete is seene, be they winnesse which are privie to his study” (“December,” Glosse, 109) under the tutelage of Harvey. Such a private conspiracy of song-making finds its parallel in the pastoral world, where small groups of shepherds gather to hear and evaluate one another’s songs. When the concern is “pastoral songs,” or literary competition, such as that between Harvey and Spenser or between Tompkins and Fletcher, the atmosphere is ideally like that of the shepherd’s singing matches, which conclude in mutual admiration. Such rivalry enhances rather than destroys fellowship.

Eventually, these circles of companions within the university began to directly mimic the pastoral poems they inspired. Abram Langdale observes that during Fletcher’s years at Cambridge “the Cambridge society of poets . . . surrounded Fletcher and celebrated him as their president. This clique was founded in accordance with the traditional laws of the pastoral cult.” In using pastoral laws to form their group, these students quite deliberately shaped their lives to imitate art. In Fletcher’s Eclogues, art returns the compliment. Pastoral cliques such as these usually had at their center a more prominent poet around whom the rest of the group gathered. The size of these groups varied from two to as many as six or seven. Ultimately, we find, in and out of the amoebians, in nearly all pastoral eclogues that the pastoral number is two. Pastoral is largely composed of the often intimate, sometimes hostile, exchange between two
swains. Such dialogues in the poetry of Spenser, Fletcher, and Milton could all have been modelled on Cambridge friendships.

Of these friendships, and others that these men had, we probably know most about that of Fletcher and Tompkins—an excellent example of a Cambridge friendship turned into pastoral poetry. According to Langdale: "Tompkins shared the poet's inmost thought, became the confidant of his love affairs and his consolation in disappointment. . . . The relationship was all the more vital because it was concentrated within Fletcher's creative years and colored nearly all of his major works." 17 The intimacy between Fletcher and Tompkins is not only the subject of Fletcher's Eclog 6, but, like the relationship of Colin to Hobbins in The Shepheardes Calender, governs the Eclogues as a whole. "I love my health, my life, my books, by friends, / Thee (dearest Thomalin) Nothing above thee" ("To Thomalin," lines 25–26) expresses the essence of pastoral friendship, especially insofar as it exceeds the "true love" between swain and maiden, as Thirsil insists that it does.

The university conversations in which these poets' fraternal friendships were formed were not free of governing rules. Students' conversations with one another, except in their chambers or during the hours of relaxation, were restricted to Latin, Greek, or Hebrew, an inhibition for even the most learned students. The bedchamber then was one refuge within the university where students were allowed to converse freely in their native tongue. The bedchamber necessitated conversation since it was unusual during these times for a member of a college to have a chamber wholly to himself. Two or three students usually shared the same room; consequently, we read in contemporary college biographies "of the chum or chamber-fellow of the hero as either assisting or retarding his conversation." 18 The very fact that conversation is thus described emphasizes its importance.

We know of course that students, by whatever means, managed to converse in English outside of their bedchambers. We read of walks in the garden, through the town at night, and in the surrounding fields and woods. Such excursions were not likely illuminated by Latin discourses, nor was the content of these common English conversations restricted, as they would have been had they been in the mandatory Latin of the university. (In fact, the requirement to speak in Latin was intended to limit students to elevated scholarly discourse.) Students undoubtedly
looked forward to excursions and to the privacy of the bedchambers for the chance they provided to talk in English about love, poetry, and politics. Given the freedom to speak in their native tongue, students, we can be sure, did precisely that; the tone and substance of those conversations were as common (they might say as "base"), as English itself.

Given the linguistic environment of the university, we can begin to understand the significance of Spenser's, and the others', choosing to write their pastorals in vernacular English. A more traditional imitation of Virgil—indeed, a more courtly imitation—would have been composed in formal Latin or French, and Spenser was certainly capable of composing in either language. One reason for his choice of English, of course, was its commonness, which allowed it to serve, appropriately, as the language of the "common" swain. Spenser even chose to embellish his pastorals with a pseudo-antiquated commonality. Yet there is more here than just the desire to portray commonness; among university students, English would also denote privacy, for English was not only the more common tongue but also the more intimate. In his choice of English over Latin, Spenser clearly perceived the pastoral genre as linguistically intimate and wrote accordingly.

As the more common tongue, English lends itself readily to discussion of such common matters as the shepherd's or fisherman's trade. As the more intimate tongue, English invites conversation on more personal matters, such as the swains' hearts. With regard to content, the conversations in *The Shepheardes Calender* are essentially like those that took place in the Cambridge gardens and bedchambers, implicitly intimate, fraternal exchanges between two youths. They praise one another's songs, "O Colin, Colin, the shepheards joye, / How I admire ech turning of thy verse" ("August," 190-91); reveal their private ambition, "Piers, I have pypped erst so long withayne, / That all mine Oten reedes bene rent and wore: / And my poore Muse hath spent her spared store, / Yet little good hath got, and much less gayne" ("October," 7-10); engage in ecclesiastical debate, "Syker, thous but a laesie loord, / and rekes much of the swinck / That with fond termes, and weetlesse words / to blere myne eyes doest thinke" ("Julye," 33-36); "make purpose of love / and other plesaunce" ("March," Argument); and pass along gossip, "Colin thou kenst, the Southerne shepheardes boye: / Him Love hath wounded with a deadly darte" ("April," 21-22).
From Theocritus on, this pastoral pleasure of conversation comes intertwined with a bucolic setting, a pleasant place. A makeshift version of such a landscape might well have been afforded by the countryside surrounding Cambridge, where, according to statutes issued by Elizabeth in 1570, scholars, in time of plague, were to assemble and continue their learning in the countryside:

Lectores et caeteri ejusden Collegii, si simul rure tempore pestis sunt, ut lectiones caeteraque exercitationes consuetas quemadmodum si domi essent, habeant, omnes commoditates et fructus percipient, quos haberent, si domi essent.

[Readers and others of this college, if once they are in the country in time of plague, in order that they may have their readings and other customary exercises just as if they were at home, let them obtain all the advantages and benefits which they would have if they were at home.]19

This bucolic inconvenience furnishes a direct and richly suggestive connection between the life of the academic world and the subsequent pastoral poetry of a student like Spenser for whom the country became a locus of fellowship and learning.

Likewise, students' vacations from the university often took the form of bucolic retreats. Charles Gawdy, for example, writing to his father in 1637 requests payment to his tutor for "that quarter when I was in the countrie."20 In the following updated letter written from Oxfordian Diodati to his friend John Milton, we see why such bucolic ventures, in and of themselves, are not necessarily pastoral:

I have no fault to find with my present mode of life, except this alone, that I lack some kindred spirit that can give and take with me in conversation. For such I long; but all other enjoyments are abundant here in the country; for what more is wanting when the days are long, the scenery blooming beautifully with flowers, and waving and teeming with leaves, on every branch a nightingale or goldfinch or other small bird glorying in its songs and warblings, most varied walks, a table
neither scant nor overloaded, and sleep undisturbed. If I could provide myself in addition with a good companion, I mean an educated one and initiated in the mysteries, I should be happier than the King of the Persians.21

Here is epicurean bliss without the epicurean companion. The setting is every bit the *locus amoenus*; the table bears the fruits of moderation; no worry harasses his sleep; and yet, left alone, Diodati lacks the essential ingredient of pastoral happiness—companionship. Here the Oxford student sounds much like Hobbinol in the "June" eclogue of the *Calender* who also lacks only the good conversation formerly provided him by his companion. Diodati has found a place for song, but there is no one to hear him sing. Note also that for Diodati as for Hobbinol, Thomalin, and the uncouth swain of "Lycidas," not just any companion will do. He requires "an educated one... initiated in the mysteries," one presumably with whom he can share not just conversation, but verse.

These collegiate friendships of Spenser, Milton, and Fletcher were based chiefly on "the mysteries" of poetry, just as the pastoral dialogues of their eclogues concerned the common activity of composing and singing songs. The subject of the songs themselves is often True Love, a calling not exclusively bucolic, which necessarily brought both the Cambridge student and the pastoral swain beyond the boundaried world they inhabited.

**COLLEGIATE LOVE**

Though opinions vary concerning the role love plays in the pastoral world, it seems clear that this world, like that of the Renaissance university, is essentially a man's world. Just as women were prohibited from the cloistered academic campus, so they are virtually absent from the shepherd's world in English poetry. Renato Poggioli argued that English poets so developed the pastoral of innocence that they neglected the pastoral of love and happiness that would fulfill the passion of love and erotic wishes.22 This lack of fulfillment typifies the pastorals we are examining. They contain plenty of love laments, but all passion remains unrequited. Lack of consummation, in fact, is what propels these pastorals forward, what gives the swains something to pipe about. As Rosenmeyer
describes it, love is an animating force that enlivens *otium*. If successful, it would be higher than *otium*; if unsuccessful, it would destroy *otium*. The naturalness of love, Rosenmeyer asserts, is tempered by its lack of consummation.23

What compensates for unconsummated love affairs in both campuses is the consummation of actual friendships, which is why pastoral fellowship, and not true love, is the central joy in the world of both student and swain. The loves of whom the swains sing in their pastorals, while not imaginary, are at best beautiful objects. For instance, Colin’s lovesickness takes up a good part of the *Calender*, yet we learn little of the object of his affection other than that she is ‘a countrie lasse called Rosalinde,’ who cares very little for either him or his piping. In the *Piscatorie Eclogues*, Myrtil is infected with love-madness when ‘A friendly fisher brought the boy to view / Coelia the fair.’ Though in matters of love there is no consolation, the ‘swowning’ Myrtil is at least kept alive and comforted by his friends: ‘Till fisher-boyes (fond fisher-boyes) revive him, / And back again his life and loving give him’ (3.20.2—3).24

The objects of the shepherds’ affections exist, like those of the university student, beyond the boundary of the campus (in Colin’s case, for example, the neighboring town). The consummation of such a love requires that the lover, be he student or swain, go beyond the boundaries of the pastoral circle. If successful, the pastoral lover will find a love that replaces *otium*. The very pondering of true love, therefore, while it enlivens *otium*, simultaneously threatens the destruction of the pastoral circle. Thus like Harvey whom he represents, Hobbinol (about whom we learn much more than Rosalinde) can rail against romantic love for more than just reasons of principle. Such love not only is immoderate, unrealistic, and therefore the source of inevitable misery, it also threatens the pastoral circle. Colin not only scorns Hobbinol’s gifts, he hands them over to a woman who scorns pastoral song (‘Shepheardes device she hateth as the snake’). More particularly, Colin’s romantic love jeopardizes the preexisting love between him and Hobbinol. ‘The ladde, whome long I lovd so deare,’ Hobbinol complains, ‘Nowe loves a lasse.’ This splendid pun emphasizes, alas, romantic love’s futility. Ironically, though, Colin’s actual departure from the world of the Calender demonstrates the transcience and unreality of pastoral *otium*.
In Eclog 6 of Fletcher’s *Eclogues* the lovesickness of Thomalin comes between him and Thirsil. Not as easily put off as Hobbinol is by Colin, Thirsil challenges his friend:

Thomalim, I see thy Thirsil thou neglect’st
Some greater love holds down thy heart in fear;
Thy Thirsils love, and counsel thou reject’st;
Thy soul was wont to lodge within my eare:
But now that port no longer thou respect’st;
Yet hath it still been safely harbour’d there.

(St. 3, lines 1-6)

We see here the critical importance of conversation to the pastoral friendship, which is formed by the confiding of one’s soul through language. The college world, far more than the world of the court, provided the occasion for such an intimate lodging. When Thirsil extracts a confession from Thomalin, he discovers that it is the nymph, Sweet Melite, who is behind the neglect of their friendship. Thirsil does not regard his friend’s recent infatuation with the nymph as a “greater love”; for though he too once had his heart held down in fear, he is now cured and uses his own experience to persuade Thomalin of a higher love. “Those storms of looser fire are laid full low; / And higher love safe anchors in my heart: / So now a quiet calm does safely reign” (st. 17, lines 1-7).

This quiet calm, this *otium*, requires that Thomalin be unbound from his love of Melite, who has left him with a captive heart. Thirsil tells him that “If from this love thy will thou canst unbinde” (st. 26, line 3) proper pastoral freedom can be restored: “To morrow shall we feast; then hand in hand / Free will we sing, and dance along the golden sand” (st. 26, lines 8-9).

This freedom is the same fraternal freedom, not merely allowed but, in a sense, required in the university. To be wounded by Rosalinde or Melite is to venture, not just beyond the pastoral circle, but beyond the cloistering walls of the all-male university environment. In Langdale we read of Fletcher’s trips from Cambridge to visit his cousins, where he enjoyed at least one courtship. Judson suggests that since Colin represents Spenser, love may have been the “exciting force” that prompted Spenser’s departure from Cambridge.  

In the real world as in the pastoral
world, the consummation of love often meant marriage and maturity. Marriage means essentially the death of the pastoral circle and the loss of freedom by which that circle was formed, for marriage is the institution of a civilized society apart from the pastoral world. Marriage belongs at the court, not on the campus, and one aspires to marriage, as one aspires to the court, only after departing from the campus.

**COLLEGIATE RIVALRY**

Like fellowship, the joy of rivalry was an ingredient the English pastoralists found both in their classical models and in their immediate university environs. The rivalry in the pastorals of Theocritus and Virgil takes the form of singing matches between two rival swains who exchange boasts, usually about their respective beloveds. These matches are usually friendly exchanges that end in mutual admiration and gift giving, although sometimes they are less than friendly bouts that must be resolved by an intervening third party. In either case, the contests provide the excuse, the frame, for pastoral songs and at the same time illustrate the pastoral joy that is as much a part of the pastoral world as singing itself, the joy of competitive rivalry. In the English pastoral, the sport and rivalry of the singing matches were more ranging and often more physical than in earlier poetry.

In the fourth of Theocritus’s Idylls, for example, Corydon tells Battus that the goatherd Aegon has been carried off to Alpheus because “Men say he rivals Heracles in might” (line 8). In the fifth Idyll, a goatherd and a shepherd precede their piping with accusations of theft and then venture into progressively cruder subject matter before arriving at this final exchange before beginning the singing match:

**COMATAS**

Most excellent blockhead, all I say, I, is true, though for my part I’m no braggart; but Lord! what a railer is here!

**LACON**

Come, come; say thy say and be done, and let’s suffer friend Morson to come off with his life. Apollo save us Comatas! thou hast the gift o’ the gab.

(lines 76–79)
Such "gift o' the gab" is weeded out by Virgil in order to make room for more refined song. Along with the bantering also go the suggestions of Heraclean strength and footraces. The shepherds have less to do with sheep than with singing.

In Spenser the conversations are resumed, but this time in a decidedly collegiate manner. Thenot and Cuddie rival as old and young; Piers and Palinode dispute as churchmen, but in other eclogues of the Calendar rivalry has largely been replaced by collegiality. The eclogues are governed by "arguments," and the swains typically give more energy to conversation than song. Spenser reserves the more raucous Theocritan rivalry for book 6 of The Faerie Queene in which the shepherds, "To practise games, and maisteries to try" (6.9.43.2), turn to wrestling. Such physical contests have no place in the "arguments" of The Shepheards Calendar. When we compare the Calendar with its classical models, we see that the English pastoral was clearly born more of the classroom than the country.

That campus originally meant "field of contest" gives us a good idea of the sorts of pastoral play to be found in the world of the university. Pastoral rivalry found a place in the dormitory, the lecture hall, the playing field and, in its most mischievous form, beyond the campus. The rivalry and sport of the university world took basically two forms, legal and illegal, with a clear and unsurprising preference being shown by the students for the latter. The result, in both the world of the university and that of the English pastoral, was a perpetual tension between epicurean impulses and puritanical restraint, a tension that inevitably resulted in a rivalry between youth and age, a rivalry that gave way to debate. For in neither the pastoral nor the university world do the impulses of youth go unchecked by age. Elder shepherds reside in the pastoral, just as in the university there are elder tutors, and in both cases it is the duty of these elders to instruct. Often, be they shepherd or tutor, the subject of their instruction is "the greater world" in which they have lived and from which they have returned wiser. Those whom they instruct, however, by the virtue of their youth, are the proprietors of this world of youthful joys.

Thenot and Piers know the maturity of age, the brevity of life, and the empty promises of the greater world. They advocate a puritanical restraint that is lost on Cuddie and Hobbinol, who, in harmony with the locus amoenus, are true pastoral shepherds, enjoying the delights of
youth to which Colin bids a reluctant adieu. These shepherds observe an epicurean code that, while sometimes complementary with the puritanical code of Piers, finds itself in continual tension with it as well.

A nearly identical tension between epicurean impulses and puritanical restraint existed in the world of the Renaissance university. In his description of undergraduate life, John Venn suggests that the impulse toward disobedience was a way of life. Speculating where one might find a Cambridge student of that day, Venn writes: “If he was forbidden to attend bull-batings, to go fowling in Chesterton marshes, or to bathe in the river [Cam], we gain a clue as to where we should be likely to find him of a summer’s afternoon.” In a letter of 1563, William Soone describes Cambridge students carousing through the streets of town “perpetually quarreling and fighting” with the townsfolk: “They go out in the night to show their valour, armed with monstrous great clubs furnished with a cross piece of iron to keep off the blows, and frequently beat the watch.” Like romantic love, the violence of arms was reserved for ventures beyond the safe and prohibitive confines of the collegiate cloister. Concerning such nighttime recreation, Soone concludes: “The way of life in these colleges is the most pleasant and liberal: and if I might have my choice, and my principles would permit, I should prefer it to a kingdom.” The pleasantness to which Soone refers is that which happens in spite of, and not because of, college codes.

In college, as in the pastoral world, the proprietors are the young, a circumstance that prompts the following complaint of a Cambridge authority during the late sixteenth century. Upset by students wearing the “new fashioned gowns of any colour whatsoever, blew or green or red or mixt,” the official declared:

If remedy be not speedely provyded, the Universety, which hath bene from the begyning a collection and society of a multitude of all sorts of ages, and professyng to godlines, modesty, vertew, and leerning, and a necesary storehouse to the realme of the same, shall become rather a storehouse for a stable of prodigall, wastfull ryotous, unlerned and insufficient persons.

A nearly identical complaint is delivered by Piers, the shepherd-guardian, in “Maye” of The Shepheardes Calender, when informed by his more
liberal companion, Palinode, that "Yougthes folke now flocken in every where / To gather may buskets and smiling brere" (lines 9–10), Piers responds:

Perdie so farre am I from envie,
That their fondnesse inly I pitie.
Those faycours littl e regarden their charge,
While they letting their sheepe runne at large,
Passen their time, that should be sparely spent,
In lustihe and wanton meryment.

(lines 37–42)

For Piers the shepherd is a Shepherd, a proper Christian minister. He has no envy for the epicurean joys, gratuitous interests, and leisurely activities described by Palinode.

Unfortunately for both Piers and the Cambridge authorities, "wanton meryment" would not subside, and the epicurean impulses that are the joy of the pastoral world would prevail over the puritanical codes that governed the university. Eclog 4 of Fletcher's *Piscatorie Eclogues* records this decline in discipline at Cambridge. As the fisher Thelgon (an allegorical figure for Fletcher's own father) departs Chamus's shores, he laments the deterioration of the fishers' trade and complains that his songs will be replaced by the songs of "a crue of idle grooms, / Idle, and bold, that never saw the seas" (st. 14, lines 1–2). Such as these, he tells Chromis, will fill the empty rooms and enjoy lazy living and "bathing in wealth and ease" (st. 14, lines 3–4)—bathing, too, no doubt in the River Cam, come the month of May.

Despite the frolic of the students on the sporting fields, in the river and the woods, and through the dark streets of town, the rivalties that occupied them most occurred in the corridors of the university, namely the rivalry of minds. This rivalry played itself out in conversations fed by murmured rumor that raised up some and lowered others and in a never-ending parade of academic and ecclesiastical disputes. Such rumors might include the latest of the attacks on the existing church system by Thomas Cartwright or news of a rebuttal by Elizabeth's loyalist John Whitgift. Such events, Alexander Judson notes, would not soon be forgotten: "The emotional life of large bodies of young men must find
some outlet," he says, "and in the absence of important athletic contests [no football was permitted with those beyond the university], it probably concerned itself at this time with events such as we have been narrating." 34

Rumor might, about this same time, encourage the young fellows of Pembroke Hall not to vote for Gabriel Harvey in his appeal for Master of Arts. Thus it is no surprise that in the covert shades and bower's of The Shepheardes Calendar we are privy to more than just the "delectable Theocritan controversy" of who is the best singer of songs. We hear talk of who is and who is not a worthy shepherd ("Maye," "Julye"), reports of how badly love has ruined a fellow swain (Hobbinol's constant theme), and discussion of the general wickedness of the world (Diggon's lament in "September"). As he recounts the university's injustice to his father, Fletcher's Eclogues take on a particularly Theocritan tone. Chame, having given to the worthy fisher Thelgon a costly boat (academic post) "bequeath'd it to a wandring guest" (2.12.3). Thelgon no sooner regains his "boat" when "Chame to Gripus gave it once again, / Gripus, the basest and most dung-hill swain, / That ever drew a nee, or fish in fruitful main" (2.14.6-8). By Eclog 4, Thirsil's own consolation comes from "the Prince of Fishers," who, like Chame, appears again in Milton's "Lycidas," in which "Camus, reverend Sire," demands "Ah! Who hath reft . . . my dearest pledge?" (lines 103, 107) and the pilot of the Galilean Lake rails against "Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold / A Sheep-hook" (lines 119-20).

COLLEGIATE POVERTY

One may observe yet other similarities between the world of Cambridge, where English pastoralists resided and the worlds of their subsequent pastoral poems. One such similarity is the practice of poverty, which Theocritus calls the "one stirrer-up of the crafts . . . the true teacher of labour" (Idyll 21, line 3). The exchange of funds or currency by which, for instance, one's reputation might be bought or sold at the court, was not a part of the student's world. 35 The delight of poverty for the shepherd is not the Christian joy of being poor but rather the epicurean joy of commonality. The shepherd shares with his companions common garb and common tasks; these put him in contrast with those at the court for whom negotium has taken the place of otium. The Greek
equivalent of *otium*, of course, is *scholia*. The scholar’s leisure, like that of the shepherd’s, derives from his freedom from economic concerns. If not supported by family or patron, the student supported himself with his own labor. Spenser, for example, attended the Merchant Taylor’s School as a “poor scholar” and served at Pembroke as a sizar, a student who received lodging and an education in exchange for his services and a nominal fee. As Richard Helgerson notes, “In presenting himself as a shepherd-poet, [Spenser] suffered no major déclassement.”

Freedom from worldly transactions, combined with the simpler life necessitated by a universally poorer world, allowed for a sort of ideal poverty by which the student could, if he wished, disdain the wealth of the world in the same fashion as the shepherd. Just as he could cast aside his Latin well-learnedness to adopt the simple tongue of the swain, so too this student of the university could pretend to enjoy the self-sufficiency of a pastoral economy that, Poggioli says, “equates its desires with its needs” and “ignores industry and trade; even its barter with the outside world is more an exchange of gifts than of commodities. Money, credit, and debt have no place in an economy of this kind.”

Such a barter with the outside world is the inevitable appeal the student must make for funds from his patron. The following appeal for funds comes from a letter written by Anthony Gawdy (cousin to Charles) in August of 1626. Gawdy desires to have some new clothes for spring, and we see that he does indeed perceive this dealing as an exchange of gifts, rather than commodities. More than that, however, we see in the letter, which he signs “Yor Porre Kinsman,” that the imaginative young man fancies himself in a world of nature quite apart from the world of commerce: “I confess it is the time now when nature doeth cloeth all hit creatures: the earth with grase, as the cloeth, and with diversitye of flowers as it were the triming or setting out of the garment.”

Gawdy obviously desires more here than the standard weeds provided him by the university, probably without expense. If the court was made colorful by elaborate costumes, the campus, like the pastoral world, was distinguished by simplicity in dress. The common dress of the Cambridge student was as clerical as it was scholarly; it included a gown that reached down to the heels and a sacred cap of the variety worn by priests. The following regulations also applied: “No student shall wear within the university, any hoses of unseemly greatnes or disguised fashion, nor yet
any excessyve ruffs in ther shyrts; nor shall wear swords or rapiers but when they ar to ryde abroad; nether shall any person come to study, wear any apparell of velvet or silk." The decree against weaponry is pastoral enough, but, as might be suspected and as is certainly evident from Gawdy’s letter, this code of dress was not in itself a delight. If the students enjoyed the common life, they missed the color and frills of the greater world that nature herself wore quite openly.

Residents of the pastoral world are joined not just by the "weeds" they wear but also by the tasks they perform. These tasks, if performed willingly, are not like the drudgery of the work-a-day world but are a fruitful manner of living by which they are freed from the normal curse of work. Generally speaking, the student in his cloistered world had as little to do with the usual curse of work as he did with industry and trade. Like the swain, he enjoyed instead a sort of hesychia, or work without toil. We find decrees such as the following one made by the vice-chancellor of Cambridge in 1570 to be an exception: "No inhabitant within the town of Cambridge, being scholar or scholars servant, can or may be privileged by that title, from the common days work of mending the high-ways." The very fact that such a decree had to be made indicates there was much from which the scholar, by virtue of his privileged status, was exempt, including imprisonment and legal suits. In any case, we can be sure that study, not roadwork, was the chief occupation of the Cambridge scholar. The common task of learning, requiring scholia and otium, links the university student to the pastoral swain whose only real tool is an oaten pipe. The private ponderings, learned conversations, formal debates, and verse composing in which the students spent their days were tasks like the "work" of the shepherd and fisher swains, whose primary occupation was neither herding nor fishing, but singing. The infringement of municipal laws and labor—like the black plague itself—threatened the potential otium of the academic cloister.

For the aspiring poet, the study of the ancients was not merely an academic task or intellectual discipline. Rather, this study provided him both the model and the inspiration for his own verse. Here was a place of poetic inheritance, and now was the time to try one's own song. The shepherd's world and the student's world share a startlingly similar end:
The poet comes to Arcadia for a clarification of his artistic, intellectual and moral purpose. The assumption of the shepherd's weeds signalizes for a millennium and more a commitment to poetry and to the exploration of the relative worths of the active and contemplative existences. The temporary retirement to the interior landscape becomes a preparation for engagement with the world of reality, for it is necessary for knowledge to precede action. 43

We need not substitute scholar's gown for shepherd's weeds to see the connection between the literary and historical worlds. What Peter V. Marinelli says of Arcadia is essentially true of the Renaissance university: "It is here [in Arcadia]," he observes, that the shepherd/poet explores "his commitment to the arts of poetry and to the art of love in its widest sense." 44 Similarly, it was in the university that the student/poet explored these same commitments and thereby prepared for engagement with the greater world, specifically the center of that greater world—the court. If successful, the student of poetry emerged from the university world, like the Arcadian poet, as the inheritor of a great tradition of poetry. The difficulty he then faced was how to live in the world without squandering his precious inheritance.

This engagement with the greater world required first a departure from the campus, a departure recorded—step by "stayed step"—in the twelve months of Spenser's Calender. Moving beyond the walls of Pembroke meant leaving behind fellowship, rivalry, poverty, and to an extent the common song—forgoing, as it were, "the delights of youth generally." These pastoral joys did not vanish altogether, but neither would they ever be quite the same. The shepherds of Colin Clout Comes Home Againe, published fifteen years after the Calender, are middle-aged courtiers in thin bucolic disguise. Among his many other objections to these shepherds, "masked with faire dissembling curtesie" (line 700), Colin complains that they lack collegiality and respect for learning:

No art of schoole, but Courtiers schoole.
For arts of schoole have there small countenance,
Counted but toyes to busie ydle braines:
And there professours find small maintenance,
But to be instruments of other gaines.

(lines 702–6)
Gone are the scholar-poet-shepherds who peopled The Shepheardes Calender, and gone for Spenser is the world that had inspired them, the collegiate world of youth that had allowed the postponement of real-world responsibilities and the neglect of negotium in favor of otium.

Like the poet in Marinelli’s description, Spenser had come to Cambridge for a clarification of his artistic, intellectual, and moral purpose. As the English inheritor of the classic pastoral tradition, Spenser spent his inheritance in a particular fashion, one that records not just the emergence of the poet from pastoral to heroic epic, but even more precisely the emergence of the poet from the campus to the court. To explore the latter world and ignore the former is to ignore this movement and see only the political portion of the English pastoral, to see only the greater world to which the poet travels and miss the world to which he bids adieu.

Phineas Fletcher did not so easily bid farewell to the world of his youth. He remained at Cambridge off and on for fourteen years. Finally, with his most productive years as a poet behind him and exhausted by his long struggle for official stature at Cambridge, he exiled himself to Risley, where, as a chaplain, he took to pasturing a spiritual flock.

Milton, though he would later criticize many of the methods of Cambridge in his Prolusiones oratoriae, faced more difficulty than either Spenser or Fletcher in leaving the university and engaging in the greater world. Choosing not to stay on at Cambridge as a Fellow and declining the clerical profession, Milton chose “to adopt no profession at all, but to live on as a mere student and a volunteer now and then in the service of the muses.” Milton’s later yields would more than justify this initial loitering beneath the cumbersome burden of poetic inheritance. His reluctance, like that of his pastoral predecessors, was but the reluctance of youth faced with departure from itself.

NOTES

1. Even before Paul McLane’s exhaustive study of historical allegory in The Shepheardes Calender: A Study in Elizabethan Allegory (University of Notre Dame Press, 1961), historical considerations of Renaissance pastoral poetry
focused primarily upon the Elizabethan court. More recently, New Historicists like Louis Adrian Montrose have returned to the court-pastoral connection with renewed fervor. "The otiose love-talk of the shepherd," Montrose claims, "masks the busy negotiation of the courtier; the shepherd is a courtly poet prosecuting his courtship in pastoral forms" ("'Eliza Queene of shepheardes,' and the Pastoral of Power," _English Literary Renaissance_ 10 [1980]: 154). Such claims are what prompted McLane to untangle anagrams in the first place. Less concerned with precisely whom each of the shepherds represents, however, the New Historicists concern themselves instead with what those shepherds were up to; and what they were up to, of course, was not innocent bucolic conversation, but jockeying for power. Stephen Greenblatt argues that Spenser's shepherds "are neither completely autonomous . . . nor entirely the creatures of the courtier's situation. There is a genuine doubleness about them, a mixture of outspokenness and diffidence" (_Representing the English Renaissance_ [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988], 166). Greenblatt's granting of at least some autonomy to the shepherd allows the pastoral poet something like a personal past, which, in the case of Spenser, brings us most immediately to the gardens of Pembroke College at Cambridge University.

2. Peter Marinelli calls pastoral "the art of the backward glance" (_Pastoral_, [London: Methuen and Co., 1971], 9). Like Frank Kermode, he presents the case that pastoral poetry is essentially a nostalgic product, that the pastoralist lives and writes in one world (urban) and recollects another (rural). See Kermode's _English Pastoral Poetry, from the Beginnings to Marvell_ (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1952), 14. This understanding of pastoral dates back at least as far as Quintilian, who, speaking of Theocritus, states: "Musa illa rustica et pastoralis non forum modo uerum ipsam etiam urbeb reformidat" (10.1.55).

3. Referring to Colin's departure from the pastoral in the "December" eclogue of _The Shephearde, Calender_, E. K. writes: "Adiew delights is a conclusion of all. where in sixe verses he comprehendeth briefly all that was touched in thi booke. In the first verse his delights of youth generally" (211). All quotations from the _Calender_ are taken from _The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser_, ed. William Oram et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).


12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
16. Just as the first Idyll of Theocritus laments the loss of Daphnis, so these English pastorals record the sorrowful loss of their most excellent singer. The world of the Calender suffers the departure of Colin Clout. The world of Fletcher’s Eclogues is likewise disrupted by the departure of Thrysil, and the loss of Lycidas (who “hath not left his peer”) comprises Milton’s pastoral elegy.
17. Langdale, Phineas Fletcher, 44.
19. From “Statuta Reginae Elizabethae: An XII mo edita,” in A Collection of Letters, Statutes, and Other Documents, From the Ms Library of Corpus Christi College, ed. John Lamb (London: John W. Parker, 1838), 352. The translation of this passage was provided by Herman Schibli.
24. All quotations from the Piscatorie Eclogues are taken from Phineas Fletcher, The Purple Island, or The Isle of Man: Together with Piscatorie Eclogs and Other Poetical Miscellanies (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1633).
26. In Longus’s Greek pastoral romance, Daphnis and Chloe, the lovers return to the country to be married, so that their bucolic stepparents, their fellow herdsmen, and even the goats themselves are able to take part in the wedding festivities.
From thence forward the two lead a pastoral life. This rare allowance afforded to a pair who in the world of the city enjoy a status equivalent to prince and princess is clearly a happy exception to the normal pastoral course of things. More often than not, love consummation means a marriage without goats. In book 6 of *The Faerie Queene* Calidore brings Pastorella from the pastoral world to discover her old courtly parents and her new courtly home. Likewise, in *As You Like It* it is understood that after their marriage unions, Rosalind and her companions will depart from Arden and return to court.


28. The classic example of the shepherd—tutor is Meliboe, "that good old man," in book 6 of *The Faerie Queene*, who instructs Calidore in the essential ingredients of the pastoral world to which he (Meliboe) has returned after venturing into the corrupted world of the court (see 6.9.24.1–7).

29. In Poggioili’s words, "the shepherd is neither a stoic nor a cynic, but . . . an epicurean and observes with natural spontaneity the ethics of that school" (8).


32. Ibid., 26. The "principles" that kept Soone from Cambridge, Judson tells us, were his Roman Catholic leanings: "Soone knew whereof he wrote: a Cambridge man, he had served briefly as Regius Professor of the Civil Law, but had gone abroad in 1563 on account of his Catholic sympathies" (25).


35. Economics was not taught at Cambridge until the eighteenth century, and mathematics was introduced only in the mid-seventeenth century.


40. As if different-colored gowns were not enough, Cambridge officials had to worry about priests, graduates, and younger students sporting such courtly fashions as "fair roses upon the shoe, long frizzled hair upon the head, broad spred Bands upon the shoulders and long large merchant Ruffes about the neck, with fayre feminine cuffs at the wrist" (Cooper and Cooper, *Annals of Cambridge*, 3:280).


42. In *An Abstract of the Composition between the University and Town of Cambridge* (Hentricus Septimus, 1502, 2), we learn that students’ status as
“privileged persons” included exemption from legal suits brought by citizens, as well as a reprieve from detention in jail after an arrest: “He shall have vii days to bring a certificate under any seal of the chancellor, vice-chancellor or his lieutenant, that he is a scholar and upon such certificate shall be immediately discharged” (Letters, Statutes, and Other Documents, 2).

43. Marinelli, Pastoral, 45–46.
44. Ibid., 47.