

Tradition Transformed:
The Pastoral in Marvell's Mower Poems
by
Claire Hall

A thesis presented for the B. A. degree
with Honors in
The Department of English
University of Michigan
Winter 2012

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Doug Trevor, Jennifer Wenzel, Leila Watkins, Emily Everard, Audrey Hall, and Ankur Sohoni. The inspiration borne of your suggestions, comments, and general encouragement has been invaluable. Thanks also go to my friends and family, who have all been so supportive and patient throughout this process. Lastly, I'd like to extend my thanks to Mr. Chuck Kelly, my high school English teacher, without whom my love of poetry, my decision to major in English, and, by extension, this thesis would never have existed.

Abstract

This thesis examines Andrew Marvell's four Mower poems in the context of the pastoral tradition. Marvell utilizes pastoral tropes and conventions to a certain extent, but he reshapes them to more precisely fit his needs and to redefine the uses to which the pastoral can be put. The Mower poems consider the rather weighty issue of how humans interact with the natural world in which they live, and Marvell's appropriation of the pastoral tradition helps him to comment on these subjects in a unique and meaningful way.

In Chapter I, after giving a brief description of the pastoral tradition, I analyze the nuances of Marvell's alterations to the pastoral in the Mower poems, specifically those related to the insertion of human concerns. Marvell's decision to cast his speaker, Damon, as a mower represents a deliberate turning away from the pastoral. It also has significant implications for Damon's characterization, namely in the indeterminacy of his social status. Furthermore, the intrusion of such real-world issues as tulipomania, a phenomena in which tulip bulbs were sold in a sort of futures market for extravagant prices for a period of several years, challenge the idyllic nature of pastoral poetry via a deliberate gesture to social and economic concerns.

Chapter II shifts to consideration of humans' relationship with nature. By a drastic extension of personification, Marvell makes nature a character in and of itself, altering the dynamic of Damon's – and humanity's – relationship with it. Damon weighs in on the pastoral debate of art versus nature but redefines the concept of "art" by distinguishing between the improvement and alteration of nature. This distinction preserves his own sense of fellowship with nature but condemns the rest of humanity for corrupting it. Finally, his intimacy with nature proves to be a reflection of Damon's mental state and his lament that he has fallen away from the Edenic ideal.

Overall, this thesis argues that Marvell's appropriation of the pastoral in these ways implies that the traditional pastoral may no longer be conducive to a poetic representation of the changing society of seventeenth century England.

CONTENTS

Short Titles.....	i
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I: The Problem of an Evolving Society	5
I.i. Pastoral	5
I.ii. Damon	8
I.iii. A Story of Tulips.....	14
CHAPTER II: Nature.....	23
II.i. Nature Humanized	23
II.ii. Gardens and Mowing.....	30
II.iii. Displacement.....	38
CONCLUSION.....	43
APPENDIX: The Mower Poems	45
Works Consulted.....	51

Short Titles

- “DM”: Marvell, Andrew. “Damon the Mower.” *The Complete Poems*. Ed. Elizabeth Story Donno. London: Penguin Books, 2005. 106-08.
- “MaG”: ---. “The Mower against Gardens.” *The Complete Poems*. Ed. Elizabeth Story Donno. London: Penguin Books, 2005. 105-06.
- “MS”: ---. “The Mower’s Song.” *The Complete Poems*. Ed. Elizabeth Story Donno. London: Penguin Books, 2005. 109-10.
- “MttG”: ---. “The Mower to the Glowworms.” *The Complete Poems*. Ed. Elizabeth Story Donno. London: Penguin Books, 2005. 109.
- Pastoral*: Friedman, Donald M. *Marvell’s Pastoral Art*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970.
- Poets in Their Time*: Everett, Barbara. *Poets in Their Time: Essays on English Poetry from Donne to Larkin*. London: Faber & Faber, 1986.

INTRODUCTION

The quality which Marvell had, this modest and certainly impersonal virtue – whether we call it wit or reason, or even urbanity – we have patently failed to define. By whatever name we call it, and however we define that name, it is something precious and needed and apparently extinct; it is what should preserve the reputation of Marvell. – T.S. Eliot

Traveller, tutor, politician, poet: all of these words and more describe writer Andrew Marvell, but the last represents the context in which T.S. Eliot made the above statement. The 1921 essay from which the quote originates¹ “seal[ed] [Marvell’s] reputation as a major poet in the English and European traditions” (Smith 6) and revived critical consideration of his relatively limited poetic canon. Though less prominent than his contemporaries John Donne and John Milton, Marvell’s unique and intriguing take on a wide variety of subjects qualify him to stand alongside those poets as one of the best of his time.

Born in Yorkshire in 1621 to a Church of England clergyman and his wife, Marvell attended first Hull Grammar School and then Trinity College, Cambridge, until the death of his father disrupted his studies. Although, his financial backing was subsequently removed, the career in the church for which he was likely intended was not out of the question (Smith 7-8, 12). During those same years, England was in turmoil. After King James I’s death in 1625, his son ascended the throne as King Charles I, who would achieve notoriety for being the first and only English monarch to date to be tried and executed. Charles’ reign was marked by religious discordance, clashes with an independent-minded Parliament, and military conflict in Scotland (Greenblatt 1236-41). After two years of trading blows over Parliamentary rights, first the Parliament and then Charles raised armies, launching the First Civil War in 1642 (1252). Meanwhile, Marvell, who had first spent a brief time in London after leaving Cambridge,

¹ Eliot 304

travelled throughout Europe. According to biographer Nigel Smith, this excursion greatly influenced his poetry (42-63).

His return to England in 1647 coincided with a brief hiatus in the war, which resumed the next year and ultimately resulted in Charles' defeat and death in January 1649 (Smith 64, 80). Marvell likely resided in London and began writing poetry, mostly on political subjects, before securing employment late in 1650 as tutor to the daughter of Thomas Fairfax, a prominent political figure who had just resigned control of the parliamentary army for refusing to invade Scotland (64-80, 88). Thus Marvell went to live at Nun Appleton, Fairfax's Yorkshire estate and the scene of Marvell's venerated country house poem "Upon Appleton House: To My Lord Fairfax" (88). Smith contends that "at least three of the four" Mower poems can be dated to Marvell's years there, as can a number of his other pastoral poems and love lyrics (100).

After he left Fairfax's employ in 1652, Marvell continued to write – that he penned his famous "To His Coy Mistress" in this period (Smith 102) – and became acquainted with John Milton (106), before obtaining another tutorship the next year to William Dutton, a ward of the new Lord Protector of England, Oliver Cromwell (110). In 1657, Marvell began a career in civil service as Milton's assistant in Cromwell's government (136). Cromwell died the following year, and Charles I's son was recalled from exile and crowned King Charles II two years after that, in 1660 (Greenblatt 1254). Now a Member of Parliament for Hull, Marvell intervened to save Milton from execution for dissent over the regime change (Smith 163). Marvell retained his position in Parliament for nineteen years, "paying assiduous detail to the committee work of the House of Commons" and rarely giving speeches, though "physical collisions or exchange of blows with other MPs threatened to ruin his career as representative on at least two occasions"

(8). He also anonymously wrote several important political tracts in prose, such as *The Rehearsal Transprose'd* (250). He died in 1678.

These are the basic outlines of Marvell's life; many of the finer details are hazy. His early years in particular are difficult to pin down, though once he became Dutton's tutor, records become far more numerous. Because all of his poems were published posthumously in a single collection in 1681, many of them cannot be definitively dated to a specific year or period. Even the order in which the poems appear in the volume may not be one of which Marvell approved. This uncertainty presents a challenge for the study of the four so-called Mower poems – “The Mower against Gardens,” “Damon the Mower,” “The Mower to the Glowworms,” and “The Mower's Song”² – which were printed in that order in the 1681 collection. We cannot be sure that Marvell intended for them to be read in conversation with one another because they were never published in his lifetime – indeed, it is impossible even to identify the exact years in which they were written – but the majority of critics agree that they form a sequence. All four poems revolve around the figure of the Mower, Damon, though he is only named explicitly in “Damon the Mower.” The first poem, “The Mower against Gardens,” is the most disparate of the four, focusing on ways in which human beings corrupt nature; the next three Mower poems fit together much more coherently. They describe Damon's pining for the love object, Juliana, as well as his deep and complex relationship with the natural world. Despite these differences, the distinct character of the Mower in all four poems is a strong argument for their connection: “Whether or not Marvell intended the poems as a sequence, he is at least consistent throughout all four poems in presenting a single individual who defines himself in a special relationship with nature while at the same time hinting that the reader should question that definition” (Anderson

² For the complete text of these poems, please refer to the Appendix on page 45.

131). Moreover, after studying Marvell's life and works closely, I find it hard to believe that he did nothing if not deliberately; if he did not mean for these four poems to be read and considered together, he would not have recycled the uncommon literary figure of the Mower in the way that he did.

And so, putting such questions aside, we can turn to the poems themselves and their critical consideration. This thesis will identify and analyze the complicated position the Mower poems assume in the context of the pastoral tradition and why Marvell might have chosen to position them as such. In Chapter I, I examine how Marvell deliberately subverts the poems' pastoral frame through the insertion of very human concerns, specifically those related to a changing society. After a brief introduction to the pastoral tradition, the chapter moves into examination of the figure of Damon, including his characterization and pastoral significance. Next, I look at the intrusion upon pastoral idealism through two individual words that bring with them weighty, real-world implications. Chapter II shifts to consideration of the sequence's central concern: humankind's relationship with nature. First, I analyze the extensive use of personification in relation to natural objects, which serves to make nature almost into a character in its own right. Secondly, I discuss the reasons for Damon's distinction between gardening and mowing, before concluding with investigation of important themes that underlie Damon's suffering over unrequited love. Overall, this thesis seeks to understand why Marvell employed the pastoral tradition in the Mower poems, how he manipulated pastoral conventions within them, and what effect those changes have on the sequence's meaning and on pastoral poetry as a whole.

CHAPTER I: The Problem of an Evolving Society

I.i. Pastoral

Before discussing how Marvell alters the pastoral tradition in the Mower poems, it is important to understand the basis from which he works. Paul Alpers stresses that the pastoral has no universal definition: “it sometimes seems as if there are as many versions of pastoral as there are critics and scholars who write about it,” he writes. “Apart from the happy confusion of definitions, it is clear to no one, experts or novices, what works count as pastoral” (Alpers 8). William Empson’s seminal *Some Versions of Pastoral*, however, presents a commonly accepted starting point for explaining the nature of the tradition, which is that it “put[s] the complex in the simple” (53): “The essential trick of the old pastoral ... was to make simple people express strong feelings (felt as the most universal subject, something fundamentally true about everybody)” (11). Raymond Williams similarly writes, “‘Pastoral’ means ... the simple matter in which general truths are embodied or implied” (21). In the most fundamental terms, the pastoral seeks to convey quintessential human concerns through a ubiquitous representative, often that of the simple shepherd-poet. At the same time, pastoral is closely associated with the nature and the relationship that humans share with it. Donald M. Friedman calls “the vocabularies of natural description or natural mythology” the “twin storehouses of pastoral diction” (*Pastoral* 4), indicating the centrality of the natural world to the concerns of pastoral poetry.

The pastoral tradition dates back over two thousand years to classical literature, when Hesiod, Theocritus, and later Virgil first presented the idyllic landscapes, rustic herdsmen, and general aura of serenity and simplicity that laid the foundation for future pastoral works. Many of the early modern period’s most enduring poems employ pastoral tropes and imagery, frequently

in conjunction with the *carpe diem* tradition, in which a speaker urges a love object to “seize the day” and, more often than not, indulge in his or her carnal desires. For example, Christopher Marlowe’s “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” paints a scene of rolling hills, sheep, and abundant flowers that the speaker hopes will entice his mistress to “Come live with me and be me Love” (line 1).³

Pastoral also extends to elegies, lyrics, comedies, novels, and other early modern genres (Alpers 46). Owing to its appearance in many different types of literature, critics Paul Alpers and Friedman consider the pastoral to be a mode rather than a genre, which accounts for the tradition’s “more inclusive and general” (Alpers 46) nature because a “mode” is concerned with tone over form, with “feelings and attitudes” over “their realization and manifestation in specific devices, conventions, structures” (Alpers 47). In Friedman’s words, “if we understand pastoral as a mode, literally as a way of interpreting experience, a measure of ordering that experience and giving it conspicuous artistic form, then the limitations of the genre viewed narrowly as a rhetorical specimen fall away” (*Pastoral* 7). Yet the overarching nature of the pastoral as a mode does not render it all-inclusive. According to Alpers, “modern studies tend to use ‘pastoral’ with ungoverned inclusiveness.... pastoral does not include all poems about nature and landscape, nor does it include all poetry, drama, and fiction about rural life” (Alpers ix, x).

So what *is* pastoral? The title of Alpers’ book poses this very question and argues that we can develop a “far truer idea of pastoral” by taking the lives of herdsmen – rather than idyllic landscape – to be its “representative anecdote,” a term Alpers borrows from Kenneth Burke. A representative anecdote, in Burke’s words, provides a definition through illustrative example:

³ In a classic example of what Williams calls “counter-pastoral” (23), Sir Walter Raleigh’s response to Marlowe’s poem, “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd,” turns this idealized perception of nature upside down by pointing out that it will all fade and decline with time.

“Men seek for vocabularies that will be faithful *reflections* of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that are *selections* of reality” (qtd. in Alpers 13). Alpers points out that “representative” has dual meanings, that it is at once a “typical instance of an aspect of reality” (Alpers 13-14) and a mechanism that therefore “serves to generate specific depictions, or representations, of that reality” (14). Thus the lives of herdsmen – often shepherds – in pastoral are meant to exhibit both a snapshot of real life and a “summary or characteristic example” of “something else, for which it stands or of which it is a part” (22). This “real life” that shepherds were seen to embody was one of *otium*, a Latin word meaning “leisure; rest; peace; ease; lull” (Oxford Reference Online Premium) that is commonly used to express the pastoral ideal; it is also related to the pastoral concept of a Golden Age, a distant idyllic time of tranquility and innocence.

By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the conventional pastoral form had shifted away in some respects from the original classical bucolics. With the advent of capitalism, the shepherd came to more fully embody the *otium* so absent from “the business of life in the city and at court” (McRae 131). Williams finds “a renewed intensity of attention to natural beauty” (20), as well as the emergence of idealized “feudal and immediately post-feudal values” (35) as a reaction against an increasingly money-based society. Therefore, the pastoral came to be a vehicle for social commentary, metamorphosing “into a localised dream and then, increasingly, ... into what can be offered as a description and thence an idealisation of actual English country life and its social and economic relations” (Williams 26).

Marvell’s Mower poems display an abundance of pastoral features, including a singing field worker, an idyllic landscape, personification, and tension between art and nature. Yet, as many critics have noted, all of Marvell’s pastoral poems stray from the tradition in significant

ways. Barbara Everett calls his treatment of the pastoral a “transformation” (*Poets in Their Time* 68), while Friedman writes that Marvell’s pastorals “diverge with ... apparent deliberateness from their inherited models” (*Pastoral* 9). Both Smith (100) and Edward William Taylor (153) describe the Mower poems specifically as “dark pastorals.” This chapter examines these divergences and the ways in which they contribute to Marvell’s consideration of humanity.

I.ii. Damon

Perhaps the most noticeable deviation is in Marvell’s choice of representative figure. Instead of electing the oft-employed shepherd, Marvell makes Damon a mower, a choice made more intriguing by the very centrality of the shepherd within the pastoral tradition. Though Marvell was not the first to cast a non-shepherd in the role of pastoral speaker, his Mower has certainly made its mark:

[T]he dramatis personae of pastoral can be extended to include other rustics or socially inferior persons on the grounds that they are equivalent, in a given society or world, of shepherds, or that they more truly have the representative status that traditional pastoral ascribes to its herdsmen. ... Mowers do appear in earlier pastorals, but Marvell’s figure is new because ... Marvell was the first poet to make the mower the representative pastoral lover. (Alpers 27)

As a representative pastoral lover, Damon sings and pines and ultimately falls apart. He details in “Damon the Mower” the overwhelming power of Juliana’s “scorching beams” (line 24) and concludes dramatically that ““for him no cure is found, / Whom Juliana’s eyes do wound. / ‘Tis death alone that this must do”” (lines 85-87). In “The Mower to the Glowworms” her power lies in obfuscation rather than burning, in darkness instead of light, and Damon’s mental state subsequently declines. “The Mower’s Song” features Juliana in a refrain that emphasizes his

fixation on her. At its core, Damon's story of unrequited love is familiar, and naming him a "representative pastoral lover" (Alpers 27) seems appropriate.

Yet Marvell made Damon a mower for a reason, and since there is no evidence that a shepherd's ability to love is any different from a mower's simply owing to his profession, the implications of Marvell's decision must lie elsewhere. In other words, if Marvell were merely setting out to tell a love story, a traditional shepherd would have been a perfectly suitable poetic subject. By choosing a different "socially inferior [person]" (Alpers 27), Marvell captures the shepherd's "simplicity and vulnerability" to the whims of "powerful men or by events and circumstances over which they have no control" (24), but, at the same time, deliberately steps away from many of the shepherd's other inherent pastoral associations. Some pastoral authors consider shepherds to be truly genteel or noble figures in light of their "association with leisure" (McRae 131). In keeping with that idea, poets often gifted their shepherds with silver tongues above their stations. Empson explains that the practice "impl[ies] a beautiful relationship between rich and poor": having the shepherds speak "in learned and fashionable language" meant one was writing about "the best subject in the best way"⁴ (*Some Versions of Pastoral* 11). Damon continues the trend of allowing "socially inferior" figures to speak eloquently – Thomas Wheeler writes that he speaks "in a meter that resembles Latin elegiac verse and with a wit that one would not expect of a field worker" (58) – but "Marvell's mower is defined by his labour" (McRae 131) in the way a (literary) shepherd is not. He is more like a ploughman – another popular figure in early English literature – who must earn his living through physical labor (131-32). These circumstances theoretically place him on a decidedly lower rung of the social ladder

⁴ By "best subject," Empson means the universal human emotions with which shepherds were thought to be so in tune, and he claims further that the combination of shepherd and noble, which appropriates the best aspects of each, improves the reader's opinions of both (11-12).

than the imagined noble shepherds, despite the equality implied by his ability to command elevated language.

Mowers, unlike shepherds, are “effectively free of literary associations yet [are] very clearly located in the English rural economy” (McRae 132). In practical terms, mowing grass and tending sheep are two very different tasks. In her article “The Nature of Marvell’s Mower,” Linda Anderson highlights many of the realities of mowing as a profession in early modern England. As she points out, “because hay must be cut and stacked in a limited period of time, mowing is commonly a group activity, not a solitary pursuit” (Anderson 134). By contrast, shepherds minded their sheep unaccompanied and, moreover, were able to hold a single profession year round as mowers could not, as mowing is a seasonal activity. Mowers, according to Anderson, likely engaged in plowing and sowing at other points during the harvest as well⁵ (134). Damon, however, seems to be alone in the fields at all times throughout the poems, and he identifies himself solely as a mower: “I am the Mower Damon, known / Through all the meadows I have mown” (“DM” lines 42-43). His audience is unidentified, and the supporting characters that frequently populate shepherd pastorals are absent here. With an entire field all to himself, Damon’s solitude is both pastorally abnormal and generally unrealistic.

Critic Dan Jaeckle writes that Damon “mystifies the need for labor” (68) by “project[ing] rural work onto fairies and fauns” (69) in “The Mower against Gardens”; Damon’s feeble attempts at doing his job probably contributes as well. In light of its tendency to “[obscure] the realities of labour and hardship,” pastoral poetry is sometimes considered in a “pejorative sense” (Garrard 33), particularly “the classical English pastorals influenced by Theocritus” (38). The Mower poems do not fall precisely within this category. In fact, Marvell’s manipulation of this

⁵ McRae similarly writes, “Men were employed as mowers on daily rates of pay for roughly two months of the year, usually combining this employment with other various forms of work” (132).

particular pastoral trope is a tongue-in-cheek farce. Only once in the sequence does Damon swing his scythe – he spends the rest of his time soliloquizing – and on that one occasion, he manages to botch the job and slice himself in the ankle:

While thus he threw his elbow round,
 Depopulating all the ground,

 The edgèd steel by careless chance
 Did into his own ankle glance;
 And there among the grass fell down,
 By his own scythe, the Mower mown. (“DM” lines 73-74, 77-80).

Eliciting amusement in the reader, this passage turns the concept of mystified labor on its head. The sedentary Mower has one chance to show us that he labors and is therefore different from the leisurely shepherd, but instead he exposes his complete inability to do the job he was hired to do. This passage thus becomes a parody in which the singing pastoral figure’s labor is not so much mystified as satirized.

On a related note, though mowers were “easily associated with the heavy labour of summer” (McRae 132) in light of the various temporary agricultural jobs they held, Damon displays a marked lack of physicality. Underscoring this state of affairs is a passage about mowers in Marvell’s country house poem, “Upon Appleton House: To my Lord Fairfax,” that is strikingly in its similarity to the mowing scene in “Damon the Mower.” The diction in both passages points to the deliberateness of their correlation: a “whistling scythe” (“Upon Appleton House” line 393 and “DM” line 75) features in both poems, but the “elbow” (“DM” line 73) Damon throws around is not the “elbow strong” (line 393) of the “tawny mowers” (line 388) of “Upon Appleton House.” While the “tawny mowers” stride powerfully through the grasses (lines 388-92), there is no indication in the Mower poems that Damon takes so much as one step. One of the “Upon Appleton House” mowers also draws blood in the process of mowing, but the

blood is that of a bird hidden amongst the grasses, not his own ankle. The visceral nature of the scene in “Upon Appleton House” highlights the marked contrast between the decidedly corporeal mowers in that poem and the much more abstractly occupied Damon.

Thus, with the implications of labor associated with his profession proven to be empty, Damon comes to be subtly associated with leisure, recalling the noble shepherd. But Marvell, it seems, could not resist drawing attention to his refusal to stay within the lines designated by hundreds of years of pastoral poetry, and in “Damon the Mower,” Damon confronts his non-shepherd status head-on by comparing himself to an actual shepherd:

What, though the piping shepherd stock
The plains with an unnumbered flock,
This scythe of mine discovers wide
More ground than all his sheep do hide.
With this the golden fleece I shear
Of all these closes every year.
And though in wool more poor than they,
Yet am I richer far in hay. (“DM” lines 49-56)

Crucially, Damon chooses to distinguish himself from a shepherd in terms of wealth. He claims the hay he cuts is more valuable than the wool the sheep yield – it is a “golden fleece” (line 53) though in reality sheep do not, of course, exist in that color – but such an argument carries little weight. The sheep a shepherd tended did not belong to him any more than did the meadows a mower cut. In those days, such workers were hired hands who cared for the property of rich landowners, and they probably earned wages similar to those earned by other sorts of laborers. Damon indirectly acknowledges his lack of ownership with the reference to enclosures (“closes” (line 54)), but immediately disregards it.

Taking into account the pastoral convention of the noble shepherd, this is quite a role reversal, the wealthy mower boasting of his material superiority over the shepherd. Could this be a commentary on the improving upward mobility of the lower classes in England during this

period? Or is it an argument for the shakiness of the foundations upon which the wealthy elite claim mastery over the poor? Both are possible, but the “golden fleece” allusion to the ancient Greek story of Jason and the Argonauts suggests that Marvell is more focused on his challenge to the pastoral tradition. By putting the “golden” hay he reaps in terms of a sheep’s wool, Damon cleverly melds mower and shepherd together and puts the product of his labor in monetary terms. Moreover, he does so with a nod to classical literature, a technique commonly employed in the pastoral tradition. Marvell is playing with us, undermining the pastoral from within.

He does not stop there, for Damon’s noteworthy sense of self-importance has deeper pastoral implications as well. The Mower considers himself the sole remaining advocate for leaving nature untouched in “The Mower against Gardens,” and in “The Mower’s Song,” he essentially believes that time should stop for him. He complains that the grass continues to grow “more luxuriant still and fine” (“MS” line 8), with flowers sprouting on each “blade ... you spied” (line 9), while he “with sorrow pine[s]” (line 7). As a seasonal worker, Damon should understand the cycle of the growing season, yet he foolishly expects the grass to stop growing and the flowers to stop blooming as a show of solidarity for him in his miserable state, and his palpable anger makes these wishes seem entitled rather than wistful. Time stops for no man, yet Damon places himself on so high a pedestal that he thinks he should be the exception to the rule.

Returning to Damon’s intended purpose as a representative pastoral figure, he occupies a space reminiscent of the “socially inferior” (Alpers 27) yet eloquent shepherd-swain, but his humorous incompetence obscures his labor, he claims to be “richer” (“DM” line 56) than the noble shepherd, and he exudes egotism. In short, Damon is a love-struck, expressive, self-centered mower who is seemingly incapable of doing a day’s work, a unique character with a unique voice. So what is Damon supposed to represent? Intriguingly, by stubbornly asserting his

own singularity, Damon alleges that he is in fact not representative of anything at all; defying a preordained role in favor of dancing to his own tune, he is a representative speaker who disavows being representative. Nevertheless, the fact that he is a mower and not a shepherd is important. More specifically, with the indeterminacy of his social status – is he lesser than, equal to, or greater than the noble shepherd? – Damon could potentially be a symbol for the changing social order of his time, which saw an increasingly hierarchical middle class of “smaller landowners, large tenants, surviving small freeholders and copyholders, middle and small tenants, and cottagers and craftsmen with residual common rights” (Williams 60). The subtlety and complexity of the references to class in the poems make it nearly impossible to put forward a strong argument for the Mower’s true social significance, but in any case, the social undertones with which he is associated reflect the presence of very real seventeenth-century concerns in the poems. In other words, Damon does not embody an “idealisation of actual English country life and its social and economic relations” (Williams 26), but rather grants a very candid glimpse into an evolving society – and represents a notable alteration to the sequence’s pastoral frame.

I.iii. A Story of Tulips

Damon’s imprecisely defined social status is not the sequence’s only allusion to larger real-world issues. The appearance of tulips as one of the perversions the Mower rails against in “The Mower against Gardens” conveys a comprehensive array of class tensions: “The tulip, white, did for complexion seek, / And learned to interline its cheek: / Its onion root they then so high did hold, / That one was for a meadow sold” (“MaG” 13-16). Though it occupies just four lines in the poem’s forty, this specific flora was particularly significant in the context of seventeenth century Europe. Anna Pavord’s book *The Tulip* presents its extensive history and

explains why the tulip came to be so important in both the gardens and the markets of the period. After the tulip, which originated in Turkey, gained popularity in northern Europe in the mid-sixteenth century (Pavord 33, 4), tulip cultivation and trade soon became quite lucrative – “the most sought after, costly and prestigious flowers that a seventeenth-century gardener could possess” (75) – as the wealthy began to plant them in their gardens.

In the poem, Damon’s claim that the tulip “learned to interline its cheek” (“MaG” line 14) references the process of “breaking” (Robinson 103), a then-inexplicable occurrence “whereby a plain tulip could change into a fabulous multi-coloured one, feathered and flamed in contrasting colours” (Pavord 88). It was not until the twentieth century that scientists discovered that a virus carried by plant lice infected bulbs and “partly suppress[ed] the laid-on colour of a tulip ... leaving the underlying colour, always white or yellow, to show through” (Pavord 9) and manifest in “sharply defined” (9) markings. These beautiful “broken” tulips became intensely valuable. Since no one knew what caused them to break, cultivators tried all sorts of methods to initiate the process, with limited success (9-10). It was precisely the mystery and chance that surrounded the flower that generated its allure (88). Moreover, broken tulips produced fewer buds or growths, and planting these offsets was the only way to guarantee that a tulip would grow and “break” like its mother plant (92). The rarity and slow growth of broken bulbs – tulip seeds take seven years to grow to flowering bulbs (105) – made them all the more precious, particularly the breaks of red and white or purple and white (167).

According to Pavord, tulip craze reached extravagant levels in France in the early seventeenth century, but “the most cataclysmic phenomenon in the tulip’s long and complex history” (157) occurred in Holland between 1634 and 1637, a period that became known as “tulipomania” (82 and 157). Normally, tulips were removed from the ground during the summer

months, such that they could only be sold between June and September (Robinson 93), but a market technique developed which allowed buying and selling to take place year-round. By 1636, already-planted bulbs were being sold by their weight, measured in small units called *azens* that “could be traded on their own account, without the bulbs actually changing hands at all. The *azens* took on a ‘futures’ life of their own” (Pavord 7). Benedict S. Robinson notes that this makeshift futures market was unregulated, as “promissory notes for the future delivery of a bulb were exchanged for promissory notes for future payment. The same bulb – buried somewhere in the ground – could be exchanged ten times in a day” (93-94). There was no way to tell during the sale whether that bulb had increased in weight or produced an offset (Pavord 167).

Within a few short years, however, the combination of the flower’s mysterious bursts of contrasting colors with its slow growth meant demand was increasing faster than supply. Since the chance involved in bulbs breaking made growing tulips essentially a lottery, those who were only interested in making a quick profit, not in growing the flowers, got involved in the trade (Pavord 157). A shortage of rich, fertile soil prevented large volumes of speculators from planting even if they had wanted to, so most remained situated solely on the buying and selling ends of the transactions, and the growers themselves basically became a third party who got a cut of the earnings from sales (151). With the influx of middlemen into the market, coupled with the fees involved in selling by *azen*, tulip prices shot up. In 1637, the average price per bulb at an auction at Alkmaar in Holland was 16,000 *stuivers* (800 guilders) – equal to about two years’ wages for a master carpenter in the city of Leiden – with the more rare varieties going for up to 260,000 *stuivers* (13,000 guilders).⁶ The entire auction realized 90,000 guilders, which would be the equivalent of about £6 million at the end of the twentieth century (167).

⁶ Twenty *stuivers* equaled one guilder, and according to calculations made using numbers provided by Pavord (6), the average Dutch bricklayer made roughly 360 guilders per year.

The bubble eventually burst as the number of speculators rapidly outgrew the number of people who actually wanted the bulbs themselves (Pavord 169). Only weeks after the Alkmaar auction, all trade in tulip bulbs was suspended as growers collectively demanded that “any sales made up until the end of the previous planting season (November 1636) were to be treated as binding” (169). Buyers protested, the courts got involved, and compromise was finally reached (171), but tulipomania was over. Many traders were left bankrupt, “holding fistfuls of worthless paper” (Robinson 94). While bulbs were still able to command impressive prices and tulip art remained popular after 1637 (Pavord 178-80), “moderation, prudence and discretion returned to the burghers of The Netherlands” (171).

Thus a wealth of history comes embedded within a word that, to a reader unfamiliar with its implications, seems to be an arbitrary inclusion in “The Mower against Gardens.” Marvell’s mention of it, however, is calculated. To begin with, the poet spent an extended period of time in continental Europe only a few short years after tulipomania collapsed. Smith places him in Holland at the end of 1642 or the beginning of 1643, just as the country was reaching the height of its prosperity (45-46). There, the biographer notes, “Marvell encountered the well-ingrained and flourishing painting industry that created a body of fine art the achievements of which were unparalleled in its own time or since” (Smith 47). Though Smith does not specifically point to tulip artists as potential influences on Marvell, the general popularity of tulip artwork that Pavord claims (180) prevailed in the Netherlands even after tulipomania – from paintings to stained glass to embroidery to woodwork – render it unlikely that Marvell did not encounter any during his time there.

Tulips had also captured the interest of English growers during the previous century (Pavord 104), though no speculative frenzy occurred in the island nation. Rather, tulip cultivation

was generally reserved for those who could afford it, and the flower became a favorite in the gardens of the rich and powerful (109). It was seen as “the ultimate status symbol, the definitive emblem of how much you were worth” (6) – “princes and power brokers” wanted them because “only the wealthy could afford to garden for pleasure” (75). Yet the tulip came to signify more than just wealth. With international trade burgeoning, merchants and other market participants of previously low social standing were suddenly making money, and that money allowed them not only to purchase items such as tulips that were emblematic of their new situation, but also granted them the time to enjoy them. In Robinson’s words,

the tulipists in general seem to have emerged from the upper levels of the trading, manufacturing, or professional urban classes, a monied but untitled social milieu where the promise of a new form of cultural competence – especially one so intimately and practically connected to acts of cultivation and improvement, as well as new forms of scientific knowledge – held significant social promise. (96)

At the same time, many tulip enthusiasts denigrated the commercial trade of the flower, a rather hypocritical stance given that the markets had made many of them rich and had furthermore allowed them access to tulips in the first place. Since tulips were originally a foreign plant imported to European shores, their very existence in England “went hand in hand with the expansion of foreign trade” (Robinson 95). Gardening treatises of the period, Robinson writes, display the authors’ dependency on “the networks of exploration, commerce, and colonial expansion” for both knowledge and supplies of seeds, roots, and cuttings (101). Despite this, many of these texts also attempt to “separate the cultivation of the flower from the market, reading the tulip’s commodification as a fall, a perversion that has exposed the flower to ‘scorn’” (95). Pavord describes one such writer who snobbishly distinguishes between “a true Florist and

an ignorant pretender,” linking the “pretender” to a pig snuffling through gardens for riches (93).

Damon, the simple mower, takes note of the tulips’ tremendous worth: “Its onion root they then so high did hold, / That one was for a meadow sold” (“MaG” lines 13-16). As he does with hay and “the golden fleece” (“DM” line 53), Damon expresses the monetary value of one natural object in terms of another: a tulip bulb for a meadow. Uninterested in material wealth, Damon does not think about how many gold coins for which a tulip could be exchanged. Instead, “to emphasize the extravagant price of tulips he can think of no higher cost than a meadow” (Jaekle 65). Throughout the sequence, meadows are Damon’s closest companions. They set the scene for the last three poems, and though Damon’s love for Juliana is ostensibly his primary fixation, he actually spends more time waxing poetic about his relationship with the meadows in “Damon the Mower” and particularly “The Mower’s Song,” not to mention the idealized view of them he presents at the end of “The Mower against Gardens.” In the words of Friedman, “no act could seem more insanely evil to Damon the Mower than to sell a meadow for a faddish trinket” (*Pastoral* 126). By considering the “sweet fields” (“MaG” line 32) to be equal in worth to a corrupted flower that sparked a cultural obsession, humans have “lost all sense of what is truly valuable” (Jaekle 66). Moreover, the meadows represent Damon’s livelihood, his access to wages, and so the tulips pose a double affront to him – the market says they are equal in value to both his most meaningful relationship and his income.

Therefore, Damon’s argument is not against the function of markets per se, but rather against the commodification and devaluation of nature. As further proof of this point, on the heels of the tulip lines comes mention of the “*Marvel of Peru*” (“MaG” line 18), another rare and colorful foreign flower which Robinson sees as an allusion to the connection between the development of gardens and that of the world economy (100): “Another world was searched,

through oceans new, / To find the *Marvel of Peru*" ("MaG" lines 17-18). Damon continues: "these rarities might be allowed / To man, that sovereign thing and proud, / Had he not dealt between the bark and tree, / Forbidden mixtures there to see" (lines 19-22). He is not against exploration for exploration's sake; rather, he claims that because humans have tampered with nature, they do not deserve to privilege of seeking out new treasures.

Damon's condemnation of the tulip, however, which extends by implication to the sort of (wealthy) people who would pay so much for a mere flower, appears hypocritical in light of his own elevated speech and his boasts of superior wealth. It must be noted as well that his very knowledge of tulip and its monetary worth indicates his awareness of the concerns of the privileged; tulips would be beyond the means of and far from practically useful to a fieldworker. Jaeckle finds evidence more generally of Damon's "intimate knowledge of horticulture" (66) in his familiarity with grafting and "technical terms such as *nutriment* [and] *Stock*" (67), and since such skills were largely available only to the wealthy, Damon's social indeterminacy is again on display, and societal considerations again enter the poem.

A similar undertone surfaces in "The Mower to the Glowworms," augmenting the tulip's hint of socioeconomic concerns. To open a stanza that notes that the glowworms cannot predict the future as celestial comets were thought to be able to do, Damon calls the glowworms "country comets": "Ye country comets, that portend / No war, nor prince's funeral, / Shining unto no higher end / Than to presage the grass's fall" (lines 5-8). According to Alpers, we can decipher the last two lines by considering Pliny, who wrote that glowworms appear on the hay at no other time than precisely when the hay is ripe (55). Thus, the glowworms signal to Damon that it is time for the meadows to be mown, yet where mowing was before a central facet of his self-proclaimed identity, he now seems relatively unconcerned with it. Does the glowworms'

presence suggest that Damon, lovesick and miserable, has been neglecting his task? Probably. Instead of the grass, his primary focus is his own sense of disorientation, and he fails to either cut the grass or be guided by the glowworms' light.

In the context of agriculture, to term the glowworms "country comets" seems appropriate. After all, they can be found in the "country," in the rolling meadows in which Damon spends all his time. In his book *The Country and the City*, Williams has much more to say about the word: "In English, 'country' is both a nation and a part of a 'land'; 'the country' can be the whole society or its rural area.... On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue" (1). This, of course, rings of the pastoral tradition. But reading "The Mower to the Glowworms" in its entirety, one finds that Damon does not, in fact, hold these "country comets" in the highest esteem. Not only do they lack the true power of prophesy, they cannot lead him out of the darkness Juliana has cast upon his mind. Given this, "country" takes on a slightly negative connotation, perhaps even a denigration of the rural in favor of the urban. On the whole, the use of "country" intimates a muted disparagement of the pastoral idealization of nature – if nature were really as good as its idealization, it would be able to assist Damon in his plight – or, at the very least, an awareness of the distance between the rural and the urban.

Thus seemingly innocuous words like "tulip" and "country" first appear to blend into the pastoral setting, but upon closer inspection, their connotations of worldly care intrude upon the idealism so commonly exuded by the pastoral. Furthermore, in both cases, human concerns trespass directly upon natural objects, respectively flowers and glowworms. Going beyond the common range of pastoral concerns, these nuanced subjects and their somewhat perplexing treatment disrupts the idyllic natural scene and the exterior love story, stripping away the

carefree serenity of the pastoral to reveal cold, hard human concerns underneath. Marvell's inclusion of such symbols demonstrates how "[his] poetry distinguishes itself repeatedly by appearing to accept common assumptions and literary conventions, and then proceeding to reinterpret them by revealing, with scrupulous precision and objectivity, their latent contradictions or hidden inconsistencies" (*Pastoral* 101). In this way, the socially ambiguous Mower and the economic and social importance of the terms "country" and "tulip" – not to mention the cynicism embedded within them – subvert the tradition Marvell ostensibly appropriates.

CHAPTER II: Nature

II.i. Nature Humanized

The tulip factors into another broad agenda within “The Mower against Garden” and the sequence as a whole: the personification of nature. Endowed with human characteristics, the tulip’s search for “complexion” (“MaG” line 13) essentially turns it into a vain woman. Also in “The Mower against Gardens,” flowers are “taught to paint” (line 12), plants no longer know “the stock from which [they] came” (line 23), and nature becomes “vex[ed]” (line 29). Animals are personified in “Damon the Mower” and “The Mower to the Glowworms” – “The grasshopper its pipe gives o’er; / And the hamstringed frogs can dance no more” (“DM” lines 11-12) and “The nightingale does sit so late, / And studying all the summer night, / Her matchless songs does meditate” (“MttG” lines 2-4) – while in “The Mower’s Song,” the meadows receive similar treatment.

The use of anthropomorphism is hardly uncommon within the realm of poetry. In the nineteenth century, John Ruskin coined a phrase that has come to be closely associated with this practice: pathetic fallacy. In his book *Modern Painters*, Ruskin explains that granting human characteristics to a natural object is “very beautiful and yet very untrue” (Ruskin 155). Taking for example Marvell’s tulip, the flower cannot in reality “seek” or “learn”; hence, it is untrue, a fallacy. The pathetic fallacy, Ruskin writes, is more precisely “a fallacy caused by an excited state of the feelings, making us, for the time, more or less irrational.... All violent feelings have the same effect. They produce in us a falseness in all our impressions of external things” (155). In other words, “a pathetic fallacy is a deceptive appearance caused by emotion.... It is to poets like Keats and Tennyson, who according to Ruskin tend to view nature through a lens of their own feeling (pathos), that the pathetic fallacy is imputed” (Thomas 343). In his article “Poetic

Truth and Pathetic Fallacy,” J.D. Thomas explains that many scholars misunderstand the concept of the pathetic fallacy as Ruskin originally conceived of it. Though personification is frequently the manner in which poets apply this “distortion of reality,” the definition of pathetic fallacy more broadly includes “*Any* distortion of reality under the stress of emotion” (Thomas 343-44).

Scholars often locate the pathetic fallacy within pastoral poetry generally and within the Mower poems specifically. The term is anachronistic for Marvell, but given its repeated use by his critics, it is prudent to include a short discussion of it here. Friedman notes the “prevalence of the notorious ‘pathetic fallacy’ in pastoral poetry” (*Pastoral* 99), and Tayler calls it the “central tenet of pastoral verse” (154). Tayler’s own description of the pathetic fallacy – “the idyllic correspondence between man and Nature” (154) – does not map perfectly onto Ruskin’s explanation of it, as Ruskin stresses the poet’s emotions rather than those of “the object of contemplation [i.e. nature] or the subject of the composition [i.e. the poem’s character(s)]” (Thomas 343). Since the emphasis on Damon’s relationship with nature, which is the primary focus of the Mower poems, is by definition removed with use of the phrase “pathetic fallacy,” Tayler’s term, “idyllic correspondence,” is more appropriate for tracing the extent of that relationship.

In other pastoral Renaissance poems, the “idyllic correspondence” can manifest rather abstractly. Take, for instance, Robert Herrick’s carpe diem poem “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time”:

And this same flower that smiles today,
 Tomorrow will be dying.
 The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,
 The higher he’s a-getting,
 The sooner will his race be run,
 And nearer he’s to setting. (Greenblatt 1659, lines 3-8)

Here, personification places natural objects on an equal level with humans simply by endowing

them with human capabilities – a flower smiles and the sun races. However, no real interaction occurs between the flower and the sun and humans; the relationship between nature and humans is merely figurative. The Mower poems, on the other hand, more explicitly demonstrate a connection worthy of being styled an “idyllic correspondence.” Even without personification, the closeness of the bond between Damon and nature is readily apparent. In “The Mower against Gardens,” Damon’s rant about “Luxurious man” (line 1) corrupting the natural world clearly depicts how much nature’s purity means to him. In “Damon the Mower,” so enthralled is he with the natural world that he describes Juliana’s power in terms of the sun (lines 17-24), and when he attempts to gift her with natural objects – a “harmless snake[,] ... chameleons, changing hue, / And oak leaves tipped with honey dew” (lines 35, 37-38) – as a sign of his regard, he is shocked at her refusal of them. The Mower also boasts that nature favors him above all else: “On me the morn her dew distills / Before her darling daffodils” (“DM” lines 43-44).

The use of personification adds an entirely new dimension to the relationship between Damon and nature. Evoking a strangely sensual image, the Mower claims, “And, if at noon my toil me heat, / The sun himself licks off my sweat. / While, going home, the evening sweet / In cow-slip water bathes my feet” (“DM” lines 45-48), as if nature were his wife waiting to cleanse him upon his return home from a day in the fields.⁷ “The Mower to the Glowworms” is, as the title suggests, a direct address by Damon to the glowworms: “Ye living lamps ... Ye country comets ... Ye glowworms” (lines 1, 5, and 9). This case is not quite the same as apostrophe, a literary device in which the narrator speaks to an inanimate object or to someone not present, for the glowworms are neither lifeless nor absent: “[Damon] addresses not another human observer, with whom he shares his amused interest and capacity for coining phrases, but the glowworms

⁷ The intimacy these lines point to is also reflected in the closeness of the rhyme, both phonetically and visually: “heat” / “sweat” and “sweet” / “feet” (lines 45-48).

themselves, who are therefore treated, if not exactly as his equals, then at least as belonging to the same world, occupying the same space, more than an idle curiosity” (Alpers 53). Marvell creates this sense of camaraderie, this “idyllic correspondence,” through reliance on anthropomorphism, so much so that Damon straightforwardly asserts that he and the meadows share “A fellowship so true” (“MS” line 14), as if there were no question that the meadows possessed human qualities. The fact that he thinks to rely on the glowworms to lead him out of the darkness Juliana has cast upon his mind, though their “courteous lights” are “waste[d]” on him (“MttG” lines 10-11), testifies to his feelings of the strength of that “fellowship.” He depends on nature as if on a friend.

Damon’s sense that nature can act as a human is so strong that he sees its inactivity as a betrayal. In “The Mower’s Song,” he laments that the meadows have abandoned him and continued to grow “more luxuriant still and fine” (line 8) while he wallows in misery and pain. His charge that the “Unthankful meadows” (line 13) meet in “gaudy May-games” (line 15) is one of the poem’s more startling examples of personification. “May-games” of course evinces images of young people dancing merrily around a pole weaving colorful ribbons together on May Day; even a view of grass “dancing” in the wind does not come close to the energy and dynamism of such festivities. This line, therefore, is a key indication of the transformation of the meadows – and, by extension, nature as a whole – into a humanoid entity. The implication of the meadows’ potential capacity for “compassion” (line 19) – a loaded term that often carries religious connotations and is furthermore thought to be a quintessentially human emotion – lends strength to the completeness of the anthropomorphism.

Thus personification in the Mower poems is not just a rhetorical device; it actually represents Damon’s view of nature and defines his interaction with it. Marvell’s employment of

this conventional pastoral tool, however, is more drastic than that by poets like Herrick. In addition to possessing human traits, nature also retains a subtle degree of agency in the Mower poems, which allows it both to act for itself and, at least in Damon's eyes, to act on his behalf. This technique can be seen first in "The Mower against Gardens," though the garden is, for the most part, the passive recipient of the changes "Luxurious man" ("MaG" line 1) effects upon it: the natural world is "seduce[d]" (line 2), "allure[d]" (line 3), "stupified [*sic*]" (line 8), "taint[ed]" (line 11), "taught to paint" (line 12), and so on. The tulip displays the first sign of individual action in "seek[ing]" (line 13) for a complexion and "learn[ing] to interline its cheek" (line 14), and later on, the plants are endowed with awareness (line 23) and emotion ("vex[ed]" (line 29)). It is not until Damon's view moves outside the gardens to the "sweet fields" (line 32) that any action of nature's has a direct impact on someone or something beyond itself: it "does to all dispense / A wild and fragrant innocence" (lines 33-34). This all-encompassing statement implies not only that all the "sweet fields" are filled with "innocence," but that anyone who finds themselves in those fields will be likewise imbued with purity. More importantly, nature here is "willing" (line 33), emphasizing the deliberateness of the action and standing in stark contrast with the reactionary nature of previous shows of agency. In the absence of humans, nature possesses a certain autonomy that allows it to effect change.

In the sequence's next poem, "Damon the Mower," the natural world is still active but enjoys lessened independence. Juliana traps nature in her thrall as she does Damon: in the presence of the sun, with which Juliana is associated, "'The grasshopper its pipe gives o'er; / And hamstringed frogs can dance no more'" ("DM" lines 11-12), while the protection of water or shade frees these creatures of her influence: "'But in the brook the green frog wades; / And grasshoppers seek out the shades'" (lines 13-14). Like Damon, nature is powerless before her.

She ““burns the fields and mower both”” (line 20), which would seem to imply a degree of equivalence between nature and Damon, but Damon attempts to counter that thought several stanzas later by placing nature in the position of a servant:

‘On me the morn her dew distills
Before her darling daffodils.
And, if at noon my toil me heat,
The sun himself licks off my sweat.
While, going home, the evening sweet
In cowslip-water bathes my feet.’ (lines 43-48)

Though he conceives of nature in a subservient position in this stanza, his assumed dominance is soon exposed as false posturing when he slices his ankle open: he ““there among the grass fell down, / By his own scythe, the Mower mown”” (lines 79-80). Flat on his back, he is now literally on an equal level with the grass. Furthermore, the anthropomorphism embedded within the use of “among” becomes entangled with the role reversal in which the Mower, instead of the grass, is “mown,” emphasizing the depth of their bond.

Autonomous, agency-filled nature features again in “The Mower to the Glowworms” and “The Mower’s Song.” The glowworms of the former poem, like the “willing nature” (“MaG” line 33), display a definite consciousness: “Your courteous lights in vain you waste” (“MttG” line 13). The meadows in “The Mower’s Song” hold degree of agency by implication: Damon believes they should stop growing in solidarity with him in his lovesickness, which assumes that they have the potential or ability to do so in the first place. Instead, the meadows actively “forgo” their “fellowship so true” (line 14) with Damon. Meanwhile, in “Damon the Mower,” Damon again finds himself on the ground: he “lay[s] trodden under feet” (line 16) during the meadows’ May Day celebrations (line 15) as if *he* were the grass and the meadows were the humans dancing gaily on top of him. Thus nature wins out in the end, first gaining human status and then surviving Juliana’s “scorching beams” (“DM” line 24) while Damon succumbs to them.

Personification, then, causes nature to manifest in the Mower poems as a character in and of itself, the only tangible presence in the poem other than Damon himself. More broadly, such far-reaching anthropomorphism represents the pastoral “idyllic correspondence” pushed to the extreme. Again, Marvell has demonstrated both his grasp of the pastoral mode and his determination to rework it. Looking back at Ruskin’s pathetic fallacy, it is important to note that the narrator, not Damon, uses personification with the phrase “among the grass” (“DM” line 79), a divergence from the first stanza in “Damon the Mower” in which he employs similes to describe the scene: “Like her fair eyes the day was fair, / But scorching like his am’rous care. / Sharp like his scythe his sorrow was, / And withered like his hopes the grasses” (“DM” lines 5-8). Perhaps the phrase “among the grass” is evidence that Marvell is committing the pathetic fallacy by projecting his emotions upon nature – forgoing the persona of the Mower who has, to this point, acted so effectively as a screen between the poet and the world of the poem – given that the phrase appears in one of only two stanzas in the entire sequence that are in the narrator’s voice. Yet it is Damon’s fallacy, his mistake in believing in nature’s humanity, that matters more than Marvell’s in light of the poems’ focus on humanity’s changing relationship with the natural world. Meanwhile, the poet is deliberately playing on the fact that the technique of personification, by definition, actually undermines the pastoral idealization of nature by connecting nature to the inherent imperfection of humanity. Anthropomorphism therefore renders these poems ironic: while the Mower idolizes the “sweet fields” which “lie forgot” (“MaG” line 32), his endowment of human characteristics upon nature makes him in fact guilty of the same corruption he so abhors.

II.ii. Gardens and Mowing

In “The Mower against Gardens,” Damon displays a marked preference for the “sweet fields” (line 32) untouched by man, to the artificial, enclosed gardens he so thoroughly reviles. Because of this, many critics view the poem as Marvell’s contribution to a debate often taken up by pastoral poetry – that of the value of art versus the value of nature. According to Tayler, the terms “art” and “nature” held special meaning in the Renaissance: they “pointed to what appeared to be a ‘real’ division in man’s experience of himself and the cosmos” (3). Put another way, “art” describes human impact on the natural world. The argument about the correct balance to strike between them involves the “[recognition] that the gain of Art means the loss of Nature” (Tayler 5) – in other words, that art distorts nature. The intrinsic tension between the two appears as the explicit subject of “The Mower against Gardens,” where “[g]ardening, the human effort to impose pattern on nature, is imagined as the violation of an inherently pristine milieu” (Schoenfeldt 91). Marvell does not simply pick a side and defend it staunchly. Rather, he explores what it means for humans to interfere with natural processes and, in the process, challenges the pastoral definition of “art.”

Gardens, the Mower explains, contain a number of perversions effected on nature by humans, namely the presence of “the fountain and the grot” (“MaG” line 31) and the “enclos[ing]” wall (line 5), the domestication of flowers, and the practice of grafting. The first of these grievances – the introduction of manmade decoration into a natural setting – is best understood through consideration of the seventeenth-century context in which Marvell was writing. According to Curtis Whitaker, Marvell was likely most familiar with mannerist late Renaissance gardens, which “tended to have fountains, grottoes, topiary, and terraced ‘quadratures,’ or squares. [They] differed from earlier Renaissance gardens in [their]

elaborateness... [Their] overall design was busier” (299). Mannerism is a style of art that emphasizes “self-conscious artifice over realistic depiction” (“NGA – Mannerism”), making it an easy target for a critic such as the Mower. Gardens in the mannerist style frequently incorporated statues “organized around a central [allegorical] theme” and mechanically powered fountains (Whitaker 299), and Damon designates both of these constructions as negative forces. The statues, he says, can only imitate “the outward form” of the gods of nature but never capture their lack of design, their “fruitful spirit” (*Pastoral* 128). As for the fountains, Damon lists them as proof of how “enforced” (“MaG” line 31), how contrived and “constrained” (*Pastoral* 127) everything is. In other words, the garden’s statues and fountains intrude upon nature’s perfection, attempting to enhance but in reality only serving to cheapen and restrain it.

Though the statues and fountains stand as blatant signs of artificiality, the walls that surround the gardens do active harm: “[Man] first enclosed within the gardens square / A dead and standing pool of air, / And a more luscious earth for them did knead, / Which stupefied them as it fed” (“MaG” lines 5-8). As Friedman so succinctly puts it, “The diction of these four lines is almost an exercise in the expression of disgust” (*Pastoral* 125). The common perception of a garden, full of greenery and flowers, has been transformed into an image of “stifling decay” (125) in which the earth itself has been corrupted so far as to be able to feed on and thus “stupif[y] [*sic*]” (“MaG” lines 8-9) the plants growing there. Anthropomorphism breathes human life into the natural world here yet again and intensifies the stakes of the garden’s corruption, with the visceral imagery casting heightened blame on humans.

This culpability only increases with the Mower’s next argument: that the flowers are fundamentally altered – “The nutriment did change the kind” (“MaG” line 10) – as humans look to domesticate them: “With strange perfumes he did the roses taint, / And flowers themselves

were taught to paint. / The tulip, white, did for complexion seek, / And learned to interline its cheek” (lines 11-14). In short, nature is being trained to be more human, and “The more [the plants] become like human beings, the worse they are” (Wheeler 58). More than just human, though, the flowers are becoming specifically female. The roses become scented with “strange perfumes” (line 11), and the other flowers being “taught to paint” (line 12) implies cosmetics, as does the tulip’s lesson in “interlin[ing] its cheek” (line 14) in quest of a new “complexion” (line 13). The exchange of the tulip bulb can be seen as a sort of marriage dowry, which, indeed, one groom actually did accept as such in seventeenth century France (Pavord 86). The male gendering which begins in the first line – “Luxurious man, to bring his vice in use” – and runs throughout the poem elicits the sense of men becoming “duplicitous seducers, while the plants, forced to live in a world ruled by dominating males and to conform to their expectations, transform their natural beauty into the false attractiveness of women whose sole purpose is to please the opposite sex” (Jaekle 65).

Words like “Luxurious”⁸ (“MaG” line 1), “seduce” (line 2), “allure” (line 3), and “luscious” (line 7) augment this relationship, which soon turns sexually violent and aggressive as Damon goes on to denounce the practice of grafting. Man’s “deal[ing] between bark and tree” (line 21) results in “Forbidden mixtures” (line 22) and “uncertain and adulterate fruit” (line 25), he says, suggesting rape, adultery, or, at the very least, sexual deviance. The term “seraglio” (line 27) speaks most clearly to this: it is the name for a Turkish harem, the place where a sultan’s

⁸ Wheeler points out that “luxurious” meant “licentious” in the seventeenth century (58), while Friedman similarly notes that it “gives a sense of languorous indulgence” (*Pastoral* 124). Dan Jaekle, on the other hand, gives two definitions: the Latin, which “primarily refers to the exuberant growth of plants,” and the extension Marvell takes advantage of, which indicates “dissoluteness in people” (70). The conjunction of “luxurious” with “man,” then, suggests that “people make plants luxurious in imitation of themselves” (Jaekle 70), a theme supported strongly by the use of personification.

concubines and wives lived. As such, “The seraglio was associated with both sexual perversion and despotic power” (Robinson 106), with the gardener in the role of “tyrant” (“MaG” line 28) here. Also intimating sexual perversion, though in a non-aggressive manner, are the “eunuchs” (line 27) who inhabit the seraglio and the cherry tree which man has taught “[t]o procreate without a sex” (line 30) (i.e. asexually).

All of this, then, is the “art” which humans impose on nature. Their purposes superficial, the damage done disastrous, Damon portrays humans as sexual aggressors who do not value the inherent purity of nature. Standing in contrast to the corrupted gardens is the “wild and fragrant innocence” of the “sweet fields” (“MaG” lines 34, 32). Unenclosed, untouched by humanity, this is nature at its finest, “the standard against which gardens must be judged and . . . the alternative to which mankind should return” (Jaekle 66). Importantly, Damon does not include himself in the denunciation of all of humanity. Because the poem features only a single “[l]uxurious man” (line 1) and singular masculine pronouns (“his,” “him,” “he”), the Mower neatly sidesteps the potential conflation that would have arisen had he used plural pronouns (“we” or “us”). He instead “aligns himself finally with the fields” (*Pastoral* 129) in the poem’s concluding line: “The gods themselves with *us* do dwell” (line 40, emphasis mine).

The Mower’s exceptionalism effectively creates a significant distinction within human imposition of change on nature. Although he roundly condemns gardens, he does not seem to see hypocrisy in his own brand of “alteration upon nature” – annually cutting the grasses. Indeed, Damon classifies gardens and mowing as two fundamentally and conceptually different actions upon nature. Because he makes this distinction, the definition of “art” as it can be understood from “The Mower against Gardens” takes on a more nuanced meaning in the rest of the sequence.

As discussed in Chapter I, mowers in the seventeenth century often did not work just as mowers, but also as plowmen and planters as the agricultural season demanded. Damon, though, classifies himself solely as a mower; because of this, Anderson posits, he can escape being cast “as part of the humanity that attempts to improve upon nature” (Anderson 134). Dan Jaeckle argues that the Mower “may project the rural work onto fairies and fauns, but... in performing his function he too, like the gardener, operates on nature” (69). However, Jaeckle misses here what Anderson pinpoints – a distinction between “improving upon” nature and altering it. What Damon describes in “The Mower against Gardens” falls under the heading of “improvement”: despite the fact that he believes humans are corrupting nature, the humans’ intention is to enhance it, to produce beautiful flowers and “new floral scents and colors, accomplishments worthy of praise from any perspective other than [Damon’s]” (Jaeckle 68). In fact, tulipists of the early modern period considered broken tulips to be an example of “perfecting” nature (Robinson 106). Gardeners, in Damon’s words, seek to “graft upon the wild the tame” (“MaG” line 24), and therein lies the primary charge at humanity’s door in “The Mower against Gardens”: that humans “tame” nature, rather than allowing it to thrive free and “wild” (line 34).

Mowing, however, does not constitute “improvement” in the way that the construction of a garden does. Damon mows the meadows for the purpose of obtaining hay, not because he means to beautify or “tame” (“MaG” line 24) a tract of land. In short, mowing is practical and economical, not aesthetic. In today’s world, mowing grass is associated with keeping a backyard neat and manicured, but Marvell’s time, it was a part of the agricultural process, the means by which hay was gathered to be sold or to be used for animal feed, thatching, and more. The fact that Damon makes this distinction reflects the same social consciousness that Marvell more clearly gestured to with his choice of a mower over a shepherd. Gardening, a pastime of wealthy

landowners who had time and money to spare, is condemned, while mowing, the province of the poor whose labor provides for people of all classes, is exempt from censure.

The significance of pleasure versus practicality also surfaces in two references to enclosure in the sequence. When the Mower employs “enclosed” (“MaG” line 5) to describe the gardens, the word brings negative connotations because humans are using walls as tools to entrap nature simply for aesthetic purposes. When he mentions enclosure in passing in “Damon the Mower” – “With this the golden fleece I shear / Of all these *closes* every year” (lines 53-54, emphasis mine) – he alludes to the early modern practice by which the open fields of England were fenced in and labeled as property. Access to enclosed land, previously available to the common people for farming or raising livestock, was now restricted to its owners. A parliamentary act in the mid-eighteenth century lent enclosure an official stamp and caused even more wealthy landowners to fence in claimed property: “By nearly four thousand Acts, more than six million acres of land were appropriated, mainly by politically dominant landowners: about a quarter of all cultivated acreage” (Williams 96). A significant portion of the country had already been enclosed before these acts, Williams writes, as the “process had been going on since at least the thirteenth century, and had reached a first peak in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries” (96). With land ownership narrowing to a wealthy minority, the less fortunate struggled to keep up as “general economic pressure” beset “small [land]owners and especially small tenants” who were “driven from the land, and from some independent status in relation to it” (Williams 97).

Enclosure was only a part of a larger economic and social shift that was taking place in England during the seventeenth century. With the rising concentration of landownership came increased involvement from the landowners themselves as estates became “opportunit[ies] for

investment, carrying greatly increased returns” (Williams 61). As the “peasantry” began to disappear under this new economic model, tenant farmers and wage laborers became central to an increasingly structured, organized market system, known as agrarian capitalism (60).

Williams notes the subsequent change in eighteenth century poetry from “the idealisation of the happy tenant, and of the rural retreat” to “a deep and melancholy consciousness of change and loss” (61). The seventeenth century Mower poems seem to have preempted this later trend, but in a different way. Damon does not disparage mowing and field enclosure as representatives of agrarian capitalism; quite the opposite, by excluding these weighty subjects from his expostulation and focusing exclusively on the evils of gardening, he wordlessly accepts the system. Despite the fact that gardening is arguably a more superficial charge to levy against the wealthy than that of depriving the poor of land they had been utilizing for years, Damon singles out the former as negative and embraces the new economy in the form of his wage laborer mower.

The difference Damon conceives between gardening and mowing emerges in the poems’ form as well. The fundamental nature of grass does not change when it is cut – it remains just grass, not a hybridized or grafted version of it, and every harvest season it should ideally grow back. Reflecting this fact, the language Marvell uses in conjunction with mowing differs from that employed for gardening. The “sharply detailed, realistic moment of violence” that is the mowing scene in “Damon the Mower” exhibits this disparity: “While thus he threw his elbow round, / Depopulating all the ground, / And, with his whistling scythe, does cut / Each stroke between the earth and root” (“DM” lines 73-76). The use “depopulating” (line 74) suggests that Damon has just cut through a mass of people, and the phrase “between the earth and root” (line 76) recalls the complaints against grafting the Mower made in “The Mower against Gardens” but

lacks the physical intrusiveness intimated by “deal[ing] between the bark and tree” (“Mag” line 21). In other words, the ripping of a root from the earth certainly connotes violence, but it does not suggest something similar to rape. The destruction wrought by Damon’s profession is nevertheless highlighted in the refrain in “The Mower’s Song,” in which Damon equates Juliana’s effect upon him to his effect upon the grass: “When Juliana came, and she / What I do to the grass, does to my thoughts and me” (lines 5-6).

Thus, the passage from “Damon the Mower” forgoes the tone of sexual aggression that lies beneath the surface of “The Mower against Gardens”; there is no seraglio, no allusion to seduction, no sense of perversion here. Though Damon recognizes the violence inherent in mowing, he does not characterize it as a sexualized act, a move that marks the difference he sees between gardening and mowing, between improvement and alteration. At the same time, this admission of violence indicates that while he excludes mowing from the reproach gardens receive, he does not endorse it. Reconsidering the economic context, he seems to accept the “violence” – the hardship experienced by the lower classes – as a regrettable but unavoidable symptom of humans’ changing relationship with nature – the shift to agrarian capitalism.

As a result of the distinction between gardening and mowing, pastoral “art” in Marvell earns a much more narrow definition than one would traditionally expect. As Friedman writes about “The Mower against Gardens,” Damon “is not saying simply that the natural is good and the artificial bad” (*Pastoral* 123). The “art” of gardening is placed in firm opposition to nature, while the “art” of mowing remains in some sort of equilibrium with it. According to Tayler,

A controversy over the relative values of Nature and Art is thus in effect a controversy over man’s role in the order of nature, and the terms themselves are therefore when paired, when used in tandem, a “complete” and “real” principle of

classification by which man may organize his perceptions of what is right and legitimate in this corporeal and terrestrial world, of what is good and valid for him in his role as reasoning animal alive in the physical world of animate and inanimate nature. (26)

Thus Marvell draws the line for “what is good and valid” in between improvement and alteration. Resisting the portrayal of nature as existing solely for human usage, but accepting humans’ investment and dependence upon the natural world, he molds the pastoral to explore the morality of human interference in nature. This complex conception of the traditional art versus nature debate is a perfect example of Marvell’s “incessant modifying and re-examination of literary forms” (*Pastoral* 101).

Damon displays a notable self-awareness – if also self-importance – in the final line of “Damon the Mower”: “For Death thou art a Mower too” (lines 81-88). In conjunction with the refrain in “The Mower’s Song” – “When Juliana came, and she / What I do to the grass, does to my thoughts and me” (lines 5-6) – Damon admits that his “guardianship involve[s] bringing death into the innocent world of nature” (*Pastoral* 138). Though this represents Damon’s acceptance of death as part of the natural cycle of life as well as his own role within that cycle, it is more significantly a “consummate irony” (*Pastoral* 138) similar to personification’s correspondence between pure nature and corrupted humanity. Whether or not mowing is sexually violent like gardening, in the end there is death.

II.iii. Displacement

The opening stanza of “The Mower’s Song” reveals a different brand of human-nature attachment to that presented in the first three poems:

My mind was once the true survey
 Of all these meadows fresh and gay,
 And in the greenness of the grass
 Did see its hopes as in a glass;
 When Juliana came, and she
 What I do to the grass, does to my thoughts and me. (“MS” lines 1-6)

Here, Damon draws a link between his mind (line 1) and nature and, at the same time, displays a marked internal/mental disconnect. He says his mind sees “*its* hopes” (line 4, emphasis mine), as if it were an independent entity. In addition, in the poem’s refrain, the phrase “my thoughts and me” (line 6) clearly divides his mind from the rest of his self: “The grammatical structure of the refrain refuses to let the reader regard man’s experience with Nature and man’s experience with himself and his ‘Thoughts’ as separate or unconnected” (Tayler 159). This stanza thus illustrates more explicitly Damon’s claim from the end of “The Mower to the Glowworms” that his mind is “displaced” (“MttG” line 15). Adding another dimension to that assertion, “The Mower’s Song” laments a sundering of the relationship between Damon’s mind and nature. In other words, two important separations emerge here, the first causal of the second: a separation between Damon and his mind, and a separation between his mind and nature.

Importantly, these are both relatively new occurrences. As Damon indicates in the first line, his mind and the meadows used to be closely intertwined, but Juliana has disrupted everything, throwing him into internal chaos, and nature has not followed him into his downward spiral. The depth of former relationship between Damon’s mind and nature is truly profound, to the point that one is reflective of the other. The reference to a mirror implies an easy correspondence – all one has to do is glance in it to gain access to the other’s inner thoughts and feelings – and the word “survey” (line 1) indicates an expansive one, gesturing “both to a map and to the act of measuring a plot of land” (*Pastoral* 138). Moreover, it was “the *true* survey” (emphasis mine) – it was singular, genuine, and legitimate.

In the first stanza, the Mower reveals what formerly linked his mind to the meadows: “green.” It is in “the greenness of the grass” (line 3) that he used to see his mind’s hopes mirrored, not in the grasses themselves. As such, “greenness” signifies much more than merely the grass’s color. Empson writes that it represents in various Marvellian circumstances “grass, buds, children, an as yet virginal prospect of sexuality, and the peasant stock from which the great families emerge” (127). Similarly, Summers claims that it stands for “hope and vitality and virility, the fertile promise of life which man desires and destroys” (926). These observations, while true, only scratch the surface of the word’s significance in “The Mower’s Song.”

Scholarship on this issue invariably includes consideration of another of Marvell’s poems, “The Garden,” and its most studied stanza:

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
Withdraws into its happiness:
The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find,
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds, and other seas,
Annihilating all that’s made
To a green thought in a green shade. (lines 41-48)

Each critic seems to have his or her own interpretation of the true meaning behind these words. Empson and N.K. Sugimura provide the most relevant arguments for the purpose of this thesis. Both contend that the lines imply two minds – conscious and unconscious (or intellectual and intuitive), according to Empson (119), or rational and personal, according to Sugimura (248). Empson does not give a precise interpretation of what “green” actually is; instead, he notes simply that it is connected with “mirrors and the partial knowledge of the mind” (128) in “The Mower’s Song.” Sugimura asserts more explicitly that “green” in “The Garden” is “a provenance of the real that is fundamentally indescribable, in large part because the poet is imagining an Edenic – and hence, pre-rational – world.... [T]he weirdness is that the thought of something

green is itself green: mind and world are one” (Sugimura 248). Combining Sugimura’s explanation with Empson’s for application to “The Mower’s Song,” “green” is the profound connection between the human mind and the natural world in a time when the two co-existed in Edenic harmony. These viewpoints correlate to a common pastoral practice of regarding landscape “as representative of some state of mind – an ethical attitude or a psychological yearning or a realm of imagination” (Alpers 22). In this case, Damon formerly saw nature as representative of his mind, facilitated by “greenness,” but that “green” link has disappeared with his mind’s displacement.

With that crucial connection gone, human access to the prelapsarian world is lost. The mind can no longer conceive of it, nor can it understand nature as it once did; these are the “unspoken premises of the myth of the garden, the assumption that in the original microcosm of creation, the human mind was fitted intrinsically to the structure of the world it perceived” (Friedman “Andrew Marvell” 282). Damon is left only with his memories of that former closeness. In terms of the pastoral tradition, he mourns a distant Golden Age. According to Friedman, “for the Renaissance, the involvement of the classical pastoral with theories, historical or mythical, about a Golden Age was coloured by the belief in the typological coincidence of that primitive era of natural harmony with the Christian notions of prelapsarian life in Eden ... and of the consequences for both man and nature of sin and the Fall” (*Pastoral* 9-10). In other words, Marvell uses the concept of “green” to explore a classical pastoral feature in the form of Eden as the Golden Age and makes tangible the lost union between humans and nature.

As for the “consequences for both man and nature of sin and the Fall” (*Pastoral* 9-10), that is the underlying subject of the sequence. On the surface, Damon yearns after Juliana until he is so “displaced” that he loses his “green” bond with nature. On a more subtle level, the

poems are a reinterpretation of humans' expulsion from the garden, in which "The Fall is seen as a change in the response of the mind to Nature" (Tayler 159). As we established in Chapter I, Damon is not the traditional pastoral shepherd. Instead, in this postlapsarian world, he is Adam – almost. Like Adam, his sole task is to tend to nature (Anderson 134); like Adam, love for a woman caused him to be cast out of the "garden." Furthermore, as Friedman points out, Marvell's claim that his "mind was once the true survey" ("MS" line 1) of the meadows recalls Adam's inherent relationship with the natural world as manifested in his ability to know and name all the animals ("Andrew Marvell" 282). Yet the rest of humanity has already fallen, as Damon demonstrates in "The Mower against Gardens," while he himself seems to have escaped that fate, until Juliana. Marvell thus stops short of transforming Damon into the ultimate representative figure – Adam, the Biblical father of all men – because Damon is not the cause of humanity's fall. He is only the cause of his own.

CONCLUSION

The Mower poems thus meditate on a number of important human themes, including our complex social relationships with one another, our internal struggles with love and friendship, our unshakable connection to the natural world, and our existential angst. They depict only a single, rather unstable individual, whose devotion to nature is praiseworthy and whose love-induced turmoil is dramatic but, in a way, universal. Damon wants us to believe he is special, and Marvell certainly helps us to that conclusion with his extensive re-working of a familiar literary model: the poems replace the traditional shepherd with a mower, contain economic and social undertones, hint at a distinction between alteration and improvement, and showcase a lone mower's increasing detachment from nature.

Why would Marvell want to subvert the pastoral so thoroughly? Given the abundance of deviations from conventional form and gestures to real-world issues, he seems to suggest that the pastoral is no longer adequate for meaningful commentary on the changing world of the seventeenth century. Human concerns, he intimates, have come to dominate all types of discourse – including that which involves nature – as society evolves and becomes “civilized.” At the same time, humanity's relationship with nature has been irrevocably modified, bringing with it disregard for natural integrity and, more importantly, a pronounced loss for all of humankind. The Mower poems, then, indicate that the pastoral must change with the times to maintain relevancy or otherwise fall into obscurity.

Returning to Empson's pastoral maxim of putting the complex in simple terms, it is difficult to say that Marvell has done this in the Mower poems. To extract meaning from these four poems on first read is a struggle; only after many examinations can one decipher a (semi-) consistent perception of one of the many ideas they are trying to convey. In this way, they do not

quite fit into Empson's definition of the pastoral anyway because there is very little about them that is "simple." Friedman posits that Marvell's use of pastoral elements in largely non-pastoral poems "suggest[s] that [he] thought of the possible subjects for pastoral as encompassing much more of human experience than prior examples of the genre allowed for" (*Pastoral* 9). I argue that Marvell's adaptation of pastoral elements within supposedly pastoral poems achieves this with more rebellious genius, though his transgressions make it difficult for a reader to discern the true implications and subtleties behind them. At the same time, by using the pastoral in a new way, Marvell demonstrates his mastery of its intricacies and gestures to its storied history. As Barbara Everett claims, "Marvell brought new life to pastoral by the mocking energy with which he killed it off" (*Pastoral* 67). In short, with the Mower poems, Marvell transformed a long-standing tradition by undermining it from within and, in doing so, left a lasting mark on the realm of poetry.

APPENDIX: The Mower Poems

“The Mower against Gardens”⁹

Luxurious man, to bring his vice in use,
 Did after him the world seduce,
 And from the fields the flowers and plants allure,
 Where nature was most plain and pure.
 He first enclosed within the gardens square 5
 A dead and standing pool of air,
 And a more luscious earth for them did knead,
 Which stupified¹⁰ them while it fed.
 The pink grew then double as his mind;
 The nutriment did change the kind. 10
 With strange perfumes he did the roses taint,
 And flowers themselves were taught to paint.
 The tulip, white, did for complexion seek,
 And learned to interline its cheek:
 Its onion root they then so high did hold, 15
 That one was for a meadow sold.
 Another world was searched, through oceans new,
 To find the *Marvel of Peru*.
 And yet these rarities might be allowed
 To man, that sovereign thing and proud, 20
 Had he not dealt between the bark and tree,
 Forbidden mixtures there to see
 No plant now knew the stock from which it came;
 He grafts upon the wild the tame:
 That th’ uncertain and adulterate fruit 25
 Might put the palate in dispute.
 His green seraglio has its eunuchs too,
 Lest any tyrant him outdo.
 And in the cherry he does nature vex,
 To procreate without a sex. 30
 ‘Tis all enforced, the fountain and the grot,
 While the sweet fields do lie forgot:
 Where willing nature does to all dispense
 A wild and fragrant innocence:
 And fauns and fairies do the meadows till, 35
 More by their presence than their skill.
 Their statues, polished by some ancient hand,
 May to adorn the gardens stand:
 But howsoe’er the figures do excel,

⁹ Marvell 105-06

¹⁰ [*sic*]

The gods themselves with us do dwell. 40

“Damon the Mower”¹¹

1.
 Hark how the Mower Damon sung,
 With love of Juliana stung!
 While everything did seem to paint
 The scene more fit for his complaint.
 Like her fair eyes the day was fair, 5
 But scorching like his am’rous care.
 Sharp like his scythe his sorrow was,
 And withered like his hopes the grass.
2.
 ‘Oh what unusual heats are here,
 Which thus our sunburned meadows sear! 10
 The grasshopper its pipe gives o’er;
 And hamstringed frogs can dance no more.
 But in the brook the green frog wades;
 And grasshoppers seek out the shades.
 Only the snake, that kept within, 15
 Now glitters in its second skin.
3.
 ‘This heat the sun could never raise,
 Nor Dog Star so inflame the days.
 It from a higher beauty grow’th,
 Which burns the fields and mower both: 20
 Which mads the dog, and makes the sun
 Hotter than his own Phaëton.
 Not July causeth these extremes,
 But Juliana’s scorching beams.
4.
 ‘Tell me where I may pass the fires 25
 Of the hot day, or hot desires.
 To what cool cave shall I descend,
 Or to what gelid fountain bend?
 Alas! I look for ease in vain,
 When remedies themselves complain. 30
 No moisture but my tears do rest,
 Nor cold but in her icy breast.

¹¹ Marvell 106-08

5.

'How long wilt thou, fair shepherdess,
 Esteem me, and my presents less?
 To thee the harmless snake I bring, 35
 Disarmèd of its teeth and sting;
 To thee chameleons, changing hue,
 And oak leaves tipped with honey dew.
 Yet thou, ungrateful, hast not sought
 Nor what they are, nor who them brought. 40

6.

'I am the Mower Damon, known
 Through all the meadows I have mown.
 On me the morn her dew distills
 Before her darling daffodils.
 And, if at noon my toil me heat, 45
 The sun himself licks off my sweat.
 While, going home, the evening sweet
 In cowslip-water bathes my feet.

7.

'What, though the piping shepherd stock
 The plains with an unnumbered flock, 50
 This scythe of mine discovers wide
 More ground than all his sheep do hide.
 With this the golden fleece I shear
 Of all these closes every year.
 And though in wool more poor than they, 55
 Yet am I richer far in hay.

8.

'Nor am I so deformed to sight,
 If in my scythe I lookèd right;
 In which I see my picture done,
 As in a crescent moon the sun. 60
 The deathless fairies take me oft
 To lead them in their dances soft:
 And, when I tune myself to sing,
 About me they contract their ring.

9.

'How happy might I still have mowed, 65
 Had not Love here his thistles sowed!
 But no I all the day complain,
 Joining my labour to my pain;

And with my scythe cut down the grass,
 Yet still my grief is where it was: 70
 But, when the iron blunter grows,
 Sighing, I whet my scythe and woes.’

10.

While thus he threw his elbow round,
 Depopulating all the ground,
 And, with his whistling scythe, does cut 75
 Each stroke between the earth and root,
 The edgèd steel by careless change
 Did into his own ankle glance;
 And there among the grass fell down,
 By his own scythe, the Mower mown. 80

11.

‘Alas!’ said he, ‘these hurts are slight
 To those that die by love’s despite.
 With shepherd’s-purse, and clown’s-all-heal,
 The blood I staunch, and would I seal.
 Only for him no cure is found, 85
 Whom Juliana’s eyes do wound.
 ‘Tis death alone that this must do:
 For Death thou art a Mower too.’

“The Mower to the Glowworms”¹²

1.

Ye living lamps, by whose dear light
 The nightingale does sit so late,
 And studying all the summer night,
 Her matchless songs does meditate;

2.

Ye country comets, that portend 5
 No war, nor prince’s funeral,
 Shining unto no higher end
 Than to presage the grass’s fall;

3.

Ye glowworms, whose officious flame
 To wandering mowers shows the way, 10
 That in the night have lost their aim,

¹² Marvell 109

And after foolish fires do stray;

4.

Your courteous lights in vain you waste,
 Since Juliana here is come,
 For she my mind hath so displaced 15
 That I shall never find my home.

“The Mower’s Song”¹³

1.

My mind was once the true survey
 Of all these meadows fresh and gay,
 And in the greenness of the grass
 Did see its hopes as in a glass;
 When Juliana came, and she 5
 What I do to the grass, does to my thoughts and me.

2.

But these, while I with sorrow pine,
 Grew more luxuriant still and fine,
 That not one blade of grass you spied,
 But had a flower on either side; 10
 When Juliana came, and she
 What I do to the grass, does to my thoughts and me.

3.

Unthankful meadows, could you so
 A fellowship so true forgo,
 And in your gaudy May-games meet, 15
 While I lay trodden under feet?
 When Juliana came, and she
 What I do to the grass, does to my thoughts and me.

4.

But what you in compassion ought,
 Shall now by my revenge be wrought: 20
 And flow’rs, and grass, and I and all,
 Will in one common ruin fall.
 For Juliana comes, and she
 What I do to the grass, does to my thoughts and me.

¹³ Marvell 109-10

5.
And thus, ye meadows, which have been 25
Companions of my thoughts more green,
Shall now the heraldry become
With which I will adorn my tomb;
For Juliana comes, and she
What I do to the grass, does to my thoughts and me. 30

Works Consulted

- Alpers, Paul. *What is Pastoral?* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Anderson, Linda. "The Nature of Marvell's Mower." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*. 31.1 (Winter 1991): 131-46. *JSTOR*. Web. 30 Sept. 2011
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/450447>>.
- Crane, Mary Thomas. "Marvell's Amazing Garden." *Environment and Embodiment in Early Modern England*. Eds. Mary Floyd-Wilson and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Eliot, T.S. "Andrew Marvell (1921)." *Selected Essays*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1932. 292-304.
- Empson, William. *Some Versions of Pastoral*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1950.
- Everett, Barbara. "Marvell's 'The Mower's Song.'" *Critical Quarterly* 4.3 (Sept. 1962): 219-24. *Wiley Online Library*. Web. 20 Nov. 2011
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.14678705.1962.tb01417.x>>.
- . *Poets in Their Time: Essays on English Poetry from Donne to Larkin*. London: Faber & Faber, 1986.
- Friedman, Donald M. "Andrew Marvell." *The Cambridge Companion to English Poetry: Donne to Marvell*. Ed. Thomas N. Corns. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. 275-303.
- . *Marvell's Pastoral Art*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970.
- Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Greenblatt, Stephen and M.H. Abrams, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Volume B: The Sixteenth Century/The Early Seventeenth Century*. 8th ed. New York: W.W.

- Norton & Company, 2006.
- Harrison, Robert Pogue. *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Jaekle, Dan. "Marvell's 'Mower Against Gardens': Reconsidering Bakhtinian Dialogism." *Fault Lines and Controversies in the Study of Seventeenth-Century English Literature*. Eds. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002. 62-72.
- Marvell, Andrew. "The Mower against Gardens." *The Complete Poems*. Ed. Elizabeth Story Donno. London: Penguin Books, 2005.
- McColley, Diane Kelsey. *Poetry and Ecology in the Age of Milton and Marvell*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007.
- McRae, Andrew. "The green Marvell." *The Cambridge Companion to Andrew Marvell*. Eds. Derek Hirst and Steven N. Zwicker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- "NGA - Mannerism." *National Gallery of Art*. National Gallery of Art. Web. 09 Feb. 2012. <<http://www.nga.gov/collection/gallery/gg21/gg21-over1.html>>.
- Pavord, Anna. *The Tulip*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1999.
- Robinson, Benedict S. "Green Seraglios: Tulips, Turbans, and the Global Market." *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 9.1 (Spring/Summer 2009). *Project Muse*. Web. Sept. 20, 2011 <<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/jem/summary/v009/9.1.robinson.html>>.
- Ruskin, John. *The Complete Works, Volume 22: Modern Painters, Volume 3*. New York: Bryan, Taylor, & Company, 1894. *Google Books*. Web. 23 Feb. 2012 <<http://books.google.com/books?id=BHFKAAAAYAAJ&dq=ruskin%20modern%20painters%20v.3&pg=PR5#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.

- Schoenfeldt, Michael. "Marvell and the designs of art." *The Cambridge Companion to Andrew Marvell*. Eds. Derek Hirst and Steven N. Zwicker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Smith, Nigel. *Andrew Marvell: The Chameleon*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.
- Sugimura, N.K. "Marvell's Mind and the Glow-worms of Extinction." *The Review of English Studies*. 62.254 (Apr. 2011): 241-60. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 1 Oct. 2011
<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA259988805&v=2.1&u=lom_umichanna&it=r&p=AONE&sw=w>.
- Summers, Joseph H. "Marvell's 'Nature.'" *Seventeenth-Century British Poetry: 1603-1660*. Eds. John P. Rumrich and Gregory Chaplin. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 921-30.
- Taylor, Edward William. *Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964.
- Thomas, J.D. "Poetic Truth and Pathetic Fallacy." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 3.3 (Autumn 1961): 342-47. *JSTOR*. Web. 23 Feb. 2012
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40753736>>.
- Wheeler, Thomas. *Andrew Marvell Revisited*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996.
- Whitaker, Curtis. "Andrew Marvell's Garden-Variety Debates." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 62.3 (1999): 296-311. *JSTOR*. Web. 30 Sept. 2011
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4621645>>.
- Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1973.