Poetic Genre and Economic Thought in the Long Eighteenth Century: Three Case Studies

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For well thou know'st, *'tis not th'extent*
Of Land makes life, but sweet content.

Robert Herrick, 'The Country life, to the honoured M. End. Porter,
Groome of the Bed-Chamber to His Maj.' (1648)

ABSTRACT

During the eighteenth century, the dominant rhetorical and explanatory power of civic humanism was gradually challenged by the rise of a new organising language in political economy. Political economic thought permitted radically different descriptions of what laudable private and public behaviour might be: it proposed that self-interest was often more beneficial to society at large than public-mindedness; that luxury had its uses and might not be a threat to liberty and political integrity; that landownership was no particular guarantee of virtue or disinterest; and that there was nothing inherently superior about frugality and self-sufficiency. These new ideas about civil society formed the intellectual basis of a large body of verse written during the long eighteenth century (at mid-century in particular), in which poets engaged enthusiastically with political economic arguments and defences of commercial activity, and celebrated the wealth and plenty of Britain as a modern trading nation. The work of my thesis is to examine a contradiction in the way in which these political economic ideas were handled. Forward-looking and confident poetry on public themes did not develop pioneering forms to suit the modernity of its outlook: instead, poets articulated such themes in verse by appropriating and reframing traditional genres, which in some cases involved engaging with inherited moral values and philosophical preferences entirely at odds with the intellectual material in hand. This inventive kind of generic revision is the central interest of the thesis. It aims to describe a number of problematic meeting points between new political economic thought and handed-down poetic formulae, and it will focus attention on some of the ways in which poets manipulated the forms and tropes they inherited in order to manage – and make the most of – the resulting contradictions.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FB	*The Fable of the Bees: Or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits. By Bernard Mandeville. With a Commentary Critical, Historical, and Explanatory*, ed. by F.B. Kaye, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924; repr. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1988).
HCS	Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ed. by Fania Oz-Salzberger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
TE	*The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, gen. ed. by John Butt, 11 vols. (London and New Haven, Conn.: Methuen, 1939-69).

INTRODUCTION: GENRES AND VALUES

This is a thesis about literary history and intellectual history in the long eighteenth century. It focuses on two dominant and competing strands in contemporary social thought, juxtaposed here by the Scottish philosopher and historian Adam Ferguson in his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767):

> It is possibly from an opinion that the virtues of men are secure, that some who turn their attention to public affairs, think of nothing but the numbers and wealth of a people: it is from a dread of corruption, that others think of nothing but how to preserve the national virtues. Human society has great obligations to both. They are opposed to one another only by mistake.[1]

There are intellectual continuities, Ferguson argues, between the new discipline of political economy and older philosophies of human personality. To think in terms of 'numbers and wealth' – the modern macroeconomic accounting of metropolitan and imperial riches – is not necessarily an invitation to moral corruption, and dedicating oneself to the preservation of public virtue does not preclude an attention to economic gain. Ferguson's argument in the *Essay* nicely balances debts to civic humanist philosophy with a progressive narrative of commercial development and specialisation. It introduces the social benefits of self-interest into an account of citizenship and liberty, and insists that private and public concerns may be addressed simultaneously.

My argument in this thesis is concerned with poetry that seeks to do the same, negotiating a complicated accommodation between traditional philosophical frameworks and new economic ideas. Renaissance and neoclassical genres of poetry, I will claim, were substantially reappropriated and updated during the long eighteenth century, in order to provide recognisable literary frameworks for the unfamiliar material of contemporary political

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[1] *HCS*, p. 141.

[2] Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford, 1982), p. 66. See also

economic thought. This is striking not because it is noteworthy or curious in itself that genres should be responsive to historical change and malleable under pressure, but rather because generic change involves, as Alastair Fowler has shown, something more than merely updating the thematic content of a given kind or reorganising its characteristic formal features. Genres are also distinctive for the particular value systems they espouse, kinds of moral ethos that are entrenched historically in their formation and development, and determine to some degree the scope and meaning of the activity they are able to describe. Fowler's examples include the 'epicurean values in certain pastoral kinds' and the knightly codes of medieval romance poetry; one might, for instance, also point to the anti-mercantile attitudes of seventeenth-century city comedies.[2] In each of these instances, to frame one's writing by means of the genre in question is not merely a case of revisiting a set of recognisable stylistic features or representing familiar topoi; it also requires adopting a position on the world, which has its attached range of judgements, prejudices and codes of praise and blame.

I am interested in three genres of poetry that flourished at particular moments during the long eighteenth century, all of which are notable for characteristic and shared prescriptions of ethical conduct: the country house poem, the formal georgic and political verse satire. As early modern forms, these genres are shaped by operative value systems that derive from a common classical basis in Roman and Stoic ideas of moral citizenship. The Renaissance estate poem of Ben Jonson and his imitators espouses preferences for moderation in house building and autarchy in estate economy, which are shaped by Roman and Christian convictions about the morally corrupting influence of luxury. The formal georgic of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries reimagines Virgil's *Georgics* in order to praise virtues of self-sufficiency and unambitiousness in farming, synthesising the retirement topoi of seventeenth-

[2] Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford, 1982), p. 66. See also Fowler, 'The Formation of Genres in the Renaissance and After', *New Literary History* xxxiv (2003), 185-200, on the 'more or less obligatory topics' that belong to individual genres; and Ralph Cohen, 'History and Genre', *New Literary History* xvii (1986), 203-18, on the necessary kinds of 'ideological choice' involved in making a 'generic choice'.

century poetry with Virgilian ideals of modest country life. Lastly, verse satire of the early eighteenth-century (on both sides of the partisan divide) derives its distinctive moral politics from neoclassical readings of the Roman satirists, which prescribe the genre's adherence to civic principles of republican virtue, economic disinterest and independence from the corrupt promptings of ambition and self-interest.

Common to all three of these generic value systems is a fundamental distrust of economic ambition and private interest, which are conceived to stand in the way of the moral and intellectual autonomy required for citizenship. In each case, the systematic elision of commercial forms and motivations allows for the inscription of an idealised moral economy of self-reliance, disinterest and public-mindedness. These preferences flourished in literature and philosophy during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as part of a contemporary revival of interest in the intellectual uses of the civic humanist paradigm, a body of moral and political ideas drawn originally from Aristotle and Cicero and applied to the particular historical circumstances of England and Scotland.[3] The civic paradigm studied the rise and fall of political states over time, showing that periods of crisis and collapse occurred when an obvious distinction was no longer maintained between the independent and landed minority (whose activity was public-minded and political) and the working underclasses (whose activity was predominantly economic). The landed elite could reasonably be expected to think and act for the public good because their leisured security released them from private wants and interests; but as soon as they allowed self-interestedness to threaten the autonomy of their decision-making, there would be no safeguards left in place to protect the liberty of the polity and its citizens. Free and flourishing nations, it was argued, were by definition self-sufficient, austere

[3] For a comprehensive discussion of this tradition in its seventeenth and eighteenth-century applications, see J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton and Oxford, 1975), ch.12-14. See also Shelley Burtt, *Virtue Transformed: Political Argument in England, 1688-1740* (Cambridge, 1992), pp.4-9, 64-8; Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism*, pp.164-5; John Robertson, 'The Scottish Enlightenment at the Limits of the Civic Tradition', in *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. by Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge, 1983), pp.138-40.

and frugal, populated by individuals who managed to remain resistant to the corrupting passions of avarice and love of luxury. They were liable to fall into decline if actors in the public realm did not dedicate themselves entirely to deliberations on the good of the polity and found alternative, more private channels – sociability; commerce; sympathy – for the expression of personality.

Civic philosophy provided late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century commentators with an explanatory framework for contemporary problems of society and personality. It supplied cautionary historical exempla for the deleterious effects on public morality of commerce, imperial expansion and luxury, and served to prove that there had always been a strong connection between political liberty and the existence of an elite class whose members eschewed economic activity of all kinds. This reapplication of the civic paradigm was, to a very great degree, a retroactive enterprise: the 'discourse of civic humanism', as Colin Nicholson has observed, 'struggled after the Restoration to continue framing the discussion of political conduct in its preferred ethical terms', and applying its principles to the 'altered priorities' of a sophisticated commercial society required commentators to cultivate an obdurate 'resistance to changing realities'.[4] For many poets, though, resistance was more appealing than having to formulate an untested new language to describe and categorise emergent forms of individualism and privatisation. Writing a country house poem in praise of frugality and self-sufficiency during the early seventeenth-century building boom, for instance, was an attractive option because it allowed for both nostalgia and prescriptivism: poets wrote verse that excluded unsettling social trends in the land market in order to present an implicit critique of such trends. The same is true of the business of writing a formal georgic after Dryden in the early decades of agricultural improvement, where the recognisable cycles of Virgilian labour offered a mythologised alternative to thinking too closely

[4] Colin Nicholson, *Writing and the Rise of Finance: Capital Satires of the Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1994), p.200.

about the accelerating processes of enclosure, aggregation and mechanisation. Augustan satire, likewise, drew on generic preferences for landed disinterest in order to deal critically with the new mechanisms of credit finance and professional specialisation, and to formulate a distinctively aristocratic concept of political virtue that would exclude other emergent forms of citizenship. In each instance, the inherited ethical framework of the genre in question worked to de-emphasise, obscure or attack certain uncongenial elements in contemporary socioeconomic life.

This comfortable relationship between nostalgic poetic intent and traditional generic forms was not infinitely sustainable. During the long eighteenth century, a number of poets began to engage enthusiastically with the ideas, arguments and priorities of political economic discourse, and there were compelling reasons for them to do so: they found rich imaginative possibilities in the expansive worlds it opened up, didactic opportunities in its wealth of data and technical information, and meaningful new philosophical problems in its implications for personality and sociability. But what is interesting and surprising – and worth some investigation – is that their poetry, forward-looking and confident though it was, did not develop pioneering forms to suit the modernity of its outlook. Rather, it engaged with precisely those generic frameworks that foregoing poets had used to sustain their traditional moral economies and civic critiques of modernity. In a self-contradictory fashion, it turned to the generic forms of civic humanism in order to articulate a lively interest in political economic problems.

Nicholson has claimed that civic humanist discourse and 'the conventions of its literacy' could not meaningfully survive the development of arguments for self-interest and individualism: 'these conventions', he writes, 'had not developed a sufficient vocabulary to describe and recognise the continuing revolution with which they had to contend'.[5] For the

[5] Ibid., p.201.

Scriblerian satirists with which he is concerned, an account of profound uneasiness about socioeconomic developments and an ensuing crisis of representation seems accurate, but it is not a useful way of thinking about the work of poets who returned to the traditional 'conventions' of civic humanism in order to articulate their *enthusiasm* for political economic modernity. The intellectual contradictions involved in this updating of conventions, and the attendant problems of genre and representation they prompted, are the subject of the argument presented below. In brief, the question it addresses is this: how did poets engage with the new ideas and problems of political economic thought when they became too dominant and too interesting to ignore, and to what degree could such ideas viably be approached by revisiting the traditional ethical frameworks and value systems of country house poetry, georgic and political satire? What forms of inventive generic adaptation and manipulation of inherited poetic formulae were required to manage – and make the most of – the resultant intellectual conflicts?

The thesis approaches these questions empirically by means of three case studies, separate episodes of generic rewriting that occurred over the course of the long eighteenth century as a result of significant literary engagement with contemporary strands of socioeconomic thought. These are, respectively, the estate poem written in praise of the great new country houses of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; the formal georgic on domestic agricultural subjects that flourished during the mid-eighteenth century; and Patriot political verse satire of the 1760s and 1770s. Case studies are offered because the chronological range of the thesis (roughly, 1670-1770) is large, and the argument cannot pretend to be a comprehensive survey of generic transformation under the pressure of contemporary intellectual change. Instead, it offers three distinctive and representative episodes in which it is possible to map clearly the influence of political economic thought on generic composition, and from which a series of useful conclusions may be drawn about the flexibility and adaptability of

generic categories. Equally, within the exemplary cases chosen for scrutiny a degree of selection has been necessary, since whilst it is entirely possible to address the full range of the formal georgics written on domestic agriculture at mid-century, there were a very large number of poems written in praise of country houses throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, and likewise the production of partisan verse satire in the 1760s and 1770s extended considerably beyond the small group of poems I study (and, in both cases, ephemeral publication in newspapers and magazines means that a number of pieces have yet to come to modern critical attention).

Eighteenth-century poets who took an active interest in economic ideas and problems did so by drawing on contemporary intellectual apologies, which supplied ready defences against traditionally hostile civic humanist and Christian lines of argument. The content of these defences should not be confused with the economic activity they describe: my thesis is concerned with contemporary perceptions of socioeconomic change and the arguments that were available to justify its controversial aspects, rather than the 'facts' of economic history. Though arguments and ideas may distort or falsely construct the events and information they theorise – and though they may accord certain elements a disproportionate degree of importance whilst downplaying others – they are nonetheless part of the historical record, a characteristic of the society they seek to interrogate rather than a detachable metaphysical adjunct. It is 'presumptive prejudice', as Christopher Berry has argued, 'to think that somehow 'ideas' are less 'real' than the number of shopkeepers in London'.[6]

Several eighteenth-century ideas are discussed in the course of the thesis, in the context of their explanatory usefulness for poets writing enthusiastically about the new imaginative resources of political economic nationhood (the opulent luxuries of international trade,

[6] Christopher J. Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge, 1994), p.142. On the importance of ideas as part of the historical record, see also Jules Lubbock, *The Tyranny of Taste: The Politics of Architecture and Design in Britain, 1550-1960 (New Haven and London*, 1995), pp.89-90; Alfred O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton and Oxford, 1977; repr. 2013), p.41.

ambitious projects of enclosure and land reclamation, the political virtues of the mercantile orders, and so on). In the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century country house poem, for instance, poets praised the lavishness of grand estates like Blenheim and Castle Howard by drawing on contemporary apologies for luxury expenditure as a beneficial source of employment and national prosperity, which served as a redress to Roman and Christian attacks on the moral corruption and political tyranny borne of excessive consumption. For poets adapting the formal georgic to an age of rapid agricultural modernisation, an emergent improvers' ideology of ambitious and efficient production (with an increasingly global focus) supplanted classical ideals of self-sufficient farming and philosophies of modest rural life. Verse satires written for Wilkes's Patriot campaign in the 1760s and 1770s were grounded intellectually in contemporary radical defences of the middling and commercial orders as guardians of political liberty, which served to challenge prevailing civic notions about the fundamental incommensurability of economic interestedness and virtuous citizenship.

The strands of political economic argument addressed here (apologies for luxury; defences of agricultural improvement and professional specialisation; conceptual rapprochements between economic and political activity) do not include apologetic treatments of the growth of public credit and the national debt. This is conceivably an omission of some magnitude, since the 'financial revolution' had huge effects on the nation's 'life, social attitudes, and historical development', as P.G.M. Dickson has argued, and thoroughgoing consequences for philosophies of political society and personality.[7] The explanation for excluding it from this account, though, is relatively simple. Poetic responses to the debate surrounding paper credit and the machinery of debt were almost uniformly hostile, so there is little place for a discussion of their implications in a study dedicated to enthusiastic poetic engagements with economic modernity. Progressive arguments about the changing economic

[7] P.G.M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution: A Study in the Development of Public Credit, 1688-1756* (London, 1967), p.12.

uses and valences of land, on the other hand, were inflected positively in much contemporary poetry of the period. The rhetorical frameworks of (especially) the country house poem and the georgic prompted poets to engage confidently in discussions about the moral economics of estate ownership, or the social ramifications of enclosure and improvement; and, in a partisan context, satire provided a framework for critical reflection on the traditional conceptual links between landownership and responsible political activity. The moral significance of landownership in civic thought meant that rival economic descriptions of personality were required to grapple with the problem of precisely why land mattered, and what it meant; so it is in land, rather than credit, that my argument is anchored.

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The line of argument I propose here is intended as a contribution to three separate kinds of critical work, and is also designed in part to challenge or update existing critical consensuses. In the first place, my thesis aligns itself with an ongoing trend in literary criticism and economic theory of examining the intersections – metaphorical, historical and philosophical – between economics and literature, an area of work broadly conceived as New Economic Criticism. Comparative analysis of the two disciplines is useful because economic metaphors are deeply imbricated in the structures of literary texts, whether or not the texts in question are concerned with economic matters on a thematic level, or show themselves to be influenced by developments in contemporary economic life. 'Literary works', Marc Shell argues, 'are composed of small tropic exchanges or metaphors, some of which can be analysed in terms of signified economic content and all of which can be analysed in terms of economic form'.[8] Literary debts, metaphors, tropes and exchanges, in other words, may be approached as forms

[8] Marc Shell, *The Economy of Literature* (Baltimore, 1978; repr. 1993), p.7.

of symbolic capital within a larger total economy, and analysed using the tools and protocols of economic study.

This cross-comparison is possible because, as Shell has shown, real economic capital relies on strategies of symbolisation and fictionality ('tropes') similar to those that determine the symbolic capital of language: 'money, which refers to a system of tropes, is also an 'internal' participant in the logical or semiological organisation of language, which itself refers to a system of tropes'.[9] This insight about the homological relationship between money and language underpins the 'formalist' school of economic criticism, which de-emphasises the importance of 'real' economies extra to the text in favour of scrutinising the *intra*textual symbolic economies and internal exchanges of the text itself (it is a version of New Criticism governed by economic metaphors).[10] My analysis of individual poems draws strongly on these conceptual models of intratextual economy, especially when they can be usefully related to 'real' patterns of circulation and production in the contemporary economy at large: in my chapter on country house poetry, for instance, I suggest that there are fruitful correlations to be made between the formal profligacy of the Restoration estate poem – its hyperbole, wit and extravagance of diction – and the grand ambitions of contemporary house building.

The emphasis on connecting the formal economies of texts to their economic subject matter or extratextual economic contexts is important, because it ensures that the decision to work with economic terms is not arbitrary, or easily replaceable by an alternative system of terminology.[11] It also serves to synthesise economic formalism with another strand of New Economic Criticism, the 'productionist' criticism that scrutinises the wider economy within which authors write, the marketplace in which their works are sold and disseminated and the

[9] Marc Shell, *Money, Language and Thought: Literary and Philosophic Economies from the Medieval to the Modern Era* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1982), p.3. See also Mary Poovey, *Genres of the Credit Economy: Mediating Value in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago and London, 2008), p.5; Patrick Brantlinger, *Fictions of State: Culture and Credit in Britain, 1694-1994* (Ithaca and London, 1996), p.24.
[10] See Mark Osteen and Martha Woodmansee, 'Taking Account of the New Economic Criticism: An Historical Introduction', in *The New Economic Criticism: Studies at the Intersection of Literature and Economics*, ed. by Woodmansee and Osteen (London, 1999), pp.36-7.
[11] See ibid., p.13.

sociocultural discourses that condition the nature of their production. Productionist criticism is a specialised branch of New Historicism, examining the implications for literary authorship of particular moments of economic change. In recent years, a substantial part of its focus has been on the eighteenth century, a period in which the rise of political economy as a discipline generated a decisive break between dedicated economic theory and imaginative 'literary' writing, and the development of a credit economy based on paper promises suggested problematic analogies between the fictionality of literary texts and the fictionality of banknotes and credit notes (both equally reliant on suspensions of disbelief).[12]

The amount of critical attention dedicated to eighteenth-century cultures of credit provides a further reason for the emphasis on moral economies of land in this account. There has been, I suggest, a prevailing trend of focussing closely on the literary implications of the Financial Revolution, the South Sea Bubble and similar key moments in the history of public credit, which has had the effect of downplaying poetic encounters with other kinds of socioeconomic change. In this regard, I am thinking of such recent studies as Nicholson's *Writing and the Rise of Finance* (1994), which examines ways in which Opposition satirists in the age of Walpole found themselves 'being constituted by forces and energies increasingly perceived as beyond any human control', even as they sought to impose a species of order on spiralling economic change; Patrick Brantlinger's *Fictions of State* (1996), which finds Augustan poets anxiously drawing parallels between the 'bankruptcy or imaginative impoverishment' of imitative neoclassical verse and the 'foundation of debt' on which they perceived their nation to be built; Mary Poovey's *Genres of the Credit Economy* (2008), which studies the paper instruments of finance (banknotes, credit notes, bills of exchange) as genres in their own right, kinds of

[12] Poovey, *Genres of the Credit Economy*, pp.7-8, 27-8, 89-93.

written text that increasingly required literary writing to adopt its own distinct canons of value.[13]

A common thread in these accounts is their bidirectional sense of influence in the relationship between extratextual economies and literary production: all three are 'careful to recognise the reciprocity between social systems and individuals', which is to say that they are keenly aware of the degree to which eighteenth-century poets and novelists did not merely represent or respond to economic change from a position of disinterested authority, but participated in an complex political economy that necessarily influenced the content, form and cultural valuation of their output.[14] In this regard their approach has shaped my own. My study of eighteenth-century genres examines ways in which poets adopt and reappropriate current economic ideas for their own purposes, but it is also interested in the degree to which such new discourses set limits to the usefulness of inherited genres, or overwhelm the capabilities of their frameworks and tropes (as, for instance, in the case of the mid-century georgic, which struggles to contain the complex and specialised information of agricultural improvement; or in later eighteenth-century satirists' admissions of being implicated in the compromised literary market they seek to attack).

The second area of critical work to which this thesis is envisaged as a contribution is the study of mid-eighteenth century poetry, broadly conceived as verse produced between the death of Pope in 1744 and the advent of early forms of Romanticism in the 1780s. Chapter 1 on country house poetry extends to verse written in the 1760s, and Chapters 2 and 3 on georgic poetry and satire deal explicitly with the literature of the mid-century (1750-70). The ongoing critical debate on the place of mid-eighteenth-century poetry is well known, and may be summarised briefly here. Discussions adopt one of two periodising approaches: the poetry is

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[13] See, respectively, Nicholson, *Writing and the Rise of Finance*, pp.6-7; Brantlinger, *Fictions of State*, pp.41, 48-9; Poovey, *Genres of the Credit Economy*, pp.87-144.

[14] Osteen and Woodmansee, 'Taking Account of the New Economic Criticism: An Historical Introduction', in *The New Economic Criticism*, ed. by Woodmansee and Osteen, p.20.

thought of either as a belated protraction of the Augustan achievement ('post-Augustan'), or as a proleptic version of the kind of self-reflexive poetics that would come into fruition in the 1780s and 1790s ('pre-Romantic' or 'proto-Romantic'). Depending on one's preferred teleology, poets are either attempting to clear space for themselves in overworked ground, or experimenting immaturely with forms, producing rough drafts for future Romantic fair copies.[15] What both narratives share is a sense of the mid-century as a period of hiatus between two exceptional ages of literary inventiveness: it is an age of uncertainty about the viability or usefulness of imaginative writing, and its poetry is poised between the perceived obsolescence of inherited forms and the unfathomability of new ones. Its poets, by extension, are conceived of as anxiously self-questioning and self-doubting, unworldly and apolitical; they are thought to be sceptical about the role and progress of literary writing in a modern market-driven print culture, and close to dismissing entirely the idea, associated most obviously with the confidence of the late seventeenth-century and Augustan satirists, of the poet as a great public legislator with the power to make things happen in the world outside his art.

Until relatively recently, conclusions like these formed the basis for a broad critical consensus on poetry of the mid-eighteenth century, and discussions tended to concentrate on the work of poets such as Gray, Collins and Warton, who were found to offer least resistance to the imposition of a narrative of poetic self-reflexivity and imaginative retreat. John Sitter makes the case influentially in *Literary Loneliness in Mid-Eighteenth-Century England* (1982), where he charts the beginnings in the mid-century of a fundamental breach between poetry and history (the latter conceived in the broadest sense as the external world of politics, war, empire and commerce). Poems written in the years after 1740, Sitter writes, embody 'procedures of avoidance'; they show poets 'seeking to avoid history' in favour of the less politically charged

[15] For examples of the former approach, see W. Jackson Bate, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (London, 1971), pp.45-8, and John Sitter, *Literary Loneliness in Mid-Eighteenth-Century England* (Ithaca and London, 1982), pp.77-9; for an example of the latter, see Marshall Brown, *Preromanticism* (Stanford, 1991), pp.3-6. Alternative labels reference key figures or principles of the age: e.g. 'The Age of Johnson' or 'The Age of Reason'.

realms of memory and fancy, and eschewing social or public forms (the verse epistle) for the more deliberative and inward modes of the lyric or the philosophical ode.[16] This line of argument requires an awkward engagement with those poets of the period – Thomson, Akenside, Dyer, and others – whose emphases are explicitly historical and political. Evasively, it is claimed that poetic endorsements of 'commercial energy, social engagement, 'worthy' ambition and patriotism' are forms of 'official dogma' rather than genuine feeling; they are distinct from 'unofficial sympathies', or the sentiments of retreat, solitariness and indolence that are assumed to have governed mid-century poets' writing whether they were conscious of them or not. For Sitter, looking ahead to Romantic divisions between the realm of the imagination and other kinds of intellectual labour, poetry of the mid-century exhibits 'a shared attempt to differentiate the world of poetry from the world of political and economic behaviour', and turns its back on linear progress in a 'protest against various capitalistic tendencies'.[17]

Sitter's account influences several other studies of the period. Fredric V. Bogel's *Literature and Insubstantiality in Later Eighteenth-Century England* (1984), for instance, draws a key distinction between Augustan poetry and mid-century verse, which is argued to have determined the scope and meaning of the work that poets of either period were able to produce. Whilst Augustan writers concerned themselves with modes of knowledge and human authority, Bogel suggests, later eighteenth-century poets grappled with altogether more thoroughgoing ontological questions of being and existence; they were sensitive to 'a diminishment or thinning out of the world's being, a loss of its ontological potency and presence', with serious implications for man's 'capacity for happiness and […] for action in which we can robustly believe'. This 'loss of confidence' in the world's reality and solidity,

[16] Sitter, *Literary Loneliness*, pp.80, 85-6.
[17] Ibid., pp.91, 95, 107.

Bogel argues, prevented the mid-century poet from engaging meaningfully with empirical problems and social debates, and their accompanying didactic modes.[18]

William Dowling's essay on 'Ideology and the Flight from History in Eighteenth-Century Poetry' (1992) sets itself the task of refining Sitter's premise of a breach between poetry and history, suggesting that mid-century poetry is oriented not away from the past as such, but 'towards a past existing in the poetic imagination'. This new imaginary past emerged, Dowling argues, as a necessary response to the 'demise of Country ideology' along with the Augustans, and the loss of its confident conception of 'history as a field of symbolic action, of poems as events with enormous consequences in the world'. It works as a recognition that 'moral utterance in general and poetry in particular are powerless to alter, or even much to retard, the process of historical change'; and it is part of a mid-century process whereby 'pure poetry', or 'poetry-as-such', sets itself apart from the 'forces of historical development', which will continue regardless of its interventions.[19] A similar argument about divisions of intellectual labour is made in Alfred Lutz's work on Goldsmith's 'The Deserted Village' (1994), in which Lutz claims that the 'rise of the discourse of political economy' in the second half of the eighteenth century worked to 'displace poetry as a genre in which society might be analysed and critiqued'. Political economy, he argues, absorbed and refined the 'morally based economic discourses' that Augustan poets had worked into their verse, establishing a new specialist discipline whose systems were conceived to be 'independent of the traditional subject matter of poetry'.[20]

In recent years, this critical consensus about a mid-century breach between poetry and history has been challenged by a number of revisionist studies. Since the mid-1990s, several accounts of mid- or later eighteenth-century poetry have discovered complex interrelations

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[18] Fredric V. Bogel, *Literature and Insubstantiality in Later Eighteenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1984), pp.6-7, 15-7, 24.
[19] William Dowling, 'Ideology and the Flight from History in Eighteenth-Century Poetry', in *The Profession of Eighteenth-Century Literature: Reflections on an Institution*, ed. by Leo Damrosch (Madison, 1992), pp.142-7.
[20] Alfred Lutz, ''The Deserted Village' and the Politics of Genre', *MLQ* lv (1994), 149-68 (p.149).

between poetry and history, or poetry and political economy, and noticed the degree to which even apparently private utterances or solitary sentiments have public valences. This new kind of historical attention often engages directly with Sitter's thesis in order to sketch out the lineaments of its dissent. John Goodridge's *Rural Life in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry* (1995), for instance, resituates Dyer's georgic in its contemporary economic context, and insists that 'Dyer's feelings in *The Fleece* are exactly the opposite' of Sitter's diagnosis of retreat and solitariness in mid-century poetry. The georgic, Goodridge writes, is a 'social and sociable' form, whose 'poetic qualities' are 'mortgaged to rational and practical requirements, to its public and social responsibilities'. It might not be the 'personal, solitary, intuitive kind of utterance' that later developments in Romantic theory and practice have led the modern reader to think that poetry is or should be; but expectations like these, Goodridge argues, are a matter of post-hoc canonical taste, and should not preclude reading *The Fleece* as a serious engagement with contemporary political economic problems.[21]

Lance Bertelsen's study of Charles Churchill and the London wits disagrees with Sitter's 'flight from history' thesis on similar grounds. Bertelsen shows that Sitter's argument succeeds only by ignoring those mid-century poets who were immersed in 'topical journalism': Churchill, he writes, 'undertakes a complex, relativistic immersion *into* history', and fiercely asserts the 'historical specificity and importance' of the middling and lower orders.[22] The strongest challenge to the 'flight from history' argument in recent years has come from Dustin Griffin's *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2002), which disagrees explicitly with the 'essentially apolitical reading of eighteenth-century poetry after Pope' (Sitter and Bogel's work, he says, is 'a still influential misreading'), and the notion that 'an age of enlightenment

[21] John Goodridge, *Rural Life in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.96-8.
[22] Lance Bertelsen, *The Nonsense Club: Literature and Popular Culture, 1749-1764* (Oxford, 1986), p.258.

was somehow inimical to the production of poetry'.[23] Griffin's own account argues that even poets who have traditionally been viewed as indifferent or hostile to public matters (Gray, Collins) are in fact deeply invested in collective discourses of nationhood, and makes the case for placing politically- and economically-minded poets like Akenside and Dyer at the centre of the debate rather than on the periphery.[24]

My thesis on genre and socioeconomic thought is intended to complement and extend these revisionist projects, and others like them.[25] It also aims to contribute to an ongoing critical process of resituating eighteenth-century British poetry within broader systems of production and distribution, turning outwards to accommodate the global forces of war, commerce and empire that inflected metropolitan writing. I am thinking here of such studies as John Cardwell's assessment of political and propagandist poetry during the Seven Years' War; Karen O'Brien's work on 'imperial georgic' of the long eighteenth century and its harnessing of Virgilian frameworks for the purposes of aestheticizing and naturalising colonial settlement; and, in particular, Suvir Kaul's account of poetry's contributions to discourses of patriotism, chauvinism and nationhood during an age of great commercial expansion.[26] Kaul's monograph declares itself to be about 'the quest for poetic confidence' during the eighteenth century, and offers a series of readings to illustrate its major thesis that 'poetry… is not an exercise in inwardness' for poets such as Thomson, Young, Glover and Dyer, but is conceived as 'a viable

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[23] Dustin Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2002), pp.3-5. On the possibility or otherwise of writing poetry in 'an age of enlightenment', see John Barrell, *English Literature in History 1730-1780: An Equal, Wide Survey* (London, 1983; repr. 2007), p.108.

[24] Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry*, pp.98-198.

[25] Other recent challenges to the received view of mid-century poetry include William Levine, ''Beyond the Limits of a Vulgar Fate': The Renegotiation of Public and Private Concerns in the Careers of Gray and Other Mid-Eighteenth-Century Poets', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* xxiv (1995), 223-42; Dustin Griffin, 'Akenside's Political Muse', in *Mark Akenside: A Reassessment*, ed. by Robin Dix (Cranbury, NJ, 2000), pp.19-50; Rachel Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure and the Vernacular Landscape, 1700-1830* (Cambridge, 2002); Adam Rounce, 'Akenside's Clamors for Liberty', in *'Cultures of Whiggism': New Essays on English Literature and Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. by David Womersley, Paddy Bullard and Abigail Williams (Cranbury, NJ, 2005), pp.216-34, especially p.223.

[26] M. John Cardwell, *Arts and Arms: Literature, Politics and Patriotism during the Seven Years War* (Manchester and New York, 2004); Karen O'Brien, 'Imperial georgic, 1660-1789', in *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550-1850*, ed. by Gerald Maclean, Donna Landry and Joseph P. Ward (Cambridge, 1999), pp.160-79; Suvir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville and London, 2000).

and even vital way of intervening in, and moulding, public discourse'. He shows that their verse 'does not, as romantic poems often do, call attention to the world only to disavow its noise and clutter': instead, it makes active interventions into a globalised public sphere of which it explicitly approves, and seeks to 'endow the nation with literary, cultural, and iconic capital adequate to its burgeoning status as a global power'.[27]

Kaul's argument notices as a point of some interest the degree to which the 'articulation of the historically new' in economics or politics prompted poets to turn to inherited tropes and topoi, engaging in a 'strategic or polemical renewal of older (particularly classical) poetic forms and genres'. His example is the miscellaneous generic inheritance of Young's encomium to British naval prowess, *Imperium Pelagi* (1730):

> The formal counterpart of Young's global vision is an encyclopaedia of poetic conventions: this ode to Britain and to Commerce contains within itself tropes and topoi identified with the pastoral, the georgic, the progress poem, the Pindaric. It mines, in an entirely eclectic fashion, a variety of poetic forms and practices in order to fashion and enrich its iconography and rhetoric.[28]

The observation here – a formalist comparison between generic *copia* and the richness of the global harvest – has obvious resonances for my argument about the appropriation of poetic genres for new intellectual purposes. But there is a key difference between Kaul's work and mine, which concerns the fact that his analysis does not isolate what it means *in particular* to select one genre for reappropriation over another, where selection also involves the negotiation of genre-linked value systems and moral positions. For Kaul in his argument about Young, the particular ethical and philosophical associations of the pastoral, the georgic, the progress poem or the Pindaric are unimportant; it is their combinatory or encyclopaedic pressure that matters. My analysis foregrounds such individual implications, and selects poems as objects of study

[27] Kaul, *Poems of Nation*, pp.8-18.
[28] Ibid., pp.189, 208.

because they reach particularly complex and interesting accommodations between generic codes of value and new socioeconomic ideas.

The point about genre leads to the third and final area of critical work to which this thesis aims to contribute. My argument is aligned with certain key aspects of genre theory of the last few decades, which argue for genre's imbrication in social history, its responsiveness to changing socioeconomic pressures and the contextual nature of its formations. According to these ideas of genre, thinking about literature in generic terms does not mean endorsing essentialist conceptions of kind or category: 'even for Aristotle', Ralph Cohen writes in an influential article on the interrelations between genre and history, 'generic markers are not absolutes; they indicate stages through which a genre passes'.[29] My thesis involves an assumption that certain genres espouse value systems and codes of praise and blame, but this assumption does not presuppose that value systems or codes are inherent within genres or that they have always remained the same. Instead, I work on the premise that genres accrue various normative preferences or associations over the course of their historical development, which may in time be altered or discarded in favour of others, but which nonetheless offer suggestive indications of why a certain genre was conceived to be important or useful at a particular moment in its history, and point towards the kind of intellectual work that its projected ethical frameworks – or calculated divergences from them – were taken to perform.

Frameworks, in all such historical cases, are important because they make divergence possible: they 'serve as a goad, rather than a hindrance to creative variation in poetic practice', and offer a platform for various kinds of conscious political disagreement (the disdain for aristocratic independence in later eighteenth-century satire, for instance, is pointed precisely because previous kinds of verse satire are so invested in civic ideals of landed disinterest).[30] If I emphasise the degree to which individual genres are associated historically with determinate

[29] Cohen, 'History and Genre', p.207.
[30] Hayden White, 'Anomalies of Genre: The Utility of Theory and History for the Study of Literary Genres', *New Literary History* xxxiv (2003), 597-615 (p.601).

philosophies of behaviour, it is because my argument draws on lines of historicist thinking in genre studies (elaborated from the 1980s onwards by Cohen, Alastair Fowler and others), which conceive of these determining associations as necessary for dissatisfaction and change. Cohen, for instance, argues that 'genres are open categories': they exist in a constant state of flux, since 'each member alters the genre by adding, contradicting, or changing constituents'.[31] They do not operate in a vacuum, but arise to complement or challenge other genres, and as such individual texts may belong to more than one category, or move between categories, as boundaries and expectations change.[32] For Fowler, similarly, 'the character of genres is that they change', and change is brought about by the production of new texts, which by virtue of 'conformity, variation, innovation, or antagonism' will necessarily reshape the generic categories they relate to.[33]

Change, as my own argument attests, is also brought about by extratextual pressures, the kinds of sociocultural trends that require genres to perform new kinds of intellectual work, or prompt them to highlight or de-emphasise various ideas or associations (this new work is necessary because genres that are found to be insufficiently adaptable may lose their explanatory usefulness and become obsolete). Fowler, for instance, suggests that the genre of Renaissance country house poetry 'seems to have emerged in response to changes in the character of hospitality', whilst Cohen has demonstrated how the generic transformation of the seventeenth-century broadside 'The Excellent Ballad of George Barnwel' into a full-length domestic tragedy in the early eighteenth century was closely associated with contemporary forms of social mobility and the 'class elevation of the merchant'.[34] David Fairer has connected the rise of the georgic in Britain after 1707 to its usefulness as a framework for the 'organising

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[31] Cohen, 'History and Genre', p.204.
[32] Ibid., p.204, 207, 210; see also Cohen, introd. to *New Literary History* xxxiv (2003), v-xv (p.vi). For the role of readerly expectations in the 'scope, alteration and reproduction of the borders and structure of the genre', see Hans Robert Jauss and Elizabeth Benzinger, 'Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory', *New Literary History* ii (1970), 7-37 (pp.11-15).
[33] Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, p.23.
[34] Fowler, 'The Formation of Genres', p.186; Cohen, 'History and Genre', pp.215-7.

and development of the young nation's resources', suggesting that the georgic's dual attention to 'new skills and opportunities' and 'time-hallowed tradition' provided a 'subtle way of confronting wider problems of continuity and innovation'.[35] Likewise, Paula McDowell has shown that high-cultural revaluations of oral ballads (and the composition or forgery of new ones) during the later eighteenth century were prompted by anxieties about the contemporary spread of print culture and print commerce, and the desire to think of modern conditions of textual production as imaginatively separate from a purer native tradition of oral poetry.[36]

McDowell's suggestion about the market pressures that encourage generic revival (and the degree to which such pressures influence the valuation and classification of generic forms) is part of a broader critical interest of the last decade in studying the sociocultural conditions that encourage generic differentiation, or accelerate the process of generic decline. Poovey, for instance, has claimed that the rise of 'economic writing' – printed financial instruments, as well as the new discourses of political economic thought – encouraged differentiation between pragmatic communicative or didactic forms and what was newly demarcated as 'imaginative writing', and suggests that metrics of aesthetic value were constructed in order to elevate 'original' literature (defined by its refusal to defer to market considerations) above all other kinds of writing.[37] Clifford Siskin and William Warner have focussed on the proliferation of new genres in print culture during the eighteenth century (periodical essays, society journals, critical reviews), and demonstrated that these categories of writing were prompted and enabled by the existence of new forms of cultural mediation, developments in infrastructure, legal protocol and public sociability that disseminated writing faster to its readers and made more of

[35] David Fairer, *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century* (Harlow, 2003), pp.79-80.
[36] Paula McDowell, 'Towards a Genealogy of 'Print Culture' and 'Oral Tradition'', in *This Is Enlightenment*, ed. by Clifford Siskin and William Warner (Chicago and London, 2010), pp.243-4.
[37] Poovey, *Genres of the Credit Economy*, pp.27-9, 90-3, 125-6, 290-4. See also Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700-1830* (Baltimore and London, 1998), p.6, on the emergence of 'literature' as an implicitly hierarchized denotation of 'deeply imaginative writing'.

those readers into writers themselves.[38] Siskin has also suggested some socioeconomic contexts for the phenomenon of increased generic mixing during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: he highlights the 'advent of print culture' and the kinds of 'technological change' it brought, as well as the refinement of knowledge production into disciplinary branches, which demanded specialised hybrid forms of their own (giving rise, for instance, to genres like the conjectural history, which married developmental narratives with the experimental philosophy of political economy).[39] My analysis of the adequacy of inherited genres to Enlightenment forms of knowledge and information aligns itself with theories of generic transformation of this kind, and likewise the conclusions I propose about the viability of certain traditional genres in evolving market conditions (the relevance, for instance, of the country house poem's structures of patronage to the networks of a modern literary marketplace) are intended to complement recent theoretical emphases on revaluation, classification and canon formation.

'Stories of genre', Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker have argued, 'are not merely evidence of cultural and political change, they are themselves part of that history'. Narratives of generic formation, rise and decline belong to a cultural 'history of perception', a history of intellectual trends, priorities and applications.[40] This is a thesis about the flexibility of genres as tools to think with, their usefulness as frameworks to legitimise and account for unfamiliar kinds of argument and information. It is also a study of the particular intellectual conditions of the eighteenth century, and the degree to which such tools and frameworks were found to be practical and meaningful under the pressure of radically new political economic imperatives. As I have outlined above, it is divided into three chapters or case studies, each of which deals with a particular instance of generic transformation during the long eighteenth century, and makes separate suggestions about the nature of generic change and the relationship between

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[38] Clifford Siskin and William Warner, 'This Is Enlightenment: An Invitation in the Form of an Argument', in *This Is Enlightenment*, ed. by Siskin and Warner, pp.12-18.
[39] Siskin, *The Work of Writing*, pp.19, 45-8.
[40] Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, introd. to *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. by Sharpe and Zwicker (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1987), pp.10-11.

literary history and intellectual history. I conclude by proposing that there were particular political economic ideas and formulations that proved difficult for all three genres to compass, and suggest some links between the problematic nature of these ideas and the gradual decline of the traditional kinds during the later eighteenth century.

2: THE COUNTRY HOUSE POEM AND THE NATIONAL ESTATE, 1670-1760

In 'A Vote' (1636), Abraham Cowley reworks a common poetic theme of the early seventeenth century, the idea of the happy man's retirement in modest rural surroundings. One aspect of living well, he argues, is having the right kind of house and garden:

> My house a cottage more
> Then pallace, and should fitting bee
> For all my use, no luxurie.
> My garden painted ore
> With natures hand, not arts, and pleasures yield,
> *Horace* might envy in his *Sabine* field.[41]

Cowley's 'vote' here is for moderation and temperance, and the short lines and simple verbal range of his lyric provide a formal counterpart to the distrust of 'luxurie' and showiness he professes. The preference for 'natures hand' is a rejection of cultivated sophistication and Baroque flourish, and the reference to Horatian management anchors the poem in a recognisable tradition of early seventeenth-century Stoic self-restraint.[42] For Cowley, the country house provides an organising *locus* for various commonplace reflections on the moral superiority of frugality and retreat.

William Harrison's *Woodstock Park* (1706), written in the first year of building works at Blenheim, begins by drawing on the same inherited ethos of country life. Positioning himself as an astonished visitor to the new estate, Harrison emphasises his unfamiliarity with its luxury and extravagance:

> We, who in humble Cells, and learn'd Retreat,

[41] Abraham Cowley, 'A Vote', ll. 75-80, in *The Collected Works of Abraham Cowley*, 2 vols., gen. ed. by Thomas O. Calhoun, Laurence Heyworth, Robert B. Hinman, William B. Hunter and Allan Pritchard (Newark, London and Toronto, 1989-93), i: *Poetical Blossomes, The Puritans Lecture, The Puritan and the Papist, The Civil War* (1989), p.73.
[42] On this tradition, see Maren-Sofie Rostvig, *The Happy Man: Studies in the Metamorphoses of a Classical Ideal: Volume II, 1700-1760*, 2nd ed. (Oslo, 1971), pp.50-2.

> Are Strangers to the Splendor of the Great,
> On barren Cliffs of Speculation thrown,
> Of all besides unknowing, and unknown,
> Pronounc'd our Fabricks just in ev'ry Part,
> And scorn'd the poor Attempts of modern Art;
> (Proud of his Cottage so exults the Swain,
> Who loves the Forest, and admires the Plain).[43]

Harrison's lines preserve the virtues of retirement and modesty that his speaker feels to be threatened by Blenheim's extraordinary magnificence. As a 'Stranger' to the 'Splendor of the Great', he has taken care to preserve his independence from worldly dealings, absorbed in lonely 'Speculation' and happy to remain in obscurity ('unknowing, and unknown'); he is like a simple 'Swain', proud of his humble 'Cottage' and scornful of the flashiness of 'modern Art'. But the grammar of these pronouncements makes them sound oddly provisional, because Harrison puts them in the past tense: he and his fellow visitors 'Pronounc'd' their 'Fabricks just in ev'ry part' and 'scorn'd' the 'Attempts of modern Art', but are no longer able to do so with the same unshakeable moral confidence. Faced with the grandeur of Marlborough's edifice at Woodstock, virtuous protestations about the superiority of frugal living seem false and inappropriate. Blenheim is a magnificent sight, a 'glorious Pile' even in the early days of its construction, and Harrison feels compelled to celebrate it as such without reserve or qualification.

The careful negotiation between tenses in *Woodstock Park* describes in miniature a larger shift of vision and emphasis in contemporary estate poetry. During the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, poets turned from traditional modes of representing the great house as modest, frugal and parochial, isolated from the external world of politics, trade and war. Instead, they celebrated estates for their luxury and sophistication, their centrality to the political affairs of the nation and their economic links to metropolitan and imperial wealth. The Duke of Beaufort's house in Joseph Trapp's *Ædes Badmintonianae* (1701), for instance,

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[43] William Harison, *Woodstock Park. A Poem*, 2nd ed. (London, 1706), p.8.

showcases 'the glitt'ring Honours of the Great' and displays 'all the Pomp of Princely Luxury'; Harrison's half-built Blenheim does justice in a magnificent fashion to the military feats of 'CHURCHILL's Hand'; and Canons House, to the eye of Charles Gildon in *Canons; or, The Vision* (1717), is a 'Noble Pile', a 'sublime Abode', under whose 'Gilded Roofs' the Earl of Carnarvon will 'true Examples to the Nations give' as a lord and politician.[44] In poems like these, the idea of the country house is enlisted in the ebullient process of self-determination that England – and subsequently Britain – underwent as a nation during the early part of the eighteenth century: the estate's grandeur and wealth are emblematic of all kinds of worldly success, military, political and commercial, and its house and grounds are imagined as a site for public business and activity, rather than retreat.

This new attitude, I suggest, represents a significant rethinking of the poetic uses of the country estate. The late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century country house poem measures the economic activity of the great house by modern criteria of opulence and wealth creation rather than inherited moral codes of virtuous landownership, exchanging the idealised paternalist model delineated by Cowley for an enthusiastic engagement with contemporary ideas of trickle-down economics and social responsibility. In the readings that follow, I situate this transformation of the estate genre as part of a broader intellectual reappraisal of the function and meaning of the great house in contemporary public discourse. During the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the cultural value of the country estate underwent a rapid process of inflation. Individual houses were promoted as objects of national interest by the new print media of the domestic tourist industry, admired as sites of legislative decision-making and ambitious imperial planning, and praised for their part in stimulating the building trade and the growing international commerce in luxury goods. The contemporary estate poem, I suggest,

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[44] See, respectively, Joseph Trapp, *Ædes Badmintonianæ: A Poem most humbly presented to His Grace Henry Duke of Beaufort &c…* (London, 1701), pp.2-3; Harrison, *Woodstock Park*, p.8; Charles Gildon, *Canons: or, The Vision. A poem address'd to the Right Honourable Earl of Caernarvan, &c.* (London, 1717), pp.10, 26.

provided a recognisable framework for these modern patterns of power and landownership, representing individual estates as working models of successful political economic management.

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'The Builder ought to be encouraged in all Nations as the chief promoter of their Welfare', Nicholas Barbon maintained in 1685.[45] His *Apology for the Builder* was a spirited defence of grand houses at a time of revived interest in building, as both the London metropolis and areas of the countryside were developed into sites for luxury residences and apportioned into estates. The early boom in architectural commissions of the 1680s was stimulated by the profits of overseas trade and the commercial prosperity of peacetime, and it inaugurated the vogue for prodigiously grand country house construction on the part of the newly powerful Whig peerage, following the Baroque style of the Continent and the magnificent example of Versailles.[46] Chatsworth was a notable statement of intent in this style under William Talman's direction from 1686, followed in 1699 by Castle Howard, the seat of the Whig Earl of Carlisle and an early project of John Vanbrugh's. From 1700, the building of country seats – construction from scratch, or refabrication and extension of now unfashionable Elizabethan manor houses – became an enterprise of national importance for the peerage, the aristocracy and ambitious families of the gentry, to the extent that more than 150 great houses were built in the first half of the century.[47] Spurred on by the beneficial effects of enclosure and the enshrinement of legal conditions favourable to property ownership and entailment, extravagant

[45] Nicholas Barbon, *An Apology for the Builder, or, A Discourse Shewing the Cause and Effects of the Increase of Building* (London, 1685), p.3.
[46] See Adrian Tinniswood, *A History of Country House Visiting: Four Centuries of Tourism and Taste* (Oxford, 1989), p.66.
[47] John Summerson, 'The Classical Country House in 18th-Century England', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* cvii (1959), 539-57 (p.540); Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester, 2000), p.4. Charles Saumarez Smith identifies as many as 389 new houses built between 1660 and 1760. See Saumarez Smith, 'Supply and Demand in English Country House Building, 1660-1740', *Oxford Art Journal* xi (1988), 3-9 (p.4).

building for the sake of visibility and display was the preferred articulation of political, economic and aesthetic superiority during the early decades of the eighteenth century.[48]

The house-building explosion reflected a change in the business of architecture as well as a change in its function and application. The expansion of the client base to include the non-titled aristocracy and upper echelons of the gentry marked a gradual transfer of architectural activity from the Court-sponsored projects of Royal Works office-holders to the privatised work of professional draughtsmen and builders.[49] The clientele for grand country seats included the lower ranks of the landed and distinguished members of the Commons (Robert Walpole, Henry Pelham and the Marquess of Rockingham, for instance), and it was bolstered to an increasing degree by an influx of new money from trading, banking and industrial quarters. Established members of the commercial classes invested their capital in land, as a secure, prestigious and patriotic kind of economic stakeholding. Wealth acquired in the East India Company, for instance, was the basis of Warren Hastings's estate at Daylesford, whilst Harry Hoare's banking fortune and successful negotiation of the South Sea crisis enabled him to redevelop Stourhead from 1717. Ralph Allen, who made his money and reputation in reforming the Post Office, established himself at Prior Park in Somerset. The influx of cash, additionally, helped to revivify the estates of old families as well as paying for new ones. Members of the peerage with particularly large estates maintained business and industrial interests in order to turn their acres into collieries, canals and turnpike roads for investment purposes.[50]

Country house building, as Barbon had observed decades earlier, was a comparative business for aspiring landowners, who were motivated by 'an emulation among them to out-live and out-vye one another in Arts'.[51] Their emulation was intensified by the fact that it was

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[48] John Habbakuk, *Marriage, Debt, and the Estates System: English Landownership, 1650-1950* (New York, 1994).
[49] See Summerson, 'The Classical Country House', p.548.
[50] G.E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1963), pp.189-201.
[51] Barbon, *An Apology for the Builder*, p.33.

increasingly possible to view and evaluate estates on a national scale, rather than merely locally or circumstantially. The publication of the first volumes of Jan Kip and Leonard Knyff's *Britannia Illustrata* (1707) and Colen Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1715-25) offered topographical portraits and architectural elevations of great English houses from all counties, from which aspiring builders and arbiters of taste could imitate the most fashionable Palladian designs.[52] These subscribers' volumes of architectural templates also helped to inaugurate the eighteenth-century vogue for country house tourism. As part of a wider grand tour of the British Isles, showpiece houses from various counties (Norfolk and Northumberland were particular favourites) were available to viewing parties on a pre-organised or *ad hoc* basis. Increasingly, visits required tighter administration by means of a fee or stipulated opening times, since – as Defoe recorded of Viscount Castlemain's gardens at Wanstead – 'the Crowds grew too great, and his Lordship was oblig'd to restrain his Servants from shewing them, except on one or two Days in a Week only'.[53] (Holkham solved this problem by letting 'noblemen and foreigners' enter on 'any day of the week, except Sunday', but opening on 'Tuesday only' for 'other people'.[54]) In its early days country house visiting was an activity practised solely by the aristocracy, but by mid-century the 'tourist class' included members of the lower middling orders as well as the higher echelons of the gentry.[55] The cultural idea of the great estate proved to be just as powerful for those without a landed basis for their aspirations as for a coterie audience of the landowning rich.

Estate tourism was a significant boost to local trade: publicans and innkeepers benefited from an influx of moneyed visitors, and booksellers made profits from the increasing popularity

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[52] See James S. Ackerman, *The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses* (London, 1990), pp.136-56.
[53] Daniel Defoe, *A Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, I, in *Writings on Travel, Discovery and History*, gen. ed. by W.R. Owens and P.N. Furbank, 8 vols. (London, 2001-2), i: *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain, Volume I* (2001), p.130; see also Tinniswood, *A History of Country House Visiting*, pp.92-3.
[54] Richard Beatniffe, *The Norfolk Tour: Or, Traveller's Pocket Companion…*, 4th edn. (Norwich, 1786), p.106.
[55] Carole Fabricant, 'The Literature of Domestic Tourism and the Public Consumption of Private Property', in *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature*, ed. by Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (New York and London, 1987), pp.256, 259. See Oliver Cox, 'A Mistaken Iconography? Eighteenth-Century Visitor Accounts of Stourhead', *Garden History* xl (2012), 98-116 (p.101), for a representative demographic case study of Stourhead's visitors.

of county-specific tourist guides and descriptions of local seats.[56] The most visited estates – Stowe, Blenheim, Houghton, Stourhead – had printed guides of their own as early as the 1740s, whilst smaller houses were represented in *The Gentleman's Magazine* or the *London Magazine* by lists of their pictures and statues. These tourist guides offered what amounted to a fully conceived visiting experience, as they showcased individual houses in hyperbolic terms as unmissable stops on a thriving domestic tourist route (Kedleston was 'one of the finest houses in the kingdom'; Houghton's picture collection was 'unquestionably the first in England, after the royal one'; Wentworth-Woodhouse stood on 'one of the most exquisite spots in the world'[57]), and laid out blueprints for the route and shape of a standardised 'ideal' tour, such that all individual visits must have come to look very much like one another.

The public availability of the estate experience meant that great houses assumed a function that was more public and national than private and local: the kinds of sociability they fostered and the economic interests they maintained were on a far grander scale than the parochial activities of the communities immediately contained within and around their walls. Defoe, whose *Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724-7) offered an early version of the topographical tourist guide, had the breadth of vision to see this bigger network in action. 'That these Houses and Gardens are admirably Beautiful in their kind, and in their separate, and distinct Beauties, such as their Scituation [*sic*], Decoration, Architect, Furniture, and the like, must be granted', he wrote,

> But I find none has spoken of what I call the distant Glory of all these Buildings: There is a Beauty in these Things at a distance, taking them *en Passant*, and in *Perspective*, which few People value, and fewer understand; and yet here they are more truly great, than in all their private Beauties whatsoever; Here they reflect Beauty, and Magnificence upon the whole Country, and give a kind of a Character to the Island of *Great Britain* in general.[58]

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[56] Fabricant, 'The Literature of Domestic Tourism', p.256.
[57] *A New Display of the Beauties of England…* (London, 1774), pp.106, 42, 140.
[58] Defoe, *A Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, I, in *Writings on Travel, Discovery and History*, gen. ed. by Owens and Furbank, i. 201.

Here, Defoe's trick of 'Perspective' allows him to consider the country house as a national idea, and to commend it for its part in an estate larger than itself, the 'Island of *Great Britain* in general'. In this grand view the individual seat is seen to matter both less and more, as it loses various historical claims on singularity, but acquires economic and political significances it would not otherwise have.

Tourist literature and accounts like Defoe's considered the great house as an index of the growing riches of the nation. Its material collections of paintings, statues and textiles were quantifiable storehouses of wealth, and it generated flourishing labour and leisure markets to support its own extravagance. But it was also conceived of as a measure of the nation's standing in relation to countries of comparable wealth and status, and its global interests and reputation abroad contributed to the value of its stock at home. Individual houses were praised provocatively as superior to foreign offerings ('I can assure you, we see many Palaces of Sovereign Princes abroad, which do not equal it',[59] Defoe boasted of Cannons House), and they were celebrated as both a lucrative attraction for international visitors, and a great stimulant to the global trade in luxury goods. George Bickham, in his popular guide to *The Beauties of Stow* (1750), offered one reason why building extravagant houses was a worthwhile enterprise. 'I might still add another Advantage of a public Nature, derived from these elegant Productions of Art; and that is, their Tendency to raise us in the Opinion of Foreigners', he argued. 'If our Nation had nothing of this Kind to boast of, all our Neighbours would look upon us as a stupid tasteless Set of People, and not worth visiting'.[60] The great house was praised for its ability to showcase not only the most prized domestic 'Productions of Art', but also those of other European countries. Eighteenth-century British seats were grand display cabinets for the work of Carlo Dolci, Poussin, Canaletto and others, which large estate owners such as Robert Walpole at Houghton and Harry Hoare at Stourhead imported via agents from France, Italy and

[59] Ibid., II, in *Writings on Travel, Discovery and History*, gen. ed. by Owens and Furbank, ii: *A Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain, Volume II* (2001), p.129.
[60] George Bickham, *The Beauties of Stow* (London, 1750), pp.62-3.

Holland.[61] 'Commerce', Horace Walpole noted in his guide to the collection of pictures at Houghton, 'carries along with it the Curiosities and Arts of Countries, as well as the Riches, [and] daily brings us something from *Italy*'. His house and others like it were admired for their international sphere of influence, their ability to collect the finest things of the civilised world under one roof. 'Most of the famous *Pallavicini* Collection have been brought over', Walpole boasted: 'many of them are actually at *Houghton*'.[62]

The scale and the purchasing power of the eighteenth-century house were the source of its social and political importance, but they also exposed it to moral accusations of excess and waste. Land ownership, George Berkeley argued in his warning tract *An Essay towards Preventing the Ruin of Great Britain* (1721), brought with it no automatic title to civic superiority, since estates changed hands with every lucky stint at the gaming table. Country houses were luxurious status symbols to be bought and sold with alarming rapidity ('Some Men shall from nothing in an instant acquire vast Estates without the least desert'), and the ease of acquiring an estate by dubious means encouraged men to sidestep the 'old honest methods of Industry and Frugality' by which they could attend to their needs without growing luxurious and covetous. This growing disaffection with 'slow moderate Gains' and 'honest Industry', Berkeley wrote, must be 'ruinous to the Public' at large, both because of the financial fluctuations it would cause and the example it would set for loose moral conduct.[63]

Berkeley's warning in the *Essay* was one of a number of early eighteenth-century civic treatments of the moral depredations of luxury. Commentators restated arguments from Roman philosophy, historiography and verse satire in order to substantiate claims about the superior moral value of frugality, and to draw connections between the rise of luxury and the

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[61] Tinniswood, *A History of Country House Visiting*, pp.67-73.
[62] Horace Walpole, *Ædes Walpolianæ: Or, a Description of the Collection of Pictures at Houghton-Hall in Norfolk…* (London, 1747), p.viii.
[63] George Berkeley, *A Essay Towards Preventing the Ruine of Great Britain* (London, 1721), pp.5-6.

decline of political states.[64] Cicero, Juvenal, Sallust and Polybius, among others, were enlisted to demonstrate that an unhealthy focus on economic gain stifled the independent political agency of individual citizens and swayed the otherwise disinterested decisions of legislators (neo-Harringtonian writers such as John Toland and John Trenchard, for instance, showed that there were close historical links between states that succumbed to luxurious habits and those whose citizens' liberty was threatened by the maintenance of a standing army).[65] Luxury was presented as a threat to Stoic virtues of self-control, a dangerous indulgence of the passions and the quickest route to overstepping the line that divided man's cultivated self-denial from the appetitive impulses of beasts. The classical attack operated alongside Christian denunciations of profligacy as an advanced form of greed and self-interest. Berkeley, John Dennis, Thomas Cole and Samuel Fawconer wrote treatises that attacked luxury for its deplorable effects on private morality and public-spirited benevolence.[66] 'This reigning passion for pleasure', Fawconer wrote, 'disposes us to a general neglect of several duties, which we owe to ourselves, our family, our country, and our God'.[67]

But protests on behalf of frugality began to look increasingly anachronistic and impracticable as Britain flourished as an international trading power. It became clear as early as the end of the seventeenth century that extolling the virtues of parsimony was intellectually inconsistent with celebrating the growth of free trade, and attempting to emulate the example of autarchic ancient republics such as Sparta was impossible in a new age of global interdependence (in war as well as commerce).[68] As the new century progressed, there was a gradual movement amongst moral philosophers and the new school of political economists

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[64] For a discussion of the eighteenth-century anti-luxury arguments, see John Sekora, *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett* (Baltimore, 1977), pp.28-48; Christopher Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.45-86; *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods,* ed. by Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (Basingstoke, 2003; repr. 2007), pp.7-10.

[65] See Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, pp.424-32.

[66] See Berkeley, *An Essay Towards Preventing the Ruine of Great Britain*; John Dennis, *Vice and Luxury, Publick Mischiefs* (London, 1724); Thomas Cole, *Discourses on Luxury, Infidelity, and Enthusiasm* (London, 1761); Samuel Fawconer, *An Essay on Modern Luxury* (London, 1765).

[67] Fawconer, *An Essay on Modern Luxury*, p.28.

[68] David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000), pp.141-4.

towards reconciling the terms of the luxury debate with the contemporary facts of a booming commerce- and credit-based economy.[69] The revised debate, as Pocock summarises it, 'took shape around the varying relationships which publicists were prepared to allow between land, trade, and credit as sources not merely of public wealth, but of political stability and virtue'.[70] The ultimate aim of the progressive conversation, in other words, was to find a means of thinking about luxury as *conducive* to the development of man as a reasoning, independent actor; but, in practice, commentators differed as to the degree to which they were prepared to place together the seemingly antithetical concepts of luxury and commerce on the one hand, and civic virtue and liberty on the other.

Bernard Mandeville, whose controversial re-issue of *The Fable of the Bees* in 1723 sparked much of the urgency and notoriety of the renewed debate, insisted that intellectual conflations of virtuous public-mindedness and commercial self-determination were hypocritical. An apology for luxury could perfectly well be made on economic and social grounds (it 'Employ'd a Million of the Poor', as he wrote in 'The Grumbling Hive'), but it could not be made on moral ones, since a nation's wealth flourished only in accordance with its vices.[71] The mastering of appetites was necessary in primitive social conditions because political forms were not sufficiently refined to act as a check on the unmediated flow of the passions; but under advanced social conditions the indulgence of one's desires was positively encouraged as an essential structural feature of polite commercial interaction. 'New personality types had emerged with the appearance of the stable structures of modern civil society', E.J. Hundert writes of Mandeville's thesis: 'as a consequence [...] the virtuous citizens of both classical and Christian pedigree had become unintended casualties of the civilising process, save in the

[69] See Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, pp.486-505; Sekora, *Luxury*, pp.111-30; Berry, *The Idea of Luxury*, pp.101-76; *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Berg and Eger, pp.9-21.
[70] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, p.426.
[71] Bernard Mandeville, 'The Grumbling Hive: Or, Knaves Turn'd Honest', *FB*, i. 25.

fantasies of moralists'.[72] Re-establishing the conditions of a 'frugal and honest Society', Mandeville argued, would be possible if modern man could be made to feel happy with the idea of returning to his 'Native Simplicity' and being kept away from all 'Strangers or Superfluities' that might accelerate the progress of civilisation.[73] But if he could not be happy in this way, it was only to be expected that there would be a moral trade-off from his refined pleasures, advancing knowledge and polished interaction: commentators 'must expect to see at the same time his Desires enlarg'd, his Appetites refin'd, and his Vices increas'd'.[74] Praising the virtuous self-denial of the classical republican tradition whilst participating actively in the self-interested nexus of modern commercial society was a necessary kind of duplicity (it allowed men to retain the semblance of a public morality), but Mandeville saw it that it would be preferable to find a new organising language in which to conceptualise the benefits of luxury and trade.[75]

Mandeville's writings insisted that luxury consumption, though it had triumphed as an indispensable motor of polite society, was not to be reconciled with the stern moral prescriptions of the civic tradition. For commentators on the pro-luxury side of the debate, this recognition meant that space could be cleared for a new set of evaluative criteria. In his *Review of the State of the English Nation*, for instance, Defoe worked to establish a firm distinction between the intellectual categories of political economy (by whose principles luxury was defensible) and moral philosophy (according to which it was not). In 'open, Large, and Plentiful Living', he wrote in February 1706, 'is that Luxury Maintain'd, which I say however it may be a Vice in Morals, may at the same time be a Vertue in Trade'.[76] The Scottish political economist James Steuart adopted the same intellectual distinction, and emphasised in his *Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy* (1767) the difference between his object – a political-economic defence of luxury on the grounds of its social benefits – and the aims and categories

[72] E.J. Hundert, *The Enlightenment's Fable: Bernard Mandeville and the Discovery of Society* (Cambridge, 1994), p.70.
[73] Mandeville, 'Remark Q', *FB*, i. 185.
[74] Mandeville, 'Remark M', 'Remark Q', *FB*, i. 124, 185.
[75] On the necessary pretence of moral behaviour, see Hundert, *The Enlightenment's Fable*, p.74.
[76] Daniel Defoe, *Review of the State of the English Nation*, 17 (February 7 1706), p.2.

of moral philosophy. 'As my subject is different from that of morals', he argued, 'I have no occasion to consider the term luxury in any other than a political sense'; his objective, he said, was merely to 'reason very coolly upon the political consequences' of prodigality.[77] Though luxury did, as he admitted, 'commonly convey a more complex idea', it was to be dealt with in his treatise as nothing more or less than 'the providing of superfluity with a view to consumption', which meant that the long religious and philosophical tradition of deploring its morally enervating effects never had to be addressed head-on.[78]

These efforts of intellectual differentiation set limits to the problem and recategorised its terms. In a rapid process of 'demoralisation', as Sekora and Berry have written, it was transformed from 'a myth to a fiction, […] from an essential, general element of moral theory to a minor, technical element of economic theory', and its concerns translated into the new organising language of specialist economic discourse.[79] The revised intellectual grounding for the debate allowed for a defence of lavish expenditure on the basis of the economic benefits it produced in society at large, regardless of the moral intentions behind the initial outlay. 'The immediate disadvantages of some trades are to be overlooked, if in the long run and great circle of commerce, they at last turn out to be beneficial', concluded the monetary scholar Joseph Harris in his *Essay upon Money and Coins* (1757). Since the trade in luxury goods delivered 'useful employments […] for a greater number of hands', there were no reasons why it could not be admired as an inadvertent kind of social benevolence and reappraised as 'benign, and beneficial to the whole society'.[80] For Hume, in his essays 'Of Commerce' and 'Of Refinement in the Arts' (1741), the argument could be taken a stage further: he suggested that the civic ideals of public-spiritedness and independence so beloved of luxury's detractors could be understood to be protected, not threatened, by the progress of commercial refinement.

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[77] Sir James Steuart, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy*, 2 vols. (London, 1767), i. 32n.
[78] Ibid., i. 307, 310.
[79] Berry, *The Idea of Luxury*, p.101; Sekora, *Luxury*, p.112.
[80] Joseph Harris, *An Essay upon Money and Coins. Part I. The Theories of Commerce, Money, and Exchanges* (London, 1757), pp.24, 23, 30.

Independence and liberty flourished with economic progress, Hume suggested, because 'the luxury of individuals must diminish the force, and check the ambition of the sovereign': the increasing economic demand of private citizens directed the balance of labour – and thus the balance of power – towards the supply of their needs.[81] Public-spiritedness, too, could emerge counter-intuitively from greed and self-interest, since the concentration of labour in superfluous employments (the finer arts and manufactures, rather than the necessaries of agriculture) meant that in times of crisis, all 'persons engaged in that labour may be easily be converted to the public service' without encroachment on the basic requirements of the nation.[82] This argument was an attractive one, because it implied that there would be no reason to retain a standing army if luxury's surplus manufactures could create space for a natural militia (traditionally, the perceived connection between superfluous wealth, mercenary troops and arbitrary sovereign powers had been a central pillar of the anti-luxury argument). Luxury, Hume showed, established the conditions for a return to public-spirited cooperation, and it fulfilled a valuable political function by contributing to the happiness and self-determination of citizens.

In several contemporary arguments for the political and social uses of luxury, commentators drew on the idea of the large country house as an eloquent rhetorical illustration of the effects of lavish expenditure. 'One important focus for [the] luxury debate in the early eighteenth century', Jules Lubbock has argued, 'was the building, furnishing and equipping of aristocratic country houses'.[83] The great house was found to be a useful model for economically progressive reasoning, whereby theorists could seek to prove that profligate private expenditure was an (albeit unintentional) form of public-spirited social enterprise: aristocrats who built and furnished large country piles were stimulating trade and expanding the

[81] David Hume, 'Of Commerce', in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. by Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis, 1987), p.257. For similar arguments in Montesquieu, Steuart and Millar about the political checks afforded by luxury and commerce, see Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, pp.81-9.
[82] Hume, 'Of Commerce', pp.261-2.
[83] Lubbock, *The Tyranny of Taste*, p.xiii. See also Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century*, p.18.

labour market.[84] Barbon's *Apology for the Builder*, for instance, used the economics of house building and furnishing to illustrate an early version of the trickle-down apology for surplus expenditure. Large houses did not merely sustain a local paternalist economy, Barbon explained, but contributed to the aggregate wealth of the nation by stimulating larger networks of supply and demand. The materials used to build houses ('Stones, Bricks, Lime, Iron, Lead, Timber') were all originally 'the Commodities of the Country', and would inject wealth back into the rural economies in which they were produced; likewise, all the necessaries and luxuries required by the wealthy inhabitants of the new estates ('food, Apparel, or Furniture for their Houses'), were also 'at first the growth of the Country', and provided labour for workers in numerous kinds of trade and manufacture.[85]

In the *Spectator*, Addison used the example of Sir Andrew Freeport's retirement to a country estate to illustrate a similar thesis about the wide-ranging social benefits of indulging one's private tastes. Addison described Sir Andrew's plans to purchase an estate that he could carve up into 'improveable Lands' and 'cultivate to the best Advantage', which he hoped would produce wide-ranging economic benefits for the local poor. 'My Garden, my Fishponds, my Arable and Pasture Ground shall be my several Hospitals, or rather Work-houses', Addison wrote in the character of Freeport, 'in which I propose to maintain a great many indigent Persons'. The article presented his lavish estate improvements as public works projects, turning 'indigent' men into happy labourers and providing them with 'a comfortable Subsistence out of their own Industry'.[86] The Whig journalist Matthew Concanen, likewise, argued that there were public benefits to profligate estate management, insisting in his pirated edition of Pope's *Epistle to Burlington* in the *Miscellany on Taste* (1732) that the poet's faulty

[84] This argument was acknowledged by commentators on the other side of the debate, even if they did not consider it valid: Fawconer, for instance, admitted that luxury was 'apt to assume the pleasing garb of benevolence and generosity, pretending to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked'. See Fawconer, *A Discourse on Modern Luxury*, p.37.
[85] Barbon, *An Apology for the Builder*, p.23.
[86] *Spectator*, 549 (November 29 1712), pp.1-2.

understanding of political economy had led him to miss a key point about the desirability of lavish bad taste amongst landowners. '*Villario* pleas'd himself with Planting and Gardening, and by that Means kept his poor Neighbourhood from Want', he asserted in a note to the lines on Villario's fickle tastes in gardening, and proceeded to defend Timon's profligacy on similar social grounds. Although Timon had 'thrown away vast Sums in Building', this was in fact something of a public service, since 'the Whole was undoubtedly given Stone-Cutters, Carvers, Statuaries, Bricklayers, Carpenters, Joyners, Labourers. &c.' 'Such a private Expence', Concanen argued, was 'so far from being a Publick Loss, that the Nation would not be one Farthing the poorer, if fifty such Fabricks were erected every ten or a dozen years'.[87]

In its most elaborated form, the point about the public usefulness of country house expenditure was made in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), where Smith drew on a model of estate economics to illustrate his trickle-down theories of wealth creation. In undeveloped nations, Smith explained, the unavailability of either foreign commerce or the finer manufactures meant that no 'great proprietor' would have sufficient purchasable objects for which he could 'exchange the greater part of the produce of his lands', and he would be compelled instead to 'consume the whole in rustic hospitality at home' by employing 'a hundred or a thousand men' as retainers.[88] In later and more sophisticated ages, though, the rise of foreign commerce and luxury manufactures would provide a market for the surplus capital of the great estate, offering landowners something that 'they could consume themselves without sharing it either with tenants or retainers'. This new purchasing power naturally militated against the feudal model, since 'for a pair of diamond buckles', Smith wrote, proprietors 'exchanged the maintenance [...] of a thousand men for a year', and swapped their hospitality for self-interest. His point, though, was that this profligate selfishness (and military naivety) had beneficial social consequences despite itself. The landowner who dismissed a thousand footmen and bought a

[87] Pope [Matthew Concanen *et al.*], *A Miscellany on Taste. By Mr. Pope, &c.* (London, 1732), pp.12-13n.
[88] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. by R.H. Campbell, A.S. Skinner and W.B. Todd, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1976), i. 412-3.

pair of diamond buckles maintained 'as great or even a greater number of people than he could have done by the ancient method of expense', since he paid for the labour of workmen, artificers and tradesmen.[89] The post-feudal country house, for Smith, was an eloquent model of political economic developments in all sectors: lavish estate management offered a useful illustration of the benefits of investing surplus wealth in a potentially infinite number of economic branches.[90]

In the emerging field of country house tourist literature, there were practical applications for this theoretical model of modern landownership. A number of estate guides produced during the mid-century deployed political economic arguments as sophisticated defences of the apparent extravagance of sumptuous architecture and lavish gardens. In William Gilpin's *Dialogue upon the Gardens at Stow* (1748), for instance, the debate is set out in the form of an imagined conversation between two men touring Viscount Cobham's estate: Polypthon, a man of business who is supposed to know very little at all about Stowe, and Callophilus, a local gentleman of Buckinghamshire who has the role of curing his friend's ignorance. During a pause in their tour, Polypthon wonders about the point of the lavishness he sees around him:

> *P*: Instead of useless Temples, I would build Farm-houses; and instead of cutting out unmeaning Vistas, I would beautify and mend Highways: [...] What signifies all this ostentatious Work? Is any Man the better for it? Is it not Money most vilely squandered away?[91]

[89] Ibid., i. 418-20.
[90] This point was made as early as 1711, when Addison made a distinction in *The Spectator* between Sir Roger de Coverley's old-fashioned feudal hospitality and Sir Andrew Freeport's modern idea of employment. 'It would be worth while to consider', Sir Andrew exclaims, 'whether so many Artificers at work ten Days together by my Appointment, or so many Peasants made merry on Sir ROGER's Charge, are the Men more obliged: I believe the Families of the Artificers will thank me, more than the Housholds of the Peasants shall Sir ROGER'. See *Spectator*, 174 (September 19 1711), p.1.
[91] William Gilpin, *A Dialogue upon the Gardens of the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Cobham, at Stow in Buckinghamshire* (London, 1748), p.45.

Such ostentation, Callophilus suggests in response, 'may very properly be said to be sanctified by *Use*', since it belongs to the kind of productive luxury that benefits an incalculably large number of tradespeople of all kinds. Stowe's wealth, he explains, 'is laid out in a very laudable Manner, [...] in circulating thro' a Variety of Trades, in supporting a Number of poor Families, and in the Encouragement of Art and Industry'. The benefit of expenditure of this kind is twofold, moreover, since it leaves no surplus money for the sort of gaming and whoring that would otherwise diminish the landowning family's fortunes and 'prevent Mankind's being benefited by their affluent Circumstances'.[92]

Callophilus proceeds to make the point that the supply and management of the great house are not the sole ways in which it encourages industry: the estate's ostentation and visibility produce another kind of demand in the form of tourist interest, which brings wealth and custom to local tradespeople. 'I can tell you one very great Piece of Service arising to the Country from Wealth laid out in this elegant manner', he concludes, 'and that is, the Money spent in the Neighbourhood by the Company daily crouding hither'.[93] George Bickham's much-reprinted tourist guide to Stowe, *The Beauties of Stow* (1750), recycled both these arguments about the wide-ranging social benefits of country house luxury. Stowe's example proved, he wrote, that there was 'a very visible Connexion between an improved Taste for Pleasure, and a Taste for Virtue', since the self-interested promptings of pleasure-seeking could be observed to have benevolent – if inadvertent – consequences in stimulating a market for surrounding trades and industries. Stowe and other such 'productions of Art', he claimed, 'may be considered as a very great Advantage to every Neighbourhood, that enjoys the lucky Situation of being placed near them'.[94] Here, lavish country house expenditure, as in Gilpin's account, is contextualised and defended as part of a national discourse of employment and public works.

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[92] Ibid., pp.46-7.
[93] Ibid., p.50.
[94] Bickham, *The Beauties of Stow*, p.61.

Great houses, Stowe or Wilton or Chatsworth, were conceived to be valuable because they were local and particular, with private histories and unique idiosyncrasies; but there was also a marked tendency amongst contemporaries to think about estates in abstract terms as working examples, valuable because they were able to be enlisted rhetorically in contemporary debates about the use of riches, the morality of profligacy and the political economic state of the nation. As Alastair Fowler has written, the great estate presented itself usefully as 'a sample of the country at large – a manageable example of national issues', and its calculable quantities could be made to solve large problems in a small and tangible way; as a 'model of right use', it offered a particularly appealing form of 'analogical thinking'.[95] By virtue of problem-solving engagements of this kind, the idea of the house was made to contend with debates and arguments greater than itself or its precise historical moment, and this continual process of contextualisation is suggestive of the way in which the eighteenth-century estate, for apologists and critics alike, was very rarely considered as a *hortus conclusus*, as neither a self-sufficient neo-feudal community nor a site of unworldly retirement.

This chapter will suggest that the country house poetry of the period was the place where such contextualisation happened, the formal site where the 'analogical thinking' and sampling processes were carried out. The poems of Harison, Gildon and Trapp already touched on are part of a large number of poems addressed to specific houses and landowners over the course of the late Restoration and first half of the eighteenth century, which take their cue from pre-existing generic *topoi*, but are more interested in the great house as a representative model of contemporary socioeconomic relations, a blueprint for the commercial ambition and luxury economics of the British national estate. This revised kind of country house poem draws on the history of the estate genre in order to establish a series of contrasts, between frugality and opulence, moderation and surplus, self-sufficiency and interestedness;

[95] Alastair Fowler, *The Country House Poem: A Cabinet of Seventeenth-Century Estate Poems and Related Items* (Edinburgh, 1994), p.21; Virginia C. Kenny, *The Country-House Ethos in English Literature, 1688-1750: Themes of Personal Retreat and National Expansion* (Sussex and New York, 1984), p.14.

and it is shaped by a firm conviction that local concerns are less interesting or important than national ones, as it praises the individual house for its participation in a network far greater than the parochial rhythms of its immediate neighbourhood. Forward-looking and progressive in nature, the poetry is conceived as part of the same confident public discourse of political economic modernity as contemporary philosophical and economic defences of country house expenditure.

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Late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century poets of all backgrounds wrote occasional pieces on individual country houses they had visited or heard of. As a sub-genre, the late Restoration and Georgian country house poem was shaped by the same interest in local landscapes and topographies that also emerges in major works such as Denham's *Cooper's Hill* (1642), Thomson's *The Seasons* (1726-30) and Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* (1751). Robert Aubin's magisterial collection, *Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England* (1936), takes 'topographical' to mean 'poetry [which] aims chiefly at describing specifically named actual localities', according to which he counts 234 topographical 'estate-poems' published over the century.[96] Some, like Pope's *Windsor-Forest* (1713), Stephen Duck's piece on 'Richmond Park, and Royal Gardens' (1738) and James Woodhouse's 'The Lessowes: A Poem' (1764) are relatively well-known; but the vast majority are occasional verses, produced either in commemoration of the construction of a particularly significant building (Harison's *Woodstock Park*, for instance), or as a poetical exercise in a larger collection showcasing generic range (such as Thomas Warton's 'An Ode, Written in a Grotto near Farnham in Surrey' (1748), collected in his *Poems on Several Occasions*). Poets wrote particularly prolifically in the genre

[96] Robert Arnold Aubin, *Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England* (New York, 1936), p.vii. This criterion of 'specifically named actual localities' means that poetry on imagined country seats, such as the Timon's villa episode in Pope's *Epistle to Burlington* (1731) or the satirized houses in Smollett's 'Advice' (1746), is not included.

during the 1730s and 1740s, and it resurfaced in a more meditative form during the 1770s and 1780s as part of the vogue for the picturesque. What distinguishes the estate poem of the first half of the century, though, is its progressive breadth of vision, the surprising degree to which it engages – as part of a common enterprise with contemporary economic and philosophical writings on the role of the great country seat – with the commercial and imperial prospects of Britain as a modern trading power; and the way in which it acknowledges, concomitantly, that the house it describes has a part to play in these economic prospects, providing a public service insofar as it hires and spends extravagantly, and promising far-reaching social benefits by virtue of its lavish costs.

Critical treatments of the country house poem have been reluctant to acknowledge that the form continued to manifest itself in any significant fashion after the Restoration, let alone to draw out the altered priorities and attitudes that characterise the eighteenth-century version. There are several extended treatments of the Renaissance estate poem of Ben Jonson and his imitators: G.R. Hibbard's seminal study, 'The Country House Poem of the Seventeenth Century' (1956), provided the first summary of the genre's key features, which has since been elaborated and finessed by Charles Molesworth, Raymond Williams, William McClung, Malcolm Kelsall, Alastair Fowler and Hugh Jenkins, among others.[97] In recent decades, historicist studies by Don E. Wayne and Kari Boyd McBride have worked to unmask the deceptive representations at work in the seventeenth-century estate poem, querying the re-adoption of classical preferences for frugality and self-sufficiency at a time of 'ruinous expenditure on country houses and estates', as McBride writes, and corresponding 'huge stress' on the few houses that did retain feudal models of housekeeping under nascent capitalist

[97] See, respectively, G.R. Hibbard, 'The Country House Poem of the Seventeenth Century', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* xix (1956), 159-74; Charles Molesworth, 'Property and Virtue: The Genre of the Country-House Poem in the Seventeenth Century', *Genre* i (1968), 141-57; Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London, 1973; repr. 1993), pp.27-34; William A. McClung, *The Country House in English Renaissance Poetry* (Los Angeles and London, 1977); Malcolm Kelsall, *The Great Good Place: The Country House and English Literature* (London, 1993); Fowler, *The Country House Poem*; Hugh Jenkins, *Feigned Commonwealths: The Country-House Poem and the Fashioning of the Ideal Community* (Pittsburgh, 1998).

pressures.[98] In the main, though, these various approaches do not consider at any length the continuation of the country house genre beyond the mid-seventeenth century and Marvell's *Upon Appleton House*. Hibbard's argument posits a brief resurgence of Renaissance themes in Pope's *Epistle to Burlington*; McClung adds a coda to his argument, which glances over Restoration pieces like the *Belvoir* pindaric ode, Pope's *Epistle* and, more speculatively, posits the 'survival of Renaissance estate mythology' into Byron's *Don Juan* (1819-24); and Fowler's introduction to his anthology offers some excellent, though brief, conclusions on the commercial influences operating on the eighteenth-century estate poem, and the 'national problems of distribution' it contends with.[99] These, though, are sketches and suggestions, rather than extended pieces of analysis.

Lengthier work on the eighteenth-century country house poem is chiefly concentrated on Pope's contribution to the genre, and it looks at the *Epistle to Burlington* and smaller related sections in the *Epistle to Bathurst* (1733) and the *Second Satire of Dr. John Donne* (1735). Maynard Mack and Howard Erskine-Hill, for instance, devote considerable space to analyses of Pope's reworking of Roman and Renaissance *topoi* in the context of his literary and political allegiances.[100] This, though, has the unwarranted effect of suggesting that Pope's preoccupation is something of a lone phenomenon in eighteenth-century letters, and the interest in considering the work of non-canonical poets is still comparatively rare. Virginia Kenny's *The Country-House Ethos in English Literature, 1688-1750* (1984) is the sole full-length study of the characteristic attitudes of the eighteenth-century form (aside from Aubin's survey, whose critical chapter on 'estate poems' now feels somewhat dated). Kenny assesses a wide selection of exempla, though focusing closely on prose treatises and commentaries as much as poems,

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[98] Kari Boyd McBride, *Country House Discourse in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2001), p.93; see also Don E. Wayne, *Penshurst: The Semiotics of Place and the Poetics of History* (London, 1984).
[99] See, respectively, Hibbard, 'The Country House Poem of the Seventeenth Century', p.174; McClung, *The Country House in English Renaissance Poetry*, pp.174-80; Fowler, *The Country House Poem*, p.21.
[100] Maynard Mack, *The Garden and the City: Retirement and Politics in the Later Poetry of Pope, 1731-1743* (Toronto and London, 1969), pp.91-100; Howard Erskine-Hill, *The Social Milieu of Alexander Pope: Lives, Example and the Poetic Response* (New Haven and London, 1975), ch.9.

and examines the idea of the estate as it is pulled in opposite directions by antithetical impulses towards retreat and social action, animated both by 'withdrawal from the world of affairs' and 'engagement in the challenge of pushing outwards to extend the bounds of knowledge or sovereignty'.[101] Her focus, though, remains chiefly canonical (much of the work on poetry between 1730-1750 is confined to Thomson and Pope), and the conclusions she draws are conservative in nature, elaborating on the ways in which the estate poem bordered closely on the contemporary world of political and economic action, but retained its mystique because of its ability to elude the incursion of threatening external forces, as an 'integrated symbol of potential order' amidst chaos. 'The house itself', she writes, 'was a convenient metonym for structures of order and right use set up to counter the dread of undifferentiated plenitude'.[102] There is considerable critical work to be done on the large number of estate poems that do not indulge in such nostalgic cognitive dissonance.

The poems considered in this chapter are part of this more awkward and interesting group, thoroughly conversant with the 'undifferentiated plenitude' of Britain's national estate, and finding within it their own kind of order and confidence. As such, the particular attitudes that distinguish them are considerable divergences from the moral value system of the pre-existing generic framework for country house poetry, the seventeenth-century form of Jonson and his imitators. The world-view of 'To Penshurst' (in company with, among others, Jonson's 'To Sir Robert Wroth' (printed 1616), Thomas Carew's 'To Saxham' and 'To My Friend G.N., from Wrest' (1640), and poems by Herrick, Waller and Marvell) is drawn from exemplary passages on country life and self-sufficient housekeeping in Horace's *Epodes* II and Virgil's *Georgics*, and from descriptions of the spontaneous Golden Age fecundity of the earth (*sponte sua*) in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Martial's *Epigrams*.[103] It also has a satiric heritage.

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[101] Kenny, *The Country-House Ethos in English Literature*, p.17.
[102] Ibid., pp.204, 211.
[103] Horace, *Epodes* II, in *The Complete Odes and Epodes*, trans. by W.G. Shepherd (London, 1983), pp.48-9; Virgil, *Georgics* IV. 130-3, in *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I-VI,* trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough and revised by G.P. Goold

Juvenal's *Satires* V on an inhospitable dinner party (the host, Virro, insists on serving his guests inferior food and wine, despite how wealthy he is) influences Jonson's appreciative description of the Sidney family's generosity at Penshurst, where 'the same beer and bread, and self-same wine, / That is His Lordship's, shall be also mine'.[104] Juvenal is also imitated in Joseph Hall's *Virgidemiarum* V.ii (1598) and Herrick's 'Panegyric to Sir Lewis Pemberton' (1648). Trebius, Hall's unfortunate guest at Virro's household, is watched over by a begrudging waiter who 'pouts and frowns, and curseth thee the while', and helps him to the cheapest sort of wine whilst offering Virro the best: 'When pleasing *Burdeaux* falls unto his lott, / Some sowrish *Rochell* cuts thy thirsting throate'.[105] Hall's satire also censures miserly and abandoned country houses (the latter on the increase, in the wake of a growing Elizabethan trend of landlord absenteeism): he describes a visit to a 'proud pile' whose 'marble pavement' and 'garish wals' belie the cold and cheerless welcome within, where 'towered chymneis, which should bee / The wind-pipes of good hospitalitie' are instead a nest for birds.[106]

Hall's satire is descriptive in nature, deploring the bad housekeeping practice that is a commonplace of his age. Jonson, by contrast, inverts the genre's satiric heritage to prescribe a nostalgic and idealised pattern for landownership: in 'To Penshurst' and 'To Sir Robert Wroth', he describes a model of neo-feudal, hall-centred hospitality that had become a thoroughly outdated form of management by the beginning of the seventeenth century. This vein of wistful panegyric proved a popular model. Cavalier country house poems such as Carew and Herrick's, written a few decades later, required an even more pronounced degree of ideality and exaggeration, and their reiteration of Jonson's Ovidian and satiric tropes often

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(London and Cambridge, Mass., 1999; repr. 2006), p.226; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, ed. and trans. by E.J. Kenney and A.J. Melville (Oxford, 1986), p.4; Martial, *Epigrams* X. 30, in *Martial: Epigrams*, trans. by W.C.A. Ker, 2 vols. (London, 1927), ii. 177.

[104] Juvenal, *Satire* V. 24-173, in *The Satires*, ed. by William Barr and trans. by Niall Rudd (Oxford, 1991; repr. 2008), pp.31-6; Ben Jonson, 'To Penshurst', ll. 63-4, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, gen. ed. by David Bevington, Martin Butler and Ian Donaldson, 7 vols. (Cambridge, 2012), v: *1616-1625*, p.213.

[105] Joseph Hall, *Virgidemiarum* V.ii, l. 136, 127-8, in *The Collected Poems of Joseph Hall, Bishop of Exeter and Norwich*, ed. by Arnold Davenport (Liverpool, 1949), pp.82-3.

[106] Hall, *Virgidemiarum* V.ii, ll. 1, 34, 52, 67-8, in ibid., pp.79-81. See Lubbock, *The Tyranny of Taste*, pp.152-3, on the symbolism of the smoking chimney with regard to hospitality and absenteeism.

works as witty play or self-conscious hyperbole rather than a serious reinscription of civic values. But the central interest in a reciprocal and benevolent contract of landownership remains, offering a conscious programme of economic retrospection which responds to political anxieties about the influx of mercantile cash into the land market, and espouses firm preferences for traditional and aristocratic forms of estate-holding.

The kind of good housekeeping particular to the seventeenth-century genre has been described at length by several critical studies, so it will be necessary merely to outline a few of its most important ethical attitudes.[107] The chief assumption of the genre is that the economic workings of a house and estate are an eloquent expression of the virtues of its lord, and this prompts the related assumption that moral and socioeconomic categories are closely interconnected and may be illustrative of one another ('thou know'st order, Ethicks, and ha's read / All Oeconomicks', Herrick praises Sir Lewis Pemberton, with the implication that the disciplines are complementary).[108] Morality is bound up with economic practice in two important ways. Firstly, good household management and land usage are characterised by their adherence to Roman ethical preferences for frugality and self-sufficiency. Luxurious expenditure is censured as corrupting and wasteful, because it counts as lavish display without any underlying use value: there is a difference, as Carew points out in a satiric couplet, between 'a Pile […] / Of carved Marble, Touch, or Porpherie' and 'a house for hospitalitie'.[109]

Secondly, ethical considerations also govern the house's displays of charitable sociability, which embrace the local community and passing visitors in its generosity and liberality. Tenants and workers, on the seventeenth-century estate, are welcome to come and go as they please at the great house, as if differences in degree did not exist. 'All come in, the

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[107] See, especially, Hibbard, 'The Country House Poem of the Seventeenth Century', pp.159-74; McClung, *The Country House in English Renaissance Poetry*, ch.4; Kenny, *The Country House Ethos in English Literature*, pp.1-19; Erskine-Hill, *The Social Milieu of Alexander Pope*, pp.279-87.

[108] Robert Herrick, 'A Panegyrick to Sir Lewis Pemberton', ll. 89-90, in *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. by Tom Cain and Ruth Connolly, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2013), i. 140.

[109] Thomas Carew, 'To My Friend G.N. from Wrest', ll. 22-4, in *The Poems of Thomas Carew, with his Masque Coelum Britannicum*, ed. by Rhodes Dunlap (Oxford, 1949; repr. 1964), p.87.

farmer and the clown', Jonson observes at Penshurst, and Herrick praises the way in which the 'lanke-Stranger, and the sowre Swain' are free to 'feed, and come againe' at the Pembertons' Rushden.[110] This liberal open-door policy culminates in great annual feasts for labourers and retainers, at which the work of the year is celebrated and all social degrees mingle as one. The 'rout of rural folk come thronging in' to the hall at Sir Robert Wroth's Durrants, for instance, where 'Freedom doth with degree dispense'; and in Herrick's 'The Country Life' they have the pleasures of 'Thy Morris-dance; thy Whitsun-ale; / Thy Sheering-feast, which never faile', and for which 'no man payes too deare'.[111]

The praiseworthy country estate is a network of reciprocities, repaying the willing labour of its tenants by means of the surplus produce of its lands, and offering its guests a hearty welcome in return for the appropriate social observances (the King's good opinion, for instance, in the case of 'To Penshurst', or a laudatory tribute in verse from a passing poet). These efficient exchanges are part of a more general sense of the country house as happily divorced from the rest of the world, and insulated from most kinds of historical change. 'Untouched by London, or the court, or mercantilism, or imperialism', as Kari Boyd McBride has it, the Jonsonian great house relies purely on the 'unbought provision' of its own lands, and declines the 'rough Pepper' and 'scorched Clove' of the far-off 'Eastern Ind'.[112] Inside the same small compass, the sociability it supports is purely local in nature, made up of tenants, neighbours and occasional visitors; and the kind of benevolence it underwrites is circumstantial

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[110] Jonson, 'To Penshurst', l. 48, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. by Bevington, Butler and Donaldson, v. 212; Herrick, 'A Panegyrick to Sir Lewis Pemberton', ll. 11-12, in *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. by Cain and Connolly, i. 138.

[111] Jonson, 'To Sir Robert Wroth', l. 53, 58, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. by Bevington, Butler and Donaldson, v. 218; Herrick, 'The Country Life', ll. 54-5, 61, in *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. by Cain and Connolly, i. 218. See Williams, *The Country and the City*, p.31, on the degree to which this 'eating and drinking communion' is 'inevitably a mystification' in presentations of working societies, since the feast operates as a kind of benevolent shorthand for labour and permits the poet to obscure the nature and extent of it.

[112] McBride, *Country House Discourse in Early Modern England*, p.106; Jonson, 'To Sir Robert Wroth', l. 14, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, gen. ed. by Bevington, Butler and Donaldson, v. 216; Robert Herrick, 'The Country life, to the honoured M. End. Porter, Groome of the Bed-Chamber to His Maj.', ll. 6-8, in *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. by Cain and Connolly, i. 217.

and small-scale, provided abundantly to those who ask for it, but limited in practice merely to a small circle of the local poor.

Inheriting this seventeenth-century moral economy of autarchy and paternalist generosity, a handful of eighteenth-century estate poets chose to adopt the form as a nostalgic exercise in reconstruction, a way of rearticulating the neo-feudal ethos of the Jonsonian genre wholesale. This 'reinscription of country house values', in McBride's phrase, required an attitude to historical change basically consonant with that of the Jacobean and Caroline country house poets, a systemic elision of emergent (or, by the eighteenth century, dominant) capitalist functions.[113] *Town and Country Magazine*, for instance, published an anonymous piece entitled 'Boughton, Sept. 24, 1748', which describes a rapturous visit to the estate of the Montagu family in Northamptonshire. The poem signals its literary inheritance with an opening derived from Carew's 'To My Friend G.N. from Wrest': the Boughton poet's delight in 'breath[ing] again in Northantonian air' echoes Carew's similar pleasure at being able once more to 'Breathe […] the temperate ayre of *Wrest*'.[114]

There are characteristic contemporary touches (guests congregate for a 'sober dish of coffee', before climbing a hill and observing the 'extensive prospect round' with its picturesque 'vast cascade'), but the poem's ethos is largely neo-feudal and paternalist, as the house plays host to a great dinner for all estate employees and neighbouring villagers, and supports a restrained level of extravagance that distinguishes itself from urban luxury (guests are 'in decent garb array'd, and rural dress, / Superiour much to courtly artifice').[115] The poem shares in the Renaissance conviction that gates and doors are only worth having if they are open to all comers: Lord Montagu's 'Gates, open as his heart' derive from the 'gates […] / Made onely to let strangers in' in 'To Saxham', the 'open Door' at Marvell's Nun Appleton, proudly

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[113] McBride, *Country House Discourse in Early Modern England*, p.108.
[114] 'Boughton, Sept. 24, 1748', in *Town and Country Magazine*, 7 (December 1775), p.711; Carew, 'To My Friend G.N. from Wrest', l. 1, in *The Poems of Thomas Carew*, ed. by Dunlap, p.86.
[115] 'Boughton', in *Town and Country Magazine*, 7, p.712.

exhibiting its 'Stately *Frontispiece of Poor*', and the gate at Herrick's Rushden, which Sir Lewis Pemberton 'Early setts ope to feast, and late'.[116] Montagu's paternalist benevolence, the poet writes, is a kind of divine virtue ('His hands profuse, perpetual gifts dispense, / And imitate o'erflowing Providence'), and its extraordinary generosity absolves tenants and the local poor from labour and want in the same fashion as the Renaissance estate: 'thy bountie's such, / They cannot steale, thou giv'st so much'.[117]

The kind of hospitality and household economy that 'Boughton' tries to recover for the eighteenth century is present, though in a less sustained form, in various other contemporary poems.[118] In Charles Cotton's description of Chatsworth in *The Wonders of the Peak* (1681), for instance, the Duke of Devonshire's generosity is 'a constant, unexhausted tide / Of hospitality and free access', and his 'liberal condescention' works to 'captivate respect and love' amongst staff and guests.[119] Percy Lodge in Buckinghamshire, the subject of John Dalton's 'To the Right Honourable Countess of Hartford' (1745), is 'Great, open, liberal, unconfin'd, / Just emblem of its master's mind', with the characteristic Marvellian touch of imagining the house as a metaphor for its owner; and at Petworth, the Duke of Somerset's seat, Thomas Cooke observes that a regard for decorum does not prevent the admission of all social degrees in the feudal manner, as 'Unruly Riot never stains his Floor, / Yet open stands the hospitable Door'.[120] Richard Jago's four-book topographical poem, *Edge-Hill* (1767), has a section on the ruins of Kenilworth Castle, which leads to an evocation of the 'rustic Revelry', 'sprightly Mirth' and

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[116] Carew, 'To Saxham', ll. 51-2, in *The Poems of Thomas Carew*, ed. by Dunlap, p.29; Andrew Marvell, 'Upon Appleton House, to my Lord Fairfax', ll. 65-6, in *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*, ed. by H.M. Margoliouth, revised by Pierre Legouis with the collaboration of E.E. Duncan Jones, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1971), i: *The Poems*, p.64; Herrick, 'A Panegyrick to Sir Lewis Pemberton', ll. 45-6, in *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. by Cain and Connolly, i. 139.

[117] 'Boughton', in *Town and Country Magazine*, 7, p.712; Carew, 'To Saxham', ll. 57-8, in *The Poems of Thomas Carew*, ed. by Dunlap, p.29.

[118] It is also present in a handful of plays of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century on the loss of the housekeeping tradition, such as Thomas Shadwell's *The Lancashire Witches* (1681) and Thomas Baker's *Tunbridge Wells* (1703). See Tinniswood, *A History of Country House Visiting*, p.78.

[119] Charles Cotton, *The Wonders of the Peak*, 2nd ed. (Nottingham, 1744), p.60. All further page references are incorporated in the text.

[120] John Dalton, 'To the Right Honourable, the Countess of Hartford, at Percy-Lodge', ll. 139-40, in *Two Epistles* (London, 1745), p.26; [Thomas] Cooke, *Petworth: a Poem, to His Grace the Duke of Somerset. By Mr. Cooke* (London, 1739), p.5.

'festive Walls' of bygone feudal days, and the 'assembled Crowds' of retainers and local poor who offer their 'Plaint, or Suit importunate' to the benevolent ears of the Leicester family.[121]

Pope's admiration for the Jonsonian ideal is founded on the same generic values of hospitality and liberality, but his reappropriation of the form is satiric rather than epideictic, lamenting the passing of an old feudal world by contrasting it with the absenteeism and improvidence of his own generation of landowners.[122] 'We see no new-built Palaces aspire', he observes in *The Second Satire of Dr. John Donne*,

> No Kitchens emulate the Vestal Fire.
> Where are those Troops of poor, that throng'd of yore
> The good old Landlord's hospitable door?[123]

Pope's disappointment here is generic and allusive, invoking a Renaissance tradition of satiric complaint in Donne and Hall.[124] But it is also distinctly of its time, because although the central social problem has not changed – there are *still* no 'Troops of poor' to throng around the landlord's door – it is felt that the particular conditions of eighteenth-century landholding make a return to the days 'of yore' more unlikely than ever. There is, Pope suggests, a new and insurmountable kind of strain attached to clinging onto old paternalist ideals in a mercenary and complicated world of 'Indentures, Cov'nants, Articles', where the closest thing to landowning is Peter Walter and his accountants' gradual theft of land from clients ('Piecemeal they win this Acre first, then that, / Glean on, and gather up the whole Estate').[125] In a formal way, this strain is registered by the measure of his verse, as it stumbles over the unfamiliarity and anachronism of the language of benevolent paternalism: there is the halting internal rhyme on

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[121] Richard Jago, *Edge-Hill, or, the Rural Prospect Delineated and Moralised* (London, 1767), pp.65-6 (II. 314-24). All further book and line references are incorporated in the text.
[122] See Mack, *The Garden and the City*, pp.94-100, for a discussion of Pope's 'notably seventeenth-century English sense of proprietorship and place'.
[123] Alexander Pope, *The Second Satire of Dr John Donne*, ll. 111-14, *TE*, iv: *Imitations of Horace* (1939; repr. 1961), p.143.
[124] 'Where's th'old landlord's troops, and almes?' See John Donne, *Satyre* II. 105, in *John Donne: The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters*, ed. by W. Milgate (Oxford, 1967), p.10; Hall, *Virgidemiarum* V.ii, especially ll. 53-74, in *The Collected Poems of Joseph Hall*, ed. by Davenport, pp.80-1.
[125] Pope, *The Second Satire of Dr John Donne*, l. 94, 91-2, *TE*, iv. 141.

'poor' and 'yore', which has the effect of tripping up the confidence of the verse's rhetorical question, and the awkward metrical irregularity of 'The good old Landlord's hospitable door', which is sensitive to the difficulty and sheer unlikelihood of recreating a neo-feudal form of hospitality in Pope's venal eighteenth-century.

This is the kind of thoroughgoing scepticism that also inflects the writing on good housekeeping in the *Epistle to Bathurst*, which looks back to the disappointment and bitterness of Hall's satire in its vignette on Old Cotta's parsimonious household economy.
The miser's 'smoakless tow'rs' are a version of Hall's empty chimneys ('Nor halfe that smoke from all his chymneies goes / Which one Tabacco-pipe drives through his nose'), and Cotta's 'court with nettles, moats with cresses stor'd' reimagines Hall's similar 'marble pavement hid with desart weede, / With house-leeke, thistle, docke, & hemlock-seed'.[126] There are also sardonic and inverted references to Jonsonian country house panegyric: the inhospitable 'unop'ning door' to Cotta's house, for instance, is designed to be the disgraceful eighteenth-century answer to the gates 'Untaught to shut' in 'To Saxham', which 'stand wide open all the yeare' to admit passing visitors and the local poor.[127] Likewise, whilst the generous Pemberton household at Herrick's Rushden is praiseworthy because it opts not to post a sentry at the gate to keep away unwanted comers ('no black-bearded *Vigil* from thy doore / Beats with a button'd-staffe the poore'), Cotta places a 'gaunt mastiff growling at the gate' to 'Affright the beggar' and warn him away.[128]

Pope's substitution of satire for encomium marks the point at which the laudatory sentiments of the Jonsonian genre begin to be recognised for nostalgia or wish-fulfilment, so that an honest appreciation of the historical facts has to steer clear of the potential self-deceptions involved in adopting the Renaissance generic framework. It is perfectly possible, as

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[126] Hall, *Virgidemiarum* V.ii, ll. 73-4, 59-60, in *The Collected Poems of Joseph Hall*, ed. by Davenport, pp.80-1; Pope, *Epistle III. To* Allen *Lord* Bathurst, l. 193, 183, *TE* III.ii: *Epistles to Several Persons* (1961), p.109.
[127] Carew, 'To Saxham', ll. 53-4, in *The Poems of Thomas Carew*, ed. by Dunlap, p.29.
[128] Herrick, 'A Panegyrick to Sir Lewis Pemberton', ll. 13-14, in *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. by Cain and Connolly, i. 138; Pope, *Epistle to Bathurst*, ll. 197-8, *TE*, III.ii. 109.

the author of 'Boughton' shows, to apply seventeenth-century tropes to an eighteenth-century country house if one is happy to ignore the historical ironies, and contemporary great estates may imagined as oases of 'antient hospitality' by means of a myth-making process very similar to that used by their Jacobean and Caroline models. This nostalgic approach, though, is based on the same essential conviction as Pope's satirical one: a sense that the country house poem, in the form in which it has been transmitted to the eighteenth century, is highly – or absolutely – resistant to contemporary application. Its vision is fundamentally backward-looking and retroactive, both in cases where (as for the 'Boughton' poet and in sections of poems by Cotton, Dalton and others) it demands blissful ignorance of prevailing socioeconomic realities, and in the case of more sophisticated treatments like Pope's, for which it becomes a satiric mode that points up its own inadequacies as a way of writing and thinking about eighteenth-century estate management.

For several late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers in the genre, though, neither of these backward-looking approaches – the satiric and the nostalgic alike – is satisfactory, and nor is the attempt to re-articulate the norms and expectations of the Jonsonian model wholesale without due regard for historical difference. The country house poetry they pioneer is capable instead of reorganising or inverting the available generic framework in order to align it with more contemporary notions of what a functioning estate should be. Contemporary houses are celebrated for the lavishness and worldliness that makes them distinctive, rather than being deplored for the degree to which they fall short of a mythologised literary economy of neo-feudal management; the poetry embraces the idea of the house as closely involved in Britain's commercial and imperial prospects, and is sufficiently ambitious in tone and scope to be able to situate it within a greater political economic network of interlinking interests. The emergence of this adapted country house poem marks the moment at which the Renaissance investment in frugality, domestic self-sufficiency and old-fashioned

local generosity is exchanged for the larger calculations of luxury expenditure, international trade and multiple divisions of labour. As part of a broader intellectual drive to redefine luxury according to political economic, rather than moral, criteria, the virtue historically attached in estate poetry to moderation and self-sufficiency is rejected in favour of praising the social benefits that arise from lavish house building and furnishing (regardless of the original self-interestedness of the landowner's ambitions, and the unintended nature of their social consequences). Britain's emergent capitalist economy comes to seem, as Kenny suggests, 'a simple extension of the economy of the estate', as the poetry presents the great house as a significant commercial centre in its own right and, metonymically, also shows how it works as a comprehensible model of the larger processes of the national estate.[129] 'Eighteenth-century British poetry – even in its images of retirement and retreat – brought itself into being as part of the larger cultural conversation of the nation', Suvir Kaul argues, and this claim is especially true of the estate poem, a form about limited spaces with huge ambition.[130]

Country house poetry of the Restoration and the first decades of the eighteenth century is a panegyric to wealth and display. Lavishly written and adorned with hyperbole, poetic tributes such as Cotton's description of Chatsworth and the anonymous *Belvoir* ode are celebrations of excess, praising the Cavendish and Manners families not for their prudence or household economy, but for the sheer profligacy of their outlay and the vastness of their retinue. 'The genre has evidently changed when a poet can praise 'vast stately piles'', Fowler observes. 'No longer is display always inferior to use, frugality preferable to stateliness'.[131] This interest in surplus is expressed in a poetic idiom that is itself defiantly excessive: the poet's gaze is miscellaneously inclusive and wide-ranging, and individual lines are characterised by a tendency to redundancy, repetition, digression and imaginative flights of exaggeration. The new idiom is all the more noticeable because it is a significant departure from the formal poise

[129] Kenny, *The Country-House Ethos in English Literature*, p.16.
[130] Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire*, p.9.
[131] Fowler, *The Country House Poem*, pp.22-3.

and control of the seventeenth-century estate poem. Here, figures, ornaments and conceits are all governed by a formal version of the morality of sufficiency that the houses themselves espouse. As part of a general conviction that 'the things of nature find their proper end and pleasure in being put to use', as Hibbard observes of Jonson's method, the estate and the poetry operate according to a dominant criterion of utility, which demands that all individual elements, especially those that might be thought to be purely decorative, work to earn their place.[132]

In 'To My Friend G.N., from Wrest', for instance, Carew shows how the economy of the house relies on 'things not fine, / But fit for service':

> *Amalthea*'s Horne
> Of plentie is not in Effigie worne
> Without the gate, but she within the dore
> Empties her free and unexhausted store.
> Nor, croun'd with wheaten wreathes, doth *Ceres* stand
> In stone, with a crook'd sickle in her hand:
> Nor, on a Marble Tunne, his face besmear'd
> With grapes, is curl'd uncizard *Bacchus* rear'd.
> We offer not in Emblemes to the eyes,
> But to the taste those usefull Deities.
> Wee presse the juycie God, and quaffe his blood,
> And grinde the Yeallow Goddesse into food.[133]

Carew himself is set to work on the Wrest estate, despite being a guest ('*Wee* presse the juycie God', he writes, and 'grinde the Yeallow Goddesse into food' [italics mine]), and the same principle of use value applies to the figures and ornaments of his poetry. Amalthea, Ceres and Bacchus are a necessary part of the husbandry of the estate: they are not just 'Emblemes' that 'stand / In stone', but rather 'usefull Deities', because they supply in practice the functions that they stand in for. Amalthea 'Empties her free and unexhausted store', Bacchus is pressed into wine and Ceres is ground into meal. For the purposes of Wrest Park's household economy,

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[132] Hibbard, 'The Country House Poem of the Seventeenth Century', p.165.
[133] Carew, 'To My Friend G.N. from Wrest', ll. 56-68, in *The Poems of Thomas Carew*, ed. by Dunlap, p.88.

they are indispensable rather than ornamental, and in the poetic economy of Carew's poem, their role is substantive rather than merely decorative: in both cases, they are incorporated into the working life of the whole. Bacchus squeezed into wine and Ceres ground into meal are witty conflations of representation and action, playfulness and functionality; they are allusive and ornamental, but neither the estate nor the poem could do without them.

The same is true of the Ovidian conceit of *sponte sua*, which is used in Renaissance estate poems to describe the livestock, game, fish and produce of the grounds in a state of willing self-sacrifice, politely offering themselves to the landowner's table and absolving the tenants of the estate from the labour of husbandry, harvest and slaughter.[134] The trope is the imaginative basis for Jonson's 'Fat, agèd carps, that run into thy net' in 'To Penshurst', for instance, and the 'Nectaren, and curious Peach' which 'Into my hands themselves do reach' in Marvell's 'The Garden'; and, in later estate poems, it reappears in the 'lively Flow'rs' which 'lavishly dispense' their 'balmy Sweats' in Trapp's *Ædes Badmintonianae*, and the 'aspiring Fish' in the *Belvoir* ode, who of their own accord 'Design to leap to th'Seas above the Firmament'.[135] This anthropomorphising is figurative and hyperbolic, but in much the same way that the tropes and emblems in Carew's 'Wrest' poem are co-opted into the labouring rhythms of the estate, the fanciful illogic of *sponte sua* is a practical and indispensable thing: its acceleration of production enables the economy of the house to function as a self-sufficient unit, independent of potentially corrupting external influences. The trope is not an extraneous flourish but a productive and rich kind of *copia*, materially involved in the moral economy of the estate.

This attention to the serviceability of tropes and figures is inverted in later country house poetry, which takes the opposite approach and transfigures material objects and processes

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[134] See n. 103 above on the sources for *sponte sua* in Martial and Ovid. Williams, *The Country and the City*, pp.29-30, writes on the uses of the trope as a method of naturalising problematic social relations.

[135] Jonson, 'To Penshurst', l. 33, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. by Bevington, Butler and Donaldson, v. 212; Marvell, 'The Garden', ll. 37-8, in *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*, ed. by Margoliouth, Legouis and Duncan-Jones, i. 52; Trapp, *Ædes Badmintonianæ*, p.6; 'Belvoir: Being a *Pindarick* Ode upon *Belvoir* Castle the Seat of the Earls of *Rutland*, made in the Year 1679', in *The Harleian Miscellany*, 8 vols. (London, 1744-6), iv. 532.

into anthropomorphised conceits. Cotton, for instance, describing the great fountain at Chatsworth, imagines its streams as human tears: 'Unable longer upward to contest, / They fall again in tears for grief, and ire' [p.58]. Likewise, *Flora Triumphans* (1712), a description of the gardens at Wanstead House, indulges in the licence of imagining the house's statuary as sensitive to the delighted response of visitors: 'Ev'n the Inanimate Statues here seem pleas'd: / So gay a Smile, and chearful Aspect wear; / Their very Marble sure forgets to drop a Tear'.[136] There is the same conceit in the 'Boughton' poem ('The statues gaze, / And seem affected with so sweet a place'); and, similarly, in 'Belvoir', 'the cold and rigid Stone' of the statues has 'A Look, so ravishing and sweet, / Doth tender Passions hide within'.[137] These conceits are hyperbolic for the sake of hyperbole, leaping fancifully from the architecture of the house to a realm of pure sensibility and metaphor, and they belong to the larger economy of the poem precisely because they are unnecessary. Indulgence is felt to be appropriate and desirable because the houses in question are so magnificent and excessive, and require a corresponding kind of imaginative opulence of their panegyrics.

Tropes and conceits, in the Restoration and eighteenth-century country house poem, are lavish formal correlatives to the luxury and surplus of the houses they describe. Redundancy is positively striven for as a measure of the degree to which the estate's greatness surpasses the capacities of description. By means of a kind of disingenuous *occupatio*, poets pretend to give up the impossible task of doing justice to the splendour of their subject, and positively revel in the degree to which it is too much for the limited capacities of language and form. 'Such unnumber'd Beauties bless this Seat, / 'Twere endless on each diff'rent Charm to treat', exclaims the anonymous author of *Castle-Howard* (1732).[138] Edward Stephens, with a similar affectation of admitting defeat, writes in 'On Lord Bathurst's Park and Wood' (1747)

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[136] *Flora Triumphans. Wanstead Garden* (London, 1712), p.11. All further page references are incorporated in the text.
[137] 'Boughton', *Town and Country Magazine*, 7, p.712; 'Belvoir', in *The Harleian Miscellany*, iv. 532.
[138] *Castle-Howard, the Seat of the Right Honourable Charles Earl of Carlisle, &c.* (London, 1732), p.10.

that Cirencester House has 'A pleasing Greatness […] / Too vast in feeble Numbers to be told'.[139] For Cotton, a thorough account of all Chatsworth's beauties would be 'sure a vain, and endless work' [p.56]; in *Powers-court House* (1741), the anonymous poet dramatically throws down his pen ('Description flags – let Thought the rest express'); and, likewise, Trapp complains at Badminton that 'faint Description is in Wonder lost, / Too scanty are the Bounds of Verse'.[140]

The problem about the bounds of verse is addressed by finding ways to accommodate excess to limits, or by extending metres and line-lengths to dramatise luxurious overspill. At Chatsworth, for instance, another instance of *occupatio* makes room for the poet to indulge in lavish rhetorical inflation:

> And should I be so mad as to go about
> To give account of ev'ry thing throughout;
> The rooms of state, stair-cases, galleries,
> Lodgings, apartments, closets, offices;
> […]
> The picture, sculpture, carving, graving, gilding,
> 'Twould be as long in writing as in building.
> [p.56]

Everything about this passage is undue or excessive in some way. The false-modest pretence of discarding the subject ('And should I be so mad as to go about') becomes superfluous when the decision is taken to go ahead anyway; the enjambed list of 'rooms of state, stair-cases, galleries, / Lodgings, apartments, closets, offices' trails over the end of the line with a feeling that it might go on forever; and the unwieldy feminine rhyme on 'gilding / building' backs up the otherwise absurd suggestion that ''Twould be as long in writing as in building' with evidence that the subject is at the very least too large for the regular confines of iambic pentameter.

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[139] Edward Stephens, 'On Lord Bathurst's Park and Wood', in *Miscellaneous Poems. By Edward Stephens* (Cirencester, 1747), p.53.
[140] *A Poem Occasioned by a View of Powers-court House, The Improvements, Park &c., Inscrib'd to Richard Wingfield, Esq.* (Dublin, 1741), p.10 (l. 140). Trapp, *Ædes Badmintonianæ*, p.3.

This imaginative ranginess, luxuriating in its own space and wealth, is a kind of formal profligacy that underwrites the economic philosophy of the Restoration and eighteenth-century estate, in the same way that the frugal and efficient deployment of figures is consonant with the ethical point of the Renaissance genre. Repetition, elaboration and digression are all part of this poetics of surplus. In *Castle-Howard*, for instance, the house's magnificent lawn is described in a leisurely and expansive fashion that has the time and space to repeat itself:

> East from the House a beaut'ous Down there lies,
> Where Art with Nature emulating vyes:
> Not smoother Surface boast the *Tempean* Plains,
> Tho' sung by Poets in immortal Strains:
> Not finer Verdure can young *Flora* bring,
> Tho' she commands an ever blooming Spring.[141]

Here, the deliberately redundant anaphora of 'Not smoother' and 'Not finer' makes a connection between the extravagance of Castle Howard's lawn and the superfluity of the poet's resources. The descriptive boasts are elaborated by repeated subordinate clauses that spill over the line break ('Tho sung by Poets in immortal Strains'; 'Tho' she commands an ever blooming Spring'), measuring the vast extent of the house's 'beaut'ous Down' by redoubling the amount of space required to describe it. The lavish hyperbole of the comparisons ('Not smoother Surface boast the *Tempean* Plains') is made more credible by verse that has a correspondingly infinite capacity for elaboration.

In Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* (1770), the relationship between profligate writing and profligate spending is worked out in a similar way, but here it is pejorative rather than enthusiastic. Auburn is in decline because a large landowner has bought up and enclosed the fields previously available to tenants as common land:

> The man of wealth and pride
> Takes up a space that many poor supplied;

[141] *Castle-Howard*, p.11.

> Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
> Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds:[142]

Goldsmith's repetition here ('Takes up a space'; 'Space for his lake'; 'Space for his horses') works in a similar fashion to the anaphora in *Castle-Howard*: the unnecessary reiteration models the taking up of space it describes, making poetic structures complicit in the greed of expansion and aggregation. But whereas for the Howard family, such scaling up represents a confident endorsement of the value of excess for its own sake, in Goldsmith's poem the luxuriant use of space is covetous and perverse, threatening a particular and traditional way of life and the modest pockets of land it requires.[143] It also threatens a particular and traditional way of writing, because Goldsmith's poem draws its ethical impetus from the social virtues of the seventeenth-century estate poem: the elegy for Auburn is also an elegy for the literary occasion it supports, as the Jonsonian genre is shown to be lamentably inappropriate for the luxury economics of the new dispensation. This recognition, for Goldsmith, is an unhappy one, and it is meant pejoratively; but of course the point about inappropriateness and generic obsolescence is shared, on the other side of the luxury debate, by positive and confident accounts of extravagant building like Cotton's Chatsworth and *Castle-Howard*. Here, the need for generic revision is felt to be self-evident, and there is none of the undertow of regret that Goldsmith's poem has. Instead, the poetics of surplus they espouse is a conscious repudiation of the morality of sufficiency, and in some cases it is positively defiant: the 'Belvoir' poet, for instance, writes that the castle's great luxury 'hath the right Use, *and* serves for Show' [italics mine], in an insolent revision of Jonson's ethical opposition between 'envious show' and use value.[144]

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[142] Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*, ll. 275-8, in *Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith*, ed. by Arthur Friedman, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1966), iv. 298.
[143] For a discussion of the relationship between land enclosure and poetic form, see John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge, 1972).
[144] 'Belvoir', in *The Harleian Miscellany*, iv. 540.

There are several eighteenth-century poems, though, in which the admiration for surplus is not purely self-indulgent. Instead, lavish expenditure is framed as part of a larger ideological thesis about the connections between wealth and labour and the meaning of social responsibility. Poets engage with contemporary political economic models of trickle-down opulence, praising landowners whose luxurious and refined habits of consumption stimulate growth in production and the labour market.[145] In arguments of this kind, importing produce and purchasing luxury goods are conceived to be virtuous because they benefit artificers, salesmen and craftsmen across an incalculably large number of professional sectors, regardless of the self-interestedness behind the landowner's original decision to spend. The Renaissance genre's ethics of intention – a notion that it is inherently a good thing to subsist on produce from one's own estate, according to applied philosophical preferences for self-sufficiency – comes to be replaced by a thoroughly eighteenth-century ethics of outcome, which claims that measuring numbers and wealth is a more effective index of social responsibility than admiring the selfless benevolence behind local acts of charity. This new concept of virtuous management requires eighteenth-century poets to introduce the idea of labour and production into the scope of the genre's moral economy, where traditionally it had dwelt only on the gift-giving relations of neo-feudal hospitality.[146] The paternalist benevolence traditionally associated with landownership is reframed as a charitable willingness to provide employment for the poor, so that the estate becomes an organising space for laying out an idealised version of large-scale agricultural production and improvement. The local poor and retainers supported on an altruistic basis by the Jonsonian estate are exchanged, in this later version of the genre, for a more impersonal system of finessed labour divisions and specialised employment, such that the

[145] See Fowler, *The Country House Poem*, p.21, on the difference between landownership as 'stewardship of the inheritance' and 'expansionary commerce'.

[146] This process of generic adaptation is closely related to the transformation of pastoral in the early eighteenth century, where it was felt to be necessary to find a way of admitting into the poetry 'those everyday concerns of work, organisation and management, that are hidden [...] in Virgilian eclogue'. See John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting 1730-1840* (Cambridge, 1980), p.12.

poem becomes an exemplary rendering of the kinds of arguments used by political economic defences of lavish country house building.

The connection between landowning wealth and the labour market is made as early as 1712 in *Flora Triumphans*, where it is used to defend the building improvements made by Sir Richard Child at Wanstead. The poet acknowledges that making improvements to one's property has become a far more magnificent and expensive undertaking than in past ages (he contrasts the expense involved with the 'less costly Roofs and homelier Bowers' [p.15] laid down during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods), but insists that this does not mean the enterprise has become any more self-interested or avaricious. Instead, Wanstead's extravagant developments are claimed to be an index of the landowner's 'Inborn Virtue', since their stimulation of the labour market makes a substantial contribution to the public happiness: 'What Mouths have ev'n his humbler Outworks fed, / Hunger and Sloth uprowzd to Work and Bread!' [p.16]. By means of an even more unexpected conflation between self-interested expenditure and public-mindedness, the poet proceeds to claim that Child's 'Virtue' is of a specifically Christian kind:

> Let Misers in close Heaps their Curse possess:
> 'Tis circulating GOLD can only bless.
> In Works like these the CHRISTIAN WORTHY shines.
> The Lab'rers here dig their own Silver Mines.
> [p.16]

In the moral economy of the Renaissance estate, the iconography of the 'weary pilgrim', the generously loaded board and the shared feast establishes a Christian basis for the local forms of charity that the house underwrites. Here, though, the work of the 'Christian Worthy' is a version of political economy, and positively encourages the kind of profligate expense ('circulating Gold') that is traditionally considered antithetical to the modest and frugal claims of Christian charity.

Profligacy is benevolent, the poet shows, because it is self-sustaining form of social responsibility, promoting labour rather than individual acts of charity. Labourers 'dig their own Silver Mines' because their work establishes the conditions for future prosperity: their welfare is assured by personal initiatives of self-help and self-interest, rather than by the altruism of a patron. Edward Stephens makes a similar point in *On Lord Bathurst's Park and Wood*, where he shows that Bathurst's exemplary economic management at Cirencester Park has the effect of transforming surplus riches into the 'social Virtue' of employment. 'You', he writes to Bathurst,

> like th'Oerflowing of redundant *Nile*,
> Make the distress'd thro' ev'ry Season smile;
> Your lib'ral Bounty num'rous Poor confess,
> By Labour best preserv'd from Wretchedness.[147]

Here, the 'lib'ral Bounty' that supports 'num'rous Poor' resembles the Renaissance paternalist generosity sustaining 'Much poore' in Carew's 'To Saxham', or relieving the 'servant, Tennant, and kind neighbour' at Wrest Park.[148] But the transition to the second half of Stephens' couplet ('By *Labour* best preserv'd from Wretchedness' [italics mine]) tracks a swerve in an otherwise familiar argument. In the case of Cirencester Park, 'lib'ral' landownership is a form of labour provision, based on large-scale works projects rather than occasional gifts of charity; so Bathurst's ability to preserve men from 'Wretchedness' in 'ev'ry Season' is shown to rest on political economic pragmatism rather than neo-feudal generosity.

This new sense of social responsibility, conceived as appealing to a general desire for self-improvement rather than addressing problems on a case-by-case basis, is by nature a far more impersonal thing than the individualised paternalism of the Renaissance estate vision, and as such it requires a species of poetry that concentrates less on the well-intentioned solicitude of

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[147] Stephens, 'On Lord Bathurst's Park and Wood', in *Miscellaneous Poems*, p.56.
[148] Carew, 'To Saxham', l. 12; 'To My Friend G.N. from Wrest', l. 36, in *The Poems of Thomas Carew*, ed. by Dunlap, pp.28, 87.

the landowner and focusses instead on the social benefits that emerge as indirect consequences of his expenditure.[149] At Percy Lodge, for instance, Dalton imagines the Countess of Hertford as the inspiration and muse for estate improvement projects, and praises 'all, that her NEWCASTLE's art / In boundless fondness can impart',

> Each level walk, each shelving glade,
> Whate'er employs the labourer's spade,
> Whate'er rewards his patient toil,
> And makes the barren desart smile.[150]

The thought of making 'the barren desart smile' is a nod to the georgic trope of the *paysage riant*, the smiling landscape, whose beauty is an extension of its productivity and economic confidence (as in Thomson's 'smiling Mead' in *Summer*, for instance, or the 'Rich Industry' that 'sits smiling on the plains' in Pope's *Windsor-Forest*).[151] The inclusion of georgic images and priorities marks a shift of focus for the country house poem, because its traditional celebration of consumption and tendency to gloss over the means of production are exchanged for a new interest in labour, yield and efficiency, which must accordingly de-emphasise the role played by the aristocratic benevolence of the landowner. In Dalton's poem above, Hertford himself has surprisingly little to do: he is behind the plans for the garden's 'level walk' and 'shelving glade', but his input is articulated in vague and non-specific terms. The precise nature of his interests and activities is felt to be essentially irrelevant, because the grammar of Dalton's verse subordinates them in an offhand fashion to the beneficial consequences they will bring for the estate's workers. With anaphoric emphasis, Hertford's projects are simply the unspecified

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[149] Such poetry was particularly required in the case of 'impersonally administered estates' run by absentee landlords, who had no contact with the land or its tenants. See Alastair Fowler, *The Country House Poem*, p.21.
[150] Dalton, 'To the Right Honourable, the Countess of Hartford, at Percy-Lodge', ll. 173-8, in *Two Epistles*, p.28. All further line references are incorporated in the text.
[151] Thomson, *Summer*, l. 1404, in *The Seasons*, ed. by James Sambrook (Oxford, 1981), p.124; Pope, *Windsor-Forest*, l. 41, *TE*, i: *Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism* (1961), p.152. For the idea of the *paysage riant*, see Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place*, p.73.

subjects of 'Whate'er employs the labourer's spade, / Whate'er rewards his patient toil', so that his function as a landowner is merely to establish the preconditions for labour.

In *Powers-court House*, the poet begins by praising the Wingfield family's Dublin estate according to traditional criteria of paternalist generosity. Richard Wingfield's charity is compared to that of John Kyrle, the 'Man of Ross' in Pope's *Epistle to Bathurst*:

> What Name becomes you best? One late in Print,
> – The *Man of Ross*, seems no improper Hint,
> Whose gracious Gates, like yours, receiv'd the Poor,
> Nay, more your Merit – for your Fortune's more!
> Like his, your Worth sincere and not a Sound,
> Like him a Blessing – to your Country round,
> To him Age, Want, and Sickness paid their Vow,
> That Man thus thought, and liv'd – as you do now.[152]

Wingfield's 'gracious Gates' receive 'the Poor' in much the same way as the hospitable country seats of the Jonsonian tradition, and his munificence is extended in the paternalist manner to the 'Country round' his estate and parish. The comparison with Kyrle points towards the same ethos of landownership: as Howard Erskine-Hill has shown, the Man of Ross is framed in Pope's poem as an exemplary bastion of the old culture of charity and hospitality, fulfilling 'the country house ideal' by placing himself as a landowner 'at the centre of the community that he serves'.[153] The connection between the two establishes an allusive lineage of virtuous country house management, permitting the *Powers-court* poet to imagine himself as the heir to Pope's country house interests whilst framing Wingfield as a true moral descendent of Kyrle.

Erskine-Hill's reading emphasises the personal touch with which Kyrle ministers to the poor of his parish ('He seems more humble, more directly active, in much closer touch with those he helps'), and points to his humility in softening some of the 'tangible distinctions' that

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[152] *A Poem Occasioned by a View of Powers-court House*, ll. 17-24. All further line references are incorporated in the text.
[153] Erskine-Hill, *The Social Milieu of Alexander Pope*, p.305.

obtain between the gentry and the poor.[154] But in Pope's lines Kyrle is also celebrated for projects of a more ambitious and less obviously charitable nature, large-scale improvements that help the indigent by providing work rather than bread: 'Who hung with woods yon mountain's sultry brow? / […] Whose Cause-way parts the vale with shady rows?'[155] It is these larger public works projects, rather than the localised gestures of paternalist goodwill, that most resemble the kind of moral economy for which Wingfield is praised at Powerscourt House (and where, therefore, the comparison between the two landowners seems most apt). Wingfield's benevolence, the poet argues, expresses itself most effectively in his grand plans to landscape the house's grounds, where aesthetic flourishes like a 'swelling *Vista*', a 'verdant Slope' or a 'raised Parterre' [l. 55, 59] may be shown to have surprisingly extensive socioeconomic benefits:

> Hence, from this *Taste*, are Numbers pleas'd and fed,
> The Wise have Pleasure, the Distress'd have Bread,
> This Taste brings Profit, and improves with Sense,
> And through a thousand Channels turns Expence,
> Benevolence in num'rous Streams imparts,
> And ends in Virtue what began in Arts,
> Removes sharp Famine, Sickness, and Despair,
> Relieves the asking Eye, the rising Tear,
> […]
> If publick Spirit shines, 'tis just at least
> To give some Glory too, to *publick Taste*.
>
> [ll. 60-71]

The chief idea here, neatly turned in the closing couplet, is similar to the thought articulated in *Flora Triumphans* and *On Lord Bathurst's Park and Wood*: systemic economic activity, however self-centred its beginnings, is a more thoroughgoing approach to the problem of social responsibility than well-intentioned charity. 'Publick Spirit' may be glorified in civic discourse as a central pillar of virtuous citizenship (and praised in the Renaissance country house poem as the laudable

[154] Ibid., p.306.
[155] Pope, *Epistle to Bathurst*, l. 253, 259, *TE*, III.ii. 114.

kind of self-abnegation that underlies landowning charity); but since in practice its beneficial socioeconomic applications can only be local forms of relief distributed on a case-by-case basis, it is incumbent upon a more selfish kind of interestedness, the promptings of '*publick Taste*', to provide practical social benefits on a much larger scale.

In the case of Powerscourt House, the scale is very large indeed: Wingfield's taste creates 'a thousand Channels' of expenditure, and constitutes 'Benevolence in num'rous Streams'. The hyperbole here is excessive, but it serves to point up the fact that the house, by virtue of its tasteful additions (the 'verdant Slope, and rais'd Parterre'), is an integral part of an economy greater than its own internal operations, offering employment and succour to an incalculably large number of workers via a complex network of labour divisions. The sheer extent of this socioeconomic ripple-effect is measured by the degree to which Wingfield's own agency is subtracted from the equation: in a similar fashion to the way in which Dalton de-emphasises the Newcastle family's initiative, the *Powers-court* poet presents the house's social benefits as largely self-generative, as the loose fit of syntax to line length forms a series of grammatically incomplete units which distort and mystify the thread of agency. Five consecutive lines, for instance ('And through a thousand Channels turns Expence, / [...] Relieves the asking Eye, the rising Tear'), are completely without a governing subject, and require some effort tracking backwards to recall precisely what is responsible for the process of political economic growth. The structure of the verse paragraph, building clause upon clause in parataxis and extending outwards of its own accord, is an exercise in a poetics of impersonality, whereby the abstract idea of Wingfield's 'Taste' provides the initial prompt of activity, but is soon forgotten in a series of syntactic developments and refinements which spiral outwards centrifugally from one another. The resulting effect is a sophisticated formal version of the vast economic machine set into motion by a whimsical fashion for smooth slopes and green parterres, as a largely self-interested demand for elegance necessitates an increasingly refined

series of labour divisions, and by means of the prosperity and social benefit that come of job creation, 'ends in Virtue what began in Arts'.

'Taste', for the *Powers-court* poet, is indirectly responsible for sustaining livelihoods and creating wealth, such that improvements to the house and gardens are commercial propositions with implications for the national economy more generally. But 'Taste' and 'Arts' also provide the impetus for projects of much larger scope, which happen on an altogether grander estate than the grounds of Powers Court:

> *publick Taste*,
> Which bids proud Art the pillar'd Fabrick raise,
> Scoops the rough Rock, and levels vast High-ways
> Plans future Woods, for Prospect and Defence,
> And forms a Bower a hundred summers hence.
> [ll. 71-5]

Such improvements are beyond the ambition of Wingfield's estate (more modest embellishments are 'such […] as Time shall bring to you' [l. 77], the poet admits), but the imaginative leap from the local to the national is characteristic of the way in which the eighteenth-century country house poem is felt to be an attractive framework for considering the political and economic health of Britain as a national estate, in much the same way that contemporary accounts of the role of the great house picture it as a national enterprise, a metonymic showcasing of British capacities in aesthetic and civic realms. This metonymic thinking lionises the position of the landowner, whose breadth of vision is presented as sufficiently expansive to take in 'at one glance', as Kenny writes, 'the whole earth and the modest Horatian estate as interdependent parts of the single system'.[156] It enlists his energies and his land in a confident vision of Britain as a dominant international presence, a military or trading power with wide-ranging political and commercial influence. By this process of reimagining, the estate becomes 'a manageable concept by which to view commerce at a time

[156] Kenny, *The Country-House Ethos in English Literature*, p.16.

of unbridled trading expansion', a thoroughly familiar symbol whose various historical and ethical associations work to palliate the strangeness of the new international dispensation.[157]

This widening of perspective, and the kinds of active civic and economic engagement it entails, is a thorough revision of the moral autarchy of the Renaissance estate, whose gates and walls mark the boundaries of its whole world. Wrest Park, for instance, is praised by Carew for its retired position as an 'Island Mansion' set within the 'narrow Seas' of its own lakes, and Herrick's encomium to Endymion Porter celebrates the restraint of Porter's position as a landowner, praising the modesty of his wants ('well thou know'st, *'tis not th'extent / Of Land makes life, but sweet content*') and his ability to roam happily within his 'own dear bounds, / Not envying others larger grounds'.[158] The worldly intelligence of the eighteenth-century form complicates the reticence of the Jonsonian vision, and the perspective it brings to the genre is essentially forward-looking and self-assured (in the way that, for instance, Powerscourt House inspires thoughts of 'future Woods, for Prospect and Defence', and promises 'a Bower a hundred summers hence' [p.6]; and Benjamin Hutchinson's description of Kimbolton Castle leaps forward to imagine its oak trees as 'future sov'reigns of the sea').[159] As a particularly eloquent articulation of Britain's economic power and plenty during the first half of the eighteenth century, the genre participates in what Kaul has called 'the search for forms and idioms appropriate to weighty or inspired meditations upon the state of the nation'.[160] In this new dispensation, the insistent localism of the Jonsonian poem is exchanged for a new, more token sense of place, which scrutinises *this* house in order to think about *all* houses, and exchanges what is particular about the individual estate for a metonymic idea of productivity and husbandry more generally.

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[157] Ibid., p.35.
[158] Carew, 'To My Friend G.N. from Wrest', l. 79, 88, in *The Poems of Thomas Carew*, ed. by Dunlap, p.88; Herrick, 'The Country Life', ll. 15-18, in *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. by Cain and Connolly, i. 217.
[159] Benjamin Hutchinson, *Kimbolton Park: A Poem* (London, 1765), p.11. All further page references are incorporated in the text.
[160] Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire*, p.9.

This generalising sense of place is expressed with great economy in Thomson's *Summer* (1727), where country house *topoi* are introduced into the poem's celebration of Hanoverian power and plenty. Thomson's description of the prospect along the banks of the Thames at Richmond and Twickenham is a rapid bird's-eye tour, which takes in several individual estates '*en Passant*, and in *Perspective*', as Defoe recommends on his *Tour*, and presents the poet's speaker as a worldly country house tourist rather than a privileged guest of one specific estate. Thomson's verse skims over the abundant 'waving Harvests' and 'smiling Mead' in the country's 'boundless Landskip', and ascends Richmond Hill where 'radiant Summer opens all its Pride'; and with the same greedy interest in prosperity, it turns with 'feasted Eye' to celebrate the 'Luxurious' spread of country seats:

> Slow let us trace the matchless VALE of THAMES;
> Fair winding-up to where the Muses haunt
> In *Twit'nam*'s Bowers, and for their Pope implore
> The healing God; to royal *Hampton*'s Pile,
> To *Clermont*'s terrass'd Height, and *Esher*'s Groves,
> Where in the sweetest Solitude, embrac'd
> By the soft Windings of the silent *Mole*,
> From Courts and Senates PELHAM finds Repose.
> […]
> O Vale of Bliss! O softly-swelling Hills!
> On which the *Power of Cultivation* lies,
> And joys to see the Wonders of his Toil.[161]

William Stanhope and Henry Pelham's houses; the royal palace at Hampton Court; Pope's house at Twickenham: the seats that Thomson glances over are centres of political interest, and the poet's homogenising gaze permits each to stand in metonymically for the 'goodly Prospect' of 'Happy BRITANNIA', with its national virtues of 'Plenty', 'Vigour' and 'LIBERTY'.[162] The kinds of civic activity they represent ('Courts and Senates') belong to the same progressive landscape, the same 'softly-swelling Hills', as the forms of economic improvement understood

[161] Thomson, *Summer*, ll. 1404-9, 1417-8, 1425-37, in *The Seasons*, ed. by Sambrook, pp.124-5.
[162] Thomson, *Summer*, ll. 1438-45, in ibid., p.125.

by 'the *Power of Cultivation*' and the 'Wonders' of agricultural 'Toil'. The breadth of Thomson's vision stretches the idea of '*Cultivation*' so that it takes on a range of meanings, political and social as well as economic, and this kind of large-scale contextualisation allows land improvement and civil government to be presented alike as complementary expressions of the same virtuous national agenda. Individually, each seat has its claims to a form of legislative importance, but Thomson's generalising eye is more interested in the national estate, the larger landscape of political optimism and economic growth, that several such houses represent collectively. The distance from which he scrutinises them does not diminish, but rather magnifies, by a formal adjustment of focus, their ability to stand for the same economic and political virtues as the 'goodly Prospect' of Britain, because the bird's-eye view from which he writes requires each house to be part of a civic and economic dispensation far greater than itself if it is to be visible at all.

The same adjustment of focus, unexpectedly stepping backwards to envisage the individual estate in a grander context, is introduced as a parenthetical aside in Dalton's 'Percy Lodge'. A conventional description of the park's flora and fauna ('Here flourish sweets in mingl'd bloom' [l. 131]) is exchanged for a dramatically different tone:

> Beneath a hill, whose hoary brow
> Ne'er felt the wound of scythe or plow,
> (Along whose wild and heathy side
> BRITANNIA's Naval heroes ride,
> When they, with colours wide display'd,
> That proud IBERIA's sons upbraid,
> In tawny troop, from INDIA's shore,
> Guard in rough pomp their captive ore)
> Mid circling waters lies an isle,
> Whose verdant shores reflected smile;
> [ll. 143-52]

On either side of his parentheses, Dalton constructs a portrait of self-sufficient estate management that would be perfectly at home in the Renaissance genre. The unfarmed hill

('Ne'er felt the wound of scythe or plow') evades the problem of representing labour in the same way as the spontaneously productive earth of the Jonsonian estate, whilst the image of the house as a kind of island, surrounded and protected by its lakes ('Mid circling waters lies an isle') looks back to Carew's idea of Wrest Park in the middle of 'flowing streames', an 'Island Mansion' ringed protectively twice around by 'circles' of water.[163]

The intrusion of the parenthetic digression, though, disrupts this vision of retreat with an unfamiliar shift of perspective. Percy Lodge, on the naval route from Portsmouth, borders geographically on sites of international war and trade (at the time of writing, Dalton explains in a footnote, 'the crew of the Centurion were expected to pass by from Portsmouth with the prize-money taken from the Acapulca ship' [p.26 n.]). But rather than being merely contiguous to a larger world of political affairs, from whose complexities its gates and circling waters keep it safe, Dalton's parenthetic interpolation insists that the house is intimately bound up with its political economic modernity. The Hertford estate, with its 'rural plainness' [l. 62] and its simple hospitality, is nonetheless part of the same vision – the same confident nationalist prospect – as the passing ships and the exotic geographies of 'IBERIA' and 'INDIA'. The poem deliberately interrupts a reiteration of Renaissance generic topoi in order to point out that sheltered localism, in the case of the eighteenth-century estate, is only desirable insofar as it is provisional, constantly challenged and pressured by the larger concerns of economies far beyond the house's protected 'isle'. Similar forms of global consciousness are to be found in other mid-century panegyrics. Robert Potter's *Holkham* (1758), for instance, imagines the estate's elevated 'champain Mound' and its classical temple not from the perspective of one of Holkham's owners or tenants, but from the external vantage point of a 'home-bound Mariner', who sees 'Emerging from the Waves the tall Tow'r rise' and navigates his 'flying Sail' on the

[163] Carew, 'To My Friend G.N. from Wrest, ll. 75-9, in *The Poems of Thomas Carew*, ed. by Dunlap, p.88.

basis of its position.[164] The mariner's ship, Potter suggests, cannot complete its trading voyage without the local reference point that Holkham provides: it is the endpoint of a global commercial venture, and matters just as much to the economic networks outside its walls as it does to the small number of people in its immediate community.

The wide compass of Dalton and Potter's country house writing here is similar in scope to the expansive closure of Pope's *Epistle to Burlington*, where a depiction of the virtuous husbandry of Bathurst and Burlington (the counterexample to Timon's tasteless housekeeping) is elaborated into set of precepts for the proper management of the national estate. For Erskine-Hill, this entails the projection of a thoroughly seventeenth-century ideal, the 'country house, not as a showpiece, but as the centre of a community as Jonson, Carew, Marvell and Herrick saw it'.[165]

> His Father's Acres who enjoys in peace,
> Or makes his Neighbours glad, if he encrease;
> Whose chearful Tenants bless their yearly toil,
> Yet to their Lord owe more than to their soil;
> Whose ample Lawns are not asham'd to feed
> The milky heifer and deserving steed;
> Whose rising Forests, not for pride or show,
> But future Buildings, future Navies grow:
> Let his plantations stretch from down to down,
> First shade a Country, and then raise a Town.[166]

This passage, with its 'chearful Tenants', modest ambition ('His Father's Acres who enjoys in peace') and ethical preference for use value ('not for pride or show') is a model expression of Renaissance pieties. The formal construction of the verse is governed by an appropriate principle of self-sufficiency, which determines its interlocking system of offered and echoed returns ('Whose chearful Tenants'; 'Whose ample Lawns'; 'Whose rising Forests'), and there

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[164] Robert Potter, *Holkham. A Poem. To the Right Honourable the Earl of Leicester* (London, 1758), p.6. All further page references are incorporated in the text.
[165] Erskine-Hill, *The Social Milieu of Alexander Pope*, p.302.
[166] Pope, *Epistle IV. To* Richard Boyle*, Earl of* Burlington, ll.181-90, *TE*, III.ii. 154-5. All further line references in the text are to this edition.

are touches of poetic frugality in the efficiency of the final couplet, which makes 'plantations' work to govern three separate verbs. The amplitude of the paragraph, growing in confidence with each anaphoric reiteration, is grounded in a secure awareness of its beginnings, such that the ethical point of the *rura paterna* is not lost in the greater ambition of 'rising Forests' and 'plantations'.

For Pope, though, part of the point of proper estate management is its application, as a model of right use, to larger problems of distribution and organisation, and this means that it is not enough for him merely to reiterate the Renaissance form without a proper attention to the contemporary political and economic valences it has. 'The vision embodied in this verse-paragraph follows the order of ever-widening circles of responsibility and benefaction that the poem as a whole has followed', Miriam Lerenbaum writes, and the widening of the focus to encompass larger kinds of sociability is what allows for the triumphant political economic conviction of the closing section.[167] Pope's explanatory note informs the reader that he has 'touched upon the proper objects of Magnificence and Expence, in the private works of great men' [ll. 195-204n.], and his point is that Richard Boyle and Allen Bathurst, private landowners whose dealing is admirable according to criteria of 'Use' and 'Sense' [ll. 179-80], are also hugely wealthy and lavishly equipped, and their vast outlay is the basis for a greater kind of husbandry than the care of their own tenants and livestock. In a similar fashion to Dalton's British warships, conceived as part of the same general vision as Percy Lodge's house and park, Bathurst and Boyle's landed estates are co-opted for the creation of 'future Navies', and the 'Town' that their 'plantations' raise permits the rural seat to flourish within an essentially urban vision of commercial development. Boyle and Bathurst may spend grandly, but their outlay on projects beyond the scope of the autarchic Renaissance country house is projected as a 'magnificent' contribution to the Augustan national estate, and the supreme georgic confidence

[167] Miriam Lerenbaum, *Alexander Pope's 'Opus Magnum', 1729-1744* (Oxford, 1977), p.122. See also Erskine-Hill, *The Social Milieu of Alexander Pope*, p.304: 'The country house ideal merges into the Roman ideal… and Pope's concern with houses and estates expands into concern with the country, indeed with civilisation, as a whole'.

with which the poem continues to roll out its programme of works ('Bid Harbors open, public Ways extend' [l. 197]) is a reconfigured version of Jonsonian modesty.

For some eighteenth-century poets, the usefulness of the country house model extended beyond its applications to the British domestic economy in order to encompass colonial ambitions, as the logical extension of the expansionist confidence articulated by the idea of the national estate. The Jonsonian model was not the only available generic framework to be refashioned for imperial purposes in the eighteenth century: there were also colonial georgics such as James Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane* (1764), sentimental comedies on virtuous nabobs (Richard Cumberland's *The West-Indian* (1771), for instance), and a raft of pastoral pieces on the prelapsarian pleasures of the colonies, such as Edward Rushton's *West-Indian Eclogues* (1787).[168] But despite its ethical preferences for domestic autarchy (and accompanying profound suspicions of voyaging to the 'Eastern Ind', or fetching home the 'Ingot from the West', as in Herrick's 'The Country Life'[169]) several poets found the country house poem to be a particularly attractive organising space for the new problems of supply and distribution raised by imperial cultivation. Extending the morality of husbandry to places where it could conceivably be presented as most urgently required, the form was sufficiently capacious to 'consider England and her appendant colonies as one great estate', as Kenny argues; and since 'at the heart of the colonising urge was the idea of order shaped from abundance by right use', Jonsonian principles of utility and frugality could be applied, with little sense of contradiction, to the most lavish and superfluous expression of British economic power.[170]

For some poets, the elision between the private estate and the colonial one was merely a matter of perspective. In *Holkham*, Potter describes the immediate prospect of the house and garden 'in nearer View' ('The stately Mansion lifts its tow'ry Height, / And glitters o'er the Groves' [p.6]), before taking a series of progressively larger steps back:

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[168] See O'Brien, 'Imperial georgic', pp.160-79.
[169] Herrick, 'The Country Life', l.7, 10, in *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. by Cain and Connolly, i. 217.
[170] Kenny, *The Country-House Ethos in English Literature*, pp.16-17, 197.

> In distant Prospect, sinking from the Eye,
> Low in the tufted Dales the Hamlets lie;
> […]
> More distant yet the throng'd commercial Town,
> That makes the Wealth of other Worlds her own,
> Lifts her proud Head, and sees with ev'ry Tide
> Rich-freighted Navies croud her harbour's Side:
> Or bids the parting Vessel spread the Sail
> Loose to the Wind, and catch the rising Gale:
> Whilst the vast Ocean, Albion's utmost Bound,
> Rolls its broad Wave, a World of Waters, round.
> [pp.8-9]

Potter's 'impatient Mind / Bids her free Pow'rs expatiate unconfin'd' [p.9], moving outwards from the intimate 'View' of Holkham's lawns and groves to the 'distant Prospect' of nearby hamlets, and then outwards again to the 'More distant yet' vision of the 'commercial Town', with its promise of 'other Worlds' and their 'Rich-freighted' abundance of exotic goods. Rather than imagining the estate as a self-contained economy in its own right, his verse envisages it at the centre of a British global dominion, providing a privileged vantage point from which it is possible to survey, as a single 'Prospect', the full reach of the nation's commercial and imperial ambition. The 'Wealth of other Worlds' is not rejected as a threat to the virtue of autarchic simplicity, but instead is positively welcomed to Holkham as the tribute due from the furthest corners of its global estate, no more out of place than the locally grown produce of the house's immediate environs.

This encompassing vision of the world's tribute is shared by Benjamin Hutchinson's *Kimbolton Park* (1765), a panegyric on the estate of the Duke of Manchester. Hutchinson's description of the flora around him at Kimbolton prompts an ambitious paean to the marvellous natural variety of the globe, where all things are shown to have their place according to a providential scheme. 'From glowing India to the frozen pole', he writes, each region of the earth has its native climate and produce: the 'spreading fig' grows under the Indian sun and the

'Soft cypress' on the 'Paphian plain'; 'cold Norwegia' has its 'lofty pines' as a 'kind protection from the northern skies' [pp.10-11]. The resources of the earth are not 'at random thrown abroad', or 'undistinguish'd carelessly bestow'd' [p.10], but distributed according to need and variety; and Hutchinson's discrete couplet units, each neatly encompassing the climate of a single region ('Yon spreading fig, that first from India came, / Stretch'd broad her leaves to cool the sun-burnt dame'), provide a measured formal correlative of the methodical fashion in which 'providence' has shared out its gifts.

Hutchinson's admiration for global diversity, though, is tempered by a more compelling interest in the redistributive power of imperial trade, and the kind of rich showcasing of nature's bounty that can be achieved by artificial means. There is no need to praise order in variety abroad when it can be recreated in miniature within the bounds of Kimbolton's estate:

> Let me, ye Walks! your flow'ry maze pursue,
> And on one plain the world's whole tribute view.
> That tribute, Commerce, which we owe to thee,
> As thou we owe to godlike Liberty.
> Here spicy shrubs, the growth of Afric, bloom,
> Here ancient Asia breathes her sweet perfume:
> Columbean wilds their later treasures yield,
> And British roses crown the flow'ry field.
> [p.10]

'One plain', Hutchinson argues, is all that is required to exhibit 'the world's whole tribute': the 'flow'ry maze' of Kimbolton's gardens and walks allows 'British roses' to grow alongside the 'treasures' of 'Columbean wilds', borne away from their natural roots by a new secular version of Providence, 'Commerce'. The diversity of the estate's flora is proof of Britain's imperial capacity to collect the finest things of the globe under its own auspices, and by a metonymic process of scaling up, the 'shrubs' and 'treasures' of Kimbolton's garden come to stand for the various nations whose produce British commerce has appropriated and

redistributed. The structuring of the couplets here, a divergence from the preference for discrete, self-contained units, emphasises the point: the mixture of regions and geographies inside each verse unit ('Here spicy shrubs, the growth Afric, bloom, / Here ancient Asia breathes her sweet perfume') offers a miscellaneous jumble of resources from mutually incompatible climates, held together merely by the common patronage of British colonialism.

Kimbolton Park, like Potter's *Holkham,* involves no mention of specific colonial interests or projects, merely using the idea of the estate's rich bounty in a metaphorical fashion to make sense of larger global problems of organisation and distribution. In *Flora Triumphans*, by contrast, the poet concludes his description of Wanstead by praising the imperial ambitions of Sir Josiah Child, the father of his patron Richard, under whose governorship the East India Company pursued an aggressive colonial policy in India during the late seventeenth century. By a simple enlargement of focus, *Flora Triumphans* shifts its gaze from Wanstead's gardens to an exotic colonial topography:

> PLANTATION Works no less His Labours too,
> Only a more extended Field in View,
> T' his harder Cultivation Task assign'd,
> Such was the *FLORIST* Great *JOSIAH* shin'd.
> When the Proud *EAGLE* that adorns his Crest,
> Resolv'd to build her Eastern Cedar Nest,
> Such Fragrant Beds his PLANS of GLORY laid,
> Ev'n in Remotest Worlds an *ALBION* GARDEN spread.
> [p.17]

By a simple extension of metaphor, Child's 'PLANTATION' is framed as 'a more extended Field' that abuts directly onto the cultivated landscape of Wanstead: it is a 'fair Spot of Earth', an '*ALBION* GARDEN', whose 'fragrant Beds' have reclaimed a patch of 'Barren and Unprofitable Soil' [p.17] in much the same way that Wanstead's own gardens have landscaped a plot of wild ground into order and beauty. The conceit insists that there is no real conceptual difference, political or economic, between the gardens at Wanstead and the colonial estate: the

distinction between private and public kinds of expenditure is brushed over as irrelevant, since both enterprises are prompted by a shared set of political economic convictions about British power and plenty. It has been Child's great achievement, the poet concludes, 'So Rich a Prize t' his Country to bestow',

> T' enlarge his Darling *ALBION*'s Soveraign Throne,
> Joyn'd that new Canton of the Globe her own.
> [p.17]

The prevailing garden metaphor allows 'Country' to mean 'landscape' as well as 'nation', which means that it is only the last couplet's sudden expansion of vision (marked by the register shift of 'Soveraign Throne', '*ALBION*' and 'Globe') that adverts openly to its substitution of the national estate for Wanstead. A 'fair Spot of Earth' [p.17], properly husbanded, is an expression of the same confident nation-building principles, regardless of whether it is a private estate or half an empire.

My argument in this chapter has suggested that it is above all this confidence of approach – a conviction about the national significance of the individual estate, and its usefulness as a small-scale model for ambitious economic projections – that serves to distinguish the country house poem of the first half of the eighteenth century. Estate poetry involved individual country houses in a public conversation about political economic modernity, as the idea of the house was proposed as an organising space within which to frame and modify emerging debates about labour, luxury consumption, commerce and empire. My readings have assessed the degree to which this distinctive reappropriation of the country house ethos was found to be viable within the existing generic framework of the seventeenth century estate poem, or whether such a major intellectual reworking required the inherited tropes and structures to be discarded altogether. In the first place, my argument has discussed the characteristic ideas and attitudes of the late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century form, and

described their intellectual departure from the ethos of the Renaissance genre. Three major points of interest have been addressed. Firstly, the chapter has set out the Restoration and eighteenth-century poetry's enthusiastic celebration of luxury and excess in opposition to the Jonsonian preference for use value, and sought to describe the poetics of surplus and hyperbole that it develops to articulate this enthusiasm. Secondly, it has examined the country house poet's confident investment in a new form of moral economy, based on the beneficial social outcomes of extravagant expenditure rather than the laudable intentions behind paternalist landownership; and, thirdly, it has considered the ways in which the Renaissance poem's emphasis on localism, self-sufficiency and retreat is rejected by the eighteenth-century form in favour of ambitious metonymic representations of the state of the nation, encompassing both metropolitan and imperial agendas for commercial growth.

My secondary aim in describing these intellectual divergences from the value systems of the Renaissance genre has been to draw a set of conclusions about the nature of generic transformation, and the various kinds of adaptation – sympathetic; sceptical; hostile – that were found to be viable and appropriate. Frequently, country house poems of the long eighteenth century share very few generic features with their Renaissance predecessors, as poets communicate their enthusiasm for contemporary political economic ideas by discarding the traditional frameworks they find to be inappropriate or anachronistic. This is true, for instance, of the way in which late Restoration and early eighteenth-century estate poems (Cotton's *Chatsworth*, for instance, or the anonymous *Castle-Howard*) abandon the Renaissance estate poem's economic wit in favour of hyperbolic imagery and expansive rhetoric, as an appropriate formal counterpart to their enthusiastic investment in luxury consumption. There are some instances of a more nuanced approach to generic transformation, where poets reprise recognisable formal conventions for entirely new ideological purposes: Pope, for instance, retains elements of the Renaissance ethos of paternalist generosity and right use in his depiction

of Bathurst and Burlington's virtuous husbandry, but widens the focus to encompass a modern political economic vision of national growth; and, likewise, the ambitious modelling of self-interest and trickle-down economics in *Powers-court House* is framed by allusive nods to poems that celebrate a more traditional concept of landownership. Broadly, though, such attempts to repurpose the Renaissance generic inheritance are forward-looking in approach, pointing up the inadequacies or limitations of the seventeenth-century ethos in an age of luxury house building and confident national self-determination. Generic continuity is felt to be in most instances self-contradictory, since it makes little sense to retain traditional praise of autarchy and frugality in an enthusiastic celebration of the eighteenth-century estate's international profile, or its uses as a model defence of luxury consumption.

2: THE FORMAL GEORGIC AND AGRICULTURAL IMPROVEMENT, 1750-70

When, late in his life, John Dyer came to write his four-book georgic *The Fleece* (1757), he still retained something of his earlier interest in the fallen classical landscapes of the past, the 'Rent Palaces, crush'd Columns, [...] / Tombs on buried Tombs' that he had described in *The Ruins of Rome* (1740).[171] In Book I of *The Fleece*, he imagines ancient Greek farming as it might once have been, the 'Attic swains' hard at work to shield their livestock from 'Phoebus' beams':

> But those expensive toils are now no more,
> Proud tyranny devours their flocks and herds:
> Nor bleat of sheep may now, nor sound of pipe,
> Sooth the sad plains of once sweet Arcady,
> The shepherds kingdom: dreary solitude
> Spreads o'er Hymettus, and the shaggy vale
> Of Athens, which, in solemn silence, sheds
> Her venerable ruins to the dust.[172]

These lines are a pastoral elegy for a kind of shepherding that no longer obtains except in myth. Arcady, Hymettus and Athens are in ruins, lost to the political corruption of 'Proud tyranny' and the wastes of time; the bleating sheep and sounding pipes of the 'shepherds kingdom' have been destroyed by the encroaching forces of greed and ambition to which the entire empire has succumbed. For Dyer, though, this is not – or not merely – a lament: it is meant as a comparative observation, because his larger point is that contemporary British sheep farming is positively flourishing. Benefiting from superior topographical and political conditions alike, domestic farmers enjoy 'plenteous peace', 'gentle seasons' and an 'indulgent clime' [I.498, 463]; their sheep are healthy and 'unnumber'd' [I.553] in their abundance, and the wealth they generate is imaginatively connected to the political riches of a nation at liberty.

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[171] John Dyer, *The Ruins of Rome. A Poem* (London, 1740), p.2.
[172] John Dyer, *The Fleece: A Poem in Four Books*, ed. by John Goodridge and Juan Christian Pellicer (Cheltenham, 2007), pp.28-9 (I. 514-26). All further book and line references in the text are to this edition.

Dyer's unfavourable comparison is one of a number of places in which *The Fleece* weighs up modern and ancient allegiances, and attempts to reckon with the ideological contradictions that come with writing a Virgilian georgic about mid-eighteenth-century agriculture. His poem is highly allusive and structured by recognisable thematic and presentational elements of the formal georgic, but it is also emphatically current and self-determined, offering a comprehensive body of up-to-date information on developments in agriculture and across British industry more generally. Alongside Christopher Smart's *The Hop-Garden* (1752), Robert Dodsley's *Agriculture* (1753) and Richard Jago's *Edge-Hill* (1767), *The Fleece* forms part of a distinct sub-group of mid-century georgic poems that enlist the genre's capaciousness and wide-ranging interests to produce an anatomy of British agricultural improvement. Collectively, these poems represent a conscious effort to write decorously about farming in a new way: they aim to do justice to the technical complexity of the mechanisms and processes involved, and they are sufficiently ambitious in their scope and range to show the close interconnections between large-scale land improvement schemes and many kinds of specialist industrial work. The language in which they think and write about agricultural labour is governed by economic concepts of yield, organisation and distribution, and they assume that the value of farming work lies in its measurable contributions to the nation's political economic health, rather than in qualitative standards of moral or philosophical benefit. The inclusiveness and range of their didactic content is vast, and they place particular emphasis on the accuracy of the information they convey, as part of a wider intellectual interest in contemporary modes of scientific enquiry and communication.

Writing a georgic about farming, though, is an essentially imitative business, regardless of how progressive the approach is, or how modern the tools and techniques in question are. In the mid-century georgic, the self-conscious novelty of the enterprise is framed by an allusive and backwards-looking classical inheritance: poets are required to engage with a generic

superstructure that is extensively flexible and adaptable, but is also liable to be placed under too much pressure, or found to be entirely uncongenial for the purposes of writing about modern agricultural work (as in the case of Dyer's consignment of 'Attic' farming to the history books). It will be the business of this chapter to examine the intellectual contradictions and imaginative opportunities that the work of updating the georgic involved. Firstly, the chapter will set out the characteristic interests and attitudes of the new georgic in relation to earlier Virgilian imitations. Secondly, it will examine the varieties of generic revision and transformation that these new attitudes bring about. And, finally, it will consider what this history of appropriation and re-usage tends to suggest about the prevailing cultural usefulness of ancient poetic forms for modern purposes.

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The progress of improvement in agriculture accelerated rapidly from the end of the seventeenth century. 'It comes to pass that this Age swarms with such a multitude of Projectors more than usual', Defoe wrote in 1687 in his *Essay Upon Projects*: they 'do really every day produce new Contrivances, Engines, and Projects to get Money, never before thought of'.[173] Defoe's own projects in the *Essay* included schemes for land reclamation and rationalisation (the 'Power to lay open or inclose Lands; to incroach into Lands, dig, raise, and level Fences, plant and pull up Hedges or Trees'), and were conceived as part of a national drive to increase efficiency in cultivation, production and distribution, spurred on by the enterprise of private individuals.[174] This culture of innovation characterises in particular the years between 1730 and 1760, the peak of the early period of agricultural improvement.[175] New techniques and tools were introduced and popularised by the sophisticated efforts of a self-determined class of professional

[173] Daniel Defoe, introd. to *An Essay Upon Projects*, in *Political and Economic Writings of Daniel Defoe*, gen. ed. by W.R. Owens and P.N. Furbank, 8 vols. (London, 2000), viii: *Social Reform*, pp.34-5.
[174] Defoe, *An Essay Upon Projects*, in ibid., p.57.
[175] A.H. John, 'The Course of Agricultural Change, 1660-1760', in *Essays in Agrarian History*, ed. by W.E. Minchinton, 2 vols. (Newton Abbot, 1968), i. 245.

farmers and owner-occupiers, intellectually exercised by the technicalities of improvement and the possibilities for maximising the profitability of their acres.

The new farming interest was able to flourish during the eighteenth century because its members had bought out and replaced the previously large numbers of tenants and copyholders who farmed in common field, or leased a few acres from their local landowner. Such smaller farmers were characteristically unwilling to experiment with improvers' techniques: the potential for economic gain failed to outweigh the likely risk to their livelihoods, and they were disposed to distrust new farming methods and crops brought in from abroad. They were 'mouldy old leavened husbandmen', as Walter Blith wrote with evident frustration in *The English Improver Improved* (1652), 'accustomed to such a course of husbandry as they will practise, and no other'.[176] Towards the end of the seventeenth century, their traditional methods (farming common field strips, and allowing lands to lie fallow when not used for pasturage) were forcibly redressed by top-down parliamentary decrees, which permitted redistribution of land and resources either directly to the Crown, or to wealthier farmers who would be encouraged to undertake large capital investments to improve the acres they purchased.[177] Acts passed by the Interregnum administration and Charles II to drain areas of fenland in Lincolnshire, for instance, entitled venture capitalists and interested parties to 'adventure for any quantity or share' of the land in question, provided they contributed financially 'at the Rate of Fifty Shillings an Acre' to the drainage project and its maintenance.[178] William III passed an act to enclose and preserve areas of woodland in the New Forest, on the grounds that timber 'hath of late Years been much wasted and impaired [...] that might be of great Use and Conveniency for Supply of His Majesties Royal Navy', and appointed

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[176] See Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (Oxford, 1982; repr. 1988), p.136.
[177] *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, ed. by Joan Thirsk, 8 vols. (Cambridge, 1967-2000), V.ii: *1640-1750, Agrarian Change* (1985), p.316.
[178] 'May 1649: An Act for drayning the Great Level of the Fens, extending itself into the Counties of Northampton, Norfolk, Suffolk, Lincoln, Cambridge and Huntingdon, and the Isle of Ely, or some of them', *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*, ed. by C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait (London, 1911), pp.130-139; see also Joan Thirsk, *Agricultural Regions and Agrarian History in England, 1500-1750* (Basingstoke, 1987), pp.54-5.

commissioners from the Navy at the suggestion of John Evelyn to ensure that sufficient numbers of trees were planted.[179] Such procedures of land rationalisation gradually drove out all tenants who were unable to compete financially for a share of the newly consolidated acreage.

Parliamentary directives, in company with the speculative projects of the newly formed Royal Society, provided the impetus for the great majority of later seventeenth-century improvement initiatives. After 1700, though, as Joan Thirsk has showed, there was a marked decline in 'the enthusiasm and originality that had infused parliamentary debates on agricultural matters under the Commonwealth', and successive parliaments were 'increasingly inclined to let agriculturalists sort out their own problems'.[180] Such self-motived agriculturalists included pioneering members of the peerage, who could afford to experiment with their acres. Progressive landowners subsidised the ventures of their tenantry and invested in experimental model farms, such as the Marquis of Rockingham with his miniature trials of the effects of lime and manure on turnip yields at Wentworth Woodhouse. Landowners with particularly extensive resources exploited the mineral potential of their estates. By 1750, for instance, the Lowther family in Cumberland had spent almost half a million pounds in developing collieries on their lands.[181] As John Barrell has observed, though, the 'vast majority of experimentalists in agriculture' came from the new class of rural professionals, 'the bigger tenant-farmers and the more substantial owner-occupiers', the attendees of agricultural meetings and literate contributors to agricultural pamphlets, who gradually changed the topography of eighteenth-century Britain by means of localised ventures and shared ideas.[182] In the east of England, farmers with their own land experimented with fodder crops introduced from Holland –

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[179] 'William III, 1697-8: An Act for the Increase and Preservation of Timber in the New Forest in the County of Southampton' in *Statutes of the Realm*, ed. by Thomas E. Tomlins, William E. Taunton and John Raithby, 11 vols. (London, 1810-28), vii: *1695-1701* (1820), pp. 405-408; *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, gen. ed. by Thirsk, V.ii. 376.

[180] *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, gen. ed. by Thirsk, V.ii. 325, 300-1.

[181] See *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, gen. ed. by Thirsk, vi: *1750-1850* (1989), p.574; Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century*, pp.189-201.

[182] John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place*, p.66.

turnips, clover, sainfoin – and implemented the new four-course rotation system promoted by Viscount Townshend on his lands at Raynham in Norfolk. On lighter soils, grassland was converted into arable, and heavier clay-based soils were converted to pasture. The seventeenth-century project of land reclamation continued and accelerated, as fens and marshes were drained, water meadows floated and barren lands irrigated by channelling streams. Extensive reclamation of wild heathlands occurred in Norfolk, where Arthur Young noticed in 1768 that the country between the estates of Holkham and Houghton had been seized 'by the spirit of improvement' and enclosed into manageable holdings, which were now 'yielding an hundred times the produce' of formerly.[183]

Enclosure was a significant catalyst for the speed and ease of land conversion. The replacement of localised enclosure by agreement with enclosure by parliamentary act allowed the transformation process to build up momentum towards the middle of the century, and the gradual retraction of commoners' traditional pasturage rights gave farmers freedom of choice in their selection of crops and methods, providing scope for large-scale projects of aggregation and improvement.[184] The new topography, as Barrell suggests, was fundamentally dynamic, encouraging the individual parish to consider itself as 'putting its agricultural produce into circulation', and transforming an idiosyncratic locality into a place much like any other place, or a point of interconnection between shared interests.[185] Increasingly, farming was a comparative and collaborative enterprise. Rural professionals travelled between counties to observe new methods and technologies, and they shared information by means of the dissemination of agricultural journals, which proliferated in the first decades of the eighteenth century. John Houghton's series of *Collections* (1681-3; 1692-1703) offered the first informative farmers' periodical, and practical handbooks like William Ellis's *The Modern*

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[183] Arthur Young, *A Six Weeks Tour, Through the Southern Counties of England and Wales* (1768), pp.21-2.
[184] See Williams, *The Country and the City*, p.96; *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, gen. ed. by Thirsk, V.ii. 381.
[185] Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place*, p.86.

Husbandman (1731) and Young's *The Farmer's Kalendar* (1770) went through several editions. For similar purposes of investigation and education, Edinburgh's Society of Improvers (established 1723) and the British Society of Arts (1754) sponsored agricultural innovations and offered rewards for local enterprise. Comparisons were even made with innovations abroad, and particularly with the state of progress in France. The Scottish improver Alexander Hunter urged Britons in 1769 to 'imitate that fashionable nation', where 'Under the genial influence of the King, Societies are erected in every province', and 'men of the first distinction do not disdain the cultivation of their own lands'.[186]

The new class of ambitious rural professionals did not merely encourage agricultural progress by exchanging techniques, information and technologies. They also brought with them a distinctive new intellectual approach to agricultural work, which valued 'scientific' accuracy and trial by experiment over a reliance on traditional ways of thinking about the land. In late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century agricultural treatises, this self-conscious discourse of improvement manifested itself in sustained efforts to debunk the handed-down precepts of former ages. In 1663, for instance, writing on clover as a new fodder crop, the river engineer and agriculturalist Andrew Yarranton warned that one great 'obstruction to good Husbandry and improvement of Lands' was a 'too stiff adhering to old Customs'. English, Irish and Welsh farmers suffered, he wrote, by 'retaining those usages and methods in Husbandry which never any man pretended any good reason for, but were […] handed from one to another, till they had got the venerable name of Antiquity'.[187] Likewise, Ellis's popular farming almanac, *The Modern Husbandman*, dismissed the credulity and passivity of 'obstinate Blades', farming traditionalists who put their trust in 'some useless, vamped up, false old Theory […] wrote by Authors not capable of judging of their Truth or Falsehood' without experimenting for

[186] Alexander Hunter, *Georgical Essays* (London, 1769), p.11.
[187] Andrew Yarranton, *The Improvement Improved by a Second Edition* (London, 1663), 'To the Reader', unpaginated.

themselves. The only valid means of attaining knowledge, Ellis wrote, was 'A Practice, for a series of Years, in the Art of Agriculture'.[188]

Jethro Tull's *Horse-Hoing Husbandry* (1733) and *Supplement to the Essay on Horse-Hoing Husbandry* (1735) made the same point about the indispensability of practice and trial. Even his own findings, he wrote, were not necessarily to be trusted until they had been 'thoroughly examined', since a man could only properly be 'satisfy'd with Experiments made by himself'. 'Truth is like Gold', he argued, 'which the more it is tryed the brighter it appears, being freed from Dross'; a so-called improver who 'writes of no Truth but what he takes from Books writ a thousand Years before him, cannot be a Discoverer of it'.[189] Alexander Blackwell complained likewise in his *New Method of Improving Cold, Wet, and Barren Lands* (1741) of the loose practice of all farmers who had 'not confined themselves to Narratives of real Practice and Experiments'.[190] And, later in the century, when the improver Alexander Hunter presented his new method for producing compost in his *Georgical Essays* (1769), he set out his findings according to similarly exacting criteria of scientific accuracy. 'In the course of investigation', he wrote, 'I took care to reason upon proper data, carefully avoiding every degree of partiality to my system'. The work of the improver, he claimed, was to correct the received 'errors of our common farmers', and this was to be achieved by empirical methods: 'theory', he concluded, 'may direct our enquiries, yet experience must at last determine our options'.[191]

The emphasis on trial and experiment was part of a broader conviction in eighteenth-century improvement writing that there was no obvious limit to the amount that the land could produce. Steady progress in yield and efficiency, with the right tools and techniques, would allow production to advance far beyond what were currently thought to be optimal levels, and aggressive policies of land reclamation and aggregation could be pursued to maximise the space

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[188] William Ellis, *The Modern Husbandman, or, the Practice of Farming*, 4 vols. (London, 1731; repr. 1744), ii. 16-17.
[189] Jethro Tull, *The Horse-Hoing Husbandry* (London, 1733), pp.ii-iii; Tull, *A Supplement to the Essay on Horse-Hoing Husbandry…* (London, 1735; repr. 1740), p.219.
[190] Alexander Blackwell, *A New Method of Improving Cold, Wet, and Barren Lands* (London, 1741), p.ii.
[191] Hunter, *Georgical Essays*, pp.42, 18, 43.

available. Farmers were encouraged to be enterprising and ambitious, launching large-scale projects to change the contours of their natural environment and conquer its limitations; there was no particular reason why the more modest agricultural learning of earlier ages (with its characteristic idea of husbandmen in a subordinate position to the land they farmed, constantly in thrall to its seasonal caprices) should apply in an age of advanced technical knowledge and empirical methodologies. The new 'ideology of improvement', as Raymond Williams has described it, held up a dominant economic ideal of 'a transformed and regulated land', and insisted that inventive methods could always be found to make cultivated acreage more productive and cost-effective.[192] Tull summed up the position in the *Horse-Hoing Husbandry*. 'No *Canon* having limited what we shall *think* in *Agriculture*', he wrote, 'nor condemned any of its *Tenets* for *Heresy*, every Man is therein a *Free-Thinker*, and must think according to the Dictates of his own Reason'.[193] Agriculture was not of the same intellectual category as disciplines that relied on myth-making, custom and inheritance. Its practitioners were professional scientists, men of '*Natural Philosophy*', whose 'Reason' alone could set limits to their accomplishment. Tull and other ideologues of improvement framed the farmer's trade as an enterprising and resourceful contribution to British scientific progress and economic growth, rather than an age-old way of life with its entrenched moral philosophies, precepts and customs.

This new intellectual approach was required to appeal to the gentry and landowning classes as well as the new order of professional farmers, since the large-scale improvements it recommended were not possible without considerable resources of land and money. This was largely a presentational matter: philosophical and practical treatises repackaged the business of agriculture as a gentleman's pursuit, rather than a menial form of subsistence. Anthony Low

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[192] Williams, *The Country and the City*, p.61, 69. See also Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place*, p.64, on a 'progressive attitude to agriculture, and a particular set of attitudes to land' that distinguished the emerging rural professional class.

[193] Tull, *The Horse-Hoing Husbandry*, p.ii.

notes that the modishness of courtly and aristocratic modes of behaviour amongst the elite in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries had produced 'a fundamental contempt for labour, especially manual and agricultural labour, on the part of England's leaders', and this ingrained prejudice was systematically contested by agriculturalists and amateur enthusiasts in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[194] The scientist Samuel Hartlib, for instance, published proposals in 1651 for the establishment of a 'Colledge of Husbandry', which would provide an education for gentlemen's sons in 'that most *Auncient*, most *Noble*, and most *necessary Trade* of all others (viz.) good *Husbandry*'.[195] With similar pedagogical aims, Abraham Cowley's essay 'Of Agriculture' (1668) presented a fervent defence of agriculture as the earliest gentleman's pursuit. 'We may talke what we please of Lilies, and Lions Rampant, and Spread-Eagles in Fields d'Or, or d'Argent', Cowley wrote, 'but if Heraldry were guided by Reason, a Plough in a Field Arable, would be the most Noble and Antient Armes'.[196] This point was still being emphasised in the mid-eighteenth century. In 1754, the anonymous author of a collection of *Essays on Commerce, Agriculture, Mines, Fisheries, and Other Useful Subjects* urged that it was nonsensical that cultivation should be 'left to the most ignorant set of men', when it ought rather to be 'the business of those who lead a country life, to make reflections and experiments upon husbandry'. The rural life was most suited to men of high office who had 'for some time fulfilled their duty to the state', and now sought a similarly public-minded occupation in retirement.[197]

Improvers sought to demonstrate the noble status of farming by pointing out its civic importance in the ancient world, praising its centrality to the life of the *polis* and its dignified public function. John Worlidge's preface to his *Systema Agriculturae* (1669), for instance, urged any detractors to 'diligently read and peruse the Ancient Writers', where they might 'observe

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[194] Anthony Low, *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton, 1985), p.5.
[195] Samuel Hartlib, *An Essay for Advancement of Husbandry-Learning…* (London, 1651), p.2.
[196] Abraham Cowley, 'Of Agriculture', in *Cowley: The Essays and Other Prose Writings*, ed. by Alfred B. Gough (Oxford, 1915), p.146.
[197] *Select Essays on Commerce, Agriculture, Mines, Fisheries, and Other Useful Subjects* (London, 1754), pp.125, 132.

that many wise and learned Men worthy of praise were exceedingly delighted, not onely in a Rural Habitation, but did also exercise themselves in Tilling the Earth'. In the ancient republics, 'the study of *Agriculture* was of so high an esteem, and so worthy of honour that *Poets, Philosophers, Princes*, and *Kings* themselves […] diligently performed the Office of a Countrey-man'.[198] Cowley's essay, similarly, lamented the fact that 'we have no men now fetcht from the Plow to be made Lords, as they were in *Rome* to be made Consuls and Dictators', where the offices of farming and statesmanship were imaginatively and practically intertwined; and he notes that Virgil, who 'might have been one of the chief men of *Rome*', nonetheless 'chose rather to employ much of his time in the exercise, and much of his immortal wit in the praise and instructions of a Rustique Life', since farming would recommend itself to one with such high civic credentials.[199]

In arguments of this kind, ancient sources were used to praise agriculture and the rural life on a philosophical basis, for the political integrity that farming symbolised and the kind of high-minded commitments it was perceived to entail. During the eighteenth century, the comparison between contemporary farming and its status in the ancient world was also made to extend to the substantive content of the agricultural advice itself. Despite their firm preference for empirical methods over traditional wisdom, agricultural writers turned to classical sources as authoritative frameworks for the new intellectual agenda of improvement. Prose treatises devoted to modern approaches to compost or aration were littered with quotations and invocations of Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Cato's *De agricultura*, Varro's *Rerum rusticarum*, Columella's *De re rustica* and – especially – Virgil's *Georgics*, which were used to support the introduction of experimental new methods. The gardener Stephen Switzer, for instance, made

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[198] John Worlidge, *Systema Agriculturae: Being the Mystery of Husbandry Discovered…* (London, 1669), pp.i-ii.
[199] Cowley, 'Of Agriculture', pp.142, 151. See also Richard Bradley, Preface to *A Survey of the Ancient Husbandry and Gardening…* (London, 1725), unpaginated: 'We find that Husbandry was accounted a Study so extremely beneficial to the [ancient] Commonwealth, that Persons of the highest Rank and Figure […] took a Pride to distinguish themselves by such new Inventions and Contrivances as might add any thing to an Art of so general Advantage'.

a case in his *Country Gentleman's Companion* (1732) for the trial of a new fodder crop on the grounds that it was very similar to one that was 'had in so great Esteem among the *Romans*', and might well be the same plant 'of which *Varro, Columella, Virgil, Pliny*, and others' had 'given so high a Character'. Switzer hoped that by 'tracing it from its Original' through 'a Labyrinth of the best Authors of Repute', he might be able to prove its suitability to be introduced as a fodder crop in British soil, though there had been 'few or no experiments ever made of it in *England*'.[200]

Improvers drew on a number of classical authors to substantiate their advice, but the *Georgics* were overwhelmingly the most popular source text. Virgil's didactic precepts could be reappropriated to legitimise both the gentlemanly nature of the farming profession and the enterprising projects and techniques of the new agriculture. In recent years, critical work on the eighteenth-century reception of Virgil has begun to acknowledge the degree to which pragmatic and scientific readings of the *Georgics* operated alongside literary and philological approaches. Frans De Bruyn in particular has written extensively on the 'debate Virgil's poem occasioned' in the eighteenth century as to 'the scientific or technical merit of the agricultural instructions it conveyed'.[201] Writers of new agricultural treatises, he suggests, 'relied on the cultural imprimatur of Virgil in order to gain a friendly reception with the reading public', and such readers, in their turn, 'continued to take seriously the claim that the *Georgics* [...] were essential reference works in the science and philosophy of agriculture'. The predominance of this mode of reading and interpretation was such, De Bruyn suggests, that it comprised a fully-fledged 'Virgilian discourse' of agricultural science, a culturally sanctioned language in which the unfamiliar new information of improvement could be transmitted and comprehended.[202]

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[200] Stephen Switzer, 'A Dissertation on the Cythisus of the Ancients', in *The Country Gentleman's Companion* (London, 1732), pp.1, 9, 28.
[201] Frans De Bruyn, 'Reading Virgil's *Georgics* as a Scientific Text: The Eighteenth-Century Debate between Jethro Tull and Stephen Switzer', *ELH* lxxi (2004), 661-89 (p.662).
[202] De Bruyn, 'From Georgic Poetry to Statistics and Graphs: Eighteenth-Century Representations and the 'State' of British Society', *The Yale Journal of Criticism* xvii (2004), 107-39 (p.107); De Bruyn, 'From Virgilian Georgic to

During the first half of the eighteenth century, almost all of the public debate about agriculture in societies, journals and handbooks made some use of Virgil's cultural capital.[203] Deference to the example of the *Georgics* was an essential preamble of improvement literature, and in some cases determined the bulk of the substantive content. Blackwell, an improver with considerable practical experience at the Duke of Chandos's estate in London (and time spent observing the newest techniques in the Netherlands), wrote of his *New Method* that any merit it had was 'chiefly owing to *Columella* and *Virgil* among the Ancients'.[204] He framed his advice about the burning of stubble lands as an endorsement of Virgil's similar point in *Georgics* I: 'I cannot leave this Chapter without taking a particular Notice of the great Genius at the Head of it, to whom I imagine the *North-Britons* are indebted for their Method of burning barren Land'.[205] Hunter, later the founder of the York Agricultural Society, appropriated Virgil's 'elegant precepts of husbandry' to serve the requirements of his own innovative recommendations in his *Georgical Essays*. Hunter's major idea was a new scientific method for producing compost, which he claimed used oil as its chemical basis because 'Virgil, indeed, has recommended the lees of oil as a manure'. He proposed some modifications to Virgil's recipe, but only because the poet had uncharacteristically forgotten to address 'the absolute necessity of rendering the oil miscible with water, by means of an alkaline salt'.[206]

By the turn of the century, pragmatic appropriations of the *Georgics* had even filtered into the new reports being produced for the Board of Agriculture (1793-1822). Under Sir John Sinclair and Arthur Young, the Board intended to gather nationwide surveys of current

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Agricultural Science: An Instance in the Transvaluation of Literature in Eighteenth-Century Britain' in *Augustan Subjects: Essays in Honor of Martin C. Battestin*, ed. by Albert J. Rivero (Newark, 1997), p.48.

[203] On the forming of the Georgicall Committee, the branch of the Royal Society established in 1664 to debate questions of domestic agriculture, see Reginald Lennard, 'English Agriculture under Charles II: The Evidence of the Royal Society's 'Enquiries'', *The Economic History Review* iv (1932), 23-45 (pp.23-4). Seventeenth-century treatises and journals that draw on the *Georgics* include Gervase Markham, *The English Husbandman* (London, 1613); Worlidge, *Systema Agriculturae*, p.58; John Houghton, *A Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade* (issued 1681-3, 1692-1703; published London, 1727-8), pp.90, 149.

[204] Blackwell, *A New Method*, p.i.

[205] Ibid., pp.49-50.

[206] Hunter, *Georgical Essays*, pp.8, 45.

and improving agrarian practice, and sent regional commissioners to produce accurate reports of soil type, land usage, wages and prices. De Bruyn has suggested that their findings represented the first overthrowing of 'Virgilian discourse' for nineteenth-century 'forms of technical data gathering and analysis', but several reports show that the *Georgics* had not entirely lost its intellectual capital as an organising framework.[207] An 1802 correspondent from Henley-on-Thames, for instance, observed that 'paring and burning' stubble ground had been found to be an effective method of soil preparation, and was especially valid as a technique because 'Virgil appears no stranger to its use'.[208] On the question of 'improving and perfecting animals of the fleecy tribe', a correspondent from northern Germany reported that the conclusions he had drawn from his own trial methods had been happily confirmed by Virgil's similar suggestions. 'Such are the experiments made by myself, […] and which confirm the truth of what Virgil observes in his *Georgics*'.[209]

Virgil could also be retranslated to serve the intellectual agenda of improvement. During the eighteenth century, a number of accessible prose version of the *Georgics* were produced in which the meaning of the Virgilian text was carefully massaged in order to provide authority for the data of recent experiments.[210] A heated debate over the meaning of Virgil's word '*planta*', for instance, was the subject of Edward Holdsworth's *Dissertation upon Eight Verses in the Second Book of Virgil's Georgics* (1749), in which Holdsworth sought to 'vindicate' Virgil from the agricultural errors and naiveties that other commentators had pointed out. *Planta*, Holdsworth contended, had been incorrectly glossed by previous translations, and in a manner that must invidiously 'reflect on the Poet's Accuracy': what Virgil meant, he wrote, was to use the word 'indiscriminately for any shoots, sprigs, slips, or cuttings whatever, to be

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[207] De Bruyn, 'From Virgilian Georgic to Agricultural Science', p.48.
[208] 'XVII. An Essay on the best Means of converting Grass Land to Tillage' in *Communications to the Board of Agriculture*…, 7 vols. (London, 1797), iii. 489.
[209] 'XXIV. Mr. *G.G. Marwedel* on the Heath Flocks of Sheep…', in ibid., i. 271.
[210] See De Bruyn, 'Eighteenth-Century Editions of Virgil's *Georgics*: From Classical Poem to Agricultural Treatise', *Lumen: Selected Proceedings from the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies* xxiv (2005), 152-61, for a study of the practical possibilities of Virgilian translation.

ingrafted, or planted'.[211] Similarly, Blackwell's *New Method* relied on a very particular translation of Virgil's text in order to support the improvements it recommended, and strongly upbraided the contradictory advice of rival versions (which were guilty of failing to 'make *Virgil* speak like a man of Sense and a Farmer'). Of *Georgics* I, Blackwell observed that 'Most if not all the Translators and Commentators on *Virgil* are against me, and suppose that *Virgil* meant only the burning a little Stubble on the Ground'; fortuitously for his own interests, he was able to show instead that 'VIRGIL uses the Word which they translate *Stubble*, frequently to signify the whole Stalk either of Corn or Grass before they are cut, which exactly corresponds to my Reading'.[212] The high water mark of this trend of pragmatic retranslation was a 1742 edition of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* by James Hamilton, a schoolmaster who saw that he could finance his improvement of a new farm by translating Virgil and capitalising on the marketability of his text amongst fellow landowners. His costs, he calculated, would probably be covered by 'the Sale of 2000 Copies' of his new version of the *Georgics*.[213]

This contemporary reframing of Virgil's poem to serve the intellectual purposes of improvement was part of a broader eighteenth-century interest in classical didactic poetry and the models it offered for a synthesis between literary decorum and scientific data. In the search for a verse genre in which to encapsulate the new information of scientific discovery (agriculture, botany, chemistry, astronomy), poets turned to a classical tradition of articulating technical information in a decorous fashion.[214] 'It is no coincidence', Dwight Durling has argued, 'that Cowley and Evelyn, among the first to give impetus to didactic poetry, were members of the Royal Society'.[215] Works by classical didactic poets on natural philosophy

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[211] Edward Holdsworth, *A Dissertation upon Eight Verses in the Second Book of Virgil's Georgics…* (London, 1749), pp.1-2, 3.
[212] Blackwell, *A New Method*, pp.51-4.
[213] Virgil [James Hamilton], *Virgil's Pastorals Translated into English Prose* (Edinburgh, 1742), pp.vii-viii.
[214] Prior to the seventeenth century, didactic poetry in English was written independently of classical influence. Thomas Tusser's sixteenth-century didactic poem on agriculture, for instance, derived its precepts from a vernacular Christian tradition of good living. See Tusser, *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry* (London, 1630).
[215] Dwight L. Durling, *Georgic Tradition in English Poetry* (New York, 1935), p.16. For a discussion of the interaction between literary tradition and the new science, see William Powell Jones, *The Rhetoric of Science: A*

(Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, Manilius' *Astronomica*, Aratus' *Phaenomena* and Virgil's *Georgics*) were translated into English and French. Concurrently, poets in France and England wrote their own didactic verse in neo-Latin, much of which was concerned with the new science: there were complex poetic explanations of the workings of the microscope and Boyle's air pump, among other subjects.[216] The didactic model was found to be receptive to technical detail, sustained instruction and variation and digression where required, oscillating between precise scientific information and rangier philosophical speculation.

This chapter will study one instance in particular of the way in which the didactic framework of Virgil's poem was appropriated for the ideological purposes of improvement. The handful of mid-century formal georgics mentioned above – Smart's *The Hop-Garden*, Dodsley's *Agriculture*, Dyer's *The Fleece* and Jago's *Edge-Hill* – returned to the didactic subject matter of Virgil's poem in order to set out the working processes of improvement in fine detail, and to produce a species of poetry that might prove useful to agricultural specialists of several different kinds. The new georgic developed as a part of a wide-ranging reappraisal of the cultural importance of farming, and it was sustained by an emerging political economic interest in the cooperative interaction of individual professional interests; but it had its basis in a Roman and neoclassical concept of farming that took little account of modernisation, and tended make firm distinctions between rural work and economic ambition. The work of the mid-century poets was to make this unpromising framework receptive to the new priorities and emphases of improvement, and to find inventive ways of reconciling the contradictions between empirical methodologies and inherited generic forms. As part of the same broad intellectual enterprise as writers of handbooks and prose treatises on improvement, Smart,

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Study of Scientific Ideas and Imagery in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry (London, 1966); Ralph Cohen, 'Innovation and Variation: Literary Change and Georgic Poetry', *Neohelicon* iii (1975), 149-82 (pp.177-9); and Martin Priestman, 'Didactic and Scientific Poetry', in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature: Volume 3, 1660-1790*, ed. by David Hopkins and Charles Martindale (Oxford, 2012), pp.401-25.

[216] See, respectively, Thomas Bisse, 'Microscopium'; Henry Stephens, 'Experimenta Machina Pneumaticae', in *Musae Anglicanae*…, ed. by Vincent Bourne, 3 vols. (London, 1761), i. 232-43, 275-8.

Dodsley, Dyer and Jago drew on and reshaped the recognisable formulae of Virgil's model in order to make sense of the complex new tools and techniques of agricultural modernity. This chapter will study some instances of this process of adaptation, as a means of formulating broader conclusions about the viability of bringing the early eighteenth-century Virgilian form into line with the intellectual premises of improvement.

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Poets began writing original English georgics on the Virgilian model after the publication of Dryden's translation and Addison's *Essay on the Georgics* (1697) had done much to raise the profile of the genre.[217] The georgic was popular partly for technical reasons (Addison, in his *Essay*, showed that it was an appealing 'middle Stile' at which poets could test their skill in between the low road of pastoral and the higher task of epic); but it also flourished because its geopolitical interests provided opportunities for poets to think through contemporary problems of nationhood and empire.[218] In particular, its practical interest in economic growth was particularly congenial to the confidence of the nation's commercial prospects at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The genre's emphasis on 'prosperity and utility' accorded well with eighteenth-century drives to measure wealth and progress, and its anticipation of the long-awaited Pax Augusta allowed for attractive comparisons with the prospect of peace and stability in Augustan Britain.[219] Its openness to the 'specialised vocabularies' of individual trades and professions, as David Fairer has remarked, enabled it to 'explore economies of many different kinds', and it benefited from the development of large-scale macroeconomic surveys of the

[217] 'Full-scale georgic as a strict genre in imitation of Virgil's poem was essentially a phenomenon of the early eighteenth century'. See Low, *The Georgic Revolution*, p.117. On early Renaissance manifestations of the genre, see ibid., pp.7-8, and Alastair Fowler, 'The Beginnings of English Georgic', in *Renaissance Genre: Essays on Theory, History and Interpretation*, ed. by Barbara Kiefer Lewalski (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), p.124.
[218] Joseph Addison, *An Essay on the Georgics*, in *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. by H.T. Swedenborg *et al.*, 20 vols. (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1956-2000), v: *The Works of Virgil in English, 1697* (1987), p.145.
[219] See John Chalker, *The English Georgic: A Study in the Development of a Form* (London, 1969), pp.2-5.

cooperation of diverse interests and occupations.[220] Early instances of this use of the georgic to meditate on the relationship between local economies and the political life of the nation include John Philips's *Cyder* (1708), a tour of the apple-growing county of Herefordshire in Miltonic verse; Pope's *Windsor-Forest*, which derives elements from Denham's *Cooper's Hill*, Dryden's translation of the *Georgics* and Philips's recent example for its celebration of the flourishing countryside around the Thames; and Thomson's *The Seasons*, the fullest elaboration of the Augustan georgic loco-descriptive mode, which ranges confidently over a productive eighteenth-century landscape of cultivated farmland, wealthy country estates and commercial towns.[221]

This Augustan version of the georgic form has been described by several critical studies, so it will be necessary merely to offer a brief sketch of the key emphases it derives from Virgil's poem.[222] The theodicy of Virgil's *Georgics* is drawn from Hesiod's founding myth of labour in his *Works and Days*, which describes the replacement of labour-free golden and silver ages by a post-lapsarian age of 'iron', characterised by human 'toil and misery'.[223] Book I of the *Georgics* describes the same pattern, as Jove introduces man to labour and ends the Golden Age of indolence: 'The great Father himself has willed that the path of husbandry should not run smooth, […] sharpening men's wits by care, nor letting his kingdom slumber in heavy lethargy'.[224] In both organising myths, the coming of the new age marks the beginning of a ceaseless struggle with the natural environment, which consistently provides less than it is required to do and capriciously destroys what men build. In the *Georgics*, chaotic storms

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[220] Fairer, *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century*, p.98; Barrell, *English Literature in History*, pp.90-1.
[221] Fowler, 'The Beginnings of English Georgic', p.125, refers to this early eighteenth-century Virgilian mode as 'Augustan Virgilian georgic'.
[222] See in particular Chalker, *The English Georgic*, pp.1-15; Low, *The Georgic Revolution*, pp.5-12; Fairer, *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century*, pp.79-93; Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, *The Green Cabinet: Theocritus and the European Pastoral Lyric* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1969), pp.20-2; Pellicer, 'Pastoral and Georgic', pp.290-3, 311-4; Juan Christian Pellicer, 'The Georgic', in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. by Christine Gerrard (Oxford, 2006), pp.403-16.
[223] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, in *Hesiod: Theogony and Works and Days*, trans. by M.L. West (Oxford, 1999), p.40-2.
[224] Virgil, *Georgics* I. 121-4, in *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I-VI,* trans. by Fairclough and revised by Goold, pp.106-7. All further book and line references in the text are to this edition.

interrupt labouring practice ('when the home of the East and West wind thunders, then the ditches overflow and all the fields are flooded' [I. 370-2]); some kinds of soil are found to be intractable and inhospitable ('unfruitful it is for crops and mellows not in ploughing; it preserves not for the vine its lineage, or for apples their fame' [II. 239-40]); and the success of the vast majority of endeavours is doubtful, regardless of the most committed human industry, since 'by law of fate all things speed towards the worse' [I. 199-200].

Work, in this unpromising landscape, is begun in the sure knowledge of incomplete achievement, but the key idea of both Hesiod and Virgil's narratives is that it retains a positive value nonetheless. 'A working man is much dearer to the immortals',[225] Hesiod argues, and the *Georgics* repeatedly emphasise the civilising and inventive properties of industry, whereby 'experience, from taking thought, might little by little forge all manner of skills' [I. 133-4]. The imperative of hard graft brings with it the social and civic virtues, and in the course of technical refinement 'arts are developed and the world can be conquered'.[226] Work makes sense of the caprices of the natural environment by means of observable and repeatable patterns, which impart a necessary appearance of structure to daily experience. The organising properties of labour's rhythms are aligned with the successive requirements of seedtime and harvest, and produce a semblance of achievement in a landscape continually turning back on itself. 'All things have their 'season', and success comes from knowing what is congenial to a task', Fairer observes of the approach to life that the *Georgics* recommend, and this is a deliberately modest and attenuated concept of 'success' to suit the poem's cyclical concept of time.[227] Accomplishment, in the *Georgics*, is a case of continuation and conservation, or of doing things at the proper time and precisely as they have always been done; and this means that it is a source of energy as much as frustration that tasks have to be repeated and nothing is

[225] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, p.46.
[226] Chalker, *The English Georgic*, p.26.
[227] David Fairer, ''The Year Runs Round': The Poetry of Work in Eighteenth-Century England' in *Ritual, Routine, and Regime: Repetition in Early Modern British and European Cultures*, ed. by Lorna Clymer (Toronto, 2006), p.164.

ever quite complete. The poem's didactic material is learnt and delivered as the result of long years of experience, inherited methods and recollected histories.[228]

Dryden's translation, the basis for eighteenth-century imitations of the *Georgics*, closely follows the precepts and ethical priorities of Virgil's poem, but also uses its framework as the basis for philosophical meditations of a more contemporary kind. His rendering of the *Georgics* belongs to a seventeenth-century Epicurean tradition of reading Virgil alongside similar honorific passages in Horace, drawing together reflections on the superior virtues of retirement, frugality and self-sufficiency.[229] Cowley's essay 'Of Agriculture', for instance, takes the '*O fortunatos*' passage in Book II of the *Georgics* as the basis for a paean to rural simplicity ('There is no other sort of life that affords so many branches of praise to a Panegyrist'[230]) and a plea for the civic value of farming as a mode of philosophical engagement. His reading sets Virgil's praise of country life alongside Horace's '*Beatus ille*' lines in *Epode* II and his praise of the Country Mouse in *Satire* II.6, passages that share common moral ideas about the value of living quietly and simply, and revere the natural world as a humbling source of inspiration and self-improvement.[231]

In Dryden's translation, this philosophy of rural happiness manifests itself in recurrent language choices and emphases. His descriptions of country life circle around the seventeenth-century civic keyword 'frugal', and dwell on the practical implications of what a frugal life might involve: Book II, for instance, concludes with an admiring sketch of the morality of the 'frugal *Sabines*' ('th'austere Etrurian virtue' of 'Old Rome'), and imagines what Saturn's simple diet might have been ('roots and herbs'), where Virgil makes no specific indication.[232] In Book IV, he designates the simple 'Vervain' and 'white Lyllies' of the Corycian farmer's table as

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[228] See Fairer, *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century*, pp.90-1; Rosenmeyer, *The Green Cabinet*, p.21.
[229] See Rostvig, *The Happy Man*; Mack, *The Garden and the City*, pp.100-7.
[230] Cowley, 'Of Agriculture', p.142.
[231] Ibid., pp.144-5, 154-67.
[232] Dryden, *Virgil's Georgics*, II. 777-92, in *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. by Swedenborg *et al.*, v. 207. All further book and line references in the text are to this edition.

'frugal Fare', and deliberately makes explicit Virgil's fainter suggestion that the old man is happy because he is self-sufficient: 'The little of his own, because his own, did please' [IV. 194-9]. On similar moral grounds, he foregrounds the passage in Book II where Virgil's country philosopher rejects the luxury goods of trade, rendering the neutrally phrased 'Assyrian dyes' into the considerably more polemical 'Purple Poyson of *Assyrian* Pride' [II. 652]. His translation presses home the elements in the *Georgics* that seem particularly congenial to a seventeenth-century ideal of country life: the notion of farming as a simple and humble business, a matter of tending to the same small plot handed down over generations; the insistence on rejecting imported goods in favour of the unbought provision of autarchic management; the preference for austerity over lavish expenditure; the distrust of large projects of improvement as an expression of greed and overweening ambition; and the veneration of the farming calendar as a cyclical measure of continuity and tradition. Rural work, Dryden emphasises, proceeds in harmony with 'the daily Circle of the Sun' and 'the short Year of each revolving Moon' [II. 571.2], rather than by ambitious manmade drives for linear progress. The cycles and repetitions of the agricultural year cannot be overcome by human effort or technology, so farmers are required to find a way of accommodating their work to its seasonal patterns and disappointments. 'In a Circle runs the Peasant's Pain, / And the Year rowls within it self again' [II. 556-7].

Inheriting this seventeenth-century moral economy of modest production and frugal living, early eighteenth-century georgics follow Dryden in repositioning the *Georgics* within a broader Horatian tradition of retirement poetry. Philips, for instance, catches on Dryden's word 'frugal' in his reworked version of the Corycian farmer passage ('A frugal Man I knew, / Rich in one barren Acre'), and praises the old man's steady equilibrium in the face of storms that destroy what little yield he has: 'Yet did he not repine, / Nor curse his Stars'.[233] His poem

[233] John Philips, *Cyder. A Poem. In Two Books*, ed. by John Goodridge and J.C. Pellicer (Cheltenham, 2001), pp.30-1 (II. 117-8, 129-30). All further book and line references in the text are to this edition.

imagines the rural life as an arena for the expression of Stoic virtues of self-reliance and humility ('nor Fear, nor Hope, / Will shock his stedfast Soul', he writes of the honest husbandman), and separates the farmer's simple happiness from the 'servile Flattery, that harbours oft / In Courts, and gilded Roofs' [I. 734-5, 720-1]. His georgic explicitly moralises the Virgilian connection between farming and philosophy, so that the model countryman is not merely 'exercis'd with Speculations deep', but also considers the 'th'wholsome Rules / Of Temperance, and aught that may improve / The moral Life', concerned simultaneously with 'how t'improve his Grounds, and how himself' [I. 761-4, 776].

The idea of improving one's grounds here has little to do with progressive agriculture, which is felt in *Cyder* to be a presumptuous divergence from the provisions that nature offers of its own accord. 'Sage Experience', the poem insists, ought to guide farming practice rather than ambitious experimentation with modern techniques. There is nothing to be gained, for instance, in trialling new composts on intractable land, which in Philips's view is better left unfarmed: 'There are, who, fondly studious of Increase, / Rich Foreign Mold on their ill-natur'd Land / Induce laborious […]; / in vain!' [I. 326, 119-22]. Likewise, venturing abroad for the exotic fruits of commercial trade is discouraged in favour of prizing the limited yield of one's own plot of land. 'Why tempt the Rage / Of the rough Ocean?' Philips asks, 'or why, in quest / Of Foreign Vintage, insincere, and mixt, / Traverse th'extreamest World?' All the husbandman requires is available from his daily labours ('our native Glebe'), so it makes neither economic nor moral sense to 'wish for more' [I. 530-33].[234]

Philips's poem, like Dryden's, is structured by the dominant circular rhythms of the farming calendar: he looks forward to the 'revolving Years' when the 'Press with purest Juice / Shall flow' [I. 64-5], and makes an imaginative connection between the seasonal cycles of cider

[234] Philips's lines here ('Why tempt the Rage / Of the rough Ocean?') recall a similar thought in Herrick's 'The Country Life', where the poet praises his patron for his estate autarchy: 'Thou never Plow'st the Oceans foame / To seek, and bring rough Pepper home'. The early eighteenth-century georgic is part of the same tradition of eschewing trade in favour of home produce (*dapes inemptae*) as the seventeenth-century country house poem. See Herrick, 'The Country Life', ll.5-6, in *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. by Cain and Connolly, i. 217.

production and the naturalised political rhythms of change and conservation, revolution and restoration ('fair-revolving Years / Our exil'd Kings, and Liberty restor'd' [II. 523-4]). Thomson, similarly, ranges across several scales and magnitudes of natural cycle in *The Seasons*: his praise in *Autumn*, for instance, of George Bubb Dodington's landscaped gardens as a model of seasonal change ('New Beauties rise with each revolving Day') is a local version of the same faith in an organising natural rhythm that governs the idea of the 'rolling Year' in its annual 'Mysterious Round' in his closing 'Hymn'.[235] Drawing on Thomson's model, Stephen Duck in *The Thresher's Labour* promises to 'sing the Toils of each revolving Year', and documents the exhaustive labours that characterise 'the Year's revolving Course'; and the labouring poet Robert Tatersal, imitating Duck in *The Bricklayer's Labours* (1734), adopts the trope in a more optimistic fashion, welcoming the way in which 'all the joyous Scene revolves again' with the coming of spring.[236]

In a series of concentric circles, these greater rhythms are organised into synchronicity with the smaller repetitions of the individual working day, and the balanced tensions of the georgic farming calendar transform labour into a civilised (and civilising) check on the vicissitudes of the natural landscape. The annual calendar is imagined as a fixed set inside which labour is performed as it becomes necessary and possible, in the same way and at the same time each year (one thinks of Dryden's 'Peasant', who 'fills' the 'round Year with daily Labour' [II. 738-40]), and its constraints are thought of as humbling limits, rather than arbitrary restrictions to be overcome by human ingenuity and ambition. Farming, for early eighteenth-century formal georgics, is by nature a repetitive proposition, and it is at home with a species of poetry that emphasises formal recurrences, cycles, imposed limitations and allusive returns. Such poetry argues that true industry is a matter of drawing the most from 'one barren Acre', rather

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[235] Thomson, *Autumn*, l. 662; 'A Hymn', l. 2, 21, in *The Seasons*, ed. by Sambrook, pp.170, 254.
[236] Stephen Duck, *The Thresher's Labour*, l.8, 279; Robert Tatersal, *The Bricklayer's Labours*, l.109, in *Eighteenth-Century English Labouring-Class Poets, 1700-1800*, gen. ed. by John Goodridge, 3 vols. (London, 2003), i: *1700-1740*, pp.139, 146, 287.

than embarking on large-scale expansion projects, and of husbanding the same little plot for the benefit of generations who will come to receive it. It insists that limiting one's ambitions for yield and growth is a source of virtue, so that the small acreage of the *rura paterna* will contain all that even the most enterprising of men could need. And it is characterised by a firm conviction that the available poetic strategies for writing about farming, in the particular form in which they have been transmitted to the eighteenth century, are distinctly resistant to the complexities of contemporary modes of agricultural production, and to the economic ideologies behind them.

For early eighteenth-century georgic poets, this mythologised and exemplary presentation of agricultural work was a useful obfuscation of emerging commercial realities. It supplied a range of literary and generic strategies that made it possible to think about rural life without touching on the new tools, techniques and labour relations of eighteenth-century improvement, or the revised political economic conception of society it presupposed. As such, it constituted a thoroughly unsuitable framework for mid-century poets bent on celebrating the technical achievements of modern agriculture, who instead required a form that would permit them to write enthusiastically about new developments in growth and yield, and to convey accurately the complex information of professional farming. Their solution, as this chapter will show, was to find ways to adapt (or reject entirely) the moral preferences and prescriptions of the genre they inherited, whilst retaining its characteristic formulae, tropes and vignettes. The resulting poetry, thoroughly invested in the economic ideology of improvement but reliant on literary structures steeped in other ways of thinking, exhibits something of the 'long process of choice between economic advantage and other kinds of value' that Raymond Williams has observed in other kinds of eighteenth-century writing.[237]

[237] Williams, *The Country and the City*, p.61.

In this revised mid-century georgic, a number of central Virgilian propositions – that the civilising process of work is more important than the extent of the yield it supplies; that modesty and limited ambition are praiseworthy at the expense of processes of land aggregation and mechanisation; that adverse natural circumstances may have their own kind of humbling value – are found to be no longer useful or applicable, as poets seek to offer a detailed and practical survey of technical information rather than a moralised philosophy of rural labour. By exchanging the morality traditionally attached to resignation and limited ambition for a distinctive contemporary ideology of economic landholding (Williams's 'ideology of improvement'), the new georgic comes to terms with the idea of agriculture as a fundamentally commercial endeavour, and looks beyond the traditional limits of the *rura paterna* in order to reposition the farmer's work as a political economic concern with implications for international networks of trade and distribution. It constitutes an 'observant engagement with the major economic activities of the time', as John Goodridge has written, roving over a broad spectrum of professional interests to celebrate agriculture's contribution to Britain's economic self-determination at mid-century.[238]

Critical work on the georgic turned its attention to the distinctive interests of the mid-century genre during the 1970s and 1980s. Commentators examined *The Fleece* in particular for its espousal of an attitude to the land hitherto not exhibited by poetry of rural life. Williams, for instance, pointed out the uses of the georgic to an increasingly capitalist agrarian order, whose larger-scale strategies of production looked beyond the pastoral for a way of articulating labour relations in verse.[239] Richard Feingold produced a sustained critical study of *The Fleece* as a confident paean to commerce and nation-building (though he blamed Dyer for not having the historical prescience to foresee the 'discomfiting facts' of industrial development); and Barrell

[238] Goodridge, *Rural Life in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry*, p.137. See also See Kurt Heinzelman, 'Roman Georgic in the Georgian Age: A Theory of Romantic Genre', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* xxxiii (1991), 182-214 (pp.201-2), for a discussion of the mid-century georgic's vision of a 'composite socioeconomic order'.
[239] Williams, *The Country and the City*, pp.69-71.

examined *The Fleece* sympathetically as the product of a 'moment when polite literature had achieved considerable freedom to discuss [...] mean topics', and could offer a complex portrait of the nature of work and the professions.[240] In the last twenty years, growing critical interest in the mid-century georgic has produced new editions and extended treatments of individual poems. Alongside Juan Christian Pellicer, John Goodridge has edited *The Fleece* for a scholarly audience, and his monograph *Rural Life in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry* (1995) examines Dyer's poem closely, glossing its agricultural and topographical references, and arguing for its inclusion in a revised eighteenth-century poetic canon.[241] With similar revisionist intentions, Pellicer claims in the first essay-length study of Dodsley's *Agriculture* that the poem was 'central to the development' of a 'seriously documentary form in the 1750s', and provided the imaginative basis for the later work of Dyer and Jago. His study also offers a more critical reading of the georgic's complicated mixture of literary and practical objectives, noting that Dodsley's attempt to 'combine the prescriptive and the encyclopaedic' in his poem was typical of the mid-century form's struggle to answer both literary and increasingly complex scientific needs at once.[242] Kurt Heinzelman has made similar suggestions about the advantages and problems of the georgic as a literary form, and the validity of the didactic mode as a modern method of transmitting information. He argues that the georgic flourished in the early part of the century because it worked to 'confirm the belief that *belles lettres* and science might find a common discursive ground', but claims that this very pragmatism eventually made the form

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[240] Richard Feingold, *Nature and Society: Later Eighteenth-Century Uses of the Pastoral and Georgic* (Sussex, 1978), p.90; Barrell, *English Literature in History*, pp.90-109; see also Barrell, 'Afterword: moving stories, still lives', in *The Country and the City Revisited*, ed. by Maclean, Landry and Ward, pp.231-50.

[241] Dyer, *The Fleece: A Poem in Four Books*, ed. by Goodridge and Pellicer; Goodridge, *Rural Life in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry*. Two more contemporary georgics, John Armstrong's *The Art of Preserving Health* (1744) and James Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane* (1764), have recently become available in scholarly editions. See, respectively, *John Armstrong's The Art of Preserving Health: Eighteenth-Century Sensibility in Practice*, ed. by Adam Budd (Farnham, 2011); *The Poetics of Empire: A Study of James Grainger's The Sugar-Cane*, ed. by James Gilmore (London and New Brunswick, 2000).

[242] Juan Christian Pellicer, 'The Georgic at Mid-Eighteenth Century and the Case of Dodsley's 'Agriculture'', *RES* liv (2003), 67-93 (pp.67, 80).

'problematically referential', undermined by the stringency of its own requirement for accuracy in an increasingly specialist field of scientific knowledge.[243]

Alongside these literary-historical approaches, recent commentary also maintains the economic and political focus of georgic criticism since the 1970s. Fairer, for instance, touches on the uses of the mid-century georgic (Dodsley's *Agriculture* in particular) as a 'patriotic mode', intended to contribute to developing myths of British nationhood by means of practical recommendations for trade and industry.[244] Rachel Crawford has emphasised the aristocratic impetus behind georgic's celebrations of happy labour, suggesting that 'georgic poems maintain a covert distinction between those who work in the fields and those who have the leisure to read didactic texts', and arguing that Jago's praise of 'the productivity of the intermediate classes' in *Edge-Hill* is problematised by 'extended descriptions which validate patterns of conservative landownership'.[245] This focus on demystifying some of the socioeconomic relations that the mid-century form tries to mask has also directed critical attention to the colonial applications of georgic. Karen O'Brien's study of 'imperial georgic' points out the usefulness of poetic myths about the ethical value of labour for the early stages of colonial development, and draws out some of the imaginative links that such myths could forge between 'rural labour, commerce, patriotism and empire'; and, with similar aims, Beth Fowkes Tobin has written on the influence of georgic poetry in the later eighteenth century on metropolitan perceptions of colonies in the West and East Indies.[246] This body of work on the social valences of the georgic at mid-century addresses several different economic, political and imperial uses

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[243] Heinzelman, 'Roman Georgic in the Georgian Age', pp.189-92.
[244] Fairer, *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century*, p.95.
[245] Rachel Crawford, 'English Georgic and British Nationhood', *ELH* lxi (1998), 123-58 (p.130); Rachel Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and the Vernacular Landscape, 1700-1830* (Cambridge, 2002), p.143.
[246] O'Brien, 'Imperial georgic', p.168; Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760-1820* (Philadelphia, 2004), pp.32-55. Recently, though, Kevis Goodman has questioned this emerging critical consensus about georgic as a form that works to obscure problematic socioeconomic relations (georgic as the 'imposition of ideas that convert places to landscape'), preferring an account of the genre as itself susceptible to 'the noise of history', registering inadvertent fault-lines in the transmission of narratives and ideologies. See Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge, 2004), pp.57, 64.

of the form, but it has paid a surprisingly small amount of attention to the agricultural subject matter of the poetry, its return to the original didactic field of the *Georgics* in order to find poetic strategies for naturalising the new intellectual priorities of improvement.

The new georgic addresses these priorities in the first instance by its combative and transformative attitude to the land, its refusal to accept with humility the limitations and caprices of the natural environment. In *The Fleece*, this rejection of traditional Virgilian stoicism is elevated into an enthusiastic celebration of land improvement on a national scale. The four Books of the poem present variations on an attitude of unqualified economic confidence, which vaunts its own capacity to refashion the natural landscape. This dominant attitude emerges in part from the poet's own professional background. By the time he came to write *The Fleece*, Dyer had considerable practical experience in the agricultural work he recommended, as in 1734 he had settled in Herefordshire at Mapleton, a failing farm which was part of the property inheritance he would shortly receive on the death of his mother. Information collected from Dyer's accounts and farmer's calendar for 1734 suggests that his methods were progressive and ambitious: he planted clover on an experimental basis, introduced a modern four-field rotation system on the model of those in East Anglia, and managed a large-scale and lucrative hop farm, all of which contributed to a marked revolution in Mapleton's fortunes during his ownership.[247] The significant improvement projects described and recommended by *The Fleece* proceed from his own confidence in the farmer's ability to reshape major features of his own environment, regardless of how intractable its shortcomings might seem to be.

In Book II of the poem, as Goodridge has observed, Dyer offers a new model of 'the poet as improving agriculturalist, providing new solutions to age-old problems' and praising large-scale land reclamation projects.[248] One such project is the seventeenth-century reclamation of the great level of the Cambridgeshire fens, transformed from a 'dreary pathless

[247] See Edward A. Parker and Ralph M. Williams, 'John Dyer, the Poet, as Farmer', *Agricultural History* xxii (1948), 134-41.
[248] Goodridge, *Rural Life in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry*, p.114.

waste' [II. 166] into productive farmland by a group of financial undertakers led by Francis Russell, 4th Earl of Bedford. For Dyer, this is a prime illustration of his conviction that 'Labor and art will ev'ry aim atchieve' [II. 164], in spite of nature's deficiencies:

> Ev'n such perfidious wilds,
> By labor won, have yielded to the comb
> The fairest length of wool. See Deeping fens,
> And the long lawn of Bourne. 'Tis art and toil
> Gives nature value, multiplies her stores,
> Varies, improves, creates; 'tis art and toil
> Teaches her woody hills with fruits to shine,
> The pear and tasteful apple; decks with flow'rs
> And foodful pulse the fields.
> [...]
> What changes cannot toil,
> With patient art, effect?
> [II. 180-91]

For Virgilian georgic's cautious attendance to what is necessary and possible within the given limitations of season, climate, soil and unforeseeable accident, Dyer substitutes an attitude to the land that prizes man's intervention above any of nature's provisions. The earth's 'stores' are limited, but human ingenuity is limitless ('What changes cannot toil, / With patient art, effect?'), which means it is the improving farmer's industry that 'Gives nature value', rather than the other way around. Work is not a simple matter of cooperating with circumstance and making the best of a bad job, in the way of Virgil's sense of necessary dissatisfaction; instead, it succeeds because it transforms pre-existing conditions and makes its own opportunities.

Dyer presses the point in Book III, as he offers his own version of the georgic labour theodicy:

> man is born to care;
> Fashion'd, improv'd, by labor. This of old,
> Wise states observing, gave that happy law,
> Which doom'd the rich and needy, ev'ry rank,
> To manual occupation;
> [III. 25-9]

This 'recommendation of labour' is a recognisable secular imitation of Virgil's passage on the fall of the Golden Age, and it continues in an orthodox fashion by praising the civic arts and innovations that come with hard work: 'Hence corn, and wine, and oil, and all in life / Delectable' [III.34-5]. In the following lines, though, the argument diverts from its model, as Dyer moves beyond the idea that labour is required to draw the best from the natural world, and claims instead that the natural world would be 'useless' without it:

> What simple nature yields
> (And nature does her part) are only rude
> Materials, cumbers on the thorny ground;
> 'Tis toil that makes them wealth; that makes the fleece,
> (Yet useless, rising in unshapen heaps)
> Anon, in curious woofs of beauteous hue
> A vesture usefully succinct and warm.
> [III. 35-41]

Nature is not valuable or useful in its 'simple' state: the resources of the earth are merely 'rude / Materials' ('Yet useless, rising in unshapen heaps') unless they can be substantially transformed and refined by the pressure of human 'toil'. Modern agricultural work is what turns the 'thorny ground' into 'wealth', a cultivated landscape with a measurable contribution to utility and pleasure, and though 'nature does her part', it is only a starting point. Jago makes a similar point in *Edge-Hill* about the superior value of human ingenuity. Offering advice on the best way of landscaping a 'rural Seat', he insists that there is no cause to abandon grand plans if 'your Lot hath fall'n in Fields less fair'.[249] Land 'less fair', like nature's 'rude / Materials', is merely a prompt to human refinement and artifice, and all imperfections can be surmounted. 'The Site too lofty shelter', Jago advises, 'and the low / With sunny Lawns, and open Areas chear'; if one's lands are wet, it is simple enough to drain the marsh, and if they are too dry, they can be refreshed 'with capacious Urns / And well-conducted Streams' [I. 435-40]. It is to be taken for granted that nature's resources are unsatisfactory, but equally that improvement is

[249] Jago, *Edge-Hill*, I. 434. Further book and line references are incorporated in the text.

capable of making any piece of wild ground, however intractable, into rich land. 'So shall your Lawns with healthful Verdure smile' [I. 435-41], Jago concludes.

In *Agriculture*, Dodsley exhibits a similar vaunting enthusiasm about the productive capacities of British soil and the landowner's ability to transform the imperfect materials he has been given. In Canto II, he reiterates the resigned attitude of the *Georgics* towards the intractable nature of some soils ('Salt Earth and bitter are not fit to sow, / Nor will be tam'd or mended with the Plough' [II. 323-4]), but departs from it by insisting that all kinds of earth, even the most unpropitious, will submit to industry. A farmer working in damp clay soil should 'Despair not, nor repine', since 'the stubborn soil / Shall yield to Cultivation, and reward / The hand of Diligence'.[250] Contemporary improvement, Dodsley suggests, is motivated by material aspirations to grow more and better than competitors: in Canto II, he opens his section about growing trees with an acknowledgement of the likely impetus for much farming labour ('thy emulation's generous pride / Would boast the largest timber, strait and strong'), and dwells on the 'envy and regret' that a farmer would feel at having his trees outstripped by a 'neighbour's infant plants' [II. 242-6]. This advice is intended to appeal to a combative and acquisitive approach to agricultural management, which values maximisation of yield and acreage above careful husbandry of a limited plot, and lays weight on the importance of ambition and interest as motivations for industry.

Dodsley's projected didactic audience includes large landowners and aristocrats, but is principally envisaged as a professional group of prosperous tenant farmers or owner-occupiers, men who are inquisitive, ambitious and willing to experiment with the land they own or lease. They are assumed to be literate and sufficiently leisured to be able to read around their subject, absorbing the information of agricultural journals and reports of trials made in other parts of the

[250] Robert Dodsley, *Agriculture*, II. 20-4, in *Public Virtue: A Poem. In three books. I. Agriculture. II. Commerce. III. Arts* (London, 1753), p.30. All further canto and line references are incorporated in the text.

country.[251] The poem uses footnotes in order to gesture to the large body of agricultural science with which such readers may be expected to be familiar, and directs them to specific sources for further reading (the footnotes are also intended to emphasise that Dodsley himself is well-read and up to date). In Canto II of *Agriculture*, he directs his advice to the curious 'young Agricolist' [II. 52], equipped with all the natural advantages of 'loamy soil' and 'kindly fields' [II. 40, 45], but interested nonetheless in further possibilities of innovation and enquiry:

> But new improvements curious would'st thou learn?
> Hear then the lore of fair *Berkeria*'s Son,
> Whose precepts, drawn from sage experience, claim
> Regard.
>
> [II. 48-51]

'Fair *Berkeria*'s Son' is glossed in a footnote as 'The late Mr. Tull, of Shalborne in Berkshire', and Dodsley provides careful citations of the relevant works ('in his Horse-hoeing Husbandry; or an Essay on the Principles of Vegetation and Tillage' [p.32 n.]). The detail here is indicative of the referential form of reading that his georgic expects, and the kinds of technical authority against which its precepts are intended to be measured; it gestures towards a literate class of interested professionals, eager to be widely read in the most current treatises and manuals, and exercised by an obsessive consciousness that there must always be more available to be extracted from the land, provided that labour and capital are forthcoming.

The mid-century georgic seeks to delineate its professional readership by pointing to the difference between the practice of agriculture as a form of ambitious self-improvement, and the 'low' business of being hired to work on someone else's fields as a labourer. Jago, for instance, addresses 'ye Nymphs, and Swains' in Book I of *Edge-Hill*, but takes care to elaborate the socioeconomic distinctions that his didactic precepts will assume: '(Not to the giddy, thoughtless Crew I call, / But to the tutor'd, and ingenuous Minds, / Smit with the Charms of

[251] On the rise of this literate farming order, see Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place,* pp.64-72.

Science, and the Feast / Of cultivated Taste)' [I. 180-4]. In *Agriculture*, similarly, Dodsley loosely addresses his precepts to a 'young Farmer' or 'swain' [I. 56, 78], before distinguishing the business of planning and 'providential care' that his farmer undertakes from the sweaty labour of ploughing, sowing and scything. Where such work is required, it is outsourced instead to 'assistant strength', as the farmer 'hastens to some neighbouring town, / Where willing Servitude [...] / holds her annual feast', and 'the toiling hand of Industry / Employment seeks' [I. 105-11]. The 'rustic band' he hires is never addressed directly: instead, the didactic matter of the georgic is uniformly conceived for an elite group of professional agriculturalists or owner-occupiers, whose experience of farming is as much theoretical as it is practical.[252]

This stratified sense of the agricultural georgic's project is most clearly articulated in Smart's *The Hop-Garden*, which provides a didactic overview of Kentish hop-farming and outlines a strategy of optimum yield based on intelligent forward-planning. Smart's georgic is exercised by concerns over poetic decorum and the problem of finding heroic matter in agricultural work: in Book I, for instance, he insists that if he were capable of epic, 'no peasants toil, no hops / Shou'd e'er debase my lay', and calls on 'Milton, bard divine' to help him 'turn / Th'unwieldly subject with thy graceful ease, / Extol its baseness with thy art'.[253] This technical sensitivity to style requires Smart to delineate the socioeconomic parameters of his subject matter and readership with unusual care, and his georgic consistently finds ways to distinguish between the 'high' intellectual business of landownership and the daily labour of tilling the soil. Its epigraph, drawn from *Georgics* I, argues that success comes from stockpiling and thinking ahead ('All of these you will remember to provide and store away long beforehand, if the glory the divine country gives is to be yours in worthy measure' [p.111]),

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[252] See Goodridge, *Rural Life in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry*, p.115, for a similar argument about *The Fleece*, and the implied addressee of Dyer's 'tactful, civil tones'.

[253] Christopher Smart, *The Hop-Garden. A Georgic. In Two Books*, I. 22-3, 270-9, in *The Poetical Works of Christopher Smart*, ed. by Marcus Walsh and Karina Williamson, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1980-96), iv: *Miscellaneous Poems, English and Latin* (1987), pp.42, 49-50. All further book and line references in the text are to this edition.

and a conviction that yield may fairly accurately be determined by intelligent strategies of preparation and forethought governs the didactic field of the poem. Smart's advice is intended for the planter who employs his own energies on the task of maximising the potential output of his land, whilst delegating the hard work of farming and drying the hops. It is his prerogative to 'consult / His quantity of acres, and his crops, / How many and how large his kilns', and thus 'Proportion'd to his wants the hands provide' [II. 74-7].

Physical labour, the poem argues, is a base and dirty business. Smart's hop-pickers are a 'tumultuous crew', a 'wild brutal crew', who must be 'tam'd to diligence' [II. 82, 91, 97] long enough to perform the simple orders issued by the farmer and the bin-man. When they do work, the motives that inspire them are greedy and self-interested:

> Now see the crew mechanic might and main
> Labour with lively diligence, inspir'd
> By appetite of gain and lust of praise:
> What mind so petty, servile, and debas'd,
> As not to know ambition?
>
> [II. 160-4]

The argument of Virgilian georgic's theodicy is that the development of labour makes a virtue of necessity: it is a way of locating 'heroic energy in [...] repeated movement', as Fairer has written, and its sheer ordinariness is praised as a daily enacting of Stoic and civilising attitudes.[254] There is ethical value in the humility of working according to nature's prescriptions, and the simple skills of manual labour are intimately allied to the most refined forms of civic development, since all arts and technologies originate in the work of men's hands. In Smart's social schema, though, work is driven by Hobbesian passions of 'lust' and 'ambition', and offers no kind of moralised compensation on its own terms. Virgil's ethical investment in the repeated exertions and slow gains of labour (reproduced, in turn, by the allusive cyclical rhythms of Dryden's translation) is exchanged here for a new economic

[254] Fairer, ''The Year Runs Round'', p.159.

investment in yield and outcome, which sets the objective profits of the land above any humanising effects of sweat and stamina. The poem's didactic emphasis on the large-scale projections of the landowner requires a corresponding neglect of the local rhythms of sowing and ploughing, and the particular set of ethical preferences – for patience, effort and humility – they are taken to illustrate.

The new georgic's confidence in the farmer's capacity to increase the output of his land is intimately connected to contemporary strategies of enclosure and aggregation, and the mid-century poem urges landholders to abandon common-field subsistence farming for a more streamlined vision of productivity and efficiency. In Book I of *The Fleece*, for instance, Dyer disparages the poor soil of 'dreary, houseless, common fields, / Worn by the plough' [I. 356-7], and observes in Book II that the worst species of wool will yield to farmers

> who poorly toil,
> Through a dull round, in unimproving farms
> Of common-fields: inclose, inclose, ye swains;
> Why will you joy in common-field?
> [II. 107-9]

Toiling 'through a dull round' alludes to Dryden's 'round Year' and Thomson's 'MYSTERIOUS Round', but in a sceptical and inverted fashion. The Virgilian motif of cyclical labour comes to stand for regressive agricultural practice (the foolish stubbornness of going round and round in circles), rather than a virtuous kind of seasonal constancy. 'Common-field' work, Dyer argues, is repetitive and endless, whereas enclosing one's lands makes progress by increasing the production capacity of the soil. The allusion makes an unfavourable connection between backwards farming and a backwards-looking poetic trope, and Dyer's way of bringing the two together has the effect of implicating the generic framework his poem inherits in the broader economic problem of stagnating development. Deploring the agricultural enervation

that he associates with common-field strip farming, Dyer is also concerned to point out the literary enervation that comes with undiscerning generic imitation.

A few lines later, this imaginative connection between farming method and literary form is worked out at the level of the poetic line. Urging his sheep-farmers to enclose their holdings, Dyer explains that

> in fields
> Promiscuous held, all culture languishes;
> The glebe, exhausted, thin supply receives;
> Dull waters rest upon the rushy flats
> And barren furrows: none the rising grove
> There plants for late posterity, nor hedge
> To shield the flock, nor copse for chearing fire;
> [II. 116-20]

Agricultural stagnation, in this verse paragraph, is represented formally as the result of repetition and circularity. Virgilian georgic welcomes cyclical patterns as points of contact with recognisable external phenomena (the sun's 'daily Circle' or the 'revolving Moon'), but here the circling syntax of 'none the rising grove /… nor hedge /… nor copse' is relentless rather than reassuring: it forms a poetic line that habitually returns on itself instead of making progress, as the elliptical grammar of 'nor hedge / To shield the flock, nor copse for chearing fire' requires backtracking to locate the main verb 'plants'. Dyer's verse is torpid and uneconomical: the trailing extra syllable of the second line forces the 'culture' of the metre to languish along with the fields, and the enjambment of 'rushy flats / And barren furrows' allows the phrasing to drag on over the line break, rather than being efficiently curtailed. The improvidence of farming in 'fields / Promiscuous held' is measured by appropriately wasteful poetry.

Agriculture is similarly sceptical about the value of common-field methods, but Dodsley makes the additional point that writing a georgic in praise of large-scale aggregative farming requires major revision of one of its associated tropes: the idea of the *rura paterna*, around which

much of the economic humility of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century retirement poetry is concentrated.[255] The moral worth of a small patch of inherited land, neither altered nor enlarged across generations, is praised as part of the *beatus ille* vignette in Horace's *Epode* II, and it governs Virgil's presentation in the *Georgics* of the happy farmer surrounded by the generations who will succeed to the same small estate ('hence comes sustenance for his country and his little grandsons' [II. 514-5]).[256] In seventeenth-century and Augustan vernacular imitations, it offers a recognisable literary *locus* for various commonplace reflections on the moral value of self-limitation. It is reworked, for instance, in Cowley's translation of the *beatus ille* passage for his 'Agriculture' essay ('Happy the Man whom bounteous Gods allow / With his own Hands Paternal Grounds to plough!'), and it is present in Pope's early ode 'On Solitude' ('Happy the man, whose wish and care / A few paternal acres bound'), as well as in his fine paradoxical idea, in the *Seventh Epistle of the First Book of Horace* (1739), that to 'retrench' economically is something worth striving after: 'Can I retrench? Yes, mighty well, / Shrink back to my Paternal Cell'.[257]

For Dodsley, though, an honest depiction of contemporary agricultural practice requires rethinking of the ethical and economic usefulness of the *rura paterna*, and his georgic points up the ideological breach between the trope's rhetorical function and the opposed interests of mid-eighteenth-century improvement. In Canto II of *Agriculture*, this critique works as an exposure of the idea of the *rura paterna* to alternative socioeconomic concepts of virtuous behaviour:

> He then, who, pleas'd,
> In Fancy's eye beholds his future race
> Rejoicing in the shades their grandsire gave.
> Or he whose patriot views extend to raise,

[255] See Mack, *The Garden and the City*, pp.100-1.
[256] 'Happy he who far from business dealing, / […] works with his oxen his family land'. See Horace, *Epodes* II. 1-4, in *The Complete Odes and Epodes*, trans. by Shepherd, p.48.
[257] Cowley, 'Agriculture', p.158; Pope, 'Ode on Solitude', ll. 1-2, *TE*, vi: *Minor Poems* (1954), p.3; Pope, *The Seventh Epistle of the First Book of Horace, Imitated in the Manner of Dr Swift*, ll. 75-80, *TE*, iv. 273.

> In distant ages, Britain's naval power;
> Must first prepare, inclining to the south,
> A shelter'd nursery;
> [II. 212-8]

Dryden's translation of the *Georgics* includes a sneering reference to the folly of 'Patriot' activity in his list of the kinds of *negotium* (politics; the law; commerce) practised by men of the city: 'Some Patriot Fools to pop'lar Praise aspire, / By Publick Speeches, which worse Fools admire' [II. 731]. Dodsley, though, closely involved by virtue of his publishing business with prominent members of the Patriot Opposition during the 1740s and early 1750s, refuses to restate Dryden's straightforward rhetorical antithesis between political activity and moral seriousness. Instead, he claims that there is as much to praise in the worldly preoccupations of naval prowess and patriotic action as there is in the life of retreat, and that the two paths ought to be considered as alternatives, rather than opposites. This is especially true because the business of farming, he says, is necessarily bound up with the larger concerns of political and economic activity that the life of the *rura paterna* would traditionally exclude: preparing a 'shelter'd nursery' is virtuous not merely because cultivation is a laudable effort in itself, but also because the trees it produces will be used for great patriotic works in future years.[258]

Dodsley presses the point in Canto I, where he invokes the *rura paterna* trope alongside a reworking of Virgil's '*O fortunatos*' passage. His imitation is initially orthodox in its emphases, a commonplace reiteration of seventeenth-century civic preferences:

> O happy he! happiest of mortal men!
> Who far remov'd from slavery as from pride,
> Fears no man's frown, nor cringing waits to catch
> The gracious nothing of a great man's nod:
> […]
> Tempted nor with the pride nor pomp of Power,
> Nor pageants of Ambition, nor the mines
> Of grasping Av'rice, nor the poison'd sweets

[258] Pope, in a similar thought, praises the ideal landowner's 'rising Forests' that will become 'future Buildings, future Navies' [ll. 187-8] at the close of the *Epistle to Burlington*.

> Of pamper'd Luxury, he plants his foot
> With firmness on his old paternal fields,
> And stands unshaken.
>
> [I. 299-318]

Stoically 'unshaken' by worldly passions and fears ('pride', 'slavery', 'Power', 'Ambition', 'Av'rice', 'Luxury'), Dodsley's happy man is rooted in the imaginative *locus* of his 'old paternal fields', placed at a safe distance from temptation and the promptings of self-interest.

The poem continues, though, by juxtaposing this portrait with another gloss on the *rura paterna* idea, which showcases a considerably more modern sense of farming as an economic profession:

> Turn then at length, O turn, ye sons of Wealth,
> And ye who seek, thro' Life's bewildering maze,
> To tread the paths of Happiness, O turn!
> And trace her footsteps in the rural walk;
> [...]
> Turn to the arts, the useful pleasing arts
> Of Cultivation; and those fields improve
> Your erring fathers have too long despis'd.
>
> [I. 326-36]

Plots of land, Dodsley argues, are no longer farmed consistently down the generations, in the same way and for the same reasons as centuries previously. Instead, his georgic notices that a more likely model of agricultural inheritance is fluctuation between periods of neglect and canny repastoralisation: the return of moneyed young men – wealthy city financiers, or the sons of absentee landlords – to the 'rural walk' and 'paths of Happiness' which their 'erring fathers' have markedly failed to cultivate. Farming is shown to be closely bound up with the influx of cash from external markets ('ye sons of Wealth'), in such a way that rural work ceases to be philosophically distinct from the interests of 'Power', 'Ambition', 'Luxury' and the rest. The point is underlined by Dodsley's clever rewriting of the *rura paterna* trope, as he turns a framework of ahistorical continuity into a modern depiction of genealogical breaks, absent

fathers and ambitious sons. The desire to 'improve', he insists, involves an acknowledgement that Virgilian georgic's praise of limited ambition is fundamentally misguided; and his juxtaposition of the hard economic fact with the inherited trope has the effect of implicating the 'erring fathers' of georgic tradition in the history of neglect he describes. Since agriculture as a growing concern is reliant on the periodic encouragements of money and ambition, Dodsley's argument is that didactic poetry ought to reassess the use value of 'old paternal fields', and more broadly the kinds of impractical ethical attitudes on which such tropes are founded.

For Dodsley, though, as for Smart, Dyer and Jago alike, the business of land improvement is not merely about the growth of British fields or British markets. Their georgics celebrate the degree to which contemporary farming is an increasingly international concern, closely involved in commercial networks of supply and distribution as far afield as the East Indies. To make this point, though, a form of generic adaptation is required, since Virgilian georgic is strongly invested in a notion of the superior moral value of autarchy and self-reliance. Hesiod's *Works and Days*, as Karen O'Brien notes, mixes 'advice on sea trading' with its precepts on domestic farming, but this sympathetic combination of husbandry and trade is predominantly absent from seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century georgics, which tend rather to follow Virgil and 'dissociate […] the world of domestic rural pursuits from the world of trade'.[259] Dryden and Philips, for instance, make a point of rejecting imported luxury goods in favour of home grown produce, and sustain the emphasis of seventeenth-century estate poetry on the ethical superiority of independence (Philips in particular celebrates Britain's stubborn self-containment, 'sever'd from the World / By Nature's wise Indulgence, indigent / Of nothing from without' [p.81]).[260] Their domestic emphasis belongs, O'Brien suggests, to an Augustan 'critical rediscovery of georgic as a means of articulating and creating a language of

[259] O'Brien, 'Imperial georgic', p.163. See also p.161: 'Earlier versions of pastoral and georgic […] tended to treat trade and agriculture as discontinuous enterprises'.
[260] Though there is at least one notable acknowledgement of the benefits of English trade in Dryden's translation: at II. 217-8, he inserts a brief reference to the 'rich Recruit of Foreign Stores' brought in by 'Our twofold Seas', lines that do not appear in Virgil's *Georgics*. See O'Brien, 'Imperial georgic', p.164.

national self-awareness', a use of the form to lay out the particular felicities that set Britain apart from a wider world of which she could happily be independent.[261] It is the same chauvinist agenda that distinguishes Whig panegyric on the political and economic happiness of the country after the Glorious Revolution (as, for instance, in *Liberty* (1735), where Thomson admires the 'matchless Charms' of 'BRITANNIA', with her 'undaunted Race' of freemen, her 'richest Pasture' and 'thriving Towns'), and informs Tory patriotic sentiment in poems such as *Cyder*.[262] In these 'panegyric of Great Britain' myths, Dustin Griffin argues, the nation is imagined as uniquely fortunate, 'as blest island, as temperate landscape, as the home of liberty, as naval power'.[263] Such confident narratives of self-determination are an aggrandising Augustan variation on seventeenth-century civic preferences for disinterest and isolation.

In the mid-century georgic, by contrast, this chauvinistic praise of British self-sufficiency is exchanged for an enthusiastic vision of the nation's involvement in a range of international trading networks, and there is an explicit connection between the common interests of husbandry and commerce. In *Agriculture*, for instance, Dodsley praises the oak tree in familiar terms as an emblem of national strength ('king of Britannia's woods, / And guardian of her isle!' [II. 280-1]), but this praise is rapidly expanded into a vision of the 'rising fleets' that the oak will be used to construct, and which the poet ambitiously prophesies will 'Bear Commerce' to 'ports / In every climate of the peopled earth' [III. 300-5]. In Book I of *Edge-Hill*, Jago juxtaposes a traditional neo-feudal portrait of local estate hospitality ('THY smiling Villa's ever open Gate, / And festive Board, O WALTON!') with a description of the town of Stratford, a little further down the Avon river, as a busy centre of international import and export: 'STRATFORD her spacious Magazines unfolds, / And hails the freighted Barge from

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[261] Ibid., p.165.

[262] James Thomson, *Liberty, A Poem*, V. 31-71, in *Liberty, The Castle of Indolence and Other Poems*, ed. by James Sambrook (Oxford, 1986), pp.127-9. All further book and line references in the text are to this edition. See Pat Rogers, 'John Philips, Pope and Political Georgic', *MLQ* lxvi (2005), 411-42, on Philips's poem as a Tory exercise in the 'patriotic sublime'.

[263] Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry*, p.81. See also Crawford, 'English Georgic and British Nationhood', p.126.

western Shores, / Rich with the Tribute of a thousand Climes' [I. 232-3, 262-4]. In Book III, with a similarly unexpected widening of focus, his praise of the domestic agricultural uses of British iron ore ('THINE is the Praise to cultivate the Soil' [III. 594]) is unexpectedly developed into a celebration of its participation in international networks of distribution: 'thine is Trade, that with its various Stores, / Sails round the World, and visits ev'ry Clime, / From NOVA ZEMLBLA to th'ANTARCTIC Pole' [III. 634-6].

Dyer's sense of British agriculture as an international concern is just as ambitiously articulated. In Book IV, for instance, his muse makes the journey across the Atlantic on 'daring wing' to observe the way in which colonial trade has 'spread Britannia's flocks o'er ev'ry dale' [IV. 494, 524]. What is especially noticeable about his interest in the links between husbandry and trade, though, is how self-reflexive it is: his gaze is directed internally to the literary problems and opportunities that arise from extending the georgic's agricultural interests beyond British shores. In Book I, for instance, he juxtaposes a bucolic sketch of pasturage with an energetic description of commercial activity:

> Such noble warlike steeds, such herds of kine,
> So sleek, so vast; such spacious flocks of sheep,
> Like flakes of gold illumining the green,
> What other paradise adorn but thine,
> Britannia? happy, if thy sons would know
> Their happiness. To these thy naval streams,
> Thy frequent towns superb of busy trade,
> And ports magnific add, and stately ships,
> Innumerous.
>
> [I. 167-75]

Dyer's intention here is to present the teeming productivity of the countryside ('such spacious flocks of sheep') as part of the same rich vision of national bounty as the 'naval streams', 'busy trade' and 'ports magnific' of its commercial capital, 'bright Augusta' [I. 177]. Partly, this is managed by a trick of form, as his verse paragraph brings together its two halves by means of a deliberately elliptical poetic grammar: the delaying of the main verb 'add', postponed in order

to allow the list of economic felicities to extend without interruption, has the effect of encompassing the two arenas of wealth as halves of a single political economic sum. The connection between the two, though, is also generic: Dyer brings husbandry and trade together by an imitation of the opening lines of Virgil's honorific passage on country life ('happy, if thy sons would know / Their happiness'). The interpolation of the allusion between depictions of rural and commercial kinds of work permits its laudatory sentiments to be read both forwards and backwards, such that they apply to the kind of 'Britannia' whose 'sons' are involved equally in domestic husbandry and international trade. The structure of the paragraph foregrounds the literary work required to stretch the familiar imaginative range of the '*O fortunatos nimium*' tag to cover the new international reach of the genre's interests; but it also shows Dyer insisting that it ought to be possible to think in Virgilian terms about a total economy that includes 'busy trade' as well as 'flocks of sheep'.

For the purposes of Books II, III and IV of *The Fleece* (concerned, among other things, with the processes whereby British manufactures are distributed abroad and foreign imports are arrive in domestic markets), the ability of the georgic to encompass international systems of organisation and supply is particularly important. Minutely describing the various specialised skills involved in dyeing wool in Book II, Dyer makes a plea for broadening the economic purview of the genre:

> For it suffices not, in flow'ry vales,
> Only to tend the flock, and shear soft wool:
> Gums must be stor'd of Guinea's arid coast;
> Mexican woods, and India's bright'ning salts;
> Fruits, herbage, sulphurs, minerals, to stain
> The fleece prepar'd;
> [II. 563-8]

Dyer is describing the kinds of work that must come together cooperatively to colour the sheep's wool, and the remarkable and complex admixture of their various far-flung

geographical origins: dyes cannot be made from home-grown materials, but require a combination of 'sulphurs', 'minerals', 'Gums' and 'salts' derived from a broad cross-section of East and West Indian climates. The professional farmer is taught to recognise that the simplest and most localised of his tasks – dyeing the fleeces he has shorn – is reliant on a various and complicated series of specialised labours across three continents. The didactic argument here, though, is also self-reflexive: such a rich interdependence of products and processes requires, Dyer suggests, a species of poetry able and willing to look beyond the pastoral model of tending to sheep and shearing their wool, as this model in itself 'suffices not' to address the extended network of international economic activity that contemporary farming involves. Since agriculture has moved beyond self-sufficient cycles of husbandry and pasturage, it is incumbent on the poet to interest himself in areas of work whose processes are not encompassed by the limited thematic range of bucolic or loco-descriptive poetry, and whose geographies range beyond recognisable English agricultural landscapes.

One way of extending the genre's working interests is by tackling head on the assumptions it makes about the superiority of native agriculture. In the *Georgics*, it is a straightforward point of fact that 'neither Media's groves, land of wondrous wealth, nor beauteous Ganges, nor Hermus, whose mud is gold, may rival the glories of Italy' [II. 136-8]. This unrivalled agriculture prevails, Virgil argues, because Italy is happily placed by divine providence in one of two temperate zones, such that its climate is neither torrid nor freezing (in contrast to the hostile polar opposites of Libya's dry 'desert stretches' and the 'far and wide earth', 'shapeless under mounds of snow' in Scythia, where ''tis ever winter' [p.201]).[264] Dryden's translation presses this providential idea of the distribution of favourable conditions ('the Gods assign'd / Two habitable Seats for Humane Kind' [I. 326-7]), and it reappears in Philips's *Cyder*, where the poet briefly turns to imagine the 'ever-during Snows' and

[264] See Goold, introd. to Virgil, *Georgics*, trans. by Fairclough and revised by Goold, p.xxiv.

'*Æquinoctial* Heat' of lands beyond the temperate zone, before dismissing them as beyond the scope of the poem's interests: 'What need to treat of distant Climes, remov'd / Far from the slopeing Journey of the Year?' [II. 241, 257, 238-9]. The trope also figures in *Windsor-Forest*, where Pope admires Britain's natural bounty as set against the offerings of foreign climates ('Let *India* boast her Plants, nor envy we / The weeping Amber or the balmy Tree'[265]), and in Thomson's *Liberty*, where there is a similarly dismissive attitude towards the inferior resources of other lands: 'nor the gorgeous *East*, nor golden *South*, / [...] Shall with BRITANNIA vie' [V. 27-30].

For Dyer, though, this narrative of providential superiority is self-defeating in an age of productive international exchange, so he engages with its assumptions in a combative fashion:

> There are, who over-rate our spungy stores,
> Who deem that nature grants no clime, but ours,
> To spread upon its fields the dews of heav'n,
> And feed the silky fleece; that card, nor comb,
> The hairy wool of Gaul can e'er subdue,
> To form the thread, and mingle in the loom,
> Unless a third from Britain swell the heap:
> Illusion all;
>
> [II. 134-41]

Dyer's argument recognises that there are contemporary political reasons for praising the British climate above all others (it is a useful fiction, for instance, to maintain that neither 'card, nor comb, / The hairy wool of Gaul can ne'er subdue'); but he dismisses them as fallacious, and insists that there is no real benefit to be gained from chauvinistic presentations of Britain as a self-sufficient haven of natural resources. Instead, since 'Our vallies yield not, or but sparing yield, / The dyer's gay materials', the agriculturalist should come to terms with the difficulties and opportunities of global variety, such that the limitations set to Britain's natural abundance might come to seem like felicities elsewhere: 'The pow'rful sun / Hot India's zone with gaudy

[265] Pope, *Windsor-Forest*, ll. 29-30, *TE*, i. 151.

pencil paints, / And drops delicious tints o'er hill and dale, / Which Trade to us conveys' [II. 601-9]. No single climate has all resources and produce in abundance, which means that it is the laudable business of foreign trade to correct their 'seeming imperfections' [II. 622] by an artificial process of redistribution. For Dyer, this redistributive activity is a source of virtue, and even of religious feeling; and the ethical weight of his conviction here is a deliberate redress of Virgilian georgic's (now parochial-seeming) insistence about the moral value of independence and self-reliance: 'They / The clearest sense of Deity receive', he writes, 'Who view the widest prospect of his works, / Ranging the globe with trade through various climes' [II. 628-31].

The new georgic's eagerness to assess and map out the 'widest prospect' of international economic activity also extends to cover the spectrum of domestic political economy. Kurt Heinzelman has noted that a 'determining ingredient' of the later georgic is its 'advocacy of a composite socioeconomic order', and Barrell's discussion of *The Fleece* shows likewise that the georgic's vision rests on an 'economic idea of social unity', which permits the poet to 'acknowledge and inspect the variety of elements that compose a society, by representing them in the form of occupational variety'.[266] Dyer, for instance, presents himself as constantly striving to provide detailed information on a wide range of economic sectors, and his energetic interest in the technicalities of their composite branches is part of a general conviction that all professions, regardless of how finessed and specialised they might seem, are fundamentally interlinked:

> 'Tis mine to teach th'inactive hand to reap
> Kind nature's bounties, o'er the globe diffus'd.
> FOR this, I wake the weary hours of rest;
> With this desire, the merchant I attend;
> By this impell'd, the shepherd's hut I seek,
> And, as he tends his flock, his lectures hear,
> [...]

[266] Heinzelman, 'Roman Georgic in the Georgian Age', p.202; Barrell, *English Literature in History*, p.25.

> Or turn the compass o'er the painted chart,
> To mark the ways of traffic;
> [II. 501-10]

Farming, commerce and trade are united as the common objects of Dyer's intellectual curiosity, and his impatience to gather specialised information 'For the high business of the public good' [II. 493] establishes a didactic idea of civic action that has very little to do with the modest strategies of self-limitation that Virgilian georgic recommends. The poem's wide-ranging precepts envisage a readership with an interested grasp of the political economic diversity of the nation and a technical curiosity that extends far beyond the seasonal repetitions of the farming calendar; and they espouse an idea of work that is essentially macroeconomic in nature, capable of encompassing an interlinked network of cooperative professional interests. This mode of presentation means that the georgic's local observations of agricultural process are contextualised in a metonymic fashion by a broader vision of all the other kinds of economic work with which they are bound up. Dodsley's 'stacks of hay' and 'pyramids of corn', for instance, are not destined for the circular exchanges of subsistence, but 'Promise the future market large supplies' [I. 259-60].

This ambitious sense of cooperation on the macroeconomic level is worked out in a microcosmic way at the level of the poetic line. In Book III of *Edge-Hill*, for instance, Jago's description of the iron industry roves easily across the various working processes of forges, factories and shop floors, and offers a composite picture of supply and demand as interrelated mechanisms:

> ''TIS Noise, and Hurry all! The thronged Street,
> The close-piled Warehouse, and the busy Shop!
> With nimble Stroke the tinkling Hammers move;
> While slow, and weighty the vast Sledge descends,
> In solemn Base responsive, or apart,
> Or socially conjoin'd in tuneful Peal.
> […]
> HOW the coarse Metal brightens into Fame,

> Shap'd by their plastic Hands! what Ornament!
> What various Use! See there the glitt'ring Knife
> Of temper'd Edge! The Scissars' double Shaft,
> Useless apart, in social Union join'd,
> Each aiding each!
>
> [III. 539-53]

Jago's verse takes in the economic arenas of the 'thronged Street', 'close-piled Warehouse' and 'busy Shop', and its formal construction is made to show the fine interdependence of their separate activities. The ringing conjunction of the 'tinkling Hammers' and 'vast Sledge' in the warehouse ('*socially* conjoin'd in tuneful Peal') re-echoes in the '*social* Union' of the 'Scissars' double Shaft' [italics mine], and the repetition notices the way in which process and product are part of the same broader mechanical effort, 'Each aiding each'. Similarly, the connection established by a double usage of 'apart' ('In solemn Base responsive, or apart'; 'Useless apart, in social Union join'd') wittily attests that individual kinds of specialised work do *not* happen 'apart', or in isolation, but require the cooperation of preceding or answering processes. Line endings are controlled in order to balance different kinds of work in equilibrium: the grammatical pivot between 'With nimble Stroke the tinkling Hammers move; / While slow, and weighty the vast Sledge descends' permits their separate motions to be equal and opposite halves of the same production line.

This formal kind of macroeconomic unity is articulated in a similar way in Book III of *The Fleece*, where Dyer's description of the composite manufacture of a loom makes a poetic unity of the division of tasks:

> From some thick wood the carpenter selects
> A slender oak, or beech of glossy trunk,
> Or saplin ash; he shapes the sturdy beam,
> The posts, the treadles; and the frame combines.
> The smith, with iron screws, and plated hoops,
> Confirms the strong machine, and gives the bolt
> That strains the roll. To these the turner's lathe,
> And graver's knife, the hollow shuttle add.

> Various professions in the work unite:
> For each on each depends.
>
> [III. 111-20]

This passage is composed of a series of arranged elements and oppositions that resolve into unity. The distinct parts of the carpenter's work – 'the sturdy beam, / The posts, the treadles' – are neatly collected into a single 'frame' by means of the delayed verb 'combines', whilst the enjambed fluidity of 'and gives the bolt / That strains the roll' moves through the line break with a momentum that enables and finesses the chain of production. Dyer's way of balancing the syntax of the smith's 'iron screws, and plated hoops' against that of the 'turner's lathe, / And graver's knife' organises a formal compliance from three distinct areas of work, and the effect is reinforced by the Latinate delaying of 'add', which gathers up the various processes into a single mode of production. The chime of 'combines' and 'Confirms' offers a harmony of enterprise at the beginning and end of lines, and across multiple kinds of manufacture; and the total effect is to comprehend as poetic work the idea that 'each on each depends'.

In a similar way to the concentric circles of Virgilian georgic's daily repetitions and larger cosmic cycles, the interdependent processes of individual manufactures are taken to gesture towards greater networks of specialisation on the national level.[267] But this idea of industrial work as a necessary component part of the total economy threatens a core principle of the georgic's world-view, the conviction that agriculture retains a special cultural importance as the earliest and most fundamental labouring form. In Hesiod's *Works and Days*, the 'work that the gods have marked out for men' is the labour of cultivation, which will happily satisfy all the wants of a farmer and even make him wealthy, provided he is industrious enough. Seafaring and trade are available as alternative economic means to 'escape debt and joyless hunger', Hesiod writes, but they are obliged to fit around the tasks of the farming year

[267] Jago, for instance, makes an easy leap from the local to the national when he describes the collective wealth that comes from husbanding 'the Sheep's gentle Race': 'woolly Vests, / Or toughen'd hides, innum'rous Hands employ, / And, on their Labours, build a Nation's Weal'. See *Edge-Hill*, IV. 175-7.

in a secondary fashion, and the artisanal skills they rely on have been acquired and developed by means of older agricultural labours.[268] In the *Georgics*, similarly, farming is celebrated as the earliest of all labours after the end of the Golden Age, when Jove first 'made art awake the fields' [I. 122-3]. Without farming, Virgil shows, a raft of other techniques – sailing, astronomy, hunting, fishing, metalwork – would not have been possible, as its simple forms and skills lay at the base of all subsequent developments and refinements.[269] This is a mythologising point as well as a sociological one, because it makes a claim about the moral superiority of farming alongside its historical primacy, deploring sophisticated later developments in economic life as perverse over-refinements of the simple tasks of the farming year.

In the mid-century georgic, this nostalgic mythology of agricultural work is rejected in favour of a teleological narrative of progressive improvement, whose zenith is the streamlined efficiency of contemporary large-scale production. Early origins no longer have any special importance or relevance: British sheep farming is praised precisely *because* it has a comparatively short history, and the arts and trades of the ancient republics are shown to have no particular claims on superiority merely by virtue of their precedence.[270] For the mid-century georgic poet, moralised categories of primacy and originality are no longer useful ways of thinking about economic practice, because the poem's interest in depicting a total political economy insists that divisions of labour are cooperative and interdependent parts of a single system, rather than increasingly specialised deviations from an *ur*-form of work. Agriculture, by this measure, is simply one professional interest amongst a large network of similar interests, each dependent to a greater or lesser degree on every other; and this, for the georgic form, is a

[268] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, pp.49, 56.

[269] 'Experience, from taking thought, might little by little forge all manner of skills […]. Then first did rivers feel upon their backs boats of hollowed alder, then the mariner grouped and named the stars…' See Virgil, *Georgics* I. 133-46.

[270] See, e.g., Dyer's 'progress of the fleece' history, which provides a range of episodes to show that a free wool trade has always flourished side by side with political liberty: both declined as a result of the political corruption of the ancient republics, were revived in Renaissance Italy, and are now thriving in contemporary Britain. See *The Fleece*, II. 191-388.

provocative and difficult idea to assimilate, because it means that certain kinds of industrial and manufacturing work may be presented as preconditions for farming, as well as the other way around.

In Book I of *The Fleece*, for instance, Dyer introduces a depiction of steel mining into a traditional set of precepts on sheep shearing:

> Now, jolly swains, the harvest of your cares
> Prepare to reap, and seek the sounding caves
> Of high Brigantium, where, by ruddy flames,
> Vulcan's strong sons, with nervous arm, around
> The steady anvil and the glaring mass,
> Clatter their heavy hammers down by turns,
> Flatt'ning the steel: from their rough hands receive
> The sharpen'd instrument, that from the flock
> Severs the fleece.
>
> [I. 555-63]

'High Brigantium', the steel manufacturing industry of Sheffield, is a bold diversion from the anticipated georgic rhythms of shearing and harvest. Goodridge, commenting on these lines, notes that it is 'remarkable' that Dyer is 'able to bring the steel-forging Brigantes into the charmed circle of his 'jolly Swains'', and admires the 'imaginative boldness' of beginning 'a pastoral description of sheep-shearing with an entirely industrial scene'.[271] The conflation of the two, he suggests, is characteristic of the poet's 'constant refusal to distinguish between pastoral idyll and post-lapsarian idyll', and argues that the result is an experimental kind of 'industrial pastoral', a tentative introduction of utopian industrial elements into pastoral's *locus amoenus*.[272] This does not seem entirely accurate, though, since for Dyer 'industrial' and 'pastoral' are both variants of the same, thoroughly georgic, vision: pastoral and industrial forms of work are intimately connected as mutually dependent interests, because sheep shearing provides the market that underpins the business of steel manufacturing, and

[271] Goodridge, *Rural Life in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry*, p.168.
[272] Ibid., p.168.

agricultural tools are produced on an industrial scale by the 'rough hands' of steel workers. Here, what is 'remarkable' and 'imaginative' is Dyer's emphatic stretching at the economic purview of georgic to include industrial work alongside agriculture, and his related suggestion that heavy industry is a prerequisite for sheep shearing rather than a perverse deviation from prelapsarian agricultural modes.

Jago's portrait of the Midlands iron industry in Book III of *Edge-Hill* comes to similar conclusions about the relative place of agriculture in a large-scale political economy. His praise of 'native *British* Ore' is careful to point up the shared interests of farming and heavy industry, and goes so far as to claim that without Warwickshire's iron manufacturies, its agriculture would fail altogether. 'THINE is the Praise to cultivate the Soil', he apostrophises the iron ore beneath his feet,

> Thine it is
> The with'ring Hay, and ripen'd Grain to sheer,
> And waft the joyous Harvest round the Land.
> Go now, and see if, to the *Silver*'s Edge,
> The reedy Stalk will yield its bearded Store
> In weighty Sheafs. Or if the stubborn Marle,
> In sidelong Rows, with easy Force will rise
> Before the *Silver* Plowshare's glitt'ring Point.
> [III. 594-605]

Jago's verse here is finely attuned to the rhythms and patterns of harvest, as the cut of 'sheer' is sympathetically matched with the line break, and the 'sidelong Rows' of turned earth are ranged along the poem's own lines and furrows. But operating beneath and alongside these naturalised seasonal rhythms are other kinds of repetitive economic work, the manufacture of the '*Silver*'s Edge' and the *Silver* Plowshare' that will expedite the farming year in much the same way as Dyer's steel shearing tools. Jago's argument is that agricultural labours are predicated on the kinds of large-scale processes and manufactures that they might more obviously seem to exclude, and he shows that this form of economic dependence is something

to be enthusiastic about, regardless of the problems it causes for the georgic's traditional investment in self-sufficiency. This is a generic recognition as well as a local one, because it puts severe pressure on the mythologised autonomy of Virgilian farming and insists on the idea of a composite political economy, in which agricultural work is relativised as just one of the myriad interests and specialisations of contemporary professional life.

Jago and Dyer's examples demonstrate that observational precision raises problems for the tropes and myths of the georgic's world-view. It is difficult to maintain with Virgil that farming has no need to rely on economies external to its own fields when it is clear that modern agriculture is bound up in several different ways with industry and commerce. This recognition, I want to suggest, is true in a more fundamental way of the georgic enterprise at mid-century, because the poetry is constantly exercised by the need to achieve a delicate balancing act between precise contemporary detail and fidelity to its generic inheritance. Mid-century agricultural georgics are recognisably of the same generic heritage as earlier eighteenth-century English georgics, regardless of the comprehensive way in which they reposition ideas and attitudes, and they allude consciously and seriously to a number of Virgilian tropes. But the information they convey is part of an emerging scientific discourse of agricultural experimentation, which places a premium on questioning the value of inherited knowledge by empirical trial (one thinks, for instance, of Tull's insistence that no improver can manage merely by drawing precepts 'from Books writ a thousand Years before him'). The achievement of Smart, Dodsley, Dyer and Jago's poetry is its ability to overcome, by means of cautious accommodations and sleights of hand, the perspectival difficulties that arise with attempting to contain scientifically accurate and empirically observed detail in a traditional poetic framework of imitation and allusion.

Mid-century poets seek to negotiate this dual obligation to practical experience and handed-down poetic formulae by a number of inventive means. The uses of the classic for

modern purposes are various, and each involves a particular set of generic transformations. Depending on the nature of the balance that a poet hopes to strike between decorum and fidelity to experience, there are opportunities to display conservative allegiances to recognisable ancient forms and to strike out as a modern in favour of empirical kinds of knowledge (both are viable in the course of a single poem). Three such avenues of approach will be examined more closely here. Firstly, the inherited structures and tropes of Virgil's poem may be transformed beyond recognition, as mid-century writers seek to do justice to their modern economic interests by discarding the traditional frameworks they feel no longer have a place. Secondly, tropes may be retained sceptically and combatively, by being made to engage in an ongoing process of competition with the contemporary subject matter they contain. Thirdly, there is the possibility of enlisting Virgilian forms sympathetically in the didactic project at hand, marrying experimental and conservative elements by using inherited tropes to articulate the new data of improvement in a more comprehensible or memorable fashion.

The Fleece accommodates all three of these approaches, as Dyer struggles in different ways to reconcile the currency and precision of his precepts with the allusive framework he retains. His georgic, though, is anxious to address in its full complexity the technical information of improvement, since the presentation of sheep farming as a gentleman's profession relies on a comprehensive presentation of its finer points; so in several places he is careful to show that the Virgilian framework available to him is insufficiently complex to do justice to the material at hand, or uncongenial from an ideological point of view. He demonstrates this by invoking recognisable Virgilian passages in a deliberately unsympathetic fashion, which has the effect of transforming them almost beyond recognition and pointing up in the process how inappropriate they are to the concerns and priorities of improvement. In

Book I, for instance, he uses an updated version of Virgil's lines on the humble old Corycian man for the purposes of advice on burning brambles for fertilisation:

> I knew a careful swain,
> Who gave them to the crackling flames, and spread
> Their dust saline upon the deep'ning grass:
> And oft with labor-strengthen'd arm he delv'd
> The draining trench across his verdant slopes,
> To intercept the small meandering rills
> Of upper hamlets:
> [I. 108-14]

Goodridge, writing on this passage, notices its modernity and the specific elements of agricultural science it describes: Dyer, he argues, shows himself to be an 'energetic improver' by his neat solution of 'turning a problem to advantage' and using unwanted brambles to fertilise the soil, and his plans for drainage systems and rilling place him at the vanguard of mid-eighteenth-century ideas on field irrigation.[273] Goodridge also points out that precisely these agricultural competences are responsible for the allusive oddness of the verse paragraph. There are, he shows, obvious contradictions involved in associating Virgil's emblematic figure (an 'exemplum', as he says, 'of modest retirement and harmonious adaptation to the limitations of the environment') with an eighteenth-century culture of ambition and land rationalisation. 'Dyer's swain', he observes, 'is by contrast an heroic figure, physically exerting himself with 'labor-strengthen'd arm' to change the environment'; he is engaged in 'single-handedly conquering the massed armies of the fleece's enemies, armed with trenching spade, axe, and fire'.[274] Heroic elements like these do figure in the elevation of Dyer's style, and they certainly run counter to the unambitious pleasures of the simple '*Corycian* Swain' of Dryden's translation, whose 'daily Care' runs no further than preparing herbs for his 'homely Board' [IV. 188-96].

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[273] Goodridge, *Rural Life in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry*, p.116.
[274] Ibid., pp.119-20.

The strain of the comparison, though, runs deeper than this, because there are profound ideological difficulties with trying to reconcile an improver's morality of growth and aggregation with a completely antithetical ethics of self-limitation and modesty: there are reasons, which have nothing to do with his historical moment, why Virgil's Corycian farmer (or Dryden's, or Philips's) would not have dug a 'draining trench'. There is also the associated problem of the amount and specificity of the information that the Corycian vignette is required to carry. Dyer's fine sensitivity to the advantages of intercepting 'small meandering rills' and the precision of his 'dust saline' rely on a different field of knowledge to the limited stock of the Corycian man, and they indicate a different kind of intellectual attitude to the old farmer's contented humility (Philips goes so far as to praise the wilful ignorance of his 'frugal Man', who 'no more / Desir'd, nor wanted, diligent to learn / The various Seasons' [p.56], and suffers for it with appropriate fortitude). The difference lies between the specialised and technical vocabulary of a growing field of scientific enquiry, and the stubborn business of sticking to the inherited customs of long experience; or between the allusive literary heritage that the Corycian man represents and the empirical drive after new data and better techniques embodied by his 'draining trench' and 'dust saline'. Dyer's use of the trope is a deliberately impossible conflation of conservative and experimental kinds of knowledge, and the result is to point up where the Corycian vignette falls short, formally and ideologically, of an adequate presentation of modern agricultural work.

Dyer's allusion is backwards-looking but firmly progressive, as it experiments with a traditional model in order to reveal its limitations for contemporary purposes. In Smart's georgic, a different approach obtains. Virgilian tropes and ideas are brought into play with contemporary farming advice much as in *The Fleece*, but the poet's careful balance between inherited precept and new technology allows ancient and modern elements to compete alongside one another for a share of the same poetic space; it is left deliberately undecided as to

which has the stronger claim on explanatory competence. In Book II of *The Hop-Garden*, for instance, Smart describes 'Th'important care of curing' [II. 190] the hops after they have been picked, and the business of drying them over charcoal. The drying process, he explains, has been considerably expedited in the last decade by the invention of a ventilator by the scientist Stephen Hales, which acts as a fan to direct the heat of the kiln. (The ventilator had several applications, as Hales wrote in an explanatory paper for the Royal Society in 1741, but in particular it was envisaged as being 'of Service in some Hop or Malt-Kilns, to carry off the main Damp, especially in moist Weather'.[275]) Chris Mounsey has recently shown that Smart's fine comprehension of the workings of Hales's mechanism – he knows, for instance, that hops need to be turned 'When the fourth hour expires', and how to tell when they are properly dried after 'twice two glasses more' [II. 210-2] – proceeds from an interest in keeping up to date with the newest technologies in hop-growing, since the ventilator was barely a year old when Smart began to compose his georgic in 1742.[276]

Smart's interest in Hales's mechanism, though, is comparative in nature: he observes its novelty and efficiency with admiration, but one of the reasons he includes it in his anatomy of hop-growing is because it has a Virgilian analogue in Book I of the *Georgics*. Numbered among the tools of the farming year is 'the mystic fan of Iacchus' [I. 166], or the winnowing fan, invented by the mortal Iacchus at the instigation of Demeter in the mysteries of Eleusis. Dryden's translation renders 'Iacchus' into 'Bacchus' ('The Fan of *Bacchus*, with the flying Sail' [I. 246]), and Smart alludes to a combination of the two in his paean to Hales's work:

> Constant and moderate let the heat ascend;
> Which to effect, there are, who with success
> Place in the kiln the ventilating fan.
> Hail, learned, useful man!
> [...]

[275] Stephen Hales, *A Description of Ventilators*... (London, 1743), p.144.
[276] Chris Mounsey, 'Christopher Smart's *The Hop-garden* and John Philips's *Cyder*: A Battle of the Georgics? Mid-Eighteenth-Century Poetic Discussions of Authority, Science and Experience', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, xxii (1999), 67-84 (p.77).

> if thy industry
> Has serv'd the hopland cause, the Muse forebodes
> This sole invention, both in use and fame,
> The mystic fan of Bacchus shall exceed.
> [II. 201-9]

An authorial footnote points the reader towards the relevant passage in *Georgics* I ('*Mystica Vannus Iacchi*' [l. 209 n.]), so that the mythical *ur*-invention is invoked alongside the freshly minted one. This has the dual effect of retouching the practical didactic value of Hales's fan with the literary gloss of Demeter and Iacchus, whilst also making the technical superiority of the new query the usefulness of the purely 'mystic' and symbolic. Smart's allusive conflation demands that ancient and modern share a common function; it makes them compete to articulate the same core georgic idea about the necessity of certain tools and techniques, and it is deliberately ambivalent about the relative authority of literary tradition and new information. There is a suggestion, though it is not insisted on, that in the last analysis Hales's mechanism may have more of a claim than Iacchus' fan to its place in a georgic on hop farming: 'the Muse forebodes', Smart writes, 'This sole invention, both in use and fame, / The mystic fan of Bacchus shall exceed', with the implication that it meets criteria of contemporary use value and canonical longevity alike in a way that the 'mystic fan' could never do. The verb 'forebodes', though, hangs nicely between rival senses of neutral forecasting and uneasy presentiment, in a way that permits Smart to show a degree of equivocation as to whether or not the usurpation of an ancient formula by a modern invention would be a necessary progression or something to be deplored. The poem allows for both conclusions, and its manner of setting inherited and new material to spar over the same contested ground has the added analytical virtue of prompting each to hold the other to account.

There is scope within the mid-century poem, though, for a thoroughly sympathetic reading of the georgic inheritance, and a way of re-transmitting it as new agriculture or new science that makes sense equally of its beginnings and of the data it is now being asked to comprehend. Fowler has written about this sympathetic form of generic transformation in

terms of 'cooperation – as if the kind were a group meditation': the motivations for assimilating the values and characteristics of a predecessor are less a 'competitive anxiety of influence' than a collaborative expansion of vision, because the new form displays a 'social coherence' with the old that allows it to articulate its own precepts more clearly or more forcibly.[277] This is a useful description, for instance, of Dyer's account in Book II of *The Fleece* of land reclamation projects like those at Bedford Level, which drain excess water from the land so that it is ready for cultivation:

> Moors, bogs, and weeping fens, may learn to smile,
> And leave in dykes their soon-forgotten tears.
> [II. 162-3]

The thought of making a moor or a bog 'smile' is a version of georgic's *paysage riant* trope, the Augustan idea of a landscape happily content with its own productivity.[278] For Dyer, the image has a uniquely specific applicability because it can be wittily extended and inverted to encompass the new idea of drainage: if a cultivated landscape is a smiling one, then it is a simple step to think of an uncultivated one as weeping, and this is especially felicitous if the reason for its lying fallow is because it is too damp. The conceit is not employed because it has been used before, and not – or not solely – because of what it does to align *The Fleece* with an early Augustan tradition of formal georgic; predominantly, it is used because its particular relation to the material in hand allows it to carry its didactic point in an imaginative and witty fashion, and more imaginatively and wittily than if Dyer had set out the process of reclamation in a straightforward technical fashion. The sympathetic interplay between trope and subject matter – or the way in which the new subject reappropriates the trope without compromising its integrity or origins – is a clever transmission of empirical methods by an inherited literary

[277] Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, p.155.
[278] On the *paysage riant*, see p.65 above.

form, in such a way that the didactic and pedagogical aims of scientific writing are furthered, rather than compromised, by a nod to tradition.

There is a similarly transformative engagement with traditional conceits later in Book II, where Dyer writes about the advantages of the movement from common-field farming to larger-scale models of production. From the end of the seventeenth century onwards, one of the chief ways in which improvers sought to overcome the limitations of the seasonal calendar was by the introduction of a four-course crop rotation system, which Dyer implemented himself on his land at Mapleton. On the example of techniques trialled in the Low Countries, experimental farmers (first in Norfolk and East Anglia, and then increasingly in the West Country) sowed root crops and clover in a four-year rotation as a means of 'cleaning' the land in between sowings of cereals. Eliminating fallow periods, the new system provided a supply of turnips to redress the prevailing insufficiency of livestock feed over the winter months, and produced increased amounts of animal manure to be spread on the fields for future cereal yields.[279] Dyer's way of describing the four-course method is to engage with Virgilian georgic's cyclical concept of seasonality:

> But why recount our grassy lawns alone,
> While ev'n the tillage of our cultur'd plains,
> With bossy turnep, and luxuriant cole,
> Learns thro' the circling year their flocks to feed.
> [II. 389-92]

This is a deliberately contradictory approach to the new technique. 'Thro' the circling year' recalls Dryden's 'round Year' and Philips's 'revolving Years': it belongs to a generic way of thinking about agriculture as repetitive and unchanging, governed by circular patterns of cultivation and lapse. Sowing 'bossy turnep, and luxuriant cole', on the other hand, is

[279] See E.L. Jones, 'Agriculture and Economic Growth in England, 1660-1750: Agricultural Change', in *Essays in Agrarian History*, ed. by Minchinton, i. 207-9.

enterprising and progressive work, because the idea of the four-course rotation is based on refusing to acknowledge that there is any need to allow land to lie fallow on an annual basis.

The comparison succeeds, though, because it points out that the new system also follows an essentially cyclical order, though in a different fashion to prevailing common-field methods; it has its repetitions and annual patterns too, and it accelerates and rationalises the progress of the 'circling year' in a way that makes somewhat better sense of the resources and topographies at hand. Along the same lines as the updated *paysage riant*, the work of the conceit here is not to confuse or obfuscate the material it contains, or in some way to contradict the inventiveness of the rotation scheme, but rather to find a recognisable form whereby complex new information may be comprehended imaginatively and simply. Bringing together the traditional and the progressive in this way puts pressure on the ethical priorities of Virgilian georgic, but it does so in order to offer a meeting point between systemic improvement and an inherited poetic *topos* of ritual and repetition, which might otherwise seem irreconcilably opposed. The enlightened farmer who transcends seasonal limitations by artificial means is elided with the Stoic peasant of Virgilian georgic's cyclical calendar, and the dynamic of progress is contained by a celebration of unchanging seasonality. The conflation is Dyer's way of harnessing the explanatory power of the tropes he has available to him by virtue of generic affiliation: it makes his georgic framework account for its place in a discussion of contemporary systems and techniques.

The point about harnessing the explanatory and imaginative power already present in a trope is particularly true of Jago's heroic verse in *Edge-Hill*, which derives its energy and amplitude from mock-heroic elements appropriated from Virgil and Dryden. In Book III, Jago describes the process of shaping iron ore in the forges of Birmingham. There is a detailed narrative of production over forty lines of verse, as the 'pond'rous Ore' is extracted, then heated and liquefied in 'huge Cauldrons', before hardening into 'Ingots rude', being transferred

to the forges and finally shaped into 'tortur'd Metal' in the blast furnace [III. 502-38]. Jago's presentation emphasises that it is brutal and difficult work; it exacts heroic capacities of strength and exertion from its labourers, and this high pitch and tone, he insists, are to be communicated by means of an appropriately inflated stylistic register:

> Now, CYCLOPEAN Chief!
> Quick on the Anvil lay the burning Bar,
> And, with thy lusty Fellows, on its Sides
> Impress the weighty Stroke. See, how they strain
> The swelling Nerve, and lift the sinewy Arm
> In measur'd Time;
> [III. 530-5]

An authorial footnote directs the reader to *Georgics* IV, where Virgil's admiring depiction of the labour of the bees allows for a sympathetic mock-heroic amplification:

> And as, when the Cyclops in haste forge bolts from tough ore, some with oxhide bellows make the blasts come and go, others dip the hissing brass in the lake, while Aetna groans under the anvils laid upon her; they, with mighty force, now one, now another, raise their arms in measured cadence, and turn the iron with gripping tongs – even so, if we may compare small things with great, an inborn love of gain spurs on the Attic bees.
> [IV. 170-7]

Jago's 'measur'd Time' chimes in with Virgil's 'measured cadence' ('*in numerum*'), and the idea of the allusion is to set the rhythms of contemporary ironwork into harmony with the smaller labours of the bees' civic economy. But there is a problem with scale. Virgil's heroic register is a comparison in the sense that it draws out the differences, as well as the similarities, between the two things it puts together: the bees are *not* the same as the Cyclops working at the forge of Vulcan; they are not working with iron ore in the depths of Etna; and this disjunction is important, because the slightly absurd stretch of the conceit is the source of its wit and affectionate irony.

In Jago's rendering, on the other hand, it is less clear that there are differences between subject and metaphor, because the kind of large-scale metalwork undertaken by the Birmingham smiths and the Cyclops is essentially the same. In generic terms, this means that the mock-heroic mode of Virgil's comparison is substituted for a straightforwardly heroic allusion in Jago's verse, since the size and scale of the iron industry at Birmingham is conceived to be at least as important and grand as the forges of Vulcan. Jago does not make Virgil and Dryden's cautious caveat about inflation ('if we may compare small things with great' [IV. 176]; 'If little things with great we may compare' [IV. 257]) because he has no need to. Modern industrial work, he argues, is sufficiently epic in its political economic breadth and complexity that it demands in earnest the kind of high style that Virgilian georgic can only invoke in jest – it requires, in other words, the poet to literalise what has previously been a conceit. The amplification of the trope, upgrading mock-heroic into heroic, is Jago's way of proving both the distinguished history of the work he describes *and* its staggering ability to surpass all previous analogues, as he draws on the wit and energy of Virgil's conceit in order to make the grand ambition of modern industry a relative and comprehensible thing. The complicated specialist processes of Birmingham's iron production, developed for efficient large-scale output and refined by scientific trial and experiment, are reimagined in the old formulae of heroic narrative.

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Not all mid-century commentary on the *Georgics* was interested in the poem for practical reasons, or thought of it principally as an opportunity for writing about contemporary agriculture and economics in a decorous manner. Historians in particular were keen to locate a determining political context for why Virgil might have written his poem and what he hoped to achieve by it, which meant approaching the *Georgics* as a product of distinctive Roman circumstances, rather than as an agricultural handbook with transferable practical implications

for Enlightenment Britain. Gibbon's *Essay on the Study of Literature* (1764), for instance, turns to the *Georgics* with the aim of 'discovering in the Poet a design equally noble and elevated, as the execution of it is highly finished', which he proceeds to locate in the immediate context of the poem's composition.[280] Virgil's aims, he argues, were not didactic or literary in the first instance but political. Since Augustus had adopted the dubious peacetime expedient of resettling large numbers of discharged Roman soldiers in the countryside with their own land to farm, he had become anxious that they would grow 'tired of an inactive life', restless, dissipated and eager for further conflict; he looked for a way to 'reconcile these turbulent spirits to their new situation' and to the farming way of life more broadly.[281] This he found in the 'harmonious lays of his friend' Virgil, who was prevailed upon to write verses on the attractions of country life, 'the innocent pleasures of the peaceful rustic; of his sports, his domestic ease, his delightful retreats', and to present the veterans with an image of what they might aspire to in 'the picture of the aged Corycian'. In Gibbon's analysis, the *Georgics* succeeded in producing precisely the effect that Augustus had hoped, as the veterans were 'insensibly reconciled to a quiet life'; and he concludes that Virgil's fame ought to be based on considerably more than his abilities as 'a mere writer', because his poem contributed in large measure to the preservation of civil society.[282]

Gibbon's narrative shows a complex understanding of the political moment of the *Georgics* and an academic's desire to imagine the poem metonymically as a distillation of various significant historical problems. It belongs to a distinguished long eighteenth-century tradition of locating political and social contexture for the works of major ancient literary figures, to which Dryden's *Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1693) on the later Roman satirists, Shaftesbury's *Soliloquy, or, Advice to an Author* (1710) on Horace and Virgil at the court

[280] Edward Gibbon, *An Essay on the Study of Literature. Written originally in French. Now first translated into English.* (London, 1764), p.35.
[281] Ibid., pp.39-41.
[282] Ibid., pp.41-4.

of Augustus, Thomas Blackwell's *Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1735) and Brown's *The History of the Rise and Progress of Poetry* (1764) also belong.[283] But this scholarly tradition of examining classical works as products of particular historical circumstances (and, concomitantly, of thinking about poets as political and social beings, rather than distant literary authorities) emerged alongside the rival eighteenth-century interpretative interest that I have been describing in this chapter, which approached the literary text in an ahistorical fashion, glossing over differences of place and circumstance in order to reappropriate ancient material for modern applications. In line with a contemporary revival of interest in the uses of classical didactic poetry, it assumed that the precepts of the *Georgics* were intended for pedagogical purposes rather than oblique political ones, and that, moreover, the kind of instruction they offered was sufficiently ahistorical that it could be comprehensible and useful to the subjects of Enlightenment Britain as well as Augustan Rome.

This chapter has sought to describe the opportunities and problems associated with this practical reappropriation of the *Georgics*, examining four adaptations of the Virgilian framework by mid-century poets for contemporary agricultural and economic purposes. The mid-century poems have been studied as divergences from the ethical attitudes of Virgil's *Georgics* and early eighteenth-century English georgics on the model of Dryden's translation, in which the rural life is praised as a repository for the kind of Stoic virtue that lies in hard work and difficult circumstances. By contrast, it is argued, the mid-century georgics offer their precepts for the purposes of improvement, not self-improvement; the value they observe in the farming life is material, rather than ethical, and the large-scale projects of development and reclamation they recommend are profoundly reliant on the feelings of ambition and self-interest that

[283] See, respectively, Dryden, 'A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire', in *Essays of John Dryden*, ed. by W.P. Ker, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1900), ii. 86-98; Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author*, II.i, in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. by Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge, 1999), pp.94-100; Thomas Blackwell, *An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (London, 1735); John Brown, *The History of the Rise and Progress of Poetry, Through it's Several Species* (Newcastle, 1764), especially pp.64-75 on the rise of Greek poetry and drama in the context of developing political life. See Michael Meehan, *Liberty and Poetics in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, Sydney and Dover, 1986), pp.44-5, on the rise of historical sociology in literary criticism after Blackwell.

seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Epicurean readings of the georgics are eager to reject. They are invested in the empirical forms of experimentation and knowledge transmission developed by contemporary scientific enquiry, and as such they place a premium on the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the information they convey, regardless of the literary principles of decorum that such presentational methods may contradict.

The chapter has examined their transmission of contemporary agricultural information in two related ways. Firstly, it has set out the various attitudes and interests that distinguish the revised form, and considered the ways in which these new attitudes necessarily modify or supplant traditional Virgilian preoccupations. In particular, it has sought to describe the mid-century georgic's combative and transformative approach to the land (according to which all nature's limitations may be overcome); its assumption of a professional and interested readership, intellectually exercised by the new experimental possibilities of improvement; its enthusiasm for enclosure and aggregation over traditional common-field farming, which involves a rejection of Virgilian georgic's ethical investment in small inherited plots; the international reach of the trade and commerce it portrays, and its vision of a total political economy that also includes modern industrial processes; and the strain that these last two areas of interest in particular place on the moralised autonomy of Virgilian farming.

In the second part of the analysis, attention has been directed to techniques and forms of generic transformation. The new georgic, I have suggested, has obligations both to empirical accuracy in the data it contains and traditional observance in the framework it adopts. Such intellectually opposed allegiances must be negotiated by complex poetic balancing acts, which involve finding imaginative points of comparison between the new material of improvement and the available range of inherited tropes and conceits. These negotiations are variously sceptical or sympathetic in nature: Dyer, for instance, indicates that there are insurmountable differences of approach between the modern 'careful swain', improving his land with 'dust

saline' and a 'draining trench', and the Stoic resignation of the old Corycian farmer; whilst, in a more generous fashion, Jago shows that it is possible to draw on the wit and energy already present in Virgil's Cyclopean conceit to admire the heroic labour of the modern iron industry. Registering the strain as well as the felicity of generic transformation, these are instances of mid-century poets testing the limits of the adaptability of their classical inheritance, and discovering in some cases that reaching an accommodation between ancient and modern interests must put one or other side under unsustainable pressure. Such problematic cases, though, are comparatively rare, and the sheer creative range of meeting points that poets discover between Virgil's model and the new attitudes of improvement tends to suggest that the revised genre is an imaginative transformation, rather than a thoroughgoing rejection, of the framework it inherits.

3: PATRIOT VERSE SATIRE AND THE MIDDLING ORDERS, 1760-70

When he wrote 'Night' in 1761, shortly after the astonishing success of 'The Rosciad', Charles Churchill was happy to admit that he had little in the way of political conviction, or much respect for political men. Interesting oneself in 'public weal or woe', he wrote, was foolish and pretentious. Statesmen and would-be statesmen were 'triflers'. For his part, he was content to remain aloof from the whole dirty business:

> Who's in or out, who moves this grand machine,
> Nor stirs my curiosity nor spleen.
> Secrets of state no more I wish to know
> Than secret movements of a PUPPET-SHEW;[284]

Ignorance of such matters was, for Churchill, a form of freedom, and it suited his growing reputation as a libertine to discard allegiances and convictions of all kinds. But six months after the publication of 'Night' in November 1761, his idea of freedom had acquired a distinctive political framework. The Earl of Bute's instatement as First Lord of the Treasury in May 1762, following the resignations of Pitt and Newcastle, provided a renewed focus for 'Patriot' opposition to the ministry, and Churchill, who began editing and contributing to Wilkes's *North Briton* in June, was at the centre of the debate and the Wilkesite Patriot circle.[285] He was caricatured alongside Pitt, Newcastle and Earl Temple in a number of ministerial and Opposition satirical prints; he risked his personal safety to support Wilkes's campaign in the

[284] Charles Churchill, 'Night', l. 210, 255, 257-60, in *The Poetical Works of Charles Churchill*, ed. by Douglas Grant (Oxford, 1956), p.56. All further citations of Churchill's poetry in the text are from this edition.
[285] At least nine numbers of the *North Briton* (nos. 5, 10, 18, 21, 22, 26, 27 and 42) are confidently attributed to Churchill, and he edited the majority of Wilkes's numbers, corrected the proofs and supervised the printing. See Edward H. Weatherly, introd. to *The Correspondence of John Wilkes and Charles Churchill*, ed. by Weatherly (New York, 1954), pp.xiii-xiv; Bertelsen, *The Nonsense Club*, p.176.

scandal over *North Briton* 45; and his verse satires of 1763 and 1764 engaged violently with matters of ministerial responsibility and aristocratic rule.[286]

Churchill's anti-ministerial satire was oppositional in much the same way as earlier eighteenth-century satire written against Walpole's ministry: it criticised governmental policy in military and imperial matters, pointed out the uncomfortably close connections between financial interests and political decision-making, and credited individual politicians with responsibility for a broader process of national decline. Influenced by a great age of neoclassical satire, his poetry is structured by recognisable thematic and formal elements of the Roman and early eighteenth-century inheritance, and owes particular debts to Pope's reappropriation of Persius and Juvenal. But his verse is not merely a straightforward reformulation of anti-Walpolian sentiments for the purposes of attacking a later administration. Writing satire for Wilkes's Patriot opposition was a different proposition to writing for the Patriot opposition of Bolingbroke and Pulteney, because it involved appealing to a distinct class of politically engaged readers among the middling orders, who had particular interests, priorities and grievances. 'The rhetorical strategy so influential during Pope's life was virtually untenable by the early 1760s', as Vincent Carretta has argued. 'Increasingly, the new times demanded new forms'.[287]

Churchill's satire provided a poetic complement to the ideological work of Wilkes's *North Briton*, addressing middling men as bulwarks of political liberty and praising their financial stakeholding in the fortunes of the nation. His verse attacked the aristocratic ruling classes for their undeserved privilege and argued that commercial interests were not incommensurate with political activity or intellectual autonomy. After Churchill's death in 1764, Thomas Chatterton continued the political work of his satires, composing Patriot verse in 1770 for Wilkes and William Beckford, the Mayor of London. There were a number of ways in which the ethical

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[286] On his appearance in caricatures, see Vincent Carretta, *George III and the Satirists from Hogarth to Byron* (Athens and London, 1990), pp.54-7. For a detailed survey of Churchill's part in Wilkes's political campaign, see Bertelsen, *The Nonsense Club*, pp.167-200.

[287] Vincent Carretta, *The Snarling Muse: Verbal and Visual Political Satire from Pope to Churchill* (Philadelphia, 1983), p.247.

assumptions underlying formal verse satire were found to be uncongenial to the radical agenda Churchill and Chatterton shared, and it will be the business of this chapter to outline the techniques of adaptation whereby both poets were able to reshape their generic inheritance in order to appeal to interests and priorities of the Wilkesite constituency. In the process, the chapter's argument will challenge received critical assumptions about the 'decline' of political verse satire after the death of Pope, and point to the ways in which the forms and conceits of the genre were found to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate a new concept of political virtue and a new class of political actors.

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The notion of a 'Patriot' interest, as Dustin Griffin has shown, shifted in designation and use over the first half of the eighteenth century and was not always conceived as oppositional. Henry Pelham, for instance, insisted on the basis of his own government that it was entirely possible to be a patriot 'in *Place* and *Power*',[288] whilst the City Tory grouping of the later 1750s rallied around Pitt, the 'Patriot Minister', and associated patriotism with the protection of commercial interests and a pro-war stance.[289] In the 1760s and 1770s, though, the Patriot ideology articulated by Churchill and Wilkes was defined by its unwavering opposition to ministerial politics, and it attracted interest and support from the commercial classes in the City and the urban poor (though the established opposition leaders tended to be somewhat more ambivalent).[290] The practice of the *North Briton*, as George Rudé has pointed out, was essentially 'negative' in nature, based on attacking perceived instances of corrupt practice and disingenuousness within the ministry, and caricaturing its most unpopular personalities.[291] The chief basis of its anti-ministerialism was a firm hatred of George III's 'Favourite', Bute, who was

[288] Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry*, p.19.
[289] See Marie Peters, *Pitt and Popularity: The Patriot Minister and London Opinion during the Seven Years' War* (Oxford, 1980); Bertelsen, *The Nonsense Club*, p.172. On the City Tory, or 'modern tory', see *Monitor*, 3 (August 23 1755).
[290] George Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty: A Social Study of 1763 to 1774* (Oxford, 1962), pp.177-84.
[291] Ibid., p.21.

despised both for his major role in negotiating the peace treaty of the Seven Years' War and for his perceived campaign of allowing Scottish placemen to infiltrate the English administration.[292] The vilification of Bute persisted even when he resigned from the ministry in April 1763.[293] For a decade afterwards, members of the Patriot opposition insisted that successive governments under George Grenville, the Duke of Grafton and Lord North were controlled secretly by Bute and the Princess Dowager from her residences at Carlton House and Kew ('The Wise look further, and the Wise can see / The Hand of Sawney actuating thee', wrote Chatterton in 1770 of Bute's influence over Grafton).[294]

The recourse to conspiracy theories would suggest that the Patriot position was speculative and reactive in nature, but Wilkes and Churchill's satirical writings developed a fuller theoretical basis for its politics during the early 1760s. Appeals to popular narratives of events, in the *North Briton* and the verse satire alike, were designed to illustrate a more abstract set of principles about virtuous political conduct and citizenship. Anti-ministerialism, for instance, was part of a broader critique of aristocratic power and the distribution of places on the basis of inherited privilege. There was a widespread anxiety, not limited to the Patriot opposition, about the encroachment of a small oligarchic elite on the power of the Commons and the Crown, and the self-sustaining exorbitance of the aristocracy was deplored as a drain on the financial and military strength of the nation.[295]

Attacks on privilege were also formulated as a new approach to the debate over the proper conduct of the public sphere, and the related problem as to which kinds or orders of men deserved to occupy public office. For Churchill and Wilkes, as for their allies in the City, merit was the only proper criterion for determining the distribution of honours and places.

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[292] See Cardwell, *Arts and Arms*, pp.266-8.
[293] John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge, 1976), pp.122-3.
[294] Thomas Chatterton, 'The Whore of Babylon', ll. 399-400, in *The Complete Works of Thomas Chatterton*, 2 vols., ed. by Donald S. Taylor in association with Benjamin B. Hoover (Oxford, 1971), i. 463. All further citations of Chatterton's poetry in the text are from this edition.
[295] Carretta, *George III and the Satirists*, pp.47-8; Robert Harris, *Politics and the Nation: Britain in the Mid-Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2002), pp.85-7.

They argued that the middling orders – the merchants, traders, shopkeepers, artisans and small financiers who occupied the demographic space between the gentry and the unpropertied poor – were uniquely deserving of the rewards of active and virtuous citizenship, because the kinds of qualities that ensured their success in business would also guarantee the integrity of their public service.[296] Their industry, honesty and common sense, in addition to the stake they held in the fortunes of the nation by virtue of their commercial interests, were far better foundations for civic engagement than the unearned entitlement of the landed elite. The political dignity of the middling orders, it was argued, was a direct consequence of their commercial enterprise: they were 'men of great integrity, wisdom, property and interest', as the City journal *The Monitor* put it in 1761, and their contribution to the mercantile wealth of the metropolitan nation and its empire stood as a protection of its liberties and martial strength.[297]

This political ideology was contemporary and reformist, and it provided an intellectual basis for radical debates over the extension of the franchise. But it was by no means an entirely independent way of thinking, because it developed as a redress to neo-Harringtonian articulations of the civic humanist paradigm in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Eighteenth-century civic commentators insisted that the forms of economic dependence and professional specialisation that accompanied the rise of commerce had an enervating effect on the public spirit and martial strength on which flourishing political states were founded. The historical example of martial republics such as Sparta served to illustrate that only an elite body of citizens who were 'amateur, propertied [and] independent' could preserve British political liberty and prevent the nation from sinking into corruption.[298] This

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[296] 'Middling orders' was a contemporary term of classification (interchangeable with 'middling ranks', 'middle station' and 'middling sort'). See Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660-1730* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1989), pp.3-16, on the composition of the 'middle station'. H.R. French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England, 1600-1750* (Oxford, 2008), ch.1, has a useful discussion of '*who* the 'middle sort of people' were, and *what* they were', and an outline of the historiographical problems of classification.

[297] *Monitor*, 335 (December 19 1761), p.5.

[298] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, p.499. For the Spartan analogue, see Trenchard, *An Argument, Shewing, that a Standing Army Is inconsistent with A Free Government…*, pp.6-7.

conceptual link between liberty and a classical notion of virtuous public-mindedness was the key tenet from which later eighteenth-century Patriot arguments diverged. Radical writers presented an entirely different set of ideas about what constituted virtuous citizenship, predicated on a conviction about the favourable connections that could be made between political liberty and commercial activity. They engaged directly and combatively with traditional civic assumptions about the independence conferred by land, the desirability of economic disinterest for public officeholders, and the deleterious effects of mercantile trade on the liberty and moral health of the state.

For Patriot writers, there were clear political reasons for issuing a challenge to the civic paradigm as they inherited it, but the process of reshaping its ideas and emphases was not a new one. As David Armitage and Lawrence Klein have shown, reconsiderations of the connection between virtuous frugality and liberty were formulated as early as the end of the seventeenth century, under the pressure of new socioeconomic imperatives and interests. Late seventeenth-century commentators, Armitage argues, looked to a revised version of civic philosophy in order to establish a recognisable intellectual framework for the unprecedented growth of England's imperial ambitions. Charles Davenant, Nicholas Barbon and others were engaged in finding a way to 'combine the classically incompatible ideals of liberty and empire', which would allow them to prove that international trade, rather than economic self-sufficiency, could alone provide a stable foundation for internal stability and military strength.[299] This involved a rejection of earlier civic humanist admiration for frugal and autarchic states, and a newly forged association between commercial expansion and constitutional liberty.[300]

Klein has traced a similar intellectual impetus to query the cultural relevance of the Spartan model in the formulation of Whig ideas of politeness. In the first decade of the

[299] David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000), p.8.
[300] Ibid., pp.141-4.

eighteenth century, the third earl of Shaftesbury's recasting of politeness as a kind of cultural and political liberty allowed him 'to produce a discourse of public liberty in which the civic element was reduced', and in which an explicit connection was made between commercial refinement and political freedom.[301] A free metropolitan centre nourished urbane modern manners and a mode of interaction that was 'sociable, conversible and refined', Shaftesbury argued: it had little in common with the rude Spartan simplicity or disinterested moral autonomy favoured by previous republican theorists.[302] A similar recognition stood behind Addison and Steele's intellectual project in *The Spectator* (1711-2), which strove to prove that citizenship could be attained by modern virtues of sociability and sympathy, rather than the austere self-abnegation that was supposed to have flourished in the ancient republics.[303]

Such engagements with the intellectual resources of the republican tradition attest, as Klein writes, to 'the magnetism of the civic vocabulary', but they also point to the ways in which it was found to be increasingly unsuitable to the interests and requirements of a modern commercial society.[304] Mandeville's 'The Grumbling Hive' offered a candid satiric portrait of what a truly 'virtuous' and frugal society might look like, if its citizens were able to give up their hypocritical enjoyment of the fruits of vice. The poem made the comic point that clergymen, magistrates and lawyers would have little to do if their parishioners suddenly became paragons of virtue ('nothing less can thrive, / Than Lawyers in an honest Hive'[305]), but it also offered the more problematic observation that commerce could only thrive on self-interest, and any attempt to claim that a flourishing modern trading nation might also be a virtuous and frugal one was pure hypocrisy – or, as the poem's 'Moral' put it, utopian thinking:

> Now mind the glorious Hive, and see

[301] Lawrence E. Klein, 'Liberty, Manners, and Politeness in Early Eighteenth-Century England', *The Historical Journal* xxxii (1989), 583-605 (p.587).
[302] Ibid., p.602. See also Hundert, *The Enlightenment's Fable*, pp.123-4.
[303] See Nicholson, *Writing and the Rise of Finance*, p.3.
[304] Klein, 'Liberty, Manners, and Politeness', p.604.
[305] Mandeville, 'The Grumbling Hive', *FB*, i. 28.

> How Honesty and Trade agree.
> The Shew is gone, it thins apace;
> And looks with quite another Face.
> […]
> T'enjoy the World's Conveniencies,
> Be fam'd in War, yet live in Ease,
> Without great Vices, is a vain
> EUTOPIA seated in the Brain.[306]

Neither arts nor arms could possibly flourish in a state whose definition of virtuous behaviour was sufficiently narrow as to exclude all forms of private interest: the politeness and opulence of contemporary European society, Mandeville showed, was underwritten by passions of self-love, pride and the desire for public approbation, rather than civic virtues of self-denial.[307] Modern imperial states were economically powerful and politically tolerant because they had cast out unworkable and anachronistic civic tenets – disinterest, self-abnegation, frugality – in order to protect modern forms of liberty and military strength.

Mandeville's writings were an extreme early instance of a broader process of reappropriation in eighteenth-century thought, whereby congenial aspects of civic humanism were retained and transformed into the philosophical basis for a defence of modern commercial society. The 'idea of virtue and corruption', as Nicholas Phillipson has written, was 'eased apart from its political frame and relocated in a framework of social relationships that were defined in social, economic and cultural terms', in a gradual re-evaluation of the concept of citizenship to include those whose interests were private and economic as well as purely public-minded.[308] Phillipson and others have drawn particular attention to the contribution made by Scottish philosophers, especially David Hume, to this process of intellectual revision.[309] Hume's 'Of Refinement in the Arts' offered what John Robertson has called a 'radical revision

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[306] Ibid., *FB*, i. 32, 36.
[307] Hundert, *The Enlightenment's Fable*, pp.68-77; Burtt, *Virtue Transformed*, pp.136-41.
[308] Nicholas Phillipson, 'Adam Smith as Civic Moralist', in *Wealth and Virtue*, ed. by Hont and Ignatieff, p.200.
[309] See Nicholas Phillipson, 'The Scottish Enlightenment', in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, ed. by Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (Cambridge, 1981), pp.21-31; Robertson, 'The Scottish Enlightenment at the Limits of the Civic Tradition', in *Wealth and Virtue*, ed. by Hont and Ignatieff, pp.137-78.

of the traditional civic conception of political community's material and moral premises', by seeking to eradicate the key philosophical demarcation between independent public actors and economic underclasses.[310] The rise of commerce, Hume argued, freed the lower orders of society from the servility of working for their superiors, and enabled them to develop and refine the specialised trades which would bring them financial means of their own. Their economic 'independence' (immunity to bribes and corrupting influence) equipped them with the kind of autonomous public-minded judgement that civic commentators had ascribed uniquely to the landed aristocracy, and established a new political class of middling men, whom Hume regarded as the 'best and firmest basis of public liberty'.[311] This reconciliation of commercial interests with the protection of 'public liberty' was a challenging engagement with civic principles, and it allowed Hume to deal combatively with the associated assumption that the rise of commerce and the arts had the deleterious effect of 'enervating' the moral vigour of the body politic. 'Nor need we fear', he insisted, 'that men, by losing their ferocity, will lose their martial spirit, or become less undaunted and vigorous in defence of their country or their liberty'.[312]

There were patriotic reasons for reclaiming the civic language of national liberty and defence: in the decades following the Union of 1707, it was particularly important for Hume and other Scottish philosophers to debate questions of economic growth and political engagement in the context of Scotland's altered position relative to England. But the explanatory use they found for the civic paradigm was not unique. During the mid-century, similar forms of patriotic discourse – shaped by the language of civic humanism, but deeply receptive to the emergent interests of commerce and empire – were articulated by English writers and politicians of Opposition Whig and 'Country' backgrounds, as part of what Bob

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[310] Robertson, 'The Scottish Enlightenment at the Limits of the Civic Tradition', p.158.
[311] David Hume, 'Of Refinement in the Arts', in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. by Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis, 1985), p.277. See Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, pp.83, 88.
[312] Ibid., p.274.

Harris has called a 'politics of virtue'. The major 'assumptions, values, and attitudes' of Opposition politics, Harris argues, had been derived since the end of the seventeenth century from the intellectual resources of the neo-Harringtonian civic tradition, which 'provided a common language and set of concepts for those who found themselves excluded from the political system'.[313] During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, this shared language tended to be nostalgic and backward looking, but from the 1730s onwards there were compelling reasons for reconciling inherited civic ideals with contemporary imperatives of commercial and imperial growth. 'The interests of trade', Harris writes, 'became more strongly and insistently represented in Country argument and politics in this period', as patriotic fears over the international presence of France and the loss of parts of the empire elevated commercial questions to the highest forums of national debate.[314]

Country-party patriotism 'expanded to accommodate new, often urban elements, with a particular emphasis on trade and commerce'.[315] Its poets and propagandists, as Christine Gerrard has shown, sought to transform the idea of commerce from a philosophical problem into a political solution, insisting that it was less an enervation of public spirit than a civic good in its own right. Their arguments demonstrated that it did not have to be a contradiction in terms to think of the pursuit of self-interest as a national interest, and private enterprise as public-mindedness. This was a particularly straightforward connection to make in the case of overseas trade, which benefited from the popular idea that British liberties were secured by means of the nation's blue water policy (derived from a long-standing civic preference for maritime strength rather than a land-based standing army). In a partial rapprochement of civic and mercantile principles, the business of safeguarding commercial interests at sea was presented as the best possible guarantee of the liberty of the nation and its citizens. *Liberty*

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[313] Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, pp.68-9. See also Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742* (Oxford, 1994), pp.5-6.
[314] Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, pp.71, 69, 272-3.
[315] Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole*, pp.6-10, 14-8.

(1735-6), James Thomson's major five-book treatment of the theme, illustrates this confluence of ideas with an allegorical progress narrative, in which the Goddess of Liberty embarks on a historical procession from the tyranny of the ancient empires to the freedom of modern Britain.

The Goddess leaves behind the ruins of Rome's imperial corruption ('the last Abyss / Of Slavery, Vice, and unambitious Want'), and proceeds in a happier vein to Britain, 'The Land where, *King* and *People* equal bound / By guardian Laws, my fullest Blessings flow' [I. 261-2, 318-9]. British liberty is shown to depend in equal measure on martial strength, honest industry and growth in trade, as the dominance of British sailors over the waves secures the nation's commercial empire and guarantees her independence. 'Theirs the Triumph be', Thomson writes as the 'Genius of the Deep',

> 'By deep *Invention*'s keen pervading Eye,
> The Heart of *Courage*, and the Hand of *Toil*,
> Each conquer'd Ocean staining with their Blood,
> Instead of Treasure robb'd by ruffian War,
> Round social Earth to circle fair Exchange,
> And bind the Nations in a golden Chain.'
> [IV. 433-8]

At the centre of the conquered globe is the great economic hub of the Thames, which the Goddess celebrates in a set-piece georgic encomium: Augusta's river, she claims, is the 'Great Nurse of Fruits, of Flocks, of Commerce', whose tides daily receive 'the mingled Harvest of Mankind' [V. 80, 59]. This hymn to commerce is part of a triumphant closing apostrophe to 'public virtue', in which the Goddess draws on a traditional civic vocabulary of citizenship to set out the 'THREE VIRTUES' by which British freedom is sustained: 'INDEPENDENT LIFE; / INTEGRITY IN OFFICE; and, o'er all / Supreme, A PASSION FOR THE COMMON-WEAL' [V. 120-3]. Thomson's point is that these virtues exist alongside and because of the supreme confidence of Britain's commercial empire, and cannot be separated intellectually from the new forms of civic life that come with the expansion of trade. The address to the

Thames is part of the same broad vision of nationhood, the same organising prospect, as the apostrophe to civic virtue: the work of the poem is to integrate a patriotic defence of trade into a grand narrative of political liberty.

Thomson's praise of 'fair Exchange' and its 'golden Chain' is echoed in a number of works in verse and prose by members of the Patriot opposition.[316] Richard Glover, City merchant and Patriot Whig, described in his poem *London: or, The Progress of Commerce* (1739) the historical progress of 'gracious Commerce' as a force of civilisation throughout the world, placing the apotheosis of her reign in 'Albion sea-embrac'd, / The joy of Freedom, dread of treach'rous kings, / The destin'd mistress of the subject main'. The ideological work of Glover's poem, like Thomson's, lies in conflating the traditionally distinct arenas of private enterprise and public virtue: his verse calls on 'Ye mariners of Britain, chosen train / Of Liberty and Commerce' to reap the fruits of their imperial gains, and the Goddess of Commerce selects London to be the chief seat of her enterprise because there 'ev'ry heart / With public cares is warm'd'.[317] Mark Akenside's Patriot 'Ode to the Country Gentlemen of England' (1758), likewise, unites a civic call to arms in defence of British liberty with a celebration of the nation's commercial prowess. His praise of the public-spirited militias of Britain's proud martial past ('Shall war's heroic arts no more ingage / The unbought hand, the unsubjected mind?') is offset by a recognition that the country's strength now relies in large part on its commerce, rather than stubborn autarchic frugality: 'every port is crouded with thy sails, / And every wave throws treasure on thy shore'. Akenside's point is that saving one's country from the encroachment of foreign tyranny is closely bound up with protecting its

[316] See Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole*, pp.14-17.
[317] Richard Glover, *London: or, The Progress of Commerce. A Poem* (London, 1739), pp.21, 27, 22 (ll. 386-8, 530-1, 423-4).

trade: 'if thy arm', he cautions, 'Shrinks at the frowns of danger and of pain, / Those gifts, that treasure is no longer thine'.[318]

Akenside's poetry was intended to appeal to the concerns of a wider Patriot circle, whose patrons and politicians retained a lively professional or private interest in the future of British trade. Charles, third Viscount Townshend, the addressee of Akenside's ode 'To the Honourable Charles Townshend, in the Country' (1750), was keenly invested in the idea of trade as the foundation of national greatness, and instituted an essay prize at Cambridge in 1755 for the best treatise written on the subject. William Hazeland, joint winner of the prize in its first year, offered 'A View of the Manner in which Trade and Civil Liberty Support Each Other'. Hazeland's dissertation took a historical view in order to demonstrate that commercial development and political liberty had always been interdependent: he rejected the 'imperfect views of Trade' held by such frugal ancient republics as Sparta and insisted that the wealth garnered by trade constituted the foundation of public liberty, because its wider distribution of money and property must 'bring the fortunes of fellow citizens towards that unattainable limit of equality near which all the safe-guards of freedom lie'.[319] An 'established Liberty', Hazeland concluded, 'and an extensive well-conducted Commerce, are the surest foundations [...] of national happiness, that any political union of mankind can procure'.[320]

Hazeland's dissertation, addressing methodically first one side of the question and then the other (respectively, the necessity of commerce for liberty, and the necessity of liberty for commerce), assumed for its dialectical basis the continuing cultural importance of civic thought, but made short work of the political naivety of civic arguments for frugality. Lengthier and more sophisticated versions of the same discussion were produced in the following decades by historical sociologists, who sought to engage with the premises of the civic

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[318] Mark Akenside, 'To the Country Gentlemen of England. MDCCLVIII', ll. 93-4, 33-4, 36-8, in *The Poetical Works of Mark Akenside*, ed. by Robin Dix (Cranbury, NJ, London and Ontario, 1996), pp.340, 338.
[319] William Hazeland, *A View of the Manner in Which Trade and Civil Liberty Support Each Other* (London, 1756), pp.3-4, 8-10.
[320] Ibid., p.3.

paradigm in order to offer an alternative – and economic – history of political nationhood. Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, for instance, insisted that the 'low state of the commercial arts' was the major reason why despotic governance could prevail in barbarous early societies, and showed that there was a profound unfairness at the heart of the idealised Roman *polis*, in which the 'distinction betwixt freemen and slaves' effectively meant that 'the honours of one half of the species were sacrificed to those of the other'.[321] Political liberty, the *Essay* showed, was protected not by the independence of a small landed minority, but by the growth of a broader trading class, possessed of 'a sense of their personal importance', whose private interests would form a 'new power to restrain the prerogative' and act as a check on the power of the crown.[322] Likewise, Smith pointed out in *The Wealth of Nations* that the rise of 'commerce and manufactures' freed a large number of the people from 'servile dependency upon their superiors' and contributed to their 'liberty and security' by providing them with private income.[323]

Ferguson and Smith's point was that political freedom would be safeguarded in economically complex societies as a largely inadvertent consequence of private interest. The public good was protected not because men were 'disposed to regard it as the end of their conduct' in a grand act of civic virtue, but because 'each, in his place, [was] determined to preserve his own'.[324] John Millar's *Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks in Society* (1771) had similar arguments to make about the happy consequences for political liberty of the rise of mobile property. In constitutional monarchies such as Britain, Millar wrote, 'the influence of commerce and manufactures' had always proved 'favourable to liberty, and conducive to a popular form of government', since the 'fluctuation of property' occasioned by commercial development had the effect of levelling the ground between the old hereditary

[321] *HCS*, pp.101, 176.
[322] Ibid., p.128.
[323] Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. by Campbell, Skinner and Todd, i. 412.
[324] *HCS*, p.124.

power and a new monied interest.[325] In the 'rise of the merchant and middle classes', as Hirschman has showed, Millar saw an effective political 'mechanism' for regulating the excessive or arbitrary behaviour of the sovereign, which would 'restore conditions favourable to the expansion of commerce and industry should they be disturbed'.[326] Merchants and tradesmen, Millar argued, were insusceptible to patronage and corruption by virtue of their independent business interests, whilst the aristocracy, 'born to great affluence, and [...] bred to no business', were given to 'indolence and dissipation' and had forfeited their birthright to political decision-making and public affairs.[327]

In the Aristotelian and Roman tradition, those 'bred to no business' were not idle or dissipated, but praised as complete and self-sufficient personalities: they were not limited to any single specialisation or employment, but were capable of performing successively in their own person all functions necessary to the life of the republic. Such men had no recourse to bribes and no reason to hire placemen. They were defined against the 'incomplete' or 'divided' personality of complex commercial societies, a professionally specialised individual whose limitations made him dependent and corruptible.[328] Ferguson, Millar and Smith sought to demonstrate that the idea of the complete personality was a historical anachronism, rather than a recoverable ideal. Because of his 'divided attention' to more than one occupation, the Aristotelian self-sufficient man would be 'prevented from acquiring any skill in the management of any particular subject', as Ferguson argued, and as such he could not possibly flourish in any but the earliest and most undeveloped societies, unless – as in the case of the classical republics – his leisured amateurism was compensated economically by a large body of

[325] John Millar, *Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks in Society* (London, 1771), pp.184, 187.
[326] Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, pp.88-91.
[327] Millar, *Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks in Society*, pp.185-7.
[328] See J.G.A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (London, 1972), pp.92-4.

slaves.[329] The reduction of the civic ideal of personality to an archaism permitted a new appraisal of the political consequences of the division of labour. Fine differentiations of specialism were shown to prompt the redistributive processes of exchange and competition on which the protection of political liberties depended, and the diversity of interests meant that all men would have individual and independent stakes in the economic life of the state. 'The *polis*', Phillipson writes, 'had become a market place', and the later eighteenth-century citizen – merchant, trader, artisan, colonialist – derived his 'moral autonomy' from participating in the 'economic life of the commercial world'.[330]

Arguments like these rested on the proposition that there were *more* opportunities in a complex commercial society for acting and thinking independently, rather than fewer as the traditional line of thinking supposed.[331] The distribution of mobile property across a broader cross-section of society equipped a new order of men – those specialists and professionals traditionally excluded from descriptions of the public sphere – with the economic means for autonomous judgement, and the reconciliation of civic tenets of public-mindedness with the new emphasis on private interest identified the mercantile classes and moneyed men as uniquely capable of virtuous citizenship.[332] This was the course adopted by Wilkes and Churchill's Patriot propaganda in the *North Briton*, which insisted that the middling orders, unlike the aristocracy or the recently ennobled placemen, had the public interests of their nation at heart. In *North Briton* 19, for instance, Wilkes printed an outraged letter in response to the latest edition of the *Briton*, in which Smollett had tried to claim on behalf of the ministry that all

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[329] *HCS*, p.172; Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. by Campbell, Skinner and Todd, ii. 694-8. See also J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History: Essays on Political Thought, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1985; repr. 1995), pp.114, 122.

[330] Phillipson, 'The Scottish Enlightenment', p.36.

[331] Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1689-1798* (Oxford, 1991), p.482.

[332] On the redefinition of virtuous citizenship, see Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism*, pp.196-8, 277-8. For a survey of the opportunities of the middling orders to engage in municipal organisation and political activity, see Jonathan Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort', in *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800*, ed. by Barry and Christopher Brooks (Basingstoke and London, 1994); pp.84-111; Nicholas Rogers, 'The Middling Sort in Eighteenth-Century Politics', in *The Middling Sort of People*, ed. by Barry and Brooks, pp.159-76; Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman*, pp.207-64, 437-46.

individuals interested in reform issued from a nondescript rabble of 'Grubs and Garretteers, desperate gamblers, tradesmen thrice bankrupt, prentices to journeymen', and were conspicuously without 'wealth, property, or credit, [...] industry, probity or learning'.[333] Wilkes's correspondent dismissed these attacks as 'insulting libels', and demonstrated the difference between seditious rabble-rousing and the warranted political interestedness of men with a stake in the affairs of the nation. In particular, he appealed to the mercantile heart of the City as a natural forum for public-minded politics: 'the *merchants* of *London*, in their collective capacity, possess more honest, useful, political knowledge, and understand more of the true interest of their country, than all the ministers of state ever discovered'.[334]

Industry and probity, the *North Briton* argued, were precisely the qualities that distinguished the middling orders from their social superiors and the unpropertied poor: their commercial success depended on honesty and hard work, and they elevated themselves socially on the basis of merit, rather than hierarchical entitlement. Their financial investment in the concerns of commerce and empire entailed a commitment to British prosperity and liberty, and their self-reliance made them less susceptible to bribes and dependence. Claims like these on behalf of the middling were a commonplace of moral philosophy at mid-century. The successful 'private man', Smith wrote in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), could be distinguished from 'the man of rank and distinction' by professional virtues of 'probity and prudence, generosity and frankness'; he would rely on his 'own industry and abilities', rather than the bestowed badges of wealth and favour, to carry him forward to positions of public

[333] *Briton*, 16 (September 11 1762), p.4.
[334] *North Briton*, 19 (October 9 1762), p.6. Anti-ministerial writing in the *North Briton* and *The Monitor* was often directed at the City of London as a centre of Patriot opposition, and in particular at the historically anti-ministerial Common Council. The Council had a venerable tradition of successful political intervention in times of ministerial corruption or tyranny. See Lucy Sutherland, 'The City of London in Eighteenth-Century Politics', in *Essays Presented to Sir Lewis Namier*, ed. by Richard Pares and A.J.P. Taylor (London, 1956), p.60; Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class*, p.266. *Monitor*, 335 (December 19 1761) is an encomiastic history of the Common Council's opposition to government and monarchy.

importance.[335] In the *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, Ferguson praised the mercantile orders in similar terms as 'punctual, liberal, faithful, and enterprising'. The trader, he wrote, 'needs no aid from the state, but its protection; and is often in himself its most intelligent and respectable member'. In 'the period of general corruption', while 'his countrymen act on the plans and under the restrictions of a police adjusted to knaves', the merchant 'acts on the reasons of trade, and the maxims of mankind'.[336] Hume's 'Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth' in the *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* sketched out the utopian implications of this reappraisal of the suitability of the middling for political engagement. He imagined an upper house composed of elected life peers, drawn at least partially from outside the traditional ruling class (and with the proviso that 'no commoner should be allowed to refuse a seat that was offered him'). A House of Lords comprised of 'the men of chief credit, abilities, and interest in the nation' would, he argued, make for a better model of governance than an unchecked system of hereditary privilege.[337]

During the second half of the century, faith in the superior virtues of the middling was 'an almost unchallengeable platitude' in educated circles.[338] Literary representations of middling men absorbed the sympathetic arguments of moral philosophy and historical sociology. Oliver Goldsmith's sentimental novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) has its protagonist Dr Primrose declaim at length on the superior merits of the 'middle order of mankind', whose members are financially secured against bribery and corruption (they are 'possest of too large fortunes to submit to the neighbouring man in power'), and who practice collectively 'all the arts, wisdom, and virtues of mankind'.[339] Churchill's friend William Cowper addressed *Tirocinium* (1784), his long poem on the reform of education, to the only

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[335] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. by D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (Oxford, 1976; repr. 1979), pp.55-6.
[336] *HCS*, p.138.
[337] Hume, 'The Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth', in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. by Miller, p.527.
[338] Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman*, p.477.
[339] Oliver Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, ed. by Arthur Friedman and Robert L. Mack (Oxford, 2006; repr. 2008), pp.87-8.

decent and intellectually honest audience he could conceive of: 'to you, then, tenants of life's middle state, / Securely placed between the small and great, / Whose character, yet undebauch'd, retains / Two thirds of all the virtue that remains'.[340] The new cultural ideal located independence of mind in private business interests that would serve as a counterweight to the corrupt attractions of conferred privilege or sinecure. Middling men, it was argued, shouldered the burden of aristocratic expense by their hard work and their tax-paying; their private investments made Britain wealthy and guaranteed the preservation of imperial conquests; and their growing financial power served as a political deterrent to the encroachment of the power of the sovereign or the aristocracy.[341] Beckford, as MP for the City of London, announced in an address to Parliament in 1761 that the 'middling people of England' were 'they who bore all the heat of the day' and yet received little say in the conduct of government: their self-discipline, credit-worthiness and native talents were conscientiously invested in the economic life of a nation from whose political forums they were still largely excluded.[342]

During the middle decades of the century, arguments like Beckford's formed the basis for contemporary political debates on the conduct of the war and the extension of the franchise, and there were clear reasons to appeal to the middling as a self-conscious – and patriotic – political class. Pitt's government during the early years of the Seven Years' War relied strongly on the pro-war sentiments of merchants and traders, particularly within the City of London, who pressed for the continuation of the war in order to secure colonial concessions from the French (and to safeguard previously settled trading bases).[343] After Pitt's resignation in 1761 and the appointment of Bute the following year, commercial and trading opinion within the

[340] William Cowper, *Tirocinium: Or, a Review of Schools*, ll. 807-10, in *The Poems of William Cowper*, ed. by John D. Baird and Charles Ryskamp, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1980-95), ii: *1782-1785* (1995), p.291.
[341] See, e.g., Vicesimus Knox, *The Spirit of Despotism* (London, 1795), p.83: the middling are 'very important members' of the community, 'contributing to its support by their personal exertions, their consumption of taxed commodities, and the payment of imposts'.
[342] Perry Gauci, *William Beckford: First Prime Minister of the London Empire* (New Haven, 2013), ch.5. See also Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism*, pp.190-5.
[343] Sutherland, 'The City of London in Eighteenth-Century Politics', p.56.

City reverted to its traditional position of fervent anti-ministerialism, and contested the new government's determination to secure a swift peace.[344] Opposition journalism fomented this Patriot outrage, appealing to the mercantile orders as a right-thinking political class who alone had the interests of the nation at heart and understood what it meant to safeguard British liberties. 'The public have been inform'd, that our conquests are to be given up', reported *The Monitor* ominously in September 1762. 'The interest of the nation is to be committed to the care and management of men, of whom they have never had any opinion, or reason to prefer them in their esteem for the necessary abilities, required in the arduous task of peace-making'.[345] Wilkes's *North Briton* printed a satiric dialogue between 'Earl Buchanan' and the 'Duke d'Ossuna', or the Earl of Bute and the Duke of Bedford, which was intended to pique City suspicions of Bute's dismissive attitude towards Britain's commercial interests. ('There is combustibility enough in it', Wilkes wrote to Churchill as he sent him the proofs.[346]) Merchants, Wilkes complained in the character of Bute, were 'rich – too rich – very rich'; they were 'low-lived wretches who live by trade', and their success at home and abroad had made them assume dangerous 'airs of consequence'. 'The colonies are too flourishing – trade in too great an extent has been our ruin', the ventriloquised Bute declared. 'Remember, my Lord – Trade is the bane of our nation!'[347]

Wilkes's satire was clear about the constituency it had in mind: it envisaged a coherent group of publicly-minded members of the middling, City merchants and traders who loathed Bute's ministry as a matter of both private and national interest, and engaged in politics under the Patriot banner as a means of safeguarding investments they had made in Britain's name. Economic specialists, the Patriot opposition insisted, were also capable of political breadth, and

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[344] See ibid., pp.54, 58, and Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty*, pp.15-6. For a discussion of Patriot literary responses to Pitt's resignation and acceptance of a peerage, see Cardwell, *Arts and Arms*, pp.250-62.
[345] *Monitor*, 373 (September 11 1762), p.2. See *North Briton*, 15 (September 11 1762).
[346] Wilkes to Churchill, November 11 1762, in *The Correspondence of John Wilkes and Charles Churchill*, ed. by Weatherly, p.32.
[347] *North Briton*, 24 (November 13 1762), pp.4-5.

in any case it was on the basis of their professional interests and investments that they were to be considered citizens of the public sphere with a right to determine the way in which they were governed. There were radical and reformist implications to this line of thinking, which Wilkes, Beckford and others emphasised as part of the campaign for 'liberty' in the 1760s and 1770s.[348] Since the middling possessed the propertied independence necessary for autonomous political judgement (and, equally, since they paid their taxes and had a right to something in return), there were clear arguments for a reform of the mechanics of political representation and the distribution of public offices. The radical writer James Burgh, for instance, argued in his essay collection *Crito* (1766) that there was no reason to suspect that the 'brain of a statesman' was 'made of materials different from that of a citizen', or to believe the common refrain of ministers that private men were 'incompetent judges of the conduct of their governors'. Since their business interests accorded them a financial stake in the prospects of the nation, private citizens had 'a right to consider themselves on the same foot with the stockholders in a trading company', and were entitled to the same prerogative to air their grievances about 'directorial' misconduct.[349] Burgh's later treatise *Political Disquisitions* (1774) elaborated the practical implications of these arguments, and sought to show that there was 'an overbalance of power in the hands of the landed men' in Parliament and the Lords, to the exclusion of crucial 'mercantile and monied' interests.[350]

Radical arguments reappraised the political and moral life of the middling orders relative to the habits of the prevailing elite. Setting out the particular merits of the mercantile and commercial classes was intended to distinguish them effectively from both the abject dependence of the unpropertied poor and – especially – the moral turpitude of the aristocracy.

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[348] See Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty*, pp.26-7.

[349] James Burgh, *Crito, or, Essays on Various Subjects*, 2 vols. (London, 1766-7), i. 1-2. Vicesimus Knox argues similarly that the middling orders 'constitute the best bulwarks of liberty', but are 'taught to believe, that they ought not to trouble themselves with affairs of state'. See Knox, *The Spirit of Despotism* (London, 1795), pp.79-87.

[350] James Burgh, *Political Disquisitions: or, an Enquiry into Public Errors, Defects, and Abuses…* 3 vols. (London, 1774-5), i. 51. See Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism*, ch.7, for a full discussion of Burgh's writing.

'It is not in the high ranks of life, or among the great and mighty, that we are to seek wisdom and goodness', Richard Price wrote in 1777.[351] Patriot writing from both Country and radical circles condemned the governing class for its members' dissipation, luxurious habits and crippling lack of interest in British concerns.[352] 'Nobility, at this period, is but a degenerated race of men, whom [...] fortune hath dissolved into every abject degree of contempt, dullness, effeminacy, and disease', proclaimed *The London Magazine* in 1774.[353] Attacks like these presented a serious challenge to the monopoly that the landed elite had always retained on civic paradigms of behaviour. The intellectual achievement of reconciling professional integrity with Patriot categories of incorruptibility and public-mindedness had the effect of uncoupling, as Margaret Hunt has suggested, 'the link between virtue and landed independence', which in turn served to interrogate the traditional connection between aristocratic birthright and public office.[354] The civic paradigm, for politically self-conscious members of the middling and their spokesmen, was a matter of meritorious application rather than fortunate birth. To be corrupt, according to the new definition, was to be lazy, unproductive, and incapable of harnessing one's native talents. To be virtuous, meanwhile, was to participate in a public sphere driven by the private impulses of self-centred gain, and to devote oneself to the specialisation of talents that would, paradoxically, equip one for a more general and significant expression of personality.[355]

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[351] Richard Price, *Additional Observations on the Nature and Value of Civil Liberty, and the War with America...* (London, 1777), p.25.
[352] Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, pp.85-7. See also Vera Nünning, 'From 'Honour' to 'Honest': The Invention of the (Superiority of the) Middling Ranks in Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal for the Study of British Cultures* ii (1995), 19-41.
[353] *The London Magazine, or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*, 43 (December 1774), pp.567-8.
[354] Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1996), p.202.
[355] Shelley Burtt has shown that this relocation of virtue to the private sphere was to some degree also an early eighteenth-century phenomenon: in the propaganda of the Court Whigs, for instance, there was an exhortation to virtue in the form of the 'typically bourgeois excellences of frugality and industry' that belonged to the private sphere. See Burtt, *Virtue Transformed*, pp.13-4, 117-27.

In the decades after the Glorious Revolution, a broad cultural interrogation of the moral credentials of literary genres encouraged attention to the ethics of the major Roman satirists, and a reassessment of their moral standing relative to one another. Neoclassical critics produced a number of commentaries on the kinds of behaviours that were variously attacked and praised by Horace, Persius and Juvenal, seeking to theorise the genre's commitment to a certain set of moral principles. There was, as Howard Weinbrot has shown, a distinct tendency in such writing to admire the 'pro-republican, anti-imperial character' of Juvenal and Persius over the 'political sycophancy, collaboration, and support of tyranny' associated with Horace's presence at the court of Augustus Caesar, who was himself ambivalently viewed as a dangerous paradigm for royal absolutism as well as a patron of arts and letters.[356] This critical bias emerged as a 'simple inversion of the positive royalist association of court and letters of (roughly) the seventeenth century', and produced a dominant normative idea of satire as a mouthpiece for political independence, a check on the self-interest and corruption associated with court and ministerial patronage.[357]

Dryden's comments in his 'Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire' (1693), attached to a new translation of Juvenal and Persius, were particularly influential in this regard. Persius, Dryden argued, was praiseworthy for his Stoic convictions and 'severe virtue', which allowed him to act independently of the corrupting biases of 'passions, interest [and] ambition', and eschew all the attractions of court preferment. Horace, meanwhile, was urbane, sophisticated and decorous: as 'a courtier', he 'complied with the interest of his master', and was 'dipt in the same actions' that he sought to satirise.[358] Dryden compared his complicity unfavourably with Juvenal's principled opposition to imperial despotism. 'His spirit

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[356] Howard D. Weinbrot, *Augustus Caesar in 'Augustan' England: The Decline of a Classical Norm* (Princeton, 1978), p.164, 153. See also Weinbrot, *Eighteenth-Century Satire: Essays on Text and Context from Dryden to Peter Pindar* (Cambridge, 1988; repr. 1991), pp.22-3.
[357] Weinbrot, *Augustus Caesar in 'Augustan' England*, p.120.
[358] John Dryden, 'A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire', in *Essays of John Dryden*, ed. by Ker, ii. 75-6, 90-1.

has more of the commonwealth genius', he wrote of Juvenal approvingly: 'he treats tyranny, and all the vices attending it, as they deserve, with the utmost rigour: and consequently, a noble soul is better pleased with a zealous vindicator of Roman liberty, than with a temporising poet, a well-mannered court slave'.[359]

Dryden's appraisals were 'well known throughout the eighteenth century', as Weinbrot observes, and provided the critical basis for a long-standing admiration of Juvenal and Persius's civic republicanism over Horace's cautious accommodations.[360] Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* (1711) attacked both Horace and Virgil for their compliance at the court of Augustus and the propagandistic function of their poetry. 'They were more to him than his arms or military virtue', Shaftesbury wrote. '[They] made his usurped dominion so enchanting to the world that it could see without regret its chains of bondage firmly riveted'.[361] Gibbon, reading over Juvenal's satires in 1763, noted in his journal that the satirist 'spoke the language of an ancient Roman' and was 'the sworn enemy of tyranny', in contrast to Horace, Virgil, Ovid and others, all of whom 'sung the ruin of their country, and the triumph of their oppressors'. Juvenal alone, Gibbon wrote, 'never prostituted his muse'.[362] Satire, Augustan commentators emphasised, ought to be unshakably oppositional in its politics. On the model of Juvenal and Persius, the satirist should cultivate and parade his virtuous disengagement from the court in order to scrutinise ministerial corruption and the suppression of liberties with the

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[359] Ibid., p.87; see Weinbrot, *Eighteenth-Century Satire*, pp.29, 135.

[360] Weinbrot, *Eighteenth-Century Satire*, p.29; P.K. Elkin, *The Augustan Defence of Satire* (Oxford, 1973), p.34; W.B. Carnochan, 'Satire, Sublimity, and Sentiment: Theory and Practice in Post-Augustan Satire', *PMLA* lxxxv (1970), 260-7 (pp.261-2).

[361] Shaftesbury, 'Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author', II.i, in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. by Klein, p.99. See Klein, 'Liberty, Manners, and Politeness in Early Eighteenth-Century England', p.597, on Shaftesbury's use of the classical past to illustrate his arguments on liberty and the arts.

[362] Originally in French (the translation in the text is mine): 'Juvenal y parle d'un bout à l'autre le langage d'un ancien Romain. Je vois partout non seulement le ton d'un vrai Censeur qui confonde le vice, […] mais encore celui d'un Republicain, dont l'ame se plié avec difficulté à la nouvelle constitution, ennemi juré de la tyrannie. […] Cet air de liberté, cette fierté d'ame distingue Juvenal de tous ses confrères qui ont veçû après l'etablissement de l'Empire, Virgile, Horace, Ovide, Lucain, Martial, Stace, Valerius Flaccus. Ils on tous chanté la ruine de la patrie et le triomphe de leurs Oppresseurs'. […] Juvenal n'a jamais sû prostituer sa muse'. See Edward Gibbon, journal for August 31 1764, in *Le Journal de Gibbon a Lausanne, 17 Août 1763-19 Avril 1764*, publié par Georges Bonnard (Lausanne, 1945), p.16. Corbyn Morris, *An Essay Towards Fixing the True Standards of Wit, Humour, Raillery, Satire, and Ridicule…* (London, 1744), p.51, has a similar comparison between Juvenal and Horace.

proper critical independence. He should retain high civic principles derived from the example of the anti-imperial satirists, which would equip him with a high-minded disdain towards trade and commerce and a firm regard for the kind of political autonomy conferred either by virtuous poverty or a landed inheritance. Fully carried through, these principles would govern the conduct of his personal life as well as the life of his literary persona.

Most poets dabbling in satire were, by these exacting moral and economic criteria, attempting a level of public-spirited participation that was fundamentally beyond them. This offered a fruitful subject for satire in itself: Walter Harte, for instance, made short work in his *Essay on Satire* (1730) of 'Wit's endless enemies', the many dunces who 'write for Glory' or 'write as Party, or as Spleen invades'.[363] The common money-grubbing satirist, Harte wrote, was lamentably susceptible to the promptings of interests and passions from which his office ought to be exempt:

> Next see the Master-piece of Flatt'ry rise,
> Th'anointed Son of Dulness and of Lies:
> [...]
> For well he knows the Vices of the Town,
> The Schemes of State, and Int'rest of the Gown;
> Immoral Afternoons, indecent Nights,
> Enflaming Wines, and second Appetites.[364]

Properly understood, the task of the satirist was monumental indeed. John Brown outlined it in ringing tones in his *Essay on Satire* (1745), where he claimed that Britain was on the verge of a crisis of moral and political enervation, poised to fall into the same corrupt and luxurious state of decline that civic philosophy had deplored in the last days of Rome ('an iron age', 'the dregs, the drainings of exhausted time').[365] In such extremities, he argued, satire was duty-bound to

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[363] Walter Harte, *An Essay on Satire, Particularly on the Dunciad...* (London, 1730), pp.27, 33.
[364] Ibid., p.30.
[365] John Brown, *An Essay on Satire: Occasion'd by the Death of Mr. Pope* (London, 1745), p.19 (ll. 242-4).

display the disinterested public-mindedness so conspicuously lacking from existing forums of political debate and stage a spirited Patriot intervention:

> When private Faith and publick Trust are sold,
> And traitors barter Liberty for gold:
> When fell Corruption dark and deep as fate,
> Saps the foundation of a tottering state:
> […]
> Then warmer numbers glow thro' SATIRE's page,
> And all her smiles are darken'd into rage:[366]

The familiar civic dichotomies here ('private'/'Publick'; 'Liberty'/'Corruption') are Brown's way of indicating that satire shares a common language and a conceptual framework with neo-Harringtonian discourse, and the emphatic transition from light Horatian to forthright Juvenalian forms of satiric presentation ('all her smiles are darken'd into rage') presses the point that there has never been a more urgent need for poetry's rhetorical call to arms. Brown insists that political virtue is to be measured according to traditional republican criteria, and presents satire as both a register and a redress of the political health of the state.

The *Essay* had firm ideas as to what sorts of men were intellectually and economically qualified to attempt the grand task of writing satire. The satirist had to be of sufficient means to remain impervious to the attractions of a place or a pension, to 'scorn the venal tribe' whom 'fear can sway, or guilty greatness bribe'.[367] In Brown and Harte's treatises alike, the contemporary model for this idealised position of disinterest was Pope, who recommended himself on both personal and literary grounds. Politically, he was a suitable model of civic opposition: he grew close during the 1730s to the circle of Boy Patriots that formed around Lyttelton, Marchmont and the young William Pitt, established a friendship with the Prince of Wales, and wrote the *Epilogue to the Satires* in praise of a virtuous minority of Opposition

[366] Ibid., ll. 297-304.
[367] Ibid., ll.467-8.

Whigs.[368] Economically, he was independent and could afford to think and write as he chose: from the sales of his *Iliad* and *Odyssey* translations he had accrued sufficient personal wealth to be able to assume a version of the landed autonomy he praised in his social superiors.[369] In his poetry, he declared his position by establishing himself as part of the emerging critical tradition of admiring Juvenal and Persius over Horace for their spirited civic republicanism, and based his projection of his own role as virtuous poet-satirist on their example.[370] In the *Moral Essays* and the *Imitations of Horace*, he formulated a thoroughly developed Juvenalian persona, bitterly opposed to the administration of the day and compelled by disinterested principles to set up a rival political forum in the country ('At home tho' exil'd', as he put it in his 'Epistle to Bolingbroke').[371]

Pope's Whig Patriot friends welcomed his political satires, but they urged him towards another kind of writing: they thought satire was liable to be self-defeating in its pessimism, and preferred the sublime high-notes of Miltonic epic and the Pindaric ode for their political writing.[372] Members of the Tory arm of the opposition to Walpole were more apt to adopt verse satire as a mode of political resistance. A number of poets including Pope, Swift, Arbuthnot, Whitehead and Johnson drew on Bolingbroke's neo-Harringtonian philosophy to attack the new financial order of the post-1688 world, setting their writing against the various 'political and economic transvaluations that were permanently altering inherited structures and habitual priorities of private and social experience'.[373] Their common ideology, as Pocock has written, was 'founded on a presumption of real property and an ethos of the civic life', and 'urged an ideal of virtue which at times reached unreally Stoical heights of moral autonomy'.[374]

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[368] See Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole*, pp.69-89.
[369] Harte, for instance, observed admiringly that Pope was 'Above all Flattery, all Thirst of Gain'. See *An Essay on Satire*, p.21.
[370] See Weinbrot, *Eighteenth-Century Satire*, pp.30-1, 136-42.
[371] Pope, *The First Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated*, l. 184, *TE*, iv. 293.
[372] Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole*, pp.71-9.
[373] Nicholson, *Writing and the Rise of Finance*, p.19; see also Isaac Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Cambridge, Mass and London, 1968), pp.70-83, 206-35.
[374] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, p.486.

Their satiric verse invoked historical civic preoccupations in a contemporary and urgent fashion, employing them as rhetorical yardsticks in the specific contexts of debates over the standing army, credit finances, corrupt placemanship and parliamentary accountability; and they measured the moral decline of the new Walpolian world ('a Land of Hectors, / Thieves, Supercargoes, Sharpers, and Directors', in Pope's phrase) against a nostalgic vision of principled retirement from the avenues of preferment.[375] By their own account, they were prompted to write satire by a 'noble Sense of Liberty [...] / That great Prerogative of *English* Souls', which they perceived to be threatened by those who submitted to a 'fatal, despicable Lust of Gold' or sold out 'for a Hireling's Pay', as the Opposition poet Thomas Gilbert wrote in 1738.[376]

The example of the major Roman satirists offered useful technical models for this satiric posture. Persius and Juvenal in particular were imitated for the tropes and conceits they used to present the satiric persona as defiantly *contra mundum*, disengaged from the compromised world of the city or the court. The idea of writing satire in dialogue, for instance, used by Pope in the *First Satire of the Second Book*, 'To Fortescue' (1733) and the two *Epilogue to the Satires* dialogues (1738), was drawn from Persius's technique of setting up an unscrupulous or callow adversarius to be defeated by the superior virtue and argumentation of the satirist's persona.[377] Likewise, the trope of contrasting sites of landed virtue with the encroaching venality of the town (employed in Swift and Pope's *Sixth Satire of the Second Book* (1738), for instance, or Johnson's *London*, published in the same year) placed the satirist in allusive company with Juvenal, elaborating the moralised oppositions between urban and rural life highlighted by Dryden's 1693 translation of *Satires* 3.[378] More broadly, a preference for

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[375] Pope, *The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated*, ll. 71-2, *TE*, iv. 11. See Burtt, *Virtue Transformed*, pp.18-9, on the particular political battles fought by the Country interest during the Walpole years.
[376] Thomas Gilbert, *The World Unmask'd. A Satire* (London, 1738), p.11.
[377] See Weinbrot, *Eighteenth-Century Satire*, p.136; Elkin, *The Augustan Defence of Satire*, p.100.
[378] Juvenal, *Satire* III, in *The Satires of Decimus Junius Juvenalis: and of Aulus Persius Flaccus*, trans. by John Dryden, William Congreve *et al.*, 4th edn. (London, 1711), especially pp.122, 144.

Juvenalian railing over lighter Horatian raillery permitted the satirist to frame his public-spiritedness as a form of judicious misanthropy, and the satiric endeavour as lonely and humourless warfare; this allowed for, among other things, Pope's pugnacious self-presentation of 'To Fortescue' ('arm'd for *Virtue* when I point the Pen'), and his great claim that 'while I live, no rich or noble knave / Shall walk the World, in credit, to his grave'.[379] The satirist professed his fitness for public life by fashioning a persona who was independent, frugal, martial and brave.

Opposition satire, 'endowed with all the riches of the complex and articulate vocabulary of civic humanism', tended to 'dominate discourse' over the years of Walpole's government.[380] Its writers, though, did not manage to retain a complete monopoly over the language of virtue and corruption, liberty and patriotism: Weinbrot, Gerrard, Griffin and Burtt have all observed that ministerial satirists were capable of appropriating the same characteristic emphases for their attacks on the Opposition.[381] Lord Hervey's dialogic *Satire in the Manner of Persius* (1739), for instance, inveighed against 'Publick Ills' and the invidious effect of 'Int'rest' on political liberty. 'Perhaps you mourn our Senate's sinking Fame, / That Shew of Freedom dwindled to a Name', Hervey wrote as one of his interlocutors, fluently engaging with a set of concepts and keywords that might seem more obviously at home in Patriot discourse.[382] In a rapidly responsive literary marketplace, both sides of the political divide developed remarkably similar rhetorical ideas of the sorts of behaviours that constituted public virtue, even if Country and ministerial satirists disagreed in practice as to the particular activities and allegiances that should be labelled praiseworthy or corrupt. For satiric poets of all kinds during the 1730s and

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[379] Pope, *The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated*, l. 105, 119-20, *TE*, iv. 15, 17.
[380] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, p.486.
[381] See Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry*, p.18; Howard D. Weinbrot, *Alexander Pope and the Traditions of Formal Verse Satire* (Princeton, 1982), p.119; Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole*, p.3. Burtt, *Virtue Transformed*, p.35, argues that Court Whig writers reclaimed the idea of civic virtue by redefining the traits that characterised the virtuous citizen.
[382] John, Baron Hervey, *A Satire in the Manner of Persius*… (London, 1739), p.6.

1740s, civic thought offered a ready-made set of concepts to think with and an adaptable range of ethical attitudes.[383]

The end of Pope's literary career in the early 1740s coincided with the fall of Walpole's government and the breakdown of a coherent Patriot opposition under Pulteney and Wyndham. 'Pope and poetry are dead!' wrote Horace Walpole triumphantly in 1746. 'Patriotism has kissed hands on accepting a place'.[384] After 1740, as Shelley Burtt has shown, 'the idea of a politics of public virtue' ceased to occupy 'an important place in public dialogue'; it was difficult to sustain a 'compelling vision of the benefits to be secured by a politics of public virtue', when that vision had been 'consistently denigrated and denied by those in power'.[385] For the remainder of the 1740s and the decade following, there was neither a thriving culture of Opposition satire nor an obvious political target for its anger.[386] Paul Whitehead wrote an impassioned poem, *Honour* (1747), on continuing instances of ministerial corruption and the deplorable unfairness of the law ('WILD falls a Felon, WALPOLE mounts a Lord'[387]); but, by and large, satires tended to be on literary subjects, taking up the attacks on Grub Street formulated in earlier decades by Pope, Swift and Gay, or were light squibs on absurd aspects of high life.[388] Overtly political satire from a self-conscious Patriot opposition – and the answering ministerial attacks it provoked – only re-emerged and flourished in the altered climate of the early 1760s, roused by a particular combination of circumstances: the arrival of a

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[383] 'Country ideology', William Dowling has argued, was a 'common symbolic language within which antagonisms [were] fought out by all parties'. See Dowling, 'Ideology and the Flight from History in Eighteenth-Century Poetry', p.141.

[384] To Sir Horace Mann (March 21 1746), in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. by W.S. Lewis, 48 vols. (New Haven, 1937-83), xix: *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Sir Horace Man III*, ed. by Lewis, Warren Hunting Smith and George L. Lam (London and New Haven, 1955), p.229.

[385] Burtt, *Virtue Transformed*, pp.22-3, 27, 31.

[386] On the 'relative sociopolitical stability' of the middle decades of the century and its implications for satire, see Ashley Marshall, *The Practice of Satire in England, 1658-1770* (Baltimore, 2013), pp.287-8.

[387] Paul Whitehead, *Honour, a Satire* (London, 1747), p.7.

[388] Thomas Lockwood lists a handful of satires written in the late 1740s and early 1750s by Smollett, Whitehead, Lloyd, Smart and Richard Owen Cambridge. See Lockwood, *Post-Augustan Satire: Charles Churchill and Satirical Poetry, 1750-1800* (Seattle and London, 1979), pp.21, 44-5, 79, 108-9. Ashley Marshall's comprehensive taxonomy of eighteenth-century satire lists satires on frivolous and literary subjects published between 1745 and 1770: see Marshall, *The Practice of Satire in England*, pp.242-3, 245-6.

new unpopular minister, the conduct of the war and negotiations over the peace, and the threat of a renewed Scottish incursion on English liberties.[389]

Ministerial and Opposition groups alike took up the pen in order to expose suspected conspiracies, denigrate individual politicians or propagandists and formulate complex historical parallels for contemporary events. Satirists for the ministry included Smollett and Arthur Murphy, who used their weekly journals *The Briton* and *The Auditor* as vehicles to foment suspicions that Opposition writers were idle rabble-rousers, and also (in the case of Murphy) wrote verse satire in direct response to Churchill's poems. On the anti-ministerial side, Wilkes furnished articles for *The North Briton* alongside additional pieces by Churchill and his friend Robert Lloyd, and both Lloyd and Churchill wrote Patriot verse satire on behalf of the Wilkesite cause. The anonymous 'Junius' composed Patriot letters to the *Public Advertiser* between 1769 and 1772, attacking the Dukes of Grafton and Bedford for their corrupt systems of administration and appointment. Thomas Chatterton, under the pseudonyms of 'Decimus' and 'Probus', imitated Junius's style in his public letters to *The Freeholder's Journal* and *The Middlesex Journal* in 1770, and published extended verse satires on Patriot subjects in the manner of Churchill.

Churchill, as Thomas Lockwood has written, was 'the first writer after Pope to take up a full-scale program of professionally conscious literary satire, and the first satirist after Pope to acquire anything like the amount of public attention Pope had'.[390] For clear political reasons (as well as specialist ones of form and technique), his satire could hardly avoid engaging in a comparative and allusive fashion with the anti-ministerial satire of the Walpole years. This comparison tended to be one-sided and was typical of a broader contemporary anxiety about inferiority and belatedness. It was a commonplace among mid-century observers that writing

[389] Verbal and visual caricature also thrived during the second half of the eighteenth century, often in tandem with more traditional kinds of verse satire: Churchill, for instance, drew impetus directly from pro-ministerial prints of Hogarth's, such as *The Times* (1762).
[390] Lockwood, *Post-Augustan Satire*, p.60.

satire – and verse satire in particular – had become something of a problematic business following the death of Pope, which had seemed to signal the end of an astonishing renaissance in neoclassical poetics.[391] Lloyd (who was preternaturally disposed to be gloomy about his craft, but nonetheless articulated a sensitivity shared by others beside himself), wondered in his 'Epistle to Mr. Colman' (1756) whether any 'but a madman, would engage / A Poet in the present age', since 'Write what we will, our works bespeak us / *Imitatores, servum Pecus*'.[392] Satire, of the various genres or models available, was particularly likely to seem hollow and imitative. 'Others, more daring, fix their hope / On rivalling the fame of Pope', Lloyd wrote in a mock-advisory epistle to a fellow-poet. 'In these the spleen of Pope we find; / But where the greatness of his mind? / His numbers are their whole pretence'.[393] Churchill attempted to distinguish his verse from its suffocating model by finding fault with Pope's achievement.[394] 'E'en excellence, unvary'd, tedious grows' [l. 369], he wrote of Pope's polished numbers in 'The Apology' (1761).

The aesthetic difficulty of following the Augustan example was not the only stumbling block associated with writing political verse satire at mid-century. There was also the problem that satire of the early eighteenth century was bound up with a particular philosophy of moral behaviour, which set limits to the kinds of political and economic activity that satirists could present as virtuous. Writing satire meant engaging with a handed-down moral vocabulary and an attached range of rhetorical postures and perspectives. As the mid-century poet inherited it, the genre embodied a number of ideological propositions, consistent with civic humanist descriptions of personality and political action. Neoclassical theory, literary histories of satire and the practice of verse satirists (on both Opposition and ministerial sides of the question) presented the same coherent critical vision of the kinds of behaviours and actions that satire

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[391] See Bate, *The Burden of the Past,* pp.45-8.
[392] Robert Lloyd, 'An Epistle to Mr. Colman. Written in the Year 1756', in *The Poetical Works of Robert Lloyd, A.M.* 2 vols. (London, 1774), i. 166-7.
[393] Lloyd, 'To * * * *, About to Publish a Volume of Miscellanies. Written in the Year 1755', in ibid., i. 107.
[394] See Carretta, *The Snarling Muse*, p.244.

ought to encourage and those it ought to denigrate. Satire praised conduct that exhibited key civic qualities of disinterest, incorruptibility, stoicism and public-mindedness; it was committed to the idea of landownership as an index of moral personality; and it argued that the safeguarding of political liberties could only be entrusted to those members of the old aristocracy or gentry who had remained staunchly detached from the encroachment of commercial wealth. The genre's ethical authority depended on a conviction that only certain sorts or classes of men were equipped with the disinterested moral sense to influence political decision-making, or to intervene in the conduct of public life on the basis of their landed stakeholding in the nation's welfare. The satirist's own claims to be able to distinguish between virtuous and corrupt behaviour had to be seen to rest on a similarly confident intellectual autonomy.

For the Patriot satirist in the age of Wilkes, this was a complicated and uncongenial literary burden to undertake. Churchill and Chatterton's politics developed as part of a thorough reconsideration of what constituted virtuous and corrupt behaviour in public life. Their poetry sought to interrogate the rational basis for the historical association between landownership and public office, contributing to an emerging tradition in radical philosophy of demonstrating that there were convincing reasons for perceiving superior personal and political attributes in the middling orders, particularly in the case of those involved in commercial activities. Political satire, as Vincent Carretta has shown, was 'addressed more consistently than it had ever been before to a mass audience composed mainly of the unenfranchised', which meant that aristocratic models of virtue were increasingly inapplicable and counterproductive. 'The role of country gentleman', he writes, 'could not be reconciled with the kind of urban political opposition Wilkes and Churchill represented in the early 1760s': virtue, for the first time, was associated not with a political ruling class who were temporarily out of office or in

exile, but with an order of men who had always been excluded from the forums of political decision-making.[395]

Familiar civic dichotomies – virtue and corruption; land and commerce; liberty and tyranny – were no longer useful terms to think with, principally because, as Kramnick has shown, such concepts did not have 'a continuous meaning throughout the century', and had shifted the ideological ground they denoted.[396] They had also lost their antithetical charge: it was no longer so clear, for instance, that the rise of commerce offered a direct threat to political liberty, since new histories of social progress had shown that the development of a monied class served as a constitutional check on the power of the crown and the aristocracy. The attributes that satire sought to praise, such as intellectual autonomy and public-mindedness, were associated with a new order of men who equipped themselves for public life by virtue of the private interests and specialisations they cultivated; and there were, moreover, new virtues related specifically to the professional life of the middling (merit, integrity, industry), which had not previously been included in satire's epideictic categories. For all these reasons, Patriot satirists of the 1760s and 1770s were required to engage with a generic formula whose philosophical foundations worked directly against their own reformist convictions. Their satire reappraised the public role of economic activity and proposed a new idea of virtuous citizenship, but the genre's civic history and its patrician associations were complicatedly at odds with the radicalism of the enterprise.

This chapter will examine the intellectual contradictions involved in writing a contemporary version of Patriot satire in an inherited Augustan language. For Churchill and Chatterton, straightforward reiterations of satire's traditional ideological framework could not possibly do justice to the political class they sought to address: the genre's inbuilt antipathy to commercial activity was an unsympathetic basis for praising the autonomy that came with

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[395] Ibid., pp.242-3.
[396] Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism*, p.169.

possessing economic interests. This chapter suggests instead that their model of verse satire worked to reclaim the available neoclassical formulae for a different species of political opposition, and a new cultural politics of virtuous behaviour. This process of revision produced a version of Patriot writing that was distinctly sceptical about holding onto the old Roman principles and prejudices of former anti-ministerial writing for the sake of generic tradition.[397] Such writing argued that praiseworthy political activity had little to do with Stoic postures of self-denial, and was more likely to emerge from addressing private interests and responding to the promptings of the passions. The new satire conceived of all forms of hereditary privilege as inherently corrupt, and insisted that canons of praise and invective ought to be established on the basis of meritocratic criteria, rather than the unfair dispensations of entitlement or purchasing power. It disputed the civic notion that independent political judgement could be practised solely by a disinterested minority of virtuous landowners and claimed instead that independence belonged to a far larger group of the disenfranchised middling, men whose distance from both corrupt entitlement and helpless poverty allowed them to make decisions freely. Patriot satire in the hands of Churchill and Chatterton was a radical celebration of the virtue of a new political order. This chapter seeks to show how their verse redefined the parameters of praiseworthy citizenship, in order to think seriously about the kinds of men who were best equipped to hold public office and represent their fellow citizens.

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The amount of political verse satire produced during the 1760s and 1770s was limited in comparison to the outpouring of anti-ministerial poetry during the Walpole years. Churchill was, as Kenneth Hopkins has pointed out, 'the only major English poet whose whole works are satirical', but his poetic career lasted only four years, in which he wrote 10 complete Wilkesite

[397] Lockwood, *Post-Augustan Satire*, p.176, notes that in such writing, 'the traditional pretensions of satire will themselves become the subject of ironic criticism or even ridicule'.

political satires written between 1761 and his early death in France in 1764.[398] Murphy, writing for Bute's ministry, waged a paper war with Churchill after the publication of *The Rosciad* in 1761, which yielded two political satires published in the same year, *The Examiner* and *An Ode to the Naiads of Fleet-Ditch*. Chatterton came to anti-ministerial satire in the last year of his short life, writing a handful of pieces in varying states of completion in the autumn of 1769 and the spring of 1770. Most of these were intended for publication, but only a couple made it through the press in his lifetime.[399] Modern critics of eighteenth-century verse satire are inclined on the whole to consider this brief Patriot episode as something of a belated last gasp in the history of political satire. If it is mentioned at all, it tends to be situated within a general narrative of declining production in the genre.[400]

Griffin's critical overview of satire, for instance, argues that satire tends to flourish under certain cultural and social conditions, which were not present in England after the mid-eighteenth century in the way that they had been before. Satire 'seems to belong more to some times than others', he writes: 'it is regularly conceded that satire in English declined in the late eighteenth century, that apart from Byron we have had little significant satire proper since about 1750'.[401] David Nokes's study of eighteenth-century political satire focusses almost entirely on Augustan poetry, arguing that although 'satires continued to be composed and published' during the second half of the century, the genre was 'gradually eclipsed by the growing interest in sentimental, gothic and romantic writings', and was eventually 'killed off [...] by the novel'.[402] Weinbrot's chapter on Churchill and Peter Pindar comes to the more

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[398] Kenneth Hopkins, *Portraits in Satire* (London, 1958), p.10.
[399] 'The Consuliad' was printed in *The Freeholder's Magazine* in January 1770; 'Resignation' appeared in parts in the same journal from April 1770. Chatterton's other Patriot satires, 'The Whore of Babylon' and 'Kew Gardens', were only printed posthumously.
[400] Some omissions are relatively unaccountable. Charles Knight's chapter on satire and nationalism, for instance, stops at 1760, though Wilkesite satire represents an obvious and important development in anti-Scottish and anti-French poetry: see Knight, *The Literature of Satire* (Cambridge, 2004), ch.2. However, Cardwell points out that Churchill *et al.* have been relatively well-served in the share of critical attention they have received, in comparison to the treatment accorded to other forms of 'political literature at mid-century'. See Cardwell, *Arts and Arms*, p.2.
[401] Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington, 1994), p.133.
[402] David Nokes, *Raillery and Rage: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Satire* (Brighton, 1987), p.22.

nuanced but similar conclusion that later eighteenth-century political satire was something of a 'debased and monolithic form' in comparison to the comprehensive achievement of Pope: its 'unhappy progress' in the hands of Churchill, Garrick, Chatterton and others led to 'the genre's lamented decline'.[403]

As Ashley Marshall has recently shown, twentieth-century critics have a common explanation for this theory of generic decline, which points to the rise of different literary representations of character and personality in the sentimental novel and Romantic poetry. 'The death-of-satire cliché is based largely on the marked shift from 'satire' to 'sentiment'', she writes: 'the premise has long been that 'real' satire gives way to drippy sympathy'.[404] Sentimental descriptions of personality, the argument runs, posited appealing optimistic alternatives to satire's gloomy portrait of human behaviour, whilst the Romantic focus on the complexities of individual personality replaced satire's concentration on the common behaviour of the species.[405] The limited amount of satire that was produced, therefore, tended to survive because it managed to assimilate certain features of the sentimental and Romantic trends. Satirists engaged with a proto-Romantic form of self-reflexivity and made their own poetic endeavour the subject of satiric scrutiny, rather than looking outwards to pronounce judgement on the common failings of the city or the nation. Raman Selden, for instance, has commented of Churchill that his 'moral stance differs from that of earlier satirists [...] as a result of the presence of a new pre-romantic emphasis on authorial *personality*': his poetry exhibits 'a cultivation of subjectivity which undermines the *social* orientation of the satirist'.[406] Donald S. Taylor, writing on Chatterton, makes a similar observation about the satirist's developing

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[403] Weinbrot, *Eighteenth-Century Satire*, p.189. See also Andrew M. Wilkinson, 'The Decline of English Verse Satire in the Middle Years of the Eighteenth Century', *RES* iii (1952), 222-233, where he argues that 'though there was some recovery' in satiric production in the 1760s, the genre 'never regained its former importance' after the early 1740s.

[404] Marshall, *The Practice of Satire in England*, pp.255, 286-7.

[405] See, for instance, Wilkinson, 'The Decline of English Verse Satire', p.223. Lockwood, *Post-Augustan Satire*, p.181, points out the growth of a 'wider interest in the spirit of sympathetic fellow-feeling at the expense of the unsympathetic emotions of satire'.

[406] Raman Selden, *English Verse Satire, 1590-1765* (London, 1978), pp.167-9.

interest in 'the analysis and expression of *his* character', and points out that the poem comes to be structured to 'represent the stream of the satirist's consciousness'.[407] Griffin acknowledges that the influence of sensibility argument 'is easily overstated', but his counter-approach is to list satirists who were also men of feeling (Goldsmith, Sterne, Burns) instead of pointing to the notably unsentimental satire of Wilkes's propagandists.[408]

Readings of this nature are notably reluctant to think about political satire of the mid-eighteenth century *as* political. Broadly, as Marshall has demonstrated, there are good reasons for de-emphasising the relative status of political satire during the period, since 'in the world of the 1750s and 1760s' verse satirists tended 'not to use their works to voice serious critique of sociopolitical circumstances' and kept largely to the safer ground of literary squabbling and light social comedy.[409] But where there were clear exceptions to the rule, as in the case of Churchill and Chatterton's sustained anti-ministerial campaign for the Wilkesite agenda, it seems more accurate to approach their work as political satire with a partisan agenda and practical implications for the conduct of government (in the same way as one might approach, say, the satires of Dryden and Defoe). Marshall, for one, adopts this method, insisting on Churchill's exceptional status as 'both versifier and propagandist' for the cause of Wilkes and liberty, and devoting as much attention as her taxonomy allows to the role that Churchill's poetry played in 'championing Wilkesite notions of independence, smearing antagonists, and rousing popular support for the cause'.[410] Likewise, Carretta's work on later eighteenth-century satire situates both Churchill and Chatterton's poetry firmly in London's literary-political milieu, singling out their attacks on ministerial conduct and the royal prerogative, and tracing the 'emphasis' in

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[407] Donald S. Taylor, *Thomas Chatterton's Art: Experiments in Imagined History* (Princeton, 1978), pp.182-3. For similar readings of the subjective nature of later eighteenth-century satire, see Carretta, *The Snarling Muse*, pp.243-4; Lockwood, *Post-Augustan Satire*, p.174; Wilkinson, 'The Decline of English Verse Satire', pp.226-8.
[408] Griffin, *Satire*, pp.136-7.
[409] Marshall, *The Practice of Satire in England*, p.250.
[410] Ibid., pp.250-3.

their poetry on 'merit as the only proper grounds for rule'.[411] Taylor's monograph on Chatterton makes a strong case for the importance of the political satires relative to the Rowley works, and discusses the poet's intelligent use of 'fact, rumour, and conspiracy myth' in Patriot circles to construct speculative political satires on ministerial corruption and the malign influence of the Princess Dowager.[412] Lance Bertelsen's study of Churchill's place in the Nonsense Club during the 1750s and 1760s has a detailed analysis of the anti-ministerial satires and Churchill's contributions to the *North Briton*; he suggests that Wilkesite Patriot poetry was one important articulation of a rising 'ideology of the middling sort', characterised by a settled hatred for 'the temptations of aristocratic patronage', and engaged in rejecting old forms of 'emulation and sycophancy' in favour of the satirist's weapons of 'suspicion and irreverence'.[413]

In Bertelsen's account, as in Carretta's, Churchill is presented as having been clear about the kind of political behaviour he rejected, but markedly unsure about what he wanted to praise as an alternative, or if indeed there could be any room for praise in a world so corrupt. His satiric attitude, Bertelsen writes, had about it a kind of 'incipient nihilism' that kept him from 'the first ranks of English poets and rebels'; he had a distinct 'inability to imagine a counter-order'.[414] Carretta, likewise, observes that 'satirists like Churchill seemed uncomfortable with the past and unclear about the future', since they could see in neither a viable programme for laudable moral conduct and had inherited a 'virtually untenable' rhetorical strategy from the Augustans for dealing with the complex new political scene under

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[411] Carretta, *George III and the Satirists*, pp.54-98, especially pp.75-87.
[412] Taylor, *Thomas Chatterton's Art*, pp.171-220. On Chatterton's political satires and his imitation of Churchill, see also Louise J. Kaplan, *The Family Romance of the Impostor-Poet Thomas Chatterton* (New York, 1988), pp.126-8, 133-5. Robert W. Jones, ''We Proclaim Our Darling Son': The Politics of Chatterton's Memory during the War for America', *RES* liii (2002), 373-95, notes in agreement with Taylor that 'the political orientation' of much of Chatterton's writing has been understudied in relation to the medieval poems. Jones shows how his adoption of 'the protesting voice of Whig patriotism' made him posthumously into a popular symbol of the defence of liberties during the American War. More recently, Daniel Cook has examined the Romantic reception of Chatterton's work and the editorial neglect accorded to the satires. See Cook, *Thomas Chatterton and Neglected Genius, 1760-1830* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp.176-8.
[413] Bertelsen, *The Nonsense Club,* pp.212-48, especially pp.222-3, 237, 245-6.
[414] Ibid., p.247.

George III.[415] This seems an inadequate account of Churchill's politics, because it passes over the fact that Patriot satire had reasons for engaging positively with the interests and self-projections of Wilkes's political constituency.

I want to suggest that Churchill and Chatterton were consistently preoccupied with envisaging 'a counter-order' of virtuous political activity amongst the commercial middling, which could be held up as meritorious standard for measuring the misconduct and corruption of the elite. Their poetry sought to differentiate itself rhetorically from the 'untenable' legacy of the Augustans by adapting the civic values of Roman satire for a different kind of political opposition, discarding the formal and substantive features of the genre that were found to be unsuitable and reappropriating others. Patriot satire attacks abuses of power in order to pursue a new concept of political virtue, intimately allied to economic interests and private life, and dismantles the hollow-sounding rhetoric of the civic tradition, its grand gestures and its great figures. It idealises the intellectual freedom of the 'virtuous and productive economic man' above the lazy entitlement of the 'corrupt political man', in Kramnick's terms, and imagines its satiric persona as emphatically part of the world of urban commerce it describes, rather than looking down at it from a position of lofty disinterest.[416]

In 'Independence' (1764), Churchill positions himself as a City satirist:

> His Arms were two twin Oaks, his Legs so stout
> That they might bear a Mansion House about,
> Nor were They, look but at his body there,
> Design'd by Fate a much less weight to bear.
> [ll. 163-6]

This self-portrait is juxtaposed with a caricature of a feeble, effeminate aristocrat, against whom Churchill engages in a symbolic struggle for favour in the court of 'Reason'. Churchill's solid brawny form, with its broad shoulders and 'Muscles twisted strong' [l.157], has the substance

[415] Carretta, *The Snarling Muse*, pp.243-4, 247.
[416] Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism*, p.197.

and convictions that the 'meagre, flimsy' nobleman lacks, and the good common 'Sense' that shows in his eyes is a foil for the simultaneous 'weakness' and 'pride' [l.132] displayed by the peer. Churchill's arms, 'two twin Oaks', invoke a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tradition of association between planting and shipbuilding, in which the oak is held to be symbolic of naval prominence, British manliness and national liberty.[417] His legs, stout enough to 'bear a Mansion House about', plant the poet firmly in the commercial world of the City, where the propagandist function of his writing helps to bolster the position of the Lord Mayor and represents the views of traders, merchants and shopkeepers. The combination of arms and legs together forms a complex body politic, which draws together civic associations of maritime freedom with mercantile radicalism; and the result is a Patriot persona who vows to safeguard the liberties of Britons and stand firm against aristocratic tyranny from his vantage point at the heart of the City.

The idea of being a City satirist is alien to the traditional topography of the genre. Early modern satire tends to make the environs of the City the butt of its wit, reserving a 'conventional and stylish sneer' for the stereotyped figure of the London 'cit'.[418] Elizabethan and Jacobean satires, for instance, tend to mock City characters for their vulgarity and venality, their greedy attempts to appropriate the landed estates of their social betters (Donne, in his *Satire* I, laughs at the upstart courtier who will 'consort none' unless it is known 'What lands hee hath in hope, or of his owne'[419]). In Pope's *Dunciad* (1743), the action of the mock-epic narrative is a travesty of the Lord Mayor's procession from Mansion House to the court at Westminster, as the 'Imperial seat of Dulness' removes from 'the City to the polite world' and brings with it all 'the lowest diversions of the rabble in *Smithfield*' to corrupt an aristocratic

[417] See Stephen Daniels, 'The Political Iconography of Woodland in Later Georgian England', in *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, ed. by Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge, 1988; repr. 2002), pp.47-8; Tim Fulford, 'Britannia's Heart of Oak: Thomson, Garrick and the Language of Eighteenth-Century Patriotism', in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary*, ed. by Richard Terry (Liverpool, 2000), pp.191-215.
[418] Aubrey L. Williams, *Pope's Dunciad: A Study of its Meaning* (London, 1955), p.32. See also Griffin, *Satire*, p.145.
[419] Donne, *Satyre* I. 33-4, in *The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Epistles*, ed. by Milgate, p.4.

centre of learning and letters.[420] Churchill and Chatterton's Wilkesite satires, by contrast, are intended to share in the admiration that the *North Briton* professes for the political integrity of commercial men, and to prove to ministerial detractors that they are more than 'a seditious rabble' or a rowdy 'mob-commonwealth'.[421] In 'Resignation' (1770), for instance, Chatterton shows how easy it is for a kept monarch to be convinced by his scheming ministers that the legitimate protests and petitions of the City are merely a series of senseless mob riots:

> Unhappy Land whose governd Monarch sees
> Thro Glasses and Perspective such as these
> [...]
> His Subjects failings are all magnify'd
> Unheeded the Petitions are receivd
> Nor one report of Grievances believd
> Tis but the voice of Faction in disguise
> That blinds with liberty the Peoples Eyes.
> [ll. 657-666]

Here, Chatterton's own sympathies are on the side of the people and their subjugation at the hands of a wealthy few, and he is bitterly sarcastic about the process of political decision-making: 'tis a Maxim with the guiding Wise / Just as the Commons sink the rich arise' [ll. 619-20]. The battles of the middling are his battles too ('from this Principle *our* Feuds began' [l. 631; italics mine]), and his angry disbelief that an oligarchic political class 'Should shake our Constitution rights and Laws' [l. 369] is personally felt. Verse satire, for Chatterton, is a popular 'Petition' or 'Grievance' in a different form, a rhetorical intervention on behalf of an economic class who have been excluded from the forums of debate and deserve to be considered as political actors on the basis of their patriotism, loyalty and industry.

Chatterton and Churchill's satires insist that the right to inclusion in political decision-making ought to be merited, rather than paid for or undeservedly bestowed. Patriotism, as

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[420] Pope, 'Martinus Scriblerus, of the Poem', *TE*, v: *The Dunciad*, 3rd ed. (1965), pp.50-1. See Williams, *Pope's Dunciad*, pp.15, 17-8, 29-41.
[421] *North Briton*, 19 (October 9 1762), p.1.

Churchill argues in 'The Farewell' (1764), is not the exclusive preserve of members of the Lords or disinterested exiles: it is something that anyone can work at, 'A duty', which 'ev'ry Man can practice ev'ry day', and its 'glorious actions [...] become a King / Nor less become a Subject' [ll. 278-82]. Churchill uses the example of his own satiric career to demonstrate that it is perfectly possible for middling men to intervene in matters of public debate, provided they earn their political platform by virtue of industry and ability. On the basis of 'some little merit', as he writes in 'The Conference' (1763), he has risen to a position of self-made stability and won his intellectual freedom by appealing to the goodwill of 'a gen'rous PUBLIC', rather than relying on corrupt modes of preferment: 'All private Patronage my Soul defies' [ll. 148-50]. His rapid rise in Patriot circles is proof that it is possible to sidestep the compromised procedures of bribery and flattery that the majority of placeholders rely on as their inroads to privilege. The man who has an honest claim to his means exists outside the restrictive system of obligations that accompanies political patronage, and that is a desirable kind of freedom.

In Churchill's earlier poetry, this freedom is envisaged primarily as a hedonistic evasion of the normal rules that govern public life. In 'Night', for instance, he imagines the hours between dusk and dawn as a kind of natural meritocracy, where 'Dull fools and coxcombs sanctified by Gold' have no place, and those whom the establishment excludes are at liberty to flourish: '*thread-bare* Merit dares not shew the head / 'Till vain Prosperity retires to bed' [ll. 12-16]. Night, he writes, is an 'honest shade, / When pomp is buried and false colours fade' [ll. 153-4], and its impartial face shows up all the absurdities of foppery, wealth and ambition. Its pleasures allow the independent man to forget hierarchies and inequalities ('in Oblivion's grateful cup I drown / The galling sneer, the supercilious frown' [ll. 85-6]), and it provides a backdrop for the kind of satire that laughs at the worldly problems it cannot fix.

In the Wilkesite satires, though, Churchill approaches the idea of merit as a political satirist, rather than a libertine, and speculates seriously about what a government might look

like whose office-holders had won their places by virtue of their industry and abilities. His poetry is preoccupied with working out a 'political metaphor of succession based on merit rather than heredity', as Carretta has argued, and it envisages an idealised mixed monarchy whose distribution of honours would cease rewarding the aristocracy for its own inertia.[422] 'Monarchs, who wealth and titles can bestow, / Cannot make Virtues in succession flow' [ll. 161-2], he writes in 'The Author' (1763), but his poems suggest that it is the satirist's prerogative to imagine a different sort of monarchy that might be able to do both. In Book III of 'Gotham' (1764), for instance, he uses the conceit of a political utopia to set out his idea of the virtues and practices of a true 'Patriot King', and shows how they would be put into practice if he were the monarch of his own kingdom.

Churchill's concept of patriot kingship is comprised of recognisable civic emphases derived from Bolingbroke: it dwells on rising above party factionalism, ruling independently of ministerial pressure and protecting the liberty of the people, and it circles around keywords of 'public virtue' and 'corruption'.[423] In addition, though, it also insists on the importance of bringing an enlightened rationality to bear on some of the murkier aspects of establishment rule. This involves scrutinising organised religious hypocrisy and delving 'to the very bottom of the Law' [l. 606], but it is principally about ensuring that the process of distributing public offices is transparent and based on reasonable criteria of merit. 'Let me', Churchill writes,

> Unravel all low Ministerial scenes,
> Destroy their jobs, lay bare their ways and means,
> And track them step by step; let me well know
> How Places, Pensions, and Preferments go,
> Why Guilt's provided for, when Worth is not,
> And why one Man of merit is forgot.
> [ll. 619-24]

[422] Carretta, *George III and the Satirists*, p.76.
[423] See Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle*, pp.33-5, on Bolingbroke's model of the Patriot King.

The insistence on the rationality of meritocratic rule is returned to in 'Independence', where Churchill uses a personification of 'REASON' to weigh up the relative moral substance of poets and lords. '*Judge* REASON', after giving the palm firmly to Churchill as the representative of the bards, exclaims:

> Those must Honour *Them*, who honour *Me*,
> They from this present day, where'er I reign,
> In their own right, Precedence shall obtain,
> *Merit* rules here, Be it enough that *Birth*
> Intoxicates, and sways the fools of earth.
> [ll. 206-10]

Reason, in these satires, is on the side of the disenfranchised: rather than being a senseless mob of self-interested discontents, as ministerial publicists were apt to represent them, middling men exhibit the clear-headed thinking that the ministry and the elite are unable or unwilling to practise. 'Courtiers have a littleness of mind / And once enslaved would fetter all Mankind', writes Chatterton sadly in 'Resignation': they are 'little Creatures of a Tool / By Lust and not by Merit rais'd to rule' [ll. 627-34], and ought by all rational criteria to cede their offices to men whose industry and specialised talents make them considerably more suitable for the task.

In early eighteenth-century satire, attacks on ministerial misuses of power and privilege are not attacks on aristocratic entitlement *per se*. The conduct of public life is the subject of invective because individuals are corrupt, not because the structural hierarchy itself is flawed. Cases of malpractice are not taken to be symptomatic of a broader moral weakness in the elite. Instead, the satirist's commitment to routing out the corrupt pockets in British national life involves a counter-investment of confidence in trusted aristocratic representatives of Country patriotism, who provide the satirist with moral and political focal points for opposition. Their authority rests on traditional civic connections between estate ownership and virtuous political autonomy, and it looks back to the Roman satiric example, where there are precedents for reposing expectations of normative virtue in an elite minority. Horace, for instance, praises his

courtly patron Maecenas for his resistance to bribes and his stalwart opposition to corruption, and Weinbrot has shown that Juvenal locates 'lingering republican virtues' in the country as an instructive contrast to the moral decay of the city.[424] Early eighteenth-century satire measures corrupt behaviour against the virtuous example of a trusted cohort of Opposition aristocrats, who are exhorted to stand firm as a moral centre around which the nation might rally. 'Come on then Satire! gen'ral, unconfin'd, / Spread thy broad wing, and sowze on all the Kind', exclaims Pope in the second *Epilogue to the Satires* dialogue, but excludes a generous list of aristocrats – either in elective retirement from court life, or actively engaged in Opposition politics – whom he is proud to count as friends and national figureheads: 'How can I PULT'NEY, CHESTERFIELD forget, / […] Or WYNDHAM, just to Freedom and the Throne'.[425] Similarly, Gilbert's *The World Unmask'd* singles out '*W---ham*' and '*St----pe*' (Wyndham and Chesterfield) as men who alone know what good politics means; Whitehead's *Manners: A Satire* (1739) admires Chesterfield, 'Abroad the Guardian of his Country's Cause; / At Home a *Tully* to defend her Laws', and praises Pulteney, Carteret and Pitt; and Benjamin Loveling's imitation of Persius's *Satire* I (1740) digresses briefly from its theme of corrupt patronage to praise '*Stair* and *Cobham*, Names to *Britain* dear' and celebrate their retirement as 'illustrious Exiles from a Court'.[426]

As Harris's study of mid-century politics has shown, though, it was less clear after the fall of Walpole that the corruption of moral values could exclusively be blamed on those in power. Aristocrats of all parties provided an undesirable example to the rest of the nation by their dissipation, luxury and laziness. Popular outrage at the turncoat behaviour of former Opposition heroes – most prominently, William Pulteney – encouraged scepticism about the vaunted disinterest of the old Country ideology, and an ideological breach opened up between

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[424] Horace, *Satire* I. 10, ll. 43-52, in *The Satires and Epistles of Horace and the Satires of Persius*, ed. and trans. by Niall Rudd, rev. ed. (London, 1979; repr. 2005), pp.33-4; see Weinbrot, *Eighteenth-Century Satire*, p.142.
[425] Pope, *Epilogue to the Satires: Dialogue II*, ll. 14-5, 84-8, *TE*, iv. 314, 317-8.
[426] Gilbert, *The World Unmask'd*, p.14; Paul Whitehead, *Manners: A Satire* (London, 1739), p.12, 17; Benjamin Loveling, *The First Satire of Persius Imitated* (London, 1740), p.13.

Patriot interests and those of the landed aristocracy.[427] In 1747, Whitehead's satire 'Honour' set out the new mid-century attitude to inherited privilege:

> SAY, what's Nobility, ye gilded Train!
> Does Nature give it, or can Guilt sustain?
> [...]
> What! tho' a long Patrician Line ye claim,
> Are noble Souls entail'd upon a Name?[428]

Whitehead's poem vowed to discover the moral emptiness at the heart of the 'titled Knave and Fool': he laid bare the 'purpl'd Guilt' and 'polluted Ermine' [p.7] of men who had got away with too much for too long by virtue of their social position. In the following decades, there were good reasons for Wilkesite satirists to pick up on his line of attack, not only because it continued to be deeply undesirable to praise the virtuous independence of a social group distinguished for their moral turpitude, but also because radical poets saw little benefit in elevating an elite minority whose interests were so far removed from their own. 'The new radicals', Kramnick writes, 'turned on *both* the landed classes and the court government'; they found nothing particularly virtuous or admirable in men who were 'independent of both the court and the people who elected them', especially since many were elected on the basis of purchasing power rather than merit.[429] Their satire, accordingly, rejected the foregoing Augustan tradition of praising a select group of MPs or aristocrats out of place for their supposed moral autonomy, and dispensed with the satiric forms in which such praise had been given.

Churchill's loathing of inherited privilege was, as Bertelsen has observed, twofold: it encompassed a widely shared fear of 'Venetian' oligarchic government by a small group of nobles, and a more focussed sense of the absurdity of the political capital attached to estate

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[427] See Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, pp.78-80, 85-7.
[428] Whitehead, *Honour*, p.8.
[429] Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism*, p.172.

ownership.[430] Both kinds of objection are framed in the poetry as a series of outraged statements about the moral unsuitability of the elites for public office. The oligarchic problem, for instance, is addressed head-on in 'The Farewell', where Churchill claims melodramatically that being ruled by a 'Mob of Tyrants' would be considerably worse than being a 'slave' under a despotic monarchy: 'Let not, whatever other ills assail, / A damned ARISTOCRACY prevail' [ll. 361-4]. Elsewhere, he interrogates in greater depth the arbitrariness of privilege and the moral failings it inculcates. 'Nobles act, without one touch of shame, / What men of humble rank would blush to name' [ll.187-8], he writes in 'An Epistle to William Hogarth' (1763), and insists in 'The Author' that it is the Patriot satirist's duty not to spare aristocratic targets: 'What's in this name of *Lord*, that we should fear / To bring their vices to the public ear?' [ll. 157-8]. In 'Independence', he derides the entire business as laughable ('Titles, with Me, are vain, and nothing worth'), and deploys the caesura of the following line with some care, so that it makes an explicit distinction between the entirely separate intellectual categories of behaviour and bloodline: 'I rev'rence Virtue, but I laugh at Birth' [ll. 265-6]. Chatterton takes his inspiration from these lines of attack and leavens them with recognisable shibboleths of Patriot journalism, feigning disbelief in 'The Whore of Babylon' (1770), for instance, at the ennoblement of such ministerial villains as Weymouth, Barrington and Holland ('Whod wear a Title when they'd titled Fox'), and taking Lord North's iniquities as representative of a broader moral failing amongst the elite: 'ev'ry Lord has Vices of his own' [l. 376, 446].

This approach to aristocratic privilege is unequivocal: there is no such thing as a virtuous lord, and there are no illustrious counter-examples of noble independence to invoke as contrast or reassurance. Insisting on this point requires either dispensing outright with the Augustan technique of listing the names of stalwart Opposition aristocrats, or reappropriating a version of the trope in a critical fashion in order to point out the absurdity of its faith in the

[430] See Bertelsen, *The Nonsense Club*, p.237.

disinterested politics of a few scattered exiles. Chatterton adopts the latter approach. In 'Resignation', he briefly turns his hand to panegyric to praise Henry Somerset, 5th Duke of Beaufort, whose principled retirement from the Duke of Grafton's ministry is set up to be the equal and opposite of Grafton's own sneaking exit from power:

> Could Beaufort with such Creatures stay behind
> No Beaufort was a Briton and resignd
> Thy Resignation Somerset shall shine
> When Time hath buryd the recording Line
> [...]
> One Nobleman of Honesty remains
> Who scorns to draw in ministerial Chains
> Who honors virtue and his Countrys Peace
> And sees with Pity Grievances increase.
> [ll. 587-98]

Beaufort's lonely self-exile ('One Nobleman of Honesty') has all the proud singleness of Pope's persona when he presents himself as the last warrior for the cause of virtue, swearing in the *Epilogue to the Satires* that although the world is lost ('Nothing is Sacred now but Villany'), he and his verse will continue to stand outside it: 'Yet may this Verse (if such a Verse remain) / Show there was one who held it in disdain'.[431] But where, in Pope's satire, the loneliness of the poet's conviction gets at the heart of why he seems so defiant and impressive (and does, in fact, involve a kind of company, since it is imaginatively backed up by a roster of principled aristocratic exiles who share his politics and his virtues), the organisation of Chatterton's poem makes Beaufort's example seem exceptional and implausible.

The lines of panegyric are enclosed on each side by catalogues of ministerial villains (Grafton, Bute and his Scottish infiltrators; Barrington, Gower, North, Weymouth and Sandwich), which has the effect of making a viable alternative politics of virtuous retirement look like a gesture that has been overwhelmed by its own unlikeness. The anaphoric repetition in Chatterton's couplets, four relentless statements of aristocratic misconduct –

[431] Pope, *Epilogue to the Satires: Dialogue I*, ll. 170-2, *TE*, iv. 309.

> When Camden driven from his Office saw
> The last weak Efforts of expiring Law
> When Bute the regulator of the State
> Prefer'd the vicious to transplant the great
> When rank Corruption thro' all Orders ran
> [...]
> When ev'ry Office was with Rogues disgrac'd,
> [ll. 579-85]

– insists in a formal way that this kind of corrupt behaviour is normative, and it prefaces Beaufort's principled stand in such a way as to frame him as an odd deviation from the usual unscrupulousness of the ruling orders. Locating a sole instance of anti-ministerial integrity in aristocratic circles is, for Chatterton, a case of finding the exception that proves the rule: his use of the trope dispenses entirely with the faith that Opposition writers of the 1730s and early 1740s repose in a Country critique of Walpole's court.

'Resignation' is a satire on Grafton, North and their ministries, but it is also a satire on Augustan conventions of praise, and it works to overturn the assumption that an aristocratic removal from court life is an expression of integrity and civic disinterest. Chatterton makes this point by using the distinctly murky example of Grafton's own exit from office, forced in January 1770 by the attacks of Junius in the press and the minister's inability to secure the confidence of his government. His account of it is a satiric travesty of the familiar language of noble stoicism that he inherits from Augustan predecessors. Grafton retires 'to Solitude', 'rails at State' and 'laments the impotence of those who guide' just as real Patriot might, and quits his post on the grounds that he 'rather would be virtuous than great' [ll. 7-9]. But formulae like these are absurdly unsuitable for the actual circumstances at hand, and Chatterton's reappropriation of them is ironic and bitter, insisting that valorising aristocratic disinterest has no place in an age of radical political discontent. In place of Cobham or Lyttelton, admired for the symbolic value of their landed estates in Opposition politics, Chatterton has Grafton, sneaking into forced retirement and adopting false postures of stoicism and self-abnegation.

With a similar kind of bitter allusiveness, Churchill compares the Earl of Sandwich to Sir William Wyndham, one of Pope's catalogue of virtuous anti-ministerial noblemen and an architect of the Tory-Opposition Whig alliance during the 1730s. 'Such WYNDHAM was, and such is SANDWICH now' [l. 432], he writes in 'The Candidate' (1763) with lavish irony, resorting to mock-panegyric because there are no virtuous lords like Wyndham left to praise. In both satires, the idea of a few good nobles in the country is darkly reimagined in character portraits of ministers who renege on their promises.

For Churchill and Chatterton alike, this anti-aristocratic disgust had broader implications for the conduct of political debate and the manner in which legislative decisions were made. If the aristocracy was corrupt, then politics was too, because members of the elite dominated both the Commons and the Lords; it was not just the substantive content of the debate that was disingenuous and compromised, but also the procedural dimension of politics – how it was carried out, by whom and in what kind of arena. The august official spaces in which decisions were made, and the set forms such decisions could take, were themselves deliberately calculated to exclude radical dissent and lay the foundations for a self-perpetuating tradition of aristocratic rule. Chatterton noticed in 1769 that this was true in a small way of the kind of politics he was acquainted with, the council of constables in charge of local decision-making in Bristol, and he saw that there were mock-heroic possibilities in the idea of an absurdly self-important political system elevated by the weight of tradition and the inflated gravity of its own rhetoric.[432] In October, he wrote 'The Constabiliad', a mock-heroic fragment which presents the Bristol constables engaged in a grubby food-fight instead of attending to their civic responsibilities. The poem delights in appropriating the machinery of epic warfare for such a squalid set of circumstances, and goes in for irreverent travesties of the formulae of Pope's Homer (as, for instance, when Pope's 'Now Shield with Shield, with Helmet Helmet clos'd, /

[432] See Ritchie Robertson, *Mock-Epic Poetry from Pope to Heine* (Oxford, 2009), pp.99-129, on Chatterton's place in the production of mock-heroic after Pope.

To Armour Armour, Lance to Lance oppos'd' in *The Iliad* is wittily transmuted into 'Sauces encountered Sauces Bottles smashed / Butter with Butter swims Knives with Knives clash' [ll. 183-4]).[433] Local politics, Chatterton shows, has no title to the grand pretensions its officials claim; its debates have all the credibility and gravity of a display of drunken fisticuffs.

By the beginning of 1770, Chatterton's ambitions were greater and his field of political reference was national in scale rather than provincial. In January, he published 'The Consuliad' in *The Freeholder's Magazine*, a revised version of 'The Constabiliad' targeted at a Patriot readership. This new mock-heroic retained the food-fight conceit and the epic formulae, but it raised the stakes of the genre by satirising members of Parliament and the Lords – the council of men who governed the country, rather than the group of constables who governed Bristol. The poem is structured as a mock-quarrel or mock-contention, a sub-genre of the mock-heroic in which all combatants are described in turn by the satirist and ridiculed for their verbal or physical performance. The combatants consider themselves to be important people and worthy of the heroic treatment that their quarrel is receiving, but the reader is made to feel otherwise ('the satire', as Donald Taylor has written, 'lies in the steady gap between the targets' pretensions and the essential triviality that the heroic decorum reveals').[434] Transforming the scene of 'The Constabiliad' into that of 'The Consuliad' ought, in theory, to involve less of a 'steady gap' between the objects of satire and the heroic mode, because government ministers are responsible for 'high' political activity that might well be taken to be epic in scale. But in practice, Chatterton argues, their claims on the heroic are just as shaky as those of Bristol's civic bureaucrats, and they are just as bestial in their passions and appetites; the difference is merely that they have further to fall. A comparison between the Virgilian invocations of the two poems makes this point clearly:

> Of warring Constables and Battles dire
> Of Geese uneaten Muse awake the Lyre

[433] Pope, *The Iliad of Homer*, IV. 508-9, *TE*, vii: *Translations of Homer: The Iliad, Books I-IX* (1967), p.245.
[434] Taylor, *Thomas Chatterton's Art*, p.201.

['The Constabiliad', ll. 1-2]

Of warring senators, and battles dire,
Of quails uneaten; Muse, awake the lyre.
['The Consuliad', ll. 1-2]

'Quails' is a slight amplification of 'Geese', but all the same there is a great deal more separating the two halves of the second couplet than those of the first. From the petty arguments of 'Warring Constables' it is not much of a bathetic misstep to the comic chaos of throwing around food and wine, but the contentions of 'warring senators' matter to a far greater extent and have consequences for an incalculably large number of people, so they ought not to resemble greasy spats with 'mangled pigeon' and 'ammunition bread'. Chatterton's easy transition from the local to the national, though, insists that they do, and his radical idea in the poem is to show that the highest arena of political debate in the land is also the most virulently corrupt and debased.

The mock-heroic scene is laid in Bloomsbury, the residence of the 4th Duke of Bedford and the centre for his political faction, the Bedford Party or 'Bloomsbury Gang'.[435] The contention is between Bedford and his followers ('the venal pack / Of Bloomsbury's notorious monarch, Jack' [ll. 25-6]) and the more nebulous group known as the 'King's Friends', the court faction in the Commons and Lords who had no formal party affiliation but gathered around Bute as a figurehead and operated from the Dowager Princess's residence at Carlton House. All were vehemently anti-Wilkes and selected to satisfy Chatterton's envisaged Patriot readership. The names are allegorical and often deliberately obscure, but it is straightforward enough to recognise key figures both in and out of place.[436] 'Madoc' is a Welsh twist on Bute and his suspect Stuart lineage ('Mab-Uther, Owein, a long train of kings, / From whom the

[435] Robertson pinpoints the location as Queen's Square by the reference to 'C-mpb-ll's chimneys'. See Robertson, *Mock-Epic Poetry from Pope to Heine*, p.117.
[436] Taylor suggests that Chatterton retained the same allegorical names he used in 'The Constabiliad' in order to allow some flexibility of designation and 'conceal his own political ignorance' at this early stage in his propagandist career. See Taylor, *Thomas Chatterton's Art*, p.209. On the identities of the quarrel's participants, see also Kaplan, *The Family Romance of the Impostor-Poet Thomas Chatterton*, p.134.

royal blood of Madoc springs' [ll. 39-40]); 'Twitcher' is Lord Sandwich, a key player in the prosecution of Wilkes for obscene libel and, in 1770, Grafton's Postmaster General; 'Balluntun' is Lord Weymouth, the Secretary of State whom Wilkes had exposed in 1768 as having signed the order to open fire on a crowd of protestors assembled at St. George's Fields ('Balluntun [...] / From whose humanity the laurels sprung, / Which will in George's Fields be ever young' [ll. 73-8]); and there is Grafton himself, still the Prime Minister in the early days of 1770, whose name Chatterton hardly bothers to disguise: 'G-----n, to whose immortal sense we owe / The blood which will from civil discord flow' [ll. 177-8].

Each of these villains is implicated in the comic carnage that follows. Sandwich hurls a loin of veal at Bute: 'Swift as a cloud that shadows o'er the plain, / It flew; and scatter'd drops of oily rain' [ll. 65-6]. Weymouth receives a 'roasted gander' to the face, so that 'the burning pepper sparkles in his eyes' [ll. 131-4]. The battle, Chatterton insists, is between aristocrats who behave like beasts rather than men, and has little to do with the subtler distinctions of party and faction:

> The fight is gen'ral; fowl repulses fowl;
> The victors thunder, and the vanquish'd howl.
> Stars, garters, all the implements of shew,
> That deck'd the pow'rs above; disgrac'd below.
> [ll. 137-40]

The radical intent of Chatterton's satire stands out in comparison with the more modest ambitions of much of the mock-heroic poetry written after Pope, which tended to be directed at single individuals as part of a bout of literary infighting.[437] Mock-heroic is designed to reveal the vacuum of heroic capacity and ideals in a given social or historical target, and the ambition of Chatterton's poem is to show how this vacuum is to be found in the ministry and the House of Lords just as much as in Grub Street or Drury Lane. Politics is compromised because its

[437] See, e.g., Smart's attack on John Hill in *The Hilliad* (1753); Garrick's satire on Thaddeus Fitzpatrick in *The Fribbleriad* (1761); Churchill's attacks on individual actors in *The Rosciad* (1761).

rhetorical arena resembles a drunken dinner party; its processes of decision-making, which ought by its own standards to be disinterested and rational, are governed by 'confusion dire', the goddess 'discord' (Chatterton's version of epic divine machinery), and the will of whoever happens to have thrown the last punch.

Chatterton presses this point home in the final section of his satire, where he has 'Tyro', or Fletcher Norton, step in to put an end to the combat:

> 'Peace wrangling senators, and placemen peace,
> 'In the king's name, let hostile vengeance cease!'
> [...]
> 'What fury, nobles, occupies your breast?
> 'What patriot spirits has your minds possest?
> 'Nor honorary gifts, nor pensions please!
> 'Say, are you Covent-Garden patentees?
> [...]
> 'See this court-pie with twenty thousand drest;
> 'Be every thought of enmity at rest,
> 'Divide it, and be friends again', he said.
> [ll. 239-48]

Norton was a suitable Patriot target because of his prominence in the 'King's Friends' group, and the role he had played as solicitor-general in the prosecution of Wilkes for treason in 1763. In January 1770, the month that Chatterton wrote 'The Consuliad', he became Speaker of the House of Commons as the ministerial candidate for the post. Chatterton organises his mock-heroic in such a way that Norton's intervention into the struggle resembles his procedural function in Parliament, interceding to settle unruly exchanges between two warring factions: 'Tyro [...] / stretching his authoritative hand, / Loudly thus issued forth his dread command' [ll. 236-8]. His 'command' has the gravity of a divine fiat: he stands 'neuter, till the champions tir'd' [l. 231], and then demands 'hostile vengeance' to 'cease' with all the imperiousness of Pope's Queen Anne in *Windsor-Forest* ('Let Discord cease!'[438]). The high style, though, is deliberately over-inflated, because Norton's method of settling the dispute is thoroughly in

[438] Pope, *Windsor-Forest*, l.327, *TE*, i. 181.

keeping with the unseemly wrangle that the democratic process has resembled so far. The food-fight conceit is extended: the ministers' agreements as well as their arguments are shown to be dependent on their stomachs, as political consensus is represented as a harmonious division of edible capital: 'See this court-pie with twenty thousand drest; / Be every thought of enmity at rest'. The nobles, Norton exclaims, ought to be perfectly content with the sinecures they have ('Nor honorary gifts, nor pensions please!'), and there is easily enough royal favour in the 'court-pie' to go round. Chatterton's point is that high politics is governed by appetite. Its participants are nominally selected for their independence and public-mindedness, but distinguish themselves chiefly for their greed.

'The Consuliad' makes a mockery of contemporary politics because the way Westminster is run is far from heroic, but the object of the its satire is the heroic pretensions of legislators rather than the degree to which politics itself falls short of heroism. Radical argument during the eighteenth century was based on a conviction that politics in general ought *not* to be glorified as a heroic and noble pursuit, and should instead be presented as something more simple and straightforward that common people could practise as well as 'great men'. Wilkes worked hard in his various City and Parliament electoral campaigns to appear as an ordinary man appealing to other ordinary men, defiantly separate from the complex machinery of high politics. 'I stand here, Gentlemen, a private Man, unconnected with the Great, and unsupported by any Party', he declared as he presented himself at the City Guildhall for election to the Common Council in March 1768.[439] The reformist writer Vicesimus Knox insisted in his essay 'An Idea of a Patriot' (1784) that the 'truest patriotism' was 'not to be found in public life'. Real public-mindedness, he argued, was a matter of serving one's country 'in the retired and unobserved walks of private life', which meant that 'every good man', however distant he was from the traditional stages of politics, could be a patriot.[440] Earlier in

[439] See Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty*, p.40; John Sainsbury, *John Wilkes: The Lives of a Libertine* (Aldershot, 2006), p.189.
[440] Vicesimus Knox, *Essays Moral and Literary*, 5th edn., 2 vols. (London, 1784), i. 43-4.

the century, as John Robertson has shown, Hume's *Essays* had argued that 'a solitary, heroic individual' could not hope to shoulder the burden of legislation in a modern commercial state: increasingly – and much more desirably – private enterprise would equip a growing proportion of ordinary citizens with the abilities required for political action.[441]

Convictions like these are behind Churchill's self-presentation in his satires as a common man addressing a popular audience, proudly announcing his remoteness from the forums of high politics. In 'The Farewell', he writes of patriotism as a simple passionate attachment to one's homeland ('the Love we bear our Country'), which anyone can cultivate provided his heart is in the right place: 'A duty, which the Good delight to pay, / And ev'ry Man can practise ev'ry day' [ll. 275-82]. In 'The Candidate', he argues that political activity happens in public spaces and forums outside the privileged chambers of Westminster, and comprehends a broad variety of activities, conversations and participants. His interlocutor warns him that going to Wildman's coffeehouse (a favourite site for Wilkesite supporters to gather) is politically rash, since its associations with radical activity will tar even the most casual visitor: 'Each dish at WILDMAN's of sedition smacks' [l. 237]. Churchill mocks the interlocutor's anti-Wilkesite convictions, but he concedes his opponent's broader point that politics and patriotism are now a matter of popular sociability just as much as traditional party debate:

> That settled Faith, that Love which ever springs
> In the best Subjects, for the best of Kings,
> Must not be measur'd now, by what Men think,
> Or say, or do – by what They eat, and drink,
> Where, and with whom, that Question's to be try'd.
> [ll. 229-33]

[441] Robertson, 'The Scottish Enlightenment at the Limits of the Civic Tradition', p.169.

Not all men are able to engage in politics merely by virtue of what they 'think / Or say', because access to the traditional rhetorical stages is available only to those with a title or a property qualification; but almost all men are able to cultivate friendships and allegiances at a coffeehouse. Churchill's sense of the importance of meeting places like Wildman's integrates the sociable middling orders into the sphere of political action by extending the parameters of what active and virtuous citizenship means: it is no longer about grand hortatory declamations or heroic kinds of disinterest, but may be as straightforward as engaging as a private individual in informed conversation with other like-minded individuals.

Churchill appeals here to the broad constituency that he and Wilkes cultivate in the poetry and the *North Briton* alike, the 'newspaper-reading, print-viewing, letter-writing middling sort', as Bertelsen has it, who 'felt that their contribution to the nation and their increasing sophistication in matters cultural and economic continued to be ignored' and demanded to be recognised as an autonomous political class.[442] In civic thought, one of the reasons that such economically sophisticated men must be excluded from political decision-making is that private interests and attachments are thought of as perverse deviations from a proper concern for the public good. It is impossible to address one's personal interests simultaneously with those of the polis, the argument runs, because the two activities are theoretically contradictory: satisfying one's self-interest militates against trying to do what would be to the best advantage of everyone else. But Churchill and Wilkes, speaking to a newly self-conscious political class, offered their more inclusive definition of politics on the basis that it was absolutely possible to cultivate both private attachments and a public-minded consciousness of the whole. The politically engaged middling orders, they saw, were engaged *because* they had interests and a stake in the fortunes of the nation: their political integrity came from the fact that they were unable or unwilling to be independent of commercial attachments.

[442] Bertelsen, *The Nonsense Club*, pp.230-1.

Private and social ties were an inroad into the public conversation, rather than a corrupting distraction from it.

Churchill found the formal verse dialogue a congenial way of making this point, because it allowed him to set up the old civic argument for disinterestedness against his new concept of political identity. In 'The Farewell', he presents his adversarius ('F.') as a high-minded philosopher, proclaiming the undesirability of private ties and the threat they pose to a 'grand love of the world':

> *F.* The gen'rous Soul, by Nature taught to soar,
> Her strength confirm'd in Philosophic lore,
> At one grand view takes in a world with ease,
> And, seeing all mankind, loves all she sees.
> [ll. 255-9]

Churchill's persona ('P.') responds combatively, declaring this 'grand love' a 'barren speculation at the best' [ll. 269-70], and laughing at how quixotic and absurd the rules of 'Philosophic lore' are ('into practice they can ne'er be brought' [ll. 52-4]). His counterargument insists that there is nothing contradictory about retaining personal interests alongside one's solicitude for the public good:

> *P.* Those ties of private nature, small extent,
> In which the mind of narrow cast is pent,
> Are only steps on which the gen'rous soul
> Mounts by degrees till She includes the whole.
> That spring of Love, which in the human mind,
> Founded on self, flows narrow and confin'd,
> Enlarges as it rolls, and comprehends
> The social Charities of blood, and friends,
> Till smaller streams included, not o'erpast,
> It rises to our Country's love at last.
> [ll. 289-98]

According to the adversarius, 'ties of private nature' have no place in the cultivation of political virtue. For Churchill, though, they do, and the 'gen'rous' expansive movement of his verse

paragraph shows how they can be synthesised into harmony with the larger cause of patriotism. The local commitments of self-love are described by a compacted subordinate clause ('That spring of Love, which in the human mind, / Founded on self, flows narrow and confin'd'), which then broadens out into enjambed syntax in order to encompass the larger commitments of family and sociability ('Enlarges as it rolls, and comprehends / The social Charities of blood, and friends'), and triumphantly concludes as it 'rises' to public virtue, the love of one's country, and the largest commitment of all. Churchill's fluid couplets are a formal version of the 'steps' on which 'the gen'rous soul / Mounts by degrees' from self-love to the public interest, and the steady accretion of his argument by stages enacts the way in which the 'smaller streams' of private attachment are 'included, not o'erpast' in the glorious progress to public-minded patriotism. It is firmly acknowledged that self-interest alone does not count as virtuous political participation (this is the trap in which 'the mind of narrow cast is pent'); but it is a necessary beginning, because caring about national problems is profoundly reliant on having a personal stake in their outcome.

'The Farewell' is in many ways an exceptional instance of the formal verse dialogue, because it departs radically from the Roman and Augustan models Churchill inherited. The classical exempla for dramatic form in satire are Horace and Persius, who place their satiric speakers in dialogue with an adversarius in order to clarify and validate the speaker's comments. Horace's dialogues are with a historical figure, the lawyer Trebatius who worked as an advisor at the court of Augustus. Trebatius counsels the poet's speaker to stop writing 'acid verse' and turn his hand to 'recounting the triumphs of Caesar' in panegyric; he warns the speaker that though he has 'powerful friends', he may not keep them for long if he continues in the satiric vein.[443] His role is to provide a rhetorical prompt for Horace's own assertions that he must indeed carry on writing satire and no other kind of poetry will do. As Weinbrot has

[443] Horace, *Satires* II.i, l. 21, 11, 61, in *The Satires and Epistles of Horace and the Satires of Persius*, ed. and trans. by Rudd, pp.39-41.

shown, though, the speaker's 'seeming outrage [...] never becomes Juvenalian', and his demurrals are light and witty: it is clear that 'the establishment's favourite lawyer is, finally, a friend of Horace's satire', since he belongs to the same court world of which Horace too is a member.[444] Persius's dialogues, by contrast, are antagonistic and combative. His adversarius has nothing in common with the principled convictions of the poet's speaker and is emphatically part of the corrupt world that the speaker denounces. Rather than being argued out of his prejudices, they are sufficiently unsympathetic to be left to undermine themselves.[445]

The Horatian dialogue was commonly imitated during the first half of the eighteenth century. Pope, for instance, adopts its light interplays in 'To Fortescue' and, less formally, in the 'Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot' (1735), where he defends his determination to write verse in the manner of Horace's *Satires* II.i. In the heightened political climate of the later 1730s, though, satirists writing for the Opposition tended to choose Persius's uncompromising version of dramatic form, which allowed them to place their ministerial enemies in the role of the corrupt adversarius and present their own speakers as crusading poet-warriors for the cause of liberty. This is the chosen pattern of Pope's two *Epilogue to the Satires* dialogues, where he sets his Whig Patriot speaker against a worldly and prudent representative of the ministry ('an impertinent Censurer'). The touches of cordiality and consonance the two interlocutors have in 'To Fortescue' are replaced in the *Epilogue* by a hostile encounter between court sycophancy and lonely civic autonomy:

> *P.* Yes, the last Pen for Freedom let me draw,
> When truth stands trembling on the edge of Law:
> Here, Last of *Britons*! let your Names be read;
> Are none, none living? let me praise the Dead,
> [...]
> *F.* Alas! alas! pray end what you began,

[444] Weinbrot, *Eighteenth-Century Satire*, pp.129-30. See also Selden, *English Verse Satire*, p.18, on the 'undogmatic and exploratory' nature of Horace's dialogues.
[445] See Weinbrot, *Alexander Pope and the Traditions of Formal Verse Satire*, pp.66-7; Weinbrot, *Eighteenth-Century Satire*, p.136.

> And write next winter more *Essays on Man*.[446]

Here, as Griffin argues, F. is used to 'further a process of self-definition' for the poet, acting as 'a foil against which P. and his readers can see more clearly who Pope is'.[447] He has the last word of the poem and does not come round to P.'s way of thinking, but his sneers at Pope's Patriot friends serve the poet's cause nonetheless by prompting the reader to align himself with P., whose asseverations of lonely courage (drawing 'the last Pen for Freedom') present him as the last bastion of Roman virtue in a failing world. Other Opposition satires imitate Persius for a similarly unbalanced dialogic effect: in Griffith Morgan D'Anvers' *Persius Scaramouch* (1734), for instance, the speaker's civic rage about the corruption of the times ('How ripe for Ruin is the present Age!') is countered by an adversarius who tries unsuccessfully to caution him into prudence: 'Brother, I presage, / You'd better try to hide your Gall'.[448] The form was so well practised during the century that it became the object of parody. John Wolcot's *One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety-Six* (1796), an astute take-off of Pope's satiric calendar dialogues, stages a dispute between 'Tom', a fiery and principled young satirist, and 'Peter' himself, who adopts the role of the adversarius. Wolcot's poem is organised so that Peter's pragmatic interjections ('Heav'ns! TOM, be cooler; take advice') get the better of Tom's crusading rhetoric, which is self-defeating in its earnestness: 'On SATIRE's burning coals *this* villain fries, / And roasted *that* with skewers in his eyes'.[449] In this case, a comic inversion of Pope's form makes lurid anti-ministerial rage the target of satire, rather than its mode.

Churchill used the verse dialogue in his earliest satires, but his sense of what it could be made to do became more complex and radical over the course of his writing life, as his political

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[446] Pope, *Epilogue to the Satires: Dialogue II*, ll. 248-55, *TE*, iv. 327.
[447] Dustin H. Griffin, *Alexander Pope: The Poet in the Poems* (Princeton, 1978), pp.172-3. Griffin argues here and elsewhere that it is possible to think of the adversarius as representing worldly or self-doubting aspects within Pope himself. See ibid., pp.169-70; Griffin, *Satire*, p.51.
[448] Griffith Morgan D'Anvers, *Persius Scaramouch: Or, a Critical and Moral Satire on the Orators, Scriblers, and Vices of the Present Times*… (London, 1734), p.9.
[449] Peter Pindar, *One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety-Six*, l. 164, 161-2, in *The Works of Peter Pindar, Esq.*, 4 vols. (London, 1802), iv. 9.

convictions deepened. In the early poems, the dialogues he includes are relatively orthodox and imitative, and involve an unsympathetic ministerial adversarius pitted against an outraged satiric speaker. In 'Night', for instance, the debate is between the speaker and the corrupt 'Sir PLIANT', who laughs at the poet-satirist's pretensions to resist the temptations of power and place: 'Too hard the task 'gainst multitudes to fight, / *You* must be wrong, the WORLD is in the right' [ll. 351-2]. Likewise, in 'An Epistle to William Hogarth', the poet's speaker is challenged by the warning voice of 'CANDOUR', who urges him towards 'Soul-soothing PANEGYRIC's flow'ry way', and has to be resisted by lofty shows of disinterest on the speaker's part: 'I cannot truckle to a Fool of State, / Nor take a favour from the man I hate' [l. 102, 121-2]. In 'The Farewell', though, something altogether different is attempted with dialogue form. It is not a parody or an inversion in the same way as Wolcot's, because it retains the basic organisational principle of weighting the debate in favour of the poet's speaker rather than the adversarius.[450] In other ways, though, it is a more radical generic transformation than Wolcot's dialogue, because it swaps around the moral and political positions that the two interlocutors are supposed to hold.

The conceit of 'The Farewell' is that Churchill's speaker has decided to relocate his satiric muse from England to 'Eastern India', where she can attack 'Nabobs' and 'Moguls' [l. 3, 453-5] instead of her usual targets closer to home. His reason for doing so is that he is passionately attached to his homeland and would rather look elsewhere to vent his spleen: 'Be England what She will, / With all her faults She is my Country still' [l. 28]. The adversarius, 'F.', disagrees vehemently. His role in the poem is the function traditionally assigned to the poet's speaker: he insists that England is a ripe target for satire because its people and politics

[450] The debate is weighted insofar as the speaker's arguments are intended to be more appealing and palatable than those of the adversarius, but it is not necessarily clear that the speaker 'wins' the rhetorical battle. Selden, for instance, argues that 'The Farewell' is the only dialogue in Churchill's repertoire where the adversarius is allowed to gain the upper hand. See *English Verse Satire*, p.170.

are sinking into corruption, and advises the speaker to select his satiric targets with disinterest rather than partisanship. 'If satire be thy object', he argues,

> search all round,
> Nor to thy purpose can one spot be found
> Like England, where to rampant vigour grown
> Vice choaks up ev'ry Virtue, where, self-sown,
> The seeds of Folly shoot forth rank and bold,
> And ev'ry seed brings forth a hundred fold.
> [ll. 15-20]

England, he claims, has grown poor in morals, arts and arms, and its constitutional freedoms are overstepped by those in government: 'Pow'r is Reason, Liberty a Joke' [l. 193]. The satirist who seeks to resist tyrannical government and stand firm against the encroachment of moral corruption is duty bound to be uncompromising in his attacks, because patriotism means redressing one's country rather than sparing it. Loving one's country for no reason, 'F.' says, is a 'wild, untemper'd zeal' and betrays a 'human soul, / Uncultur'd, wild, impatient of controul': a ruling passion like any other, it diverts one from a generous public-mindedness and has to be mastered by Stoic self-governance, the 'steady hand' of 'PHILOSOPHY' [l. 243, 91-2, 97].

By putting recognisable satiric sentiments like these into the mouth of his adversarius, Churchill's own persona is free to say something different. One of the aims of dramatic form is to allow the satirist to dissociate himself from a moral or political position he does not believe in and thereby state with more clarity the position that he does hold. In Roman and early eighteenth-century verse satire, the speaker proves his patriotic credentials by attacking a persona who represents the moral turpitude of the country and its government, and is an eloquent foil for his own crusading civic virtue. In 'The Farewell', the position that Churchill dissents from is the civic one: he gives it to his imaginary opponent instead, so that it ceases to be normative and becomes oppositional. The inversion has the radical effect of dislocating

patriotism from its civic frame, which requires the poem to explore what patriotism might look like if it were not tied to an inherited set of formulae about moral conduct and citizenship. Being a patriot, Churchill's speaker argues, has nothing to do with disinterest, and requires indulging and channelling natural impulses rather than restraining them by reason: the 'specious art' of 'PHILOSOPHERS', he says, will 'Ne'er make me from this breast one passion tear, / Which Nature, my best friend, hath planted there' [ll. 151-4]. The tenets of Stoic philosophy 'with Apathy the breast would steel, / And teach us, deeply feeling, not to feel' [ll. 121-2], and its abstract formulations of reason, virtue and vice are pure 'Theory', 'vain refinements [...] / Varnish'd with sophistry' [ll. 45-52]. Virtue, instead, manifests itself in 'Common Sense' and simple observances that anyone can practise, and it is modestly inclusive and anti-intellectual (patriotic attachment to one's country, for instance, is defined as 'a strange Something, which without a brain / Fools feel, and with one wise men can't explain' [ll. 63-4]). Patriots are sociable men who care personally about what happens to their nation, rather than disinterested philosophers who speculate and exhort others to the task: 'Their's be the praise to argue', writes Churchill, 'mine to feel' [l. 224].

Dialogue structure is particularly appropriate here, because the exchanges and accommodations of conversation are a working model of the new kind of patriotic citizenship that Churchill's speaker recommends, based on social attachments and local interaction rather than heroic disinterest or grand rhetorical formulae. In Persius's verse dialogue and its early eighteenth-century imitations, the moral and political incommensurability between the speaker and his adversarius means that they do not have much in the way of conversational interplay, and the adversarius will go on making his corrupt pronouncements regardless of the speaker's attempts to educate him. The satirist dramatises the virtuous disinterest of his speaker by setting him against an opponent so intractably vicious that one could not wish to be associated with the larger world he represents. In 'The Farewell', by contrast, the two participants have

some degree of political sympathy: they are equally in agreement, for instance, that power in the hands of an unscrupulous cabal of 'British Lords' [l. 341] would be a terrible thing, and they have a shared understanding of how juries may be bought and corrupted. Their debate is fast-paced and their exchanges are witty and knowing, as Churchill cuts across couplets to allow them to reach formal consonances by way of rhyme:

> *F.* Whilst, the true guardians of this charter'd land,
> In full and perfect vigour, Juries stand,
> A Judge in vain shall awe, cajole, perplex.
>
> *P.* Suppose I should be tried in MIDDLESEX.
>
> *F.* To pack a Jury they will never dare.
>
> *P.* There's no occasion to pack Juries there.
> [ll. 415-20]

Here, the monolithic set-piece speeches of earlier verse dialogues are exchanged for the cut and thrust of a proper conversation, and the adversarius is not in place solely to provide a foil for the speaker's staged rhetorical triumph: he answers back, he makes concessions where they are due, and he pushes the speaker to refine and retune his argument. Conversation enacts the sense in which, for Churchill, political virtue is a matter of dependence and interest rather than lofty self-exile. His speaker needs an interlocutor, not merely to represent a corrupt world that he himself rejects utterly, but because his morality is formulated in the process of exchange and flexibility. Virtuous citizenship, he suggests, may be as simple a thing as engaging as a private man in a broader conversation about public matters, and it has nothing to do with the grand rhetorical arenas for which only a small proportion of men are qualified. His conversational dialogue relocates the forum of debate from Westminster to the coffee-house or the London street, where 'ev'ry man' [l. 282] who loves his country and has an interest in its fortunes is sufficiently qualified to participate. Churchill's satire makes the dialogic structure

itself, just as much as the arguments it frames, the point: the poem lifts an inherited trope and transforms it into a model for a new kind of popular political debate.

'The Farewell' is about what happens when participants in the verse dialogue are given non-traditional material and their political positions are inverted. Churchill was also interested in what happens when the two interlocutors retain their traditional moral and political roles, but the poet's speaker has the worst of the contest. This is the generic transformation he makes in 'The Conference', where he pits his speaker against a cynical 'Lord' who derogates the value of satire with a dangerously convincing arsenal of counterarguments. His opening attack is the familiar warning of Persius's Monitor in *Satire* I: writing satire is perilous, and it is better to save one's skin. 'Your Muse in general is too severe', he cautions, 'Her Spirit seems her int'rest to oppose, / And, where She makes one friend, makes twenty foes' [ll. 12-4]. The speaker's response is a defence of his art in the manner of Juvenal's apology in *Satire* I, insisting that it is impossible to sit by and *not* write satire: 'shall I not my settled course pursue, / Because my foes, are foes to Virtue too?' [ll. 25-6]. These are traditional statements of intent, and they suggest that the dialogue will take an ordinary course. Churchill, though, proceeds to complicate the model by having the Lord attack not merely the business of writing satire, but also its mode. Systematically, he picks apart the principles and ideals of Patriot discourse, and queries the political dichotomies it relies on:

> *L.* To feign a red-hot zeal for freedom's cause,
> To mouth aloud for liberties and laws,
> For Public good to bellow all abroad,
> Serves well the purposes of private fraud.
> Prudence, by Public good intends her own;
> If You mean otherwise, You stand alone.
> What do we mean by Country and by Court,
> What is it to Oppose, what to Support?
> [...]
> Patriots and Ministers are much the same;
> The only diff'rence, after all their rout,
> Is that the One is *in*, the Other *out*.
>
> [ll. 153-66]

Churchill's speaker is stymied because his opponent has ventriloquised the impassioned language he would seek to draw on himself, and revealed it to be little more than cant. Patriot hobbyhorses – 'freedom's cause'; 'liberties and laws'; 'Public good' – are 'stale conceits' [l. 81], the Lord argues: politically, they are worn out, and poetically they are past their best too, because they belong to a former age of satiric opposition and are beginning to sound second-hand and spiritless. Above all, they have lost their partisan force: the organisation of Churchill's couplets takes concepts and values that ought to be opposed ('Public good'; 'private fraud') and arranges them in parallel, so that the rhyming connection insists on how closely linked they are in practice. On the level of the individual line, juxtaposing 'Country' and 'Court' (and 'Oppose' and 'Support' in the following line) has the effect of diminishing the space between the ideological realms they denote, and the miscellaneous throwing together of opposites cuts across the polar charge they carry. 'Patriots and Ministers' *are* much the same, in this analysis.

Greater men than Churchill's speaker, the Lord insists, have realised this and given up: it is a common thing, he says, to see 'Protesting Patriots turn'd to Peers', 'WHITEHEAD take a place, RALPH change his pen' [l. 254, 260], or Pulteney and Pitt join the government for a title. He reminds the poet that the conduct of his private life thus far has hardly been spotless enough to warrant exhorting others to virtue ('View thyself now, and own with strictest truth, / That SELF hath drawn Thee from fair Virtue's way' [ll. 198-9]), and advises that it would be better to stop dealing in abstractions and give into self-interest:

> *L*: Can this same Virtue stifle Nature's cries?
> Can She the pittance of a meal afford,
> Or bid thee welcome to one great Man's board?
> When Northern winds the rough December arm
> With frost and snow, can Virtue keep thee warm?
> [ll. 32-6]

Questions like these would be easy enough to dismiss if one were financially independent. But 'for someone with Churchill's history and social standing', as Bertelsen has argued, such challenges are 'hard and crucial', because railing at corruption and patronage as a member of the middling is not quite the same thing as attacking them from the comfort of landed retirement.[451] For all his fame and comparative financial stability, Churchill was a self-made man who had been rescued from debtors' prison only a few years earlier, and his close friend Lloyd was on the brink of insolvency in the year he wrote 'The Conference'.[452] His speaker, in this context, can protest all he likes that 'an Honest man dares starve' [l. 80], but since there is a very real chance that he or men like him might do so, the claim does not have the confident ring of improbability that it would have in the hands of Horace, say, or Pope. Instead, in his case, it is smarter to 'advance / For once to real life, and quit Romance' [ll. 81-2] as the Lord advises, and cease making the kind of defiant stand that he is not disinterested enough to afford.

Chatterton, in a considerably worse financial condition than Churchill, found it even more difficult to declare his lofty independence from the networks of bribery and placemanship.[453] In the early satirical fragment 'Intrest thou universal God of Men' (1769), for instance, he candidly speculates that a poet would probably prefer to 'lose a Number rather than a meal', and weighs up virtuous intentions against material benefits in shakily inconclusive couplets: 'Can honest Consciousness of doing Right / Provide a Dinner or a Girl at Night?' [l. 6, 9-10]. In the Patriot satire 'The Whore of Babylon', composed a few months later, he attacks a raft of targets (Lord North's ministry; the Princess Dowager's shadowy conspiracy; the religious establishment; Dr Johnson) with fierce Juvenalian spirit, and has a clear sense of

[451] Bertelsen, *The Nonsense Club*, p.221. See also Lockwood, *Post-Augustan Satire*, p.56: 'this is […] a moment in which an otherwise purely conventionalized dialogue becomes strikingly real'.
[452] Hopkins, *Portraits in Satire*, pp.9, 55. Lloyd was committed to the Fleet prison for debt in April 1764 and died there in December.
[453] During 1770, Chatterton struggled so much that he was not averse to writing for the ministerial side of the question if there was money to be had for it. 'He is a poor author, who cannot write on both sides', he wrote to his sister Mary in May. 'I believe I may be introduced […] to a ruling power in the court party'. See *The Complete Works of Thomas Chatterton*, ed. by Taylor and Hoover, i. 588.

the risks he is incurring by doing so: attacking God's ministers and the King's alike is a dangerous business, for 'Both are Adventures perilous and hard, / And often bring Destruction on the Bard' [ll. 265-6]. In much the same way as Churchill, he sets out the risks and problems by means of a cautionary adversarius or 'prudent Sage' [l. 479], who ventures criticisms that are a little too tough and too smart to be dismissed out of hand, or simply left to undermine themselves: 'Sage are the Argumnts. by which I'm taught / To curb the wild excursive flights of Thought' [ll. 467-8].

Chatterton's adversarius urges the speaker towards the safer ground of laudatory verse ('if you must persist to sing and dream / Let only Panegyric be your Theme' [ll. 527-8]), and reminds him that his licentious manner and private life make his condemnations of vice barely credible: 'Is there a Street within this spacious place / […] Where Conversation does not turn on you / Blaming your wild Amours, your Morals too?' [ll. 501-4]. As in 'The Conference', though, the toughest arguments that he has to contend with concern his financial circumstances, the reasons why it would be unwise or impracticable for him to adopt traditional postures of virtuous disinterest:

> If you from Satyre can withhold the Line
> At ev'ry public Hall perhaps you'd dine
> […]
> Honour the Scarlet Robe, and let the Quill
> Be silent when his Worship eats his fill
> Regard thy Int'rest, ever love Thyself
> Rise into notice as you rise in Pelf
> […]
> Then clip Imagination's wing, be wise
> And great in Wealth, (the real Greatness) rise.
>
> [ll. 477-8, 521-6]

In Chatterton's verse, provocations like these are not generic but personal: they are voiced by a formal adversarius and belong to a rhetorical tradition of dialogic satire, but they articulate a private kind of anxiety and self-admonition. The opponent's command to 'Regard thy Int'rest, ever love Thyself' is something altogether more problematic than an opportunity for the

satirist's speaker to offer his triumphant counterarguments, because it is, in Chatterton's case, unassailable: the speaker does not respond straight away but is silent for some lines, and when he does manage to get his voice heard once more, he prefers to return to the safer ground of attacking the religious establishment than addressing his opponent's challenge directly. There is none of the fast-paced sparring between rhetorical equals that would allow the speaker to address individual objections one by one, and his counterattack is belated, evasive and unfocussed ('Damn'd narrow Notions!' [l. 531]). The measured arguments of the adversarius are a salutary contrast to the speaker's inchoate Patriot outrage (he is, as he admits, 'raving in the Lunacy of Ink' [l. 537]), and they are sufficiently convincing to force the point that a satirist of his background cannot afford to vaunt his bravery and independence in traditional civic terms. He has no more title to virtuous disinterest than any desperate debtor of his type, and there are historical precedents for the unfortunate consequences that befall men who pretend otherwise: 'Bid dark Reflection tell how Savage dyed' [l. 496]. Declarations of civic independence mean nothing without the answering kind of independence that comes with landed prosperity.

Dialogue form allows the satirist to dissociate himself from ideas that he does not believe in, or positions that have become untenable. In the case of Churchill and Chatterton, the idea that the form rejects is the virtuous superiority of disinterest, and the associated literary posture of writing satire from a vantage point of landed autonomy. Their version of the dialogue notices the limitations of the Augustan format, the hostile encounter between the poet and an interlocutor whose counterarguments are set up to be unappealing and unconvincing, and in its place they substitute a more fluid and flexible debate in which impassioned civic rage on the speaker's part comes to seem foolish and naïve. By raising the profile of the adversarius, the new verse dialogue indicates that there is no such thing as a completely autonomous political actor, whose high concern for virtuous citizenship is impervious to the tugs of

circumstance and interest. Mounting a lonely campaign in exile, the dialogue suggests, is a conceit that belongs to an out-dated literary idea of opposition politics, based on Country forms of anti-ministerialism and the public-minded interventions of a virtuous aristocratic minority. It does not transfer easily to pro-Wilkesite satire, with its basis in popular and urban patriotism, and its appeal to a new political class of middling men who would not consider themselves independent by civic standards of landed autonomy (and whose political convictions are very closely bound up with the fact that they have commercial interests).

Working to point out the problems with traditional satiric ideals of independent political activity, Churchill and Chatterton were also invested in noticing alternative ways in which men might be thought to be independent, and in particular they sought to draw out the connections between independence of mind and economic interestedness. If the middling orders could be reappraised as the bulwarks of national liberty by virtue of their taxpaying and commercial activity, it must also be possible to praise the independence that their trades brought them from the corrupting avenues of preferment and placemanship. Later eighteenth-century social commentators argued that material investment in Britain's commerce was a guarantor of independent action and imperviousness to bribes, rather than a dangerous diversion from public-minded pursuits. John Millar, for instance, wrote in 1771 that middling men could afford to make autonomous decisions, because their proficiency at individual trades or professions provided them with 'a variety of customers' and meant that they could not be controlled by a single aristocratic patron. 'In proportion as they have less need of the favour and patronage of the great, they are at less pains to procure it', he argued. 'They have little to fear from the displeasure of any single person'.[454] Knox demonstrated in his essay collection *The Spirit of Despotism* that the middling orders were 'too numerous to be bribed by a minister, and almost out of the reach of court corruption': they were 'some of the most independent

[454] Millar, *Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks in Society*, p.185.

members of the community' and had 'little to hope or fear from those who call themselves their superiors'.[455] In arguments such as these, as Langford has shown, the notion of political independence was gradually detached from its traditional associations with 'the landed proprietor', such that it became possible to claim that commerce and business did not militate against autonomous decision-making but provided the basis for a broader class of men to think and act as political citizens.[456] The new formulation of independence also served usefully to differentiate the middling orders from the mass of the unpropertied poor, who did not have business interests or assets and could not be conceived of as autonomous citizens in the same way. They were not stakeholders: they 'lacked political independence' because they had 'no financial or social investment in the stability of the state'.[457]

This, for Churchill and Chatterton, was an appealing idea. Independence was about being in the swim of things, rather than making lofty professions of self-exile; it meant cultivating economic interests, rather than being stoically disinterested; and it allowed satiric verse to speak to Wilkes's mercantile supporters as autonomous political actors in their own right, regardless of their traditional exclusion from aristocratic forums of debate. In 'The Conference', Churchill takes the example of his own freedom from patronage to demonstrate what the new idea of independence means:

> That, from dependence and from pride secure,
> I am not plac'd so high to scorn the poor,
> Nor yet so low, that I my Lord should fear,
> Or hesitate to give him sneer for sneer;
> That, whilst sage Prudence my pursuits confirms,
> I can enjoy the world on equal terms;
> [...]
> These, and what other blessings I possess,
> From the indulgence of the PUBLIC rise;
> All private Patronage my Soul defies.

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[455] Knox, *The Spirit of Despotism*, pp.84, 94.
[456] See Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman*, p.482.
[457] Carretta, *George III and the Satirists*, p.49. See also Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort', pp.102-3.

[ll. 137-48]

Churchill's speaker is independent because he is a professional, and good at his trade: he has cut all ties with 'private Patronage' and has no need to rely on any single individual because his market is 'the PUBLIC' at large. Being in the middle – neither too high, nor too low – he is secure from both the corrupting ties of 'dependence' and 'pride', bound neither by poverty nor by the enervating effects of an inheritance he has not worked to earn. His privilege as a satirist of the middling orders is to 'enjoy the world on equal terms', which involves acknowledging that he writes as part of, or on a level with, his popular audience, since they are responsible for the freedom and relative security he has ('All that I have, They gave' [l. 151]). For Churchill, it is impossible – and undesirable – to pose as a virtuous civic exile from the urban world that his poetry satirises; independence means being 'in', rather than 'out'.

Chatterton insists repeatedly that his beginnings are unprepossessing, and that he issues from just the kind of provincial Bristolian background that his poetry satirises. In 'The Whore of Babylon', for instance, he acknowledges that he was 'Bred in Bristol's mercenary Cell' and 'Compell'd in Scenes of Avarice to dwell', and has anxieties about what this means for the credibility of his satire: 'What generous Passion can refine my Breast / What besides Interest has my mind possest?' [ll. 57-60]. Being 'in', though, in the sense that Churchill describes, may also be the basis for a different kind of independent satire, written from the perspective of interest and complicity rather than postured disengagement. In the same poem, Chatterton shows that he is entirely conscious of the irony of his position as a satirist:

> If from the humblest Station in a place
> By Writers fix'd Eternal in Disgrace
> Long in the Literary World unknown
> To all but scribbling Blockheads of its own
> Then only introduc'd (unhappy Fate)
> The Subject of a Satyres deadly hate
> Whilst equally the Butt of Ridicule
> The Town was dirty and the Bard a Fool

> If from this place where Catamites are found
> [...]
> I may presume to exercise the Pen...
> [ll. 357-67]

Writing from within Grub Street is a very different thing to writing about it as a superior outsider. The 'Town' is only part of the 'Literary World' because it has traditionally been the butt of its joke, 'By Writers fix'd Eternal in Disgrace'. Its reputation for 'scribbling Blockheads' has made it the 'Subject' of satire, rather than a vantage point from which the satirist can observe in a detached fashion the failings of somewhere else.

Chatterton belongs emphatically to this world, and the kind of poetry he can write is conditioned by his local interests and attachments. His point, though, is that it is not always possible or necessary to observe one's satiric targets with perfect disinterest, and his own example serves to demonstrate that satire may be written from the inside looking out as well as from the outside looking in.[458] Despite his disadvantages, he does 'presume to exercise the Pen', and proceeds after this self-conscious excursus to attack his favourite propaganda target (Bute's shadowy control over North's ministry) with the usual vigour: 'The Clock work of thy Conscience turns about, / Just as his Mandates wind Thee in and out' [ll. 401-2]. His satire avows its independence by declaring the freedom of choice that men of his station and background have, in spite – and also because – of their complicity with the traditional objects and scenes of satiric mockery.[459] It is entirely possible to think and act independently as a self-made man in a 'dirty' urban world, and the inherited prejudices and judgements of Augustan satire (assumptions as to who can write satire, and the perspectives from which they can write it) have little relevance to the altered economic priorities of Wilkesite verse. The confident self-determination of his writing – perceiving the limitations of his milieu and turning to satire

[458] See Frederic V. Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from Johnson to Byron* (Ithaca and London, 2001), pp.21-32, for an argument that Augustan satire is also written from more of a perspective of complicity than its rhetoric would admit.

[459] See Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman*, p.484, on new egalitarian ideas of independence as a form of free choice ('the expression of every man's liberty rather than some men's property').

nonetheless – works like a form of enfranchisement, insisting that he and professional men of his sort are perfectly capable of making public-spirited political judgements.

Arthur Murphy, aggrieved at the opprobrium visited on him by Churchill in 'The Rosciad' (he was, he said, 'tormented sore / With *Churchill*'s rumbling *Rosciad* o'er and o'er), attacked the poet and his friend Lloyd by sketching a more conventional portrait of Grub Street in his satires.[460] In 'The Examiner' (1761), he uses the familiar imaginative framework of Pope's *Dunciad* to dismiss Churchill's band of London wits as a 'scribbling legion':

> See *Grub-street* opens her ten thousand doors,
> See *Billingsgate* unsluices all her stores;
> See essays, fables, puns, assist the fray,
> [...]
> See authors on all sides desert their dens,
> New edge their blunted wits, and nib their pens;
> All who in distant *Hockley-Hole* reside,
> And they who drink, *Fleet-ditch*, thy sable tide!
> [p.14]

The filthy world of Billingsgate, Hockley Hole and Fleet Ditch is a recognisable imitation of Dulness's dominions in the four-book *Dunciad* (1743).[461] The animation of literary forms and techniques ('essays, fables puns, assist the fray') recalls Dulness's cave of 'new-born nonsense' in Book I, where personified literary squibs emerge fully formed: 'a Mob of Metaphors advance, / Pleas'd with the madness of the mazy dance'. Similarly, the formulation of 'New edge their blunted wits, and nib their pens' gives a playful 'new edge' to a line of Pope's in Book II about Cibber's loyal band of aspiring hack-writers: 'New edge their dulness, and new bronze their face'.[462] By a series of meaningful intertextual nods, Murphy's verse lays claim to

[460] Arthur Murphy, *The Examiner. A Satire* (London, 1761), p.15. All further page references are incorporated in the text.
[461] For instance, the portrait of Dulness in Book IV ('shameless *Billingsgate* her Robes adorn', *Dunciad* IV. 26, *TE*, v. 342); the description of Cibber as 'This Mess, toss'd up of Hockley-hole and White's', *Dunciad* I. 222, *TE*, v. 286; and the writers' mud-diving scene at Fleet Ditch in Book II ('where Fleet-ditch with disemboguing streams / Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames', *Dunciad* II. 271-2, *TE*, v. 308-9). The literary world of Murphy's other verse satire of 1761, *An Ode to the Naiads of Fleet-Ditch*, is also largely drawn from *Dunciad* II.
[462] Pope, *The Dunciad*, I. 67-8; II. 10, *TE*, v. 275, 296.

a scornful satiric inheritance that sets him apart from the '*Grub-street*' hordes he resents, and invests his satiric persona with the confidence of Pope's own self-projections.

Murphy's way with allusion is a respectful (and self-aggrandising) prolongation of the Augustan vision: he asserts his independence from the London wits and the common herd of scribblers by allying himself with the high principles of a past literary dispensation. His portrait of Grub Street is generic rather than precise, and it deliberately excludes the possibility of any personal association on his own part with the literary underworld he rejects. Chatterton, by contrast, refused to make any such gesture of exclusion. He was interested in allusion for what it could do to suggest interest and complicity rather than lofty pretensions of detachment. There were problems, he noticed, with writing critically about political influence in a medium that was itself thoroughly influenced, dependent upon other lines of thinking and other ways of putting things. In 'Resignation', he retails the familiar Patriot conspiracy theory about Bute's secret control over the King and the ministry from his position out of government. 'None shall obtain an Office in the State', he writes, 'But such whose principles and manner suit / The virtuous temper of the Earl of Bute' [ll. 192-4]. He illustrates this system of corrupt patronage with a Copernican metaphor:

> Around this mystic Sun of liquid Gold
> A swarm of planetary Statesmen roll'd:
> Tho' some have since as Ministers been known
> They shone with borrow'd lustre not their own;
> In evry revolution day and Night
> From Bute they caught each particle of Light:
> [ll. 267-72]

Statesmen of the last few years, Chatterton argues, have made no inroads into public life of their own accord: they are satellites, deriving their ideas and principles ('each particle of Light'), from the cosmic centre of power they venerate. Public life is a matter of purchasing power and its ministers are ventriloquised puppets rather than autonomous political actors.

Chatterton makes these observations, though, in a medium that attests pointedly to its own influences and ventriloquised voices. His phrase 'borrow'd lustre' is itself a bit of borrowed lustre, an embellishment taken from a line of Samuel Butler's in *Hudibras* (1663), from which the cosmological metaphor is also drawn: 'The twinckling *Stars* began to muster, / And glitter with their borrow'd luster'.[463] Chatterton's reuse of the phrase turns it into an allusion about the mechanisms of alluding, and its witty self-referentiality has the effect of pointing to intertextuality as the subject of the verse paragraph as well as its mode. Several of his phrases ('Sun of liquid Gold'; 'borrow'd lustre') are lifted from the opening to Book II of Churchill's *Gotham*, which is a comic parody of the derivative and inflated language of foppish scribblers: 'Let *liquid* Gold emblaze the Sun at noon, / With *borrow'd* beams let Silver *pale* the Moon' [ll. 41-2]. Alluding to an affected style, Chatterton's writing is doubly derivative, and positively emphasises the degree to which its phrasing is a matter of appropriation from elsewhere.

The presiding influence, though, is the opening to Book II of *The Dunciad*, where Cibber, Poet Laureate and chief dunce, is presented surrounded by a tribe of ambitious scribbling hacks:

> His Peers shine round him with reflected grace,
> New edge their dulness, and new bronze their face.
> So from the Sun's broad beam, in shallow urns
> Heav'ns twinkling Sparks draw light, and point their horns.[464]

Chatterton's description of Bute's ministerial radiance owes its conceit to Pope's portrait of Cibber and the 'reflected grace' of his fellow dunces hoping to win favour by proximity. The allusion is witty and deferential, because it suggests that Chatterton himself, like those lesser ministers and lesser poets, has his 'grace' and 'lustre' only by virtue of reflection from Pope's

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[463] Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*, ed. by John Wilders (Oxford, 1967), p.126 (II.i. 913-4). The phrase also appears in Welsted's 'Palaemon to Caelia, at Bath' (1717): 'Our shining picts with borrow'd lustre reign, / And o'er our hearts felonious conquest gain'. See *The Works, in Verse and Prose, of Leonard Welsted, Esq;…*, ed. by John Nichols (London, 1787), p.36. Whitehead, *Manners*, p.10, uses the phrase 'borrow Lustre'.

[464] Pope, *The Dunciad*, II. 9-12, *TE*, v. 296.

brighter light. The allusion, though, also has a more serious point to make, because it implicates the poet's own satiric craft in the kind of negotiations and accommodations that politicians and hack-writers have to make. Intertextuality involves working in company and picking up formulations that are not entirely one's own, and writing satire allusively is way of suggesting that the genre's convictions are a matter of dependence and interest as much as principled self-reliance. Chatterton's intertextual verse indicates that there is no such thing as an entirely disinterested or uninfluenced satiric position, and equally that it is perfectly possible to attack corruption in a medium which is itself not entirely free from contingent pressures. In a similar fashion to Churchill's technique of positioning his satiric persona on 'equal terms' with the popular readership he envisages, Chatterton's poem notices the ways in which it belongs to the satiric milieu it aims to scrutinise, and exults in the satiric persona's freedom of choice to think independently nonetheless. He does not, unlike Murphy, adopt an inherited posture of lofty distance from a world he knows all too well.

Churchill and Chatterton's poetry insists on its indifference *from*, rather than *to*, its satiric object: it cultivates 'insufficient difference' from the things and people it scrutinises, and is written with the clarity of vision that comes with identity and intimate knowledge rather than from a vantage point of lofty disinterest.[465] Its ability to appeal to a new order of Patriot opposition, I have suggested, is closely bound up with this satiric posture of complicity and interestedness, which permits a rapprochement between independent political thinking and economic activity and a reappraisal of the qualities required for virtuous citizenship. In this chapter, I have assessed some of the traditional features of formal verse satire that were variously adapted or discarded in order to meet the intellectual requirements of this new concept of civic behaviour. Firstly, my argument has considered the adaptations made to the substantive content of the satiric attack. Churchill and Chatterton's poetry, I have shown,

[465] See Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, p.32.

discredits the traditional moral valences of aristocratic privilege in order to emphasise the importance of merit as a criterion of social advancement; it relocates the forums of political engagement to public sites outside the traditional chambers of debate; it conceives of patriotism as a passionate and sociable love for one's country, founded on private and personal ties instead of Stoic forms of disinterested public-mindedness; and it reappraises professional interestedness as a necessary basis for intelligent citizenship rather than a mark of meanness and corruptibility.

In the second part of the chapter, my analysis has focussed on the degree to which generic adaptation also involved reappropriating or discarding formal structures of Roman and Augustan satire, genre-linked conceits and tropes whose underlying assumptions or value systems were perceived to be inappropriate for satire's new ethical priorities. In some cases, satiric structures could be made to serve radical new purposes merely by inversion: Chatterton's depiction of the politicians' food fight, for instance, rewrites mock-heroic as travesty in order to discredit aristocratic forums of debate and parliamentary procedure. Likewise, the dialogue format proved to be particularly susceptible to inventive reworking. Churchill's inversion of the traditional adversarius and speaker roles in 'The Farewell', for instance, permits him to query the social and ethical value of traditional satiric postures of disinterest and detach the idea of patriotic citizenship from its basis in civic concepts of political action. In other contexts, though, the political implications of the Augustan inheritance were such that its forms and conceits could not be reconciled by mere tricks of inversion with the radical new programme of Wilkesite satire. This is true, for instance, of the early eighteenth-century technique of praising a roster of principled aristocrats in exile, which was not easily squared with Churchill and Chatterton's sense that most of the moral corruption of the public sphere was traceable to inherited privilege. Tropes of this kind encouraged conservative habits of thinking that were anathematic to the Wilkesite satirists' formulation of a meritocratic and inclusive politics of virtue. Rejecting the inherited civic assumption that men of commerce

lacked the principled autonomy to participate in processes of political decision-making, their poetry contributed instead to a broader intellectual reappraisal of the value of middling citizenship, reassessing the kinds of men who were best equipped to occupy public office and those who had forfeited their right to a legislative platform.

CONCLUSION: THE LEGISLATIVE VIEW

A number of commentators on the history of poetic genre have argued for its decline as a serious legislative category during the mid-eighteenth century. They suggest that the period forced a decisive break with the hegemony of traditional generic composition, particularly in the case of the classical kinds.[466] The rise of prose composition in the novel, the essay and the philosophical treatise encouraged more experimental and flexible attitudes to the writing of poetry. Vernacular models for verse writing – the Spenserian stanza, Miltonic blank verse, the loco-descriptive poem – came to replace the conventional Virgilian inheritance, and an interest in primitivism forced a critical revaluation of classical and neoclassical polish. The ode grew popular because its Pindaric framework was only loosely understood, which allowed it to support kinds of poetic invention that bore little resemblance to its model. The selection of occasional verse in popular miscellanies of the age (in particular, Dodsley's 1748 three-volume *Collection of Poems*) may be taken to indicate a broad literary and commercial preference for inventive ode composition and experiments in Spenserian revivalism.[467] 'By the middle of the eighteenth century', as Bate has written, 'there was an almost universal suspicion that something had gone wrong in the neoclassic adventure', and this sensibility of having pushed the classical forms too far, or not far enough, forced a 'crisis of reconsideration', a necessary movement towards other frameworks and tropes.[468]

This thesis proposes a different view of genre at mid-century, based on readings of a large number of poems which adopt inherited generic structures in order to articulate contemporary ideas. The three case studies I have presented suggest that classical generic forms (and their early modern iterations) displayed a remarkable persistence as organising frameworks

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[466] See, e.g., Bate, *The Burden of the Past*, pp.44-8; John Butt, *The Mid-Eighteenth Century*, ed. and completed by Geoffrey Carnall (Oxford, 1979), p.7.
[467] *A Collection of Poems in Three Volumes. By Several Hands*, 3 vols. (London, 1748).
[468] Bate, *The Burden of the Past*, p.45.

for eighteenth-century poetry. Country house poetry, georgic and satire were reappropriated not because they were tired vestigial survivals of another age, but because they retained a special explanatory usefulness for the particular socioeconomic circumstances of the eighteenth century. They provided authoritative bases for the experimental thought of Enlightenment political economy and offered a conceptual standard from which poets could depart and dissent. As Ralph Cohen has argued, the 'turn to certain aspects of classical poetry' during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was driven by the requirement for 'a norm against which to innovate': the available forms were opportunities to 'break with the variant procedures and seek innovative explanations', rather than exercises in imitation and identification.[469] The modes of generic continuity and reappropriation studied in this thesis are various, but they demonstrate above all the malleability and versatility of inherited genres. They show that poets were interested in the challenge of conveying their enthusiasm for political economic ideas by means of frameworks whose ethical value systems would stand as traditionally opposed to progressive economic activity.

Reorienting country house poetry, georgic and satire for a confident age of political economic growth involves retaining recognisable images, vignettes, tropes and topoi (which act as markers of authority and intent), but setting them to work in unfamiliar moral and philosophical contexts. The three case studies above are intended to analyse the various problems and opportunities that this generic mediation presented for eighteenth-century poets. In each instance, I have shown that the process of adaptation requires two kinds of reworking. Firstly, poets seek to modify elements of subject matter (recognisably genre-linked preoccupations and actions) that have been associated historically with the genre in question: they discard themes and concerns that are found to be old-fashioned, parochial or otherwise ideologically unsuitable, and substitute in their place new problems and perspectives – the

[469] Ralph Cohen, 'Innovation and Variation: Literary Change and Georgic Poetry', p.182.

expansive geographies of global commerce, for instance, or radical reappraisals of the middling orders as a dominant class of virtuous civic actors.

Secondly, their poetry adapts key formal features of the received genre, negotiating creative meeting points between inherited structures (modes and registers, tropes, conceits, turns of phrase, imagery) and the new internal logic of eighteenth-century socioeconomic thought. This second adaptation process, in turn, can be subdivided into categories of approach, differentiated by the degree to which poets perceive genre-linked tropes to be adequate frameworks for the unfamiliar ideas they want to articulate. Poets may, for instance, dispense altogether with characteristic formal elements of the genres they adopt, in order to foreground their inappropriateness for the task in hand; they may engage sceptically with inherited forms and conceits, placing them under scrutiny by juxtaposing them with contemporary representational strategies; and, in a small number of instances, they find a special value in retaining traditional formal elements uncritically, where such elements are perceived to possess a superior ability to organise and articulate even the most modern of concerns.

The model of generic transformation I offer here is intended to complement and refine existing taxonomies of the ways in which genres adapt under historical pressure.[470] Its category distinctions are derived from the textual readings in each chapter and case study, which survey the variety and inventiveness of generic responses to changing intellectual priorities. Chapter 1, for instance, discovers a shared tendency in several Restoration and eighteenth-century estate poems to reject core elements of the Renaissance country house poem's ethical framework, transforming its moralised paternalism into a grander macroeconomic total vision. There are also more nuanced examples of eighteenth-century poets adopting familiar conceits of the inherited country house poem in a sceptical and provisional fashion, deliberately allowing

[470] For instance, Fowler's taxonomy of a number of ways in which genres may transform ('topical invention', 'combination', 'aggregation', 'change of scale', etc.). See *Kinds of Literature*, pp.170-88.

them to be overwritten by the new economic imperatives of the great estate (as, for instance, in the anonymous *Powers-court House*, where the poet's juxtaposition of familiar paternalist observances with modern improvement projects forces a revaluation of what public-spirited landownership should involve). Chapter 2 shows that mid-century poets writing georgics on British agriculture found several different ways to balance competing obligations to generic fidelity and the ideology of improvement. In some poems, Virgilian tropes and vignettes are picked up sceptically in order to emphasise their limitations and blindspots, but there are also instances of poets imitating conceits in a sympathetic fashion, because they are found to convey a technical point especially vividly and imaginatively (as in the case of Jago's heroic comparison between the forges of Vulcan and Birmingham's iron factories in *Edge-Hill*).

Likewise, Chapter 3 indicates that later eighteenth-century verse satirists had several means of generic transformation at their disposal, though here there is a separate point to be made about the imperatives governing a poet's choice of approach. Generic transformation in partisan writing has a special importance. More is at stake in evaluating the adaptability of inherited generic formal characteristics than mere explanatory usefulness: there are political valences to retaining or discarding forms, since the historical development of genre-linked tropes and conceits is closely bound up with the development of genre-linked ideological value systems. The Augustan satiric technique of lining up a canon of virtuous exiled aristocrats, for instance, relies on a conviction that aristocrats are virtuous, and that part of their virtue is dependent on their being absent from the corrupt world of the city and the court. For Wilkesite satirists celebrating a new virtuous order of urban middling citizens, such epideictic forms were discarded for being thoroughly inappropriate (or treated with bitter irony, as in the case of Churchill's mock-praise of Sandwich). It mattered to satirists whether such structures were imitated or rejected, because retaining the same way of putting things had problematic implications for the articulation of political or moral difference. Some genre-linked structures,

of course, proved less contentious and more adaptable, and could be inverted and repositioned to serve radically new political purposes. The adversarius dialogue and the mock-heroic register, for instance, survived because they were found to be eloquent frameworks on both sides of the partisan divide: they served the ideological requirements of anti-ministerial satire during the 1730s and 1740s, and were subsequently reoriented to serve the entirely different ideological requirements of anti-ministerial satire during the 1760s and 1770s.

The case studies above show in various ways that traditional poetic genres were responsive to the historical pressure of ideas, and in some cases (at mid-century in particular) were found to be remarkably useful frameworks for the unfamiliar intellectual procedures of political economy. But this period of negotiation between Enlightenment ideas and the traditional kinds was relatively short-lived, and poets did not tend to gravitate towards the country house poem, the georgic or formal verse satire for discussion of public (political economic) themes to any great degree after 1770. Robert Aubin's survey of topographical poetry over the long eighteenth century indicates that the number of estate poems addressed to named aristocratic patrons declined sharply after the mid-century, replaced by a fashion for loco-descriptive poems which took the environs of the great house as inspiration for meditative flights on solitude and retirement, or as the basis for excursions in the picturesque or sublime.[471] David Fairer and Kurt Heinzelman have remarked on the virtual disappearance after the 1760s of the formal georgic, attributed variously to the encroachment of meditative topographical poetry, a growing Romantic distrust of didacticism, and the problem of the georgic's own 'singular referentiality', a burden of factuality that barred it from the realms of imaginative writing.[472] By a broad critical consensus, political satire in verse – with notable

[471] See Aubin, *Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England*, pp.316-333, especially p.324 onwards.
[472] David Fairer, 'Persistence, Adaptations and Transformations in Pastoral and Georgic poetry', in *The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660-1780*, ed. by John Richetti (Cambridge, 2008), p.260; Heinzelman, 'Roman Georgic in the Georgian Age', pp.190, 192, 200. Both Fairer and Alan Liu, however, have argued that a Romantic version of georgic survives in Wordsworth and Coleridge's earlier poetry. See Fairer, *Organising Poetry: The Coleridge Circle, 1790-1798* (Oxford, 2009), and Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford, 1989).

exceptions in the work of Gifford, Wolcot and Byron – declined in stature after 1770, replaced by invective in prose and visual caricature.[473] My description of enthusiastic and imaginative generic transformation during the early and mid-eighteenth century must take some account of the loss of confidence that followed, so I want to conclude by proposing one reading of the later eighteenth-century situation, which will concentrate as before on the influence of socioeconomic thinking on literary categories.

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During the 1760s and 1770s, historical sociologists constructed theories of primitive social development in order to shed light on the origins of civil society, the development of political forms and the rise of the commercial and cultural arts. The 1760s, as Michael Meehan has shown, 'represented the richest decade for speculation on the social bases of artistic development', and commentators such as Adam Ferguson, John Brown and Thomas Sheridan produced large-scale historical surveys to show that refinements in the economic and political life of a society had always influenced the direction in which its poetry, music and fine arts progressed.[474] Broadly, these surveys were of a pessimistic turn, and argued that much of the vitality, authenticity and cohesion of primitive societies (and their primitive art forms) had been lost in the advancement towards refined political forms and complex economic structures.

In primitive ages, commentators argued, there were only a limited number of public functions and they required little specialist ability, so the same man could fulfil more than one function simultaneously. It was common, for instance, for the office of the legislator or chief to be conflated with that of the bard. Brown develops this connection at length in his *History of the Rise and Progress of Poetry* (1764). 'In the early Periods of […] a Commonwealth', he writes,

[473] See, e.g., Griffin, *Satire*, p.133: 'It is […] regularly conceded that satire in English declined in the late eighteenth century, that apart from Byron we have had little significant satire proper since about 1750'. See also Carretta, *The Snarling Muse*, p.247. Marshall, *The Practice of Satire in England*, ends her survey of satire in the 'long eighteenth century' at 1770, with mid-century satire as the last category.
[474] Meehan, *Liberty and Poetics in Eighteenth-Century England*, p.97.

'the *Chiefs* or *Legislators* would often be the *principal Bards, Poets*, or *Musicians*. The two Characters would commonly coalesce'.[475] This was the case for practical reasons: the important 'public Solemnities' of a primitive society – marriages, victory celebrations, funerals and the like – would be conducted in song and verse; its histories would be recorded in verse, and its maxims and laws likewise; and its religious rites and pagan offerings would be accompanied by poetic song.[476] 'The early history of all nations is uniform in this particular', Ferguson argues in his *Essay on the History of Civil Society*: 'priests, statesmen, and philosophers [...] delivered their instructions in poetry, and mixed with the dealers in music and heroic fable'.[477] In both treatises, ancient Greece is the pre-eminent example of a society in which legislation and poetic composition went hand in hand. 'In the earliest Periods of the *Greek* State', writes Brown, 'their Legislators were often Bards, or their Bards were Legislators'. Early poets such as Hesiod wrote their poetry with a '*legislative* Style and Genius'; Homer was 'a Genius truly *legislative* according to the Principles of his Time'.[478]

For Ferguson and Brown, poetry in its formative state was intrinsically social. The arts were 'an integrated and unprivileged part of the life of the community', and they derived their prestige from the glory of the polis rather than from any perceived cultural value of their own.[479] But as the administration of the community grew more complex, it became increasingly impractical for any single man to fulfil more than one social or political function simultaneously, and the 'coalesced' or 'complex' character of the legislator and bard was compelled to separate into its constituent parts. Brown explained that dedicated civil magistrates would fulfil legislative functions, whilst the bard would make his art into his profession, becoming 'a *subordinate* and *useful Servant* to the *State*' rather than 'an original Legislator' in his own right. The specialisation of his function would, in turn, encourage the

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[475] Brown, *History,* p.25.
[476] Ibid., pp.13, 27-8.
[477] *HCS*, p.165.
[478] Brown, *History*, pp.40, 64-5.
[479] Meehan, *Liberty and Poetics in Eighteenth-Century England*, pp.115-6.

division of poetic composition into 'several Kinds of Poem' or genres (ode, epic, tragedy, lyric), which a bard could perform according to the requirements of occasion.[480]

For a number of years, Brown argues, this process of separation was mutually beneficial for bards and legislators alike. The refinement of political forms (and attendant improvements in public morality and social interaction) permitted Greek society to expand and flourish, whilst the separation of poetic kinds provided sophisticated frameworks for a skilled poet to celebrate the glorious progress of his nation. For Brown, Pindar's poetry represents just such a sublime union of legislative triumph and bardic accomplishment:

> At the Period when He flourished, the Fortune and Glory of GREECE were rising to their Meridian: The *legislative* Arts had now obtained a higher Degree of Perfection: And accordingly we find, in his sublime *Songs*, the fullest and most perfect Union of salutary Principles, thrown out in Maxims religious, political, and moral.[481]

This 'Meridian' period, though, was of short duration, and Brown and Ferguson offer pessimistic accounts of what followed. As the arts developed separately in their various professional forms, the close connection they had always retained to active civil society weakened, and with it their claims on political legislation.[482] 'These Professions', Brown argues, 'which in the earliest Ages had been the Means of inculcating every thing *laudable* and *great*, grew by degrees of less and less Importance'.[483] In the last days of imperial Rome, the arts lost their social stature entirely. The poetic and dramatic kinds branched into sophisticated and frivolous subgenres; poets wrote licentious entertainments and pantomimes, which had little or nothing to do with the 'Ends of public Utility' and the civic life of the polis. 'The degenerate Arts', Brown concludes, 'sunk with the degenerate City'.[484]

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[480] Brown, *History*, pp.30, 31, 36. See also *HCS*, p.168.
[481] Brown, *History*, p.71.
[482] See Meehan, *Liberty and Poetics in Eighteenth-Century England*, p.99.
[483] Brown, *History*, pp.156-7.
[484] Ibid., pp.261-4.

Ferguson's historical narrative comes to similar conclusions, warning of the consequences for civic cohesion and legislative competence that come with the separation of professions. 'The history of this people', he writes of the Athenians, 'abundantly shewed, that men ceased to be citizens, even to be good poets and orators, in proportion as they came to be distinguished by the profession of these, and other separate crafts'.[485] The example of the Athenians indicates for Ferguson that poetry and the other arts reach a state of perfection by the separation of the professions, but their perfection comes at the expense of the shared vitality that animates a society in its early stages of development. Specialisation, he argues, 'in its termination, and ultimate effects, serves, in some measure, to break the bands of society': a community is 'made to consist of parts, of which none is animated by the spirit of society itself'.[486] As John Barrell has shown in his account of Ferguson's essay, the separation of functions requires, for its economic success, a narrowness of vision in its constituent parts; but this narrowness of vision raises political problems, because it means that no single member of society is capable of surveying the full picture in a disinterested legislative capacity. 'The ability of each link in a productive chain', Barrell writes, 'to see, to *comprehend* the range and organisation of activities necessary to its survival and progress, is impaired'.[487] Citizens of developed societies exist in a complex set of socioeconomic relations of which they have little sense, and are 'blind […] to any general combination', as Ferguson argues.[488] The knowledge or skills they possess are of too specific a kind to make other operations and functions comprehensible.

Poetry, like any other commercial art, may reach a state of perfection (in the sense of completion) in a refined and complex society. 'The library is stored', writes Ferguson, 'like

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[485] *HCS*, p.207.
[486] Ibid., pp.206-7.
[487] Barrell, *English Literature in History*, pp.28-30.
[488] *HCS*, p.173. See also *Adventurer*, 107 (November 13 1753): 'Where, then, is the wonder, that they, who see only a small part, should judge erroneously of the whole?'

the warehouse, with the finished manufacture of different arts'.[489] But the poet, in this age of finesse and polish, is reduced to the status of an improver or imitator, copying and minutely retooling the bolder works of antiquity. For Ferguson, as for Brown, the narrative of socioeconomic growth is also a narrative of artistic decline. In complex societies, poetry loses its legislative function not only because the most imaginative work has already been accomplished, but also because the individual artist's scope and vision are so thoroughly reduced by the process of specialisation that it would be impossible for him to gain a totalising perspective on the social order. As early as 1735, Thomas Blackwell had noted in his *Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* that specialisation and narrowness of vision were especially harmful for poets. 'Whoever confines his Thinking to any *one* Subject', Blackwell wrote, 'who bestows all his Care and Study upon *one* Employment or Vocation, may excel in that; But cannot be qualified for a Province that requires the *freest* and *widest*, as well as the most simple and disinterested Views of Nature'.[490] Homer would not have written as he did had he lived in Ferguson's advanced civil society, a complex world of disciplines in which 'the experienced practitioner is the master, and every general reasoner is a novice', and value is measured by economic narrowness rather than political or philosophical breadth.[491]

I suggest that this theoretical diagnosis of the implications for the arts of the separation of professions is also expressed as a practical anxiety in contemporary poetry. Poets who engage with political economic thought during the mid- and later eighteenth century are conscious of dual obligations to two kinds of value, the opposed priorities of economic narrowness and political generalism that Ferguson and Brown notice as having emerged with the separation of economic work. Negotiating between these two poles of value involves a fine balancing act. On the one hand, coming to terms with the complexity of political economic modernity requires a degree of specialisation, since the subdivision of labour and information

[489] *HCS*, p.180.
[490] Blackwell, *An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer*, p.113.
[491] *HCS*, p.144.

has the effect of making the big picture seem more complicated and ungraspable than ever. Poets are required to think of themselves as specialists both in terms of the particular knowledge base they cultivate, and the increasingly narrow and professionalised function they serve. The country house poet, for instance, rather than projecting himself as a welcome guest of the landowner's paternalist generosity, calculates the macroeconomic value of individual estates as they fit into a larger national organisation. The satirist, whose speaker would traditionally derive his virtue from economic independence, writes instead from the vantage point of a professional scribbler and interested member of the middling, embroiled in the same compromising socioeconomic nexus that he places under satiric scrutiny; and the georgic poet, rather than having an amateur interest in several different kinds of intellectual enquiry, presents himself as a didactic specialist in particular branches of agricultural improvement, able to write with confidence (in technical detail, and with claims on scientific verifiability) about the several stages of agriculture and manufacture involved in international market production.

What is lost with the decision to specialise is the sense of any total vision, the kind of disinterested vantage point from which a poet may be expected to see and comprehend enough of his object to be able to legislate for all those for whom it matters. In classical and early modern generic forms, the poet is placed in a sufficiently privileged position to enjoy this all-encompassing vision and the legislative abilities it presumes. In the Renaissance country house poem, for instance, the poet's special status as a prized guest of the lord, a temporary insider, provides him with a privileged vantage point over the whole, and the estate's small compass and parochial economy sets clear bounds to the legislative arena. In Roman and neoclassical satire, the feeling of total vision is achieved by distance: the satiric speaker is at a sufficient remove to pronounce on the failings of his society by virtue of the economic disinterestedness that saves him from complicity and corruptibility. In Virgilian georgic, Stoic preferences for humility and limited knowledge – and for handed down precepts over verifiably accurate data –

assert the amateurism of didactic wisdom, and the importance of breadth rather than narrow precision. The farmer is offered advice, but no claims are made on professional superiority, and a considerable number of topics are covered briefly in favour of dealing with one specialised process in detail.

My readings of poems on political economic ideas from the mid- and later eighteenth century have tended to suggest that poets who engaged enthusiastically with specialist debates were not always entirely happy with abandoning a legislative generality of vision. There are points at which they struggle to balance intellectual requirements for specialist precision with a traditional desire for a more inclusive and civic sense of poetry's function. These points of conflict are felt as stress fractures in the poem's progressive confidence, anxieties about what a sophisticated economic understanding of social differentiation means for poetry's special claims to be able to speak *for* any particular society or group. I want to offer a few instances of such moments of anxiety, drawn from poems in each of the three genre groupings I have focussed on. These individual readings are not intended to add up to any sort of complete theory of generic decline, but they may help to describe some of the difficulties that arose with the reappropriation of traditional poetic frameworks for political economic ideas, and suggest a direction in which future work might be taken.

The country house poem is founded on a vision of cohesion within a small paternalist society. It relies on an idealised assumption that the poet and his patron are in some fashion economically or socially useful to one another, and that both are invested in a shared moral economy of hierarchical and hospitable landholding. For Jonson and his Caroline imitators, the poet-patron relationship is dramatised as a central element of the genre. The landowner's generosity to his passing poet-guest is the capital laid out to ensure a contractual return of praise, and the poet's virtuosity earns him the right to a privileged position within the paternalist circle: the ideal household is one in which, as Jonson writes of Penshurst, 'all is

there, / As if thou, then, wert mine, or I reigned here'.[492] In the Restoration and eighteenth-century poem, there is a similar investment in the notion of a mutually beneficial exchange of favours. The visit of the poet may not be accorded quite the same dramatic emphasis, but his encomium is nonetheless targeted to garner recognition from a specific landowning family, and the poetry shares confidently in the political and economic optimism that the wealth of the house symbolises.

In the eighteenth-century genre, though (and especially after mid-century), this paternalist organising framework is forced to contend with an entirely different political economic ideology of landownership. Poets celebrate landowners who reject neo-feudal models of hospitality for larger economic ambitions, stimulating labour markets and systems of supply and demand by means of fashionable improvement projects or the purchase of luxury goods. This revised concept of what social responsibility entails – emphasising the impersonal workings of self-interest above the benevolent gestures of paternalism – has implications for patronage and for the dramatised position and role of the poet within the poem. With the passing of the paternalist community, the relationship of the poet's speaker to the landowner and the estate shifts: the poet may present himself as participating in the wider labour economy of the country house by offering his professional services for hire, but he forfeits an insider's perspective on its workings because he has no special entitlement to write about it, no invitation as a guest and welcome member of the community. Composing a country house panegyric no longer guarantees the poet's speaker privileged access to the estate as a self-contained civic society, or a legislative role in its moral and political determination. The loss of legislative confidence is felt to come as a direct result of poetry's engagement with political economic models (in this case, new ideas about social responsibility and labour).

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[492] Jonson, 'To Penshurst', ll. 73-4, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, gen. ed. by Bevington, Butler and Donaldson, v. 213.

The loss is made particularly clear in James Woodhouse's 'Elegy to William Shenstone' (1759), an early description of Shenstone's house and gardens on the Lessowes estate. Woodhouse's status as a labouring-class poet (he worked as a shoemaker to support his poetic ambitions) produces a kind of hypersensitivity to the professional nature of poetic work, which is juxtaposed awkwardly in this poem with a recapitulation of the paternalist conventions of the genre. Woodhouse opens his poem by requesting Shenstone humbly to forgive his imposition ('Pardon, O Shenstone! an intruding strain'[493]), which has the effect of interrogating the assumption of mutual benefit that underpins the poet-patron relationship, framing the service he offers as something unwanted or at the least unsolicited. His verse returns continually to the economic imperatives that govern and frustrate his poetic output: he looks forward hopelessly to 'that BLEST DAY' when he will be 'retir'd from toil and care' [p.8], and confesses that if he writes, it is in spite of economic conditions that count against him ('Tho' no auspicious rent-rolls grace my line' [p.2]).

Since he cannot afford to write on an amateur or occasional basis, Woodhouse is in a compromised position and his status is marginal; there is no tacit literary-economic contract of praise to underwrite his enterprise, no particular reason why Shenstone should take notice of his efforts and reward them with a patron's attention. He is a professional offering his wares, rather than Shenstone's equal partner in a contract of reciprocal advantage. The inequity of his position is most clearly articulated when he comes to describing his favourite pursuit at the Lessowes, reading the mottos and inscriptions displayed on statuary around the grounds:

> With heart-felt joy I've traced their various song,
> Express'd in fragments, all thy walks along:
> To read them ALL would be my humble pride;
> But only part is granted, part deny'd:
> I feel no GRECIAN, feel no ROMAN fire;

[493] James Woodhouse, 'An Elegy to William Shenstone, Esq; Of the Lessowes', in *Poems on Sundry Occasions. By James Woodhouse, a Journeyman Shoemaker* (London, 1764), p.1. All further page references are incorporated in the text.

> I only share the BRITISH muse's lyre;
> And that stern penury dares almost deny;
> For manual toils alone my wants supply:
> The awl and pen by turns possess my hand,
> And worldly cares, e'en now, the muse's hour demand.
> Once fickle fortune's gifts before me shone,
> But now that dazzling prospect's lost and gone!
> [pp.6-7]

The pressures of Woodhouse's livelihood ('manual toils') impinge on the time he would otherwise dedicate to lettered pursuits, and the result is a debilitatingly partial knowledge of the ancient languages he requires, both for a proper appreciation of the garden's classical embellishments and for literary activities beyond the base-level requirements of 'the BRITISH muse's lyre'. His exile from the republic of letters is figured as an exile from the real boundaries of Shenstone's estate (he imagines himself waiting 'before thy villa's gate' for the 'offer'd key' [p.8]), because the literary disadvantage and the social one are thought of as two sides of the same problem. Barred from proper access to the allusive storehouse of Latin and Greek, the full pleasures of his patron's statues and walks are closed to him; and when he comes to losing a 'dazzling prospect', the idea is meant literally as well as metaphorically, because it touches on a specific feeling of being unentitled to enjoy the full extent of Shenstone's lands as a welcome poet-guest should, alongside a more general disappointment at being unentitled to a literary career. Woodhouse cannot write a traditional estate poem because he does not have a 'prospect', the kind of commanding legislative overview of the Lessowes that could only come with a more confident sense of economic belonging. His competences are too narrowly professional to permit him the breadth of vision and comprehension he longs for.

In georgic poetry, narrowness is desirable: precision is required if skills and techniques are to be taught or imitated and information tends to be subject-specific rather than wide-ranging and tangential. But the didactic vision also strives for comprehensiveness within the

limits of its field of study, endeavouring to survey all the information relevant to a particular topic and to gather it together by means of a totalising framework. In the mid-eighteenth-century georgic, this balance between precision and comprehensiveness becomes a particularly difficult one to strike because the new information of improvement is highly specialised.[494] Advice is conceived to be valuable when it is technical, disciplinary and empirical, and the preference in Virgilian georgic for virtuous humility and amateurish limited knowledge is rejected as an obstacle to scientific accuracy. Mid-century georgic poets (Dodsley and Dyer in particular) appear to have experienced common problems with presenting this new technical information to standards of both disciplinary accuracy and comprehensiveness, and I suggest that the difficulties they encounter, as well as the strategies they contrive to combat them, are symptomatic of a slippage of confidence in the period about the basic assumption underpinning the didactic tradition, a sense 'of the unity of knowledge and of the verbal means available to express it'.[495] Knowledge cannot be brought together in 'unity' because it is separated into multiple disciplinary subcategories, and the terminology it involves is of too technical a kind to be expressed by shared 'verbal means' or common cultural mythologies.

Specialisation is necessary at mid-century if a didactic poem is not to become unworkably ambitious, and even carefully delineated fields of study prove themselves to be capaciously detailed: *The Fleece*, for instance, struggles to contain in four substantial books comprehensive professional advice on the wool industry, with its several arms of husbandry, manufacture and commerce.[496] It is also perceived to be necessary because information is prized for its specificity and precision. 'Listen not / To doubtful precepts, with implicit faith', Dodsley warns in Canto II of *Agriculture*: the advice he offers will 'teach the swain / The hidden

[494] Pellicer, 'The Georgic at Mid-Eighteenth Century', p.80.
[495] De Bruyn, From 'Virgilian Georgic to Agricultural Science: An Instance in the Transvaluation of Literature in Eighteenth-Century Britain', p.63.
[496] Addison had already foreseen this difficulty in his 1697 *Essay*: 'Now since this Science of Husbandry is of a very large extent, the Poet shews his Skill in singling out such Precepts to proceed on, as are useful, and at the same time most capable of Ornament'. See Addison, *An Essay on the Georgics*, in *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. by Swedenborg *et al.*, v. 146.

properties of every glebe, / And what the different Culture each requires' [II. 129-30, 2-4], providing precepts tailored to the differing professional circumstances of labour. But it is also clear that poetry is valued for its combinatory and unifying abilities, its capacity to establish connections between separate branches of work and arrange isolated professional operations so that they are newly recognisable as related.[497] This, for instance, is Dyer's object in his passage in Book III of *The Fleece* about the different manufacturing processes that come together to build a loom ('Various professions in the work unite: / For each on each depends' [III. 119-20]), and also the idea behind Dodsley's description of the many woodworking industries that are connected by virtue of their common indebtedness to 'the skilful Planter': 'Various Arts / Borrow from him materials' [II. 256-7]. In both passages, organising forms – syntactic repetition, enjambment, rhyme – are employed to extract patterns and relations from the mass of economic data, and the poet's capacity to think relatively about several different kinds of operation provides him with a theoretical vantage point from which to survey the composite political economic picture.

The problem with this totalising function, though, is one of perspective. According to political economic descriptions of the complexity of commercial society, providing information on several subjects is to provide nothing of practical value on any of them, because progress is made by small intradisciplinary refinements, rather than by grander projects spanning multiple disciplines. Equally, as Clifford Siskin's work on Scottish Enlightenment system building has demonstrated, attempts to subsume complex specialist structures within a single master narrative are doomed to failure. 'More writing of more systems made reconciliation into a single system less and less likely', Siskin argues of Smith's efforts at completeness in *The Wealth*

[497] This combinatory effect is also achieved by elision: Goodridge, for instance, has noticed how Dyer tends to conflate advice intended for improving agriculturalists and landowners with that intended for farmers and shepherds, in order to simplify an increasingly differentiated economic picture. See Goodridge, *Rural Life in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry*, p.115.

of Nations: 'there was simply too much system for system to master'.[498] Mid-century georgic poets are caught between professional obligations to offer specialist advice on particular tasks and a more traditional desire for a legislative breadth of vision, a disinterested vantage point from which no process is examined in the kind of detail that might compromise or impair one's vision of the whole. But the requirement to be at once usefully interested and necessarily disinterested is problematic, because striking a balance between the two tends to thwart the aims of both: it precludes a satisfactory degree of disciplinary focus *and* an entirely impartial generalist approach.[499]

Dodsley's *Agriculture* registers the awkwardness and imponderability of this double bind, and the larger anxieties it produces about the feasibility of the didactic enterprise. At the close of Book I, the Muse promises a lesson in 'deep mysterious Nature' and 'the causes of Fecundity' [I. 344-5], which is delivered as an allegory of the farming year. One by one, the four seasons process in 'mystic train' and 'mazy dance' under the direction of the Goddess of Nature, who expounds the didactic lesson in a hymn:

> 'Let all the Powers of Nature raise the song!
> The watry Signs forsaking, see, the Sun,
> Great Father of the vegetable tribes,
> Darts from the Ram his all-enlivening ray.
> When now the genial warmth Earth's yielding breast
> Unfolds. Her latent salts, sulphureous oils,
> And Air, and Water mixt; attract, repel,
> And raise prolific ferment'.
>
> [I. 422-9]

'The philosophy of this hymn', Dodsley explains in a footnote, 'is built on that experimental foundation, laid by the learned and ingenious Dr. Hales, in his *Vegetable Statics*' [p.23 n.]. *Vegetable Statics* (1727), the first volume of Stephen Hales's *Statical Essays*, contains several

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[498] Clifford Siskin, 'The System of the World' in *This Is Enlightenment*, ed. by Siskin and Warner, p.168.
[499] See Pellicer, 'The Georgic at Mid-Eighteenth Century', pp.81-2.

scientific experiments designed to formulate a theory of the motion of fluids in plants.[500] Dodsley's 'hymn' sticks closely to Hales's model and is full of precise terminology: alongside the references to 'latent salts' and 'sulphureous oils', there are also mentions of 'ductile juice' and 'emulgent fibres' [I. 427-31], all of which demonstrate a careful working knowledge of specialist material.

As the hymn continues, though, the 'experimental foundation' of Hales's science is abruptly exchanged for another kind of authority:

> 'Ye sons of men, with rapture view the scene!
> […]
> The wandering eye delighted roves untir'd.
> The hawthorn's whitening bush, Pomona's blooms,
> And Flora's pencil o'er th'enamell'd green,
> The varying scenes enrich'.
> [I. 448-55]

Here, the sequence of biological processes becomes a fixed topographical prospect, its features generic and mythologised. Flora and Pomona are part of a recognisable landscape of early eighteenth-century georgic: 'Flora's pencil o'er th'enamell'd green', for instance, recalls Pope's *Windsor-Forest*, where 'blushing *Flora* paints th'enamel'd Ground', and Pomona is lifted similarly from the apple-laden countryside of Philips's *Cyder*.[501] An enthusiastic desire to know exactly how scientific processes work, 'sulphureous oils' and all, is juxtaposed uncomfortably with a more modest sense that all one can do is rename them, or appeal to traditional modes of representation. The juxtaposition – and the compromise it represents – indicates that Dodsley conceives of the didactic enterprise as something more than a mere reiteration of specialist information in all its finesse and technicality. Instead, he deliberately tempers his ambitious drive for minute specificity and precision by drawing on shared cultural resources of trope and

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[500] Stephen Hales, *Statical Essays: Containing Vegetable Staticks…* (London, 1731), p.2-4.
[501] Pope, *Windsor-Forest*, l. 38, *TE*, i. 151; Philips, *Cyder,* I. 3-4 ('Thy Gift, *Pomona*, in *Miltonian* Verse / Adventrous I presume to sing').

allusion, which align him with the kind of explanatory allegorical vision made possible by earlier georgic topographies. His verse, in much the same way as Woodhouse's 'Elegy', is engaged in searching for a prospect: a vantage point from which even the most specialised poetry can reprise its legislative confidence, its traditional capacity to frame, organise and make sense of information.

One final instance of this interest in rediscovering a legislative perspective may be drawn from later eighteenth-century verse satire. Wilkesite satirists, I have argued, reorient traditional satiric orders of vice and virtue in order to praise a new kind of political 'independence', based on the economic interestedness and professionalism of the middling orders. The satirist's speaker is dramatised as being firmly *in* the grubby urban world he attacks, rather than looking down on his society from a position of lofty disengagement; this, I have suggested, is what underpins Chatterton's confidence that he 'may presume to exercise the Pen' in spite – and because – of the fact that he issues 'from the humblest Station in a place / By Writers fix'd Eternal in Disgrace' ['Whore', ll. 357-8, 367]. Satire's championing of this complicit stance permits the emancipation of a new order of men as right-thinking political citizens, but there are conceptual problems with the implications it has for the poet's uncomfortably close relationship to the object of his invective. Universalising moral judgements do not sort well with economic partiality, and whilst the satirist's self-presentation as an interested economic actor enables him to scrutinise his own professional nexus in all its complexity, it prevents him from stepping back to attain the kind of distance from which society may be surveyed as a complete picture.

Churchill, Chatterton and their contemporaries are apt to notice the perspectival blind spots that specialisation brings. 'By diff'rent methods diff'rent Men excel, / But where is He, who can do all things well?' [ll. 573-4] Churchill queries in 'An Epistle to William Hogarth'. In 'Kew Gardens', Chatterton uses his miserable experience of commercial society in Bristol to

claim that 'Few Beings absolutely boast the Man', demonstrating instead that 'Every Idea of a City Mind, / Is to Commercial Incidents confin'd' [ll. 432-4]. Murphy's *Examiner*, likewise, is plagued by anxieties of complicity and marginality, as the poet offers candid reminders that he is just as much one of the 'scribbling fry' as the London wits he attacks, and airs his doubts about the political and moral legitimacy of a satire written by a poet avowedly concerned with his own economic affairs. 'The author of the following poem is apprehensive that neither he nor the objects of his satire, are of consequence enough to engage attention to so long a piece', Murphy writes in his 'Advertisement', making no effort to distinguish his own meagre claims from the claims of those he attacks; and he opens the poem with an extended address to his own conscience, reminding himself with bitter honesty that his talent 'Ranks not with DRYDEN on the rubric row, / But crawls with LLOYD among the weeds below' [p.3, 7]. Since Lloyd's lot as a struggling Grubstreet poet-for-hire has an uncomfortable amount in common with Murphy's own predicament ('LLOYD and I', he admits, 'without *Phoebus*' aid, / Are doom'd to follow still the rhyming trade' [p.8]), it can hardly be sneered at from a position of lofty detachment.

The new model of satiric independence impairs the legislative confidence that comes with a comprehensive disinterested vision, and invites problematic moments of self-identification with the object of the satiric attack. But there is a more fundamental problem that arises as a consequence of later eighteenth-century satirists' intellectual rapprochement with political economic models of society and citizenship. Patriot verse satirists drew on the argument, articulated in contemporary moral philosophy and historical sociology, that the middling orders were best placed to be conscientious citizens of the public sphere by virtue of their independence from bribery (borne of professional self-determination) and their financial stakeholding in the fortunes of the nation. The implication of this revised concept of virtuous behaviour was that citizenship – activity that contributed in some fashion to the public good,

whether consciously or inadvertently – came to be redefined as economic in nature rather than political. 'The transformation [of virtue] involved a shift in emphasis on the nature of public behaviour', Kramnick explains. 'One's duty was still to contribute to the public good, but such contributions could best be made through economic activity, which actually aimed at private gain'.[502] Since 'contributions' were no longer political (they had ceased to be defined as deliberations on the fortunes of the *polis* made from an explicitly disinterested perspective), the nature of what constituted legislative activity was also required to undergo some modification. In a society in which public-minded behaviour meant private economic competence, it was no longer clear that attempting to speak *for* a constituency – as a poet or a politician, in print or in the Commons – counted as making a difference. Instead, a true citizen and patriot would seek to shore up the liberty of his nation by attending quietly to the duties of his profession.

In *The Examiner,* Murphy saw that the enterprise of writing for one's country was not only ineffectual by its own political standards but also harmful in a more important economic sense:

> Yes, write who will; each blockhead still possess
> The liberty, or licence of the press.
> Each modern *Curl* still has his rubric post,
> And ev'ry press maintains a scribbling host.
> Hence *England*'s navy oft defrauded stands,
> And the soil loses its manuring hands;
> [p.10]

The division of labour model counts writing poetry as a professional sector like any other, and includes it as part of a total economy of interdependent occupations. When the business of poetry becomes over-populated, it threatens the balance of the market and encroaches on other competing professions. The swarming republic of letters, Murphy shows, has had the effect of draining other, far more necessary, economic sectors of the workforce they require: liberty

[502] Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism*, p.196.

cannot be protected without a large navy and the nation cannot expand without a flourishing agrarian base. The civic posturing of patriot satire contributes nothing to national strength ('no patriot reformation makes' [p.10], Murphy writes gloomily), and detracts from its military and commercial foundation. The business of writing satire has stronger historical claims than most other professions to a basis in civic morality and public-mindedness, but ideas of what constitutes public-minded behaviour have changed, and the legislative pretensions of the 'scribbling host' now serve merely to undermine the economic needs of the public sphere. Patriots are dangerous demagogues: if they 'but bawl for freedom', as the anonymous author of the 1764 satire *The Patriot Poet* puts it,

> Coblers, and all the brethren of the jacket,
> Huzza their champion, and enjoy the racket;
> Remembring now no more the honest shed,
> And children starv'd at home for want of bread.[503]

Men are patriots because they work hard at their trades and look after their own, not because they aspire to legislate for others: there is no room for 'coblers, and all the brethren of the jacket' to abandon their trades for political action, since it is individual professional competence that guarantees private happiness and public freedom. The temptation, in poetry as in politics, is to seek for a privileged vantage point from which one can survey one's society in its totality and represent the more limited perspectives of its collective members; but in a complex commercial environment this overview does more harm than good, because it precludes attention to the small professional refinements that properly constitute virtuous citizenship. 'When the merchant forgets his own interest to lay plans for his country', Ferguson warns in the *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, 'the period of vision and chimera is near'.[504]

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[503] *The Patriot Poet, a Satire. Inscrib'd to the Reverend Mr. CH-----LL. By a Country Curate* (London, 1764), p.31.
[504] *HCS*, p.144. On this point, see also Mandeville, 'The Sixth Dialogue between *Horatio* and *Cleomenes*', *FB*, ii. 353: 'Hence we may learn, how the short-sighted Wisdom, of perhaps well-meaning People, may rob us of a Felicity, that would flow spontaneously from the Nature of every large Society, if none were to divert or interrupt the Stream'.

Elsewhere in the *Essay*, as I showed at the beginning of this thesis, Ferguson deals with the same problem in a more optimistic vein.[505] It is perfectly possible, he argues, to reconcile solicitude for the public good (anxieties over 'how to preserve the national virtues') with a modern political economic focus on 'the numbers and wealth of a people'. Society has 'great obligations to both', he says; it is only 'by mistake' that civic thought and economic individualism have come to be opposed to one another as competing descriptions of human personality. Balancing the two in this way is an attractive idea, and my readings of eighteenth-century poetry on political economic thought have shown it to be possible by means of various kinds of generic transformation, formal techniques of adaptation that permit new defences of the commercial character to be framed by traditional civic value systems. Further readings have indicated, though, that there were good reasons why this accommodation only flourished for a brief moment during middle decades of the century. Increasingly after 1750, poets sought to reclaim in various ways the sense of a total vision – a complete and impartial perspective – that they felt to have been a casualty of poetry's enthusiastic engagement with the disciplinary complexity of modern society. Their verse shared in a broader cultural anxiety, articulated in Brown and Ferguson's treatises, about the declining legislative confidence of the poet and the loss of a bardic ability to speak for the views and competences of a society or group. Inherited genres – the country house poem, georgic, verse satire – are invested in a traditional notion of the poet's capacity to offer an organising and explanatory frame through which the complexity of social life can be made to make sense to all its members. I suggest that it may be one reason for the comparatively short-lived nature of poetry's accommodation with political economic thought that the new intellectual models militated strongly against this kind of generalising overview. In the final analysis, Ferguson's projected reconciliation of concern for 'the national virtues' with a focus on 'numbers and wealth' could not be managed for long.

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[505] See p.1. above.

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