MIXED GENRE AND THE POLITICS OF EARLY MODERN ROMANCE

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by

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Abstract

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This dissertation argues that early modern romance writers such as Ariosto, Sidney, Spenser, and Wroth employed a sophisticated strategy of generic mixing when dealing with potentially troubling political topics. These elite writers associated with the court found the genre’s formal flexibility particularly useful for articulating sophisticated and even contradictory ideas at moments of intense conflict and indecision in relation to the monarch, to court culture, or public opinion. This study challenges the notion, predominant among investigations of early modern genre theory, that romance was primarily a foil for more serious epic concerns of empire, proto-nationalism, and victorious Protestant piety. Rather, that opposition was only one of many ways that these writers would set romance in relation to other narrative and poetic genres in order to investigate competing political viewpoints, navigate personal and professional conflicts of interest, and ultimately question their literary culture's reliance on using genre as a political and rhetorical tool. For these writers the politics of genre came to embody a means of articulating relationships to a host of different pressures (governmental, social,
professional, and erotic) that did not easily cohere, especially since romance itself was already a genre on the margins of literary culture.

The particular authors I discuss show a growing attention to the relationship between political content and political form in romance. Philip Sidney’s revision of the *Arcadia* show him exploring contradictions in his understanding of political agency, which pits a self-assertive pastoral romance against chivalric romance concerned with expressions of duty to social and political masters. In Books V and VI of *The Faerie Queene*, Edmund Spenser investigates how literary genres can be used for political purposes, culminating in a sense of Courtesy marked by the ability to manipulate genres for political ends. Finally, Mary Wroth’s *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* looks at the mastery of political genre in fiction, using generic mixture to articulate a rhetorical control and literary autonomy over the rhetoric of political genre to compensate for her lack of political agency in her life. In each case, romance allows for a mixture of genre based on conflict rather than synthesis to become a productive form of political commentary.
For Amber, finally.
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CHAPTER 1:
ROMANCE, MIXED GENRE, AND ARIOSTO

This dissertation argues that early modern romance writers such as Ariosto, Sidney, Spenser, and Wroth employed a sophisticated strategy of generic mixing when dealing with potentially troubling political topics. These elite writers associated with the court found the genre’s formal flexibility particularly useful for articulating sophisticated and even contradictory ideas at moments of intense conflict and indecision in relation to the monarch, court culture, or public opinion. By the sixteenth century, romance had accrued such a wide range of contradictory cultural associations, from outdated to continentally fashionable, aristocratic to common, morally dangerous to piously allegorical, that it offered ripe soil for authors to experiment with the politics of literary genre. This study challenges the notion, predominant among investigations of early modern genre theory, that romance was primarily a foil for more serious epic concerns of empire, proto-nationalism, and victorious Protestant piety. Rather, that opposition was only one of many ways that these writers would set romance in relation to other narrative and poetic genres in order to investigate competing political viewpoints, navigate personal and professional conflicts of interest, and ultimately question their literary culture's reliance on using genre as a political and rhetorical tool.
This study has three principle goals which hope to broaden the relevance of romance to early modern genre studies and to revise the subservient role most often assigned to romance in comparative generic studies:

1) The first goal is to offer a new model for understanding how early modern writers used mixed genre, exemplified by romance, emphasizing generic conflict within the same work. As the introduction will show, critics have predominantly understood the very prevalent activity of genre mixing in the Renaissance to be an exercise in creating ever-more harmonious art forms. Indeed, the notion that epic served as the highest genre because it could contain and harmonize all other genres within it stretched from the early humanists through to Milton, and it continues to dominate discussion of hybrid genres. This notion may accurately describe how early humanists like Julius-Caesar Scaliger and epic writers like Tasso or Milton understood mixed genre, but the romancers functioned differently. For these writers, hybrid genres were intended to provoke confrontation rather than represent unity and to investigate the demands for judgment between potentially incompatible “value-laden frames or fixes upon the world,” as Rosalie Colie describes genres.¹ To this end, I use the introduction to sketch a new model of how generic conflict functions in early modern romance. I then provide a reading of the epic-versus-romance conflict in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* to show how this model functions even at the very beginning of early-modern romance.

2) The study's second goal is to offer renewed readings of how romance was encoded and put to use in its most obvious early modern examples with Sidney's *Arcadia*,

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Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and Mary Wroth's *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*. Criticism on each of these works tends to downplay the importance of their investment in the romance tradition at the expense of other generic approaches. This is seen most easily in the tendency of critics to classify the *Faerie Queene* as an epic or, at times, as an epic-romance rather than as a romance. But the *Arcadia* is itself often categorized as a pastoral and even the *Urania*, the most “pure” example of romance of these three, is often read more strictly as a topical allegory than a romance. By emphasizing that these works are romances first which then incorporate other genres within them, I hope to show how they actually belong to a literary history of generic mixing that is itself part of the literary history of romance as early modern writers inherited it.

3) The third goal is to show that these authors employed romance's hybrid nature as a tool for political commentary and as a way to reflect on literature’s relationship to politics. As each chapter will show, moments of the most direct generic clashes between romance and another genre occur when the writers directly address political situations in which they find themselves conflicted. Sidney's revision of the “old” *Arcadia*'s pastoral romance with the chivalric material of Book III is fraught with concerns about his differences with Elizabeth and his troubled commitment to the religious conflict in the Low Countries. Spenser's vacillation between romance, epic, and pastoral in Books V and VI of the *Faerie Queene* address his disappointment with his uncertain reputation at court and his growing differences with Elizabethan policies due to his Irish experiences. And Wroth's movement between romance, epic, lyric complaint, and picaresque can be read alongside her own struggles to identify what remained of the legacy of Sidney and Leicester's Protestant politics as well as her own difficult relationship to the Jacobean
court. In each case, I hope to show how romance could be seen as central to an ongoing reassessment of the political understanding of genre within early modern literary history, a reassessment that belies the tendency of critics to associate romance with political weakness, “error,” antiquated aristocratic mores, and valuing personal issues (whether they be construed as erotic, domestic, and, by association, “feminine”) over public virtues. Rather than aligning romance with any one type of political viewpoint, I hope to show that romance often raised the question of how easily and how reliably genre could be “encoded” with straightforward political readings. In fact, these romances often seem to avoid clear political statements or “position taking” in favor of offering writers the freedom to experiment with using genre mixtures to explore conflicts, alternatives, and contradictions in their own political views. For these writers the politics of genre was not limited to using genres to make claims about topical events; instead, politics comes to mean a way of articulating relationships to a host of different pressures (governmental, social, professional, and erotic) that do not easily cohere.

Early modern romance emerged out of a mixture of literary traditions. Medieval vernacular romances, both English and continental and written in prose and verse, were already popular throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, and they straddled the spectrum of styles from the traditionally chivalric Guy of Warwick to Sannazaro's idyllically pastoral Arcadia. Translations and imitations of Greek romances, such as Heliodorus' Aethiopian History and Apuleius's Golden Ass, became incredibly popular after their rediscovery in the sixteenth century. Epics were inherited in forms mixed with

\[\textit{This is the norm even in Spenser studies (where they should know better). For example, see Andrew Hadfield's introduction to The Cambridge Companion to Spenser} \textit{(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 1-12.}\]
traditionally romantic topoi, such as Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* and the *Troy Book*, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseida*, and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, to name just a few. They were written in prose and verse, Greek, Latin, and vernacular. Some dealt with traditional epic content, such as the “matter of Troy,” while others mixed blatant fiction with historical content such as the “matter of Rome” or the “matter of France.” Some were really more extended pastoral reflections than quests of any sort while others multiplied knights and quests across dozens of volumes written by multiple authors. Humanist theorists treated romance like a formal genre, to be placed alongside classical genres with distinct markers, such as classical tragedy or sonnets. Others discussed it more like a mode, a way of approaching a work's content with a particular thematic strategy, present in a variety of other genres. By the time Sidney would begin the *Arcadia*, then, it was already difficult to say what might constitute a paradigmatic example of a romance that was not already somehow mixed with another form, or which would not ignore some salient feature of other romances.³

That fact is acknowledged by almost all critics of early modern romance, not least by the way that early modern works which can be called romances are also capable of being labeled by other terms, such as “pastoral fiction,” “epic-romance,” “prose fiction,” “heroic poem” and the like. And, as I argue, the writers themselves embraced this diverse inclusivity of romance. What has been overlooked, however, is the particular nature of that inclusivity such that genres are often juxtaposed in ways that avoid and even actively frustrate reconciliation. This study argues that early modern romances often start with the assumption that their genre is a mixed form and subsequently ask readers to attend to the ways that a number of generic codes and expectations interact and conflict with one another. Generic hybridity, then, is not merely a neutral classificatory feature of the genre of romance in the early modern period; rather, generic mixing is a literary strategy that can be put to use in ways that emphasize the problems raised by a single work moving between two or more genres.

The introduction will establish this claim in four stages. The first section will outline the concept of genre I employ which is appropriate to early modern romance. The second section explains how my notion of mixed genre differs from previous work on mixed genre in the period. The third section offers a model of how this type of conflict-oriented genre mixing can be read in political terms. And the final section applies this model to the end of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, both to give an illustrative example that will evolve in the individual chapters, but which will also show how Sidney, Spenser, and

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4 Colin Burrow begins his book *Epic Romance: Homer to Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) with an extended discussion of how difficult it is to label these works accurately, even discussing how figures like Tasso and Milton, so often easily categorized as “epic” writers, included far more “romance” material than classic writers, and especially early humanist critics who drew on the classics, might have allowed.
Wroth inherited this generic mixture as part of the romance tradition in which they were writing.

1.1 Genre in the Early Modern Period

My use of the term “genre” does not signify only a work’s formal categories or capacity to be classified in specific ways. This very narrow (and modern) conception of genre is certainly necessary, but the early modern sense of genre contained an epistemological, moral, and even political element as well. Rosalie Colie’s *The Resources of Kind* is perhaps the most extended discussion of how genre functioned in these multiple ways during the period, and her central thesis is that “a genre-system offers a set of interpretations, of ‘frames’ or ‘fixes’ on the world.” Although, as she argues, it is of course true that each individual genre has a history of change, development, and even a history of discourse surrounding it, nonetheless, the sense of “genre” in the early modern period, both from the perspective of those producing actual examples and those arguing its theory, was as much about how genres could open certain kinds of experiences and...

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5 Romance can easily be classified as either a genre or a mode. A generic definition would emphasize formal or stylistic characteristics, such as interlacing of narrative episodes, vernacular composition, or cyclical quest structure. A modal definition would emphasize particular subject matters, moods, or attitudes taken toward the narrative regardless of formal qualities (i.e., the romance “mode” may occur in prose, poetry, novels, in the midst of a Romantic lyric, etc.) Medieval scholarship is more likely to emphasize the technically generic history of romance, and Eugene Vinaver’s *Form and Meaning in Medieval Romance* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1966) is perhaps the classic study developing this tradition. Northrop Frye develops the most influential modal definition of romance in *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). The way I use the term actually borrows from both senses, as becomes clear in this section. I considered simply using the more less anachronistic term *kind* (or *kinde*), but decided to use “genre” because, in practice, it seems now to incorporate all the senses of genres, modes, types, or *kindes* of literature that early modern writers would have had available to them in *kinde*.

ways of viewing or interacting with the world as it was about the distinctions of abstract classification:

I would like to present genre-theory [during the Renaissance] as a means of accounting for connections between topic and treatment within the literary system, but also to see the connection of the literary kinds of knowledge and experience…The kinds honor aspects and elements of culture and in their conjunctions help make up culture as a whole.\(^7\)

Genres, in other words, were seen as composing the culture's various ways of experiencing their world. Here, Colie seems to anticipate the understanding laid out in Hans Robert Jauss' description of genre as a “horizon of expectations” between a reader and text where genre indicates the shared expectations and tropes that can organize a reading experience.\(^8\) For Jauss, as Colie, genres are “epistemological” because they offer a set of basic ground rules for kinds of topics covered and even a range of attitudes that can be presented toward those topics. Even when writers play with and innovate in generic ways, they still operate against this backdrop, and each novel element can be seen as breaking with tradition for specific reasons and in specific ways.

But while Jauss' “reception theory” has been used many times in attempts to account for poets' practice of generic inheritance and experimentation in the early modern period, Colie's work has the advantage of not restricting itself to the reader- and culture-
centered approach that Jauss emphasizes by focusing on how genre operates in its reception.\(^9\) Instead, Colie emphasizes how early modern writers saw genres not simply as forms that authors inherited and, at most, altered, but as ways of writing that were themselves actively engaged with opening up knowledge and experience of the world. One of Colie’s primary launching points for this discussion is the early modern preoccupation with the \textit{genus universum}, or the collection of all genres that would allow for the most universal apprehension of knowledge and experience. Once organized and grasped, it could also become the \textit{paideia}, or the “encyclopedia,” as the repository of all possible knowledge and the basis of a humanist education.\(^10\) Genres, in other words, were not simply literary classifications, but were also associated with types of knowledge and ways of living, with hierarchies both of types of learning and of virtues. Within “poesie,” this \textit{paideia} had its own distinct kind: the epic; and authors throughout the period, culminating with Milton, would often discuss one of the primary virtues of epic as being its capacity to bring together a multitude of genres and arrange them in their proper hierarchical order, from low to high, simple to complex, etc.\(^11\) Francis Bacon explicitly joins fecundity of generic types with epic's pedagogical nature when he says that epic has “a special relation to human dignity,” claiming that “there is agreeable to the spirit of man a more ample greatness, a more perfect order, and a more beautiful variety than it

\(^{9}\) For the prevalence of Jauss in early modern genre studies, see the two collections edited by A. D. Cousins: \textit{Donne and the Resources of Kind} (Madison: Farleigh University Press, 2002) and \textit{Ben Jonson and the Politics of Genre} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

\(^{10}\) This is the argument of Colie's third chapter, “Inclusionism: Uncanonical Forms, Mixed Kinds, and \textit{Nova reperta},” 76-102.

can anywhere (since the Fall) find in nature.”¹² And, thus, epic rises above all other forms and ways of life because it can include them and thereby lead its readers to “magnanimity and morality.”¹³ Genre, in other words, was one of the essential features of the pedagogical function of literature.

Genre appears as a primary epistemological and moral way of encountering the world even in Sidney’s Apologie for Poetry, which is usually read as a Platonic account of literary production. Traditional accounts of the Apologie would be more comfortable casting genre as a cultural and contingent accident of the prophetic poet’s creation, but Sidney’s argument eventually comes to depend on the work of genre in understanding poesie’s pedagogical role. Sidney describes the work of the poet as first imagining the “Idea or fore-conceit” to be communicated, and the literary work is then the poet’s imitation of that Idea, or a secondary manifestation.¹⁴ The Idea is the active partner in the poetic work while the poetry itself is measured only by how well it reflects or imitates the idea.¹⁵ If Sidney were to stop there, genre would seem a merely technical and even passive aspect of literary creation; during the latter half of the Apologie, however, genre


¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Philip Sidney, An Apologie for Poetry (or the Defence of Poesy), ed R. W. Maslen (New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 84. All quotations from the Apologie are from this edition.

¹⁵ Leigh A. Deneef offers a representative summary of how this notion of the “Idea or fore-conceit” is Platonic in Spenser and the Motives of Metaphor (Durham: Duke University Press, 1982): “An Idea is an abstract universal, implanted in the human mind by God (infused, as Sidney implies, “with the force of a divine breath”). The poet neither teaches nor constructs Ideas; rather, he reminds the reader of Ideas present, although perhaps ‘forgotten’ through misuse or lack of use, in the latter’s mind” (9).
becomes one the ways that Sidney tries to prove how essential poesie is to human learning and experience.16

Once he turns to a discussion of literary professions in the second half of his essay, Sidney defines literary “kinde” in three different ways throughout the second half of Apologie: by formal characteristics (closest to our modern sense of “genre”), by subject matter (closest to the sense of “mode” as a literary category that cuts across formal “genres,” such as when we speak of the “elegaic mode”), and by the generic value, which comes to mean precisely the kind of epistemic and moral knowledge that Colie stresses. However, it is clear that Sidney's primary interest in discussing “kinde” is with the values that are put to work by a written piece's genre.

Most of the famous criticisms that Sidney mentions occur when he is discussing his first definition of genre, that of formal properties. Thus, he objects to Spenser's Shepheardes Calendar for not closely following the eclogue examples of Theocritus, Virgil, and Sannazaro (110). This is also where he complains of tragedy that “mingles kings and clowns,” because proper tragedy must preserve a style attributed only to certain types of characters, or when he complains that Gorbudoc is faulty for not maintaining the

16 I should note that I am not arguing that Sidney’s Platonist defense of poetry and the more socially-contingent discussion of genre are consistent. My primary purpose here is to show the prevalence of my understanding of genre by its appearance in so central a work of Renaissance literary theory – indeed, its inconsistency seems to argue for the idea’s prevalence in the period’s use of genre. Still, other studies have pointed to the ways that the Apologie often works against itself and undercut its claims in different parts. Margaret W. Ferguson’s study of the Apologie in Trials of Desire: Renaissance Defenses of Poetry (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983, 137-162) argues that Sidney’s rhetoric may do this deliberately to make his defense more agile in anticipating even contradictory claims. Her account also keeps open the possibility that Sidney’s vacillations in the text may have both personal and political origins – in this case, allowing the poet to appear as both an otherworldly Platonic, prophetic vates and a master of very human rhetorical generic traditions is extraordinarily advantageous for a courtier with both religious and political ambitions who must be both within and free from a number of different courts. Ferguson’s is an idea I will return to, particularly in terms of how Sidney mixes genres in the Arcadias.
unity of place and time on the stage (112, 110). In each case, Sidney is relying on a very prescriptive notion of genre that specifically focuses on formal characteristics.

Throughout most of the *Apologie*, however, Sidney works with a more relaxed sense of genre discussed in terms of subject matter, much closer to the modern sense of a “mode,” or a type of literature that can be found across formal categories, such as an “ironic mode,” “lyric mode,” or “pastoral mode” that could appear in any number of generic forms. He even recognizes that novel “kindes” can still emerge by mixing different subject matters. And, while this may not be explicitly classical, it can still work if done well. As he says, it is fine to have “mingled matters” such as works that mix “Heroicall and Pastorall, but that commeth all to one in this question, for if severed they be good, the conjunction cannot be hurtfull” (97). Note that here, we would likely mix “kings and clowns,” as disallowed by the formal definition. However, when he criticizes such “mongrel tragi-comedies,” it is not mixture itself that bothers him, but that the mixture is done without paying attention to whether or not the subject matter requires it:

[H]ow all their plays be neither right tragedies, nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns, not because the matter so carrieth it, but thrust in clowns by head and shoulders, to play a part in majestical matters, with neither dececy nor discretion, so as neither the admiration and commiseration, nor the right sportfulness, is by the mongrel tragi-comedy obtained. (112)

By focusing attention on subject matter, Sidney is in line with some of his contemporaries who often avoided the overly-strict attention to classical formal definitions of genre, both in England on the Continent.17 Puttenham, for example,

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17 See the discussion in section 4 of this introduction about the epic/romance debate over the *Orlando Furioso*. 
discusses generic form as emerging from out of its subject matter, and not as something imposed on it from the outside. Thus, he says, love generates a massive variety of literary kindes in order to express the variety of ways that people experience it:

[Love is] of all other humane affections the most puissant and passionate, and most generall to all sortes and ages of men and women [and thus necessitates] a forme of Poesie variable, inconstant, affected, curious and most witty of any others, whereof the joyes [are] to be uttered in one sorte, the sorrowes in an other, and by the many formes of Poesie, the many moods and pangs of lovers, thoroughly to be discovered.18

The fact that Puttenham describes kindes as ways of “discovering” emotions suggests that genres can actually make certain experiences available to both poets and readers, rather than simply being neutral vessels within which content is poured. And it is also with such a notion of the relationship between genre and production of knowledge that Sidney's primary interest in kinde develops most fully.

Certainly Sidney's primary defense of poetry has to do with its ability to educate readers to virtue, but we should note how strongly the argument relies on stressing which kind of poetry is best suited to this aim. “Heroical” poetry (in which, we should note, he includes the “epic” hero Achilles and the “romance” hero Orlando) outranks all other types, and, according to Sidney, avoids all criticism because it can “not only teach and move to a truth, but teacheth and moveth to the most high and excellent truth” (99). And it is “Heroical” poetry that can redeem lesser kindes of poetry because it can teach us how to respond to them:

Who, if the saying of Plato and Tully be true, that who could see virtue would be wonderfully ravished with the love of her beauty - this man sets her out to make her more lovely in her holiday apparel, to the eye of any that will deign not to disdain until they understand. But if anything be already said in the defence of sweet Poetry, all concurreth to the maintaining of the Heroical, which is not only a kind, but the best and most accomplished kind of Poetry. For as the image of each action stirreth and instructeth the mind, so the lofty image of such worthies most inflameth the mind with desire to be worthy, and informs with counsel how to be worthy, ... Only let Aeneas be worn in the tablet of your memory...how in storms, how in sports, how in war, how in peace, how a fugitive, how victorious, how besiged, how besieging, how to strangers, how to allies, how to enemies, how to his own; lastly, how to his inward self, and how in his outward government; and I think, in a mind not prejudiced with a prejudicating humour, he will be found in excellency fruitful. (99-100)

Heroical poetry, it seems, can teach everything. And, interestingly, the list of things for which Aeneas serves as a model includes the same lessons that Sidney had previously said can be learned from “Lyric, Tragic, Comic, Satiric, Iambic, Elegiac, Pastoral, and certain others” (87). Satire can teach ridicule, elegy can teach compassion, and so forth, but Heroical poetry is highest because it can teach those same things and more. It opens readers and writers both to the varieties of ways of experiencing the world, and it is the highest not only because it can teach how to be the “worthiest” of each genre's value, but also because it focuses the value of literary genre itself. By offering ideals of knowledge and virtue, it also proves what we might see as the highest value of poesie: access to truth through genre. In such a reading, Sidney is not only defending poesie in general, but specifically defending it as a generic activity in which it is genre’s ability to produce knowledge and virtuous behavior that gives literature its value.¹⁹

¹⁹ The generic emphasis is present in Sidney's Apologie even before the explicit generic discussion, on which I rely here. Earlier, when defining the poet as a “vates,” Sidney returns to a discussion
If we take Sidney as representative of early modern thinking about genre, then it is clear how broad the notion is. It could include formal, and somewhat neutral or even mechanical characteristics, such as metre. It could also include “modal” characteristics, such as the topics or subject matter included (tragic endings, clowns and kings, shepherds, satire, or love complaints). And, most importantly, it could also contain epistemological and moral frameworks in which the genre alone could imply any number of standards for thinking about its content. Genre did interpretive work by offering structures in which to organize and respond to what was being written about even as a work's readers themselves interpreted the genre and the work. As I will show, when we focus on mixed genres in romances, it is this interpretive work that begins in the very choice and operation of genre that we must attend to in order to see how the “minglings,” to use Sidney's term, could actually be read.

1.2 Romance and Mixed Genre

Discussions of early modern romance often at least tacitly recognize this sense of genre as participating in an interpretive perspective, and they also recognize that the particular character it takes is often set alongside differing generic perspectives. However, the results are often quite narrow and misleading. For the most part, when

of genre, pointing out how David's psalms are not only the creation of “prophecy” in song, but are also the creation of a divine genre, complete with formal, subject-matter, and virtue-laden characteristics: “But even the name of psalms will speak for me, which being interpreted, is nothing but songs; then, that it is fully written in metre, as all learned hebricians agree, although the rules be not yet fully found; lastly and principally, his handling his prophecy, which is merely poetical. For what else is the awaking his musical instruments, the often and free changing of persons, his notable prosopopeias, when he maketh you, as it were, see God coming in His majesty, his telling of the beasts' joyfulness, and hills leaping, but a heavenly poesy, wherein almost he showeth himself a passionatelover of that unspeakable and everlasting beauty to be seen by the eyes of the mind, only cleared by faith?” (Apologie, 84)
critics address the interplay of genres within a given romance, they posit a common opposition, summarized by Barbara Fuchs:

In the theoretical debates about the nature and value of romance, as well as in the texts debated, one can trace the origins of its conceptualization as a literary strategy of pleasurable multiplicity, opposed to the single-mindedness and political instrumentality of epic. That is, whereas epic is most often associated with stories of effective quests, corporate achievement, and the heroic birth of nations, romance challenges these narratives by privileging instead the wandering hero, the erotic interlude, or the dangerous delay.  

This idea of the opposition between romance and epic dominates discussions of what happens in early modern romances when assigning meanings to their generic qualities. A short review of the criticism can show that the epic-versus-romance trope can itself become somewhat generic, often resulting in a play on the notion of “the one versus the many” where, depending on the critic's purposes, epic can look like a unifying hero of stable identities or romance can be the subversive liberator of multiplicities. The problem, however, is assuming that generic mixing is a contest which must be decided in favor of one or the other, often based on a larger literary historical sense of how the genres are supposed to be related, rather than paying close attention to how the two genres interact within the contexts of individual works. After reviewing the secondary works that fall into this genre of criticism, I then sketch the model of generic mixing

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20 Fuchs, Romance, 67.

21 Tellingly, the same dynamic seems to apply when critics are not directly addressing genre. For example, in Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton, and the Literary System (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) Richard Helgerson calls the Faerie Queen an “epic” when discussing it in the context of Spenser's early Virgilian aspirations to become a national laureate. However, when discussing Spenser's disappointment and apparent lack of nerve for this project in Book VI, as it goes wandering and erring from the original aim, he refers to the poem as a “romance,” even when focusing on its pastoral retreat from public life (96, 99).
within romance that will show how the prevalence of epic in romance studies actually forces us to ignore a more complex notion of generic mixing within romance.\footnote{Although I focus on works in this section that trace the epic-versus-romance opposition, work in classical and medieval studies also has a long tradition of hashing out the epic versus romance divide, and the story largely plays out in the same way it has in early modern studies. The notion that epic and romance are opposed certainly predates contemporary scholarship and likely has its origins in attempts to understand the difference between the two Homeric poems: the \textit{Iliad} involves manly fighting and the attempt to establish dominance while the \textit{Odyssey} involves wandering, wonders, and love and sex. Over a century ago, W. P. Ker helped solidify these two generic poles in medieval scholarship in his influential book \textit{Epic and Romance: Essays on Medieval Literature} (London: Macmillan, 1897). He also started a trend, appearing even in writers like Eugene Vinaver whose \textit{The Rise of Romance} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) otherwise champions the centrality of romance in medieval studies, of suggesting that romances were in one way or another secondary or inferior to epics, and his reasons largely fall along the lines laid out by early humanists trying to apply classical literary to medieval literature. On the Homeric origins of the generic opposition, see Northrop Frye's \textit{The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976) and Gillian Beer's \textit{The Romance} (London: Methuen, 1970). For an entertaining polemic against Ker's influence in medieval scholarship, see Cooper, \textit{The English Romance in Time}, 15-22.}

Among critics of the last few decades, Patricia Parker's \textit{Inescapable Romance} stands out as a, if not \textit{the}, central book that defines romance in relation to epic.\footnote{Patricia Parker, \textit{Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).} Parker's thesis, heavily influenced by deconstruction and the general post-structuralist critique of "closure," is that romance "simultaneously quests for and postpones a particular end, objective, or object."\footnote{Ibid., 4.} In Parker's study, which ranges from Ariosto to Keats, romance is pitted as a mode that constantly frustrates the "epic" drive to achieve narrative closure, and all of the common tropes of romance, from wandering knights to erotic interludes to interlaced and interrupted quests, are examples of how romance defers this end. Interestingly, by casting romance primarily as a mode rather than a genre, what Parker wants to show is not simply that works that are traditionally classified as romance function in this way, but rather that romance can appear in any number of generic
examples, but she focuses almost exclusively on how romance frustrates “epic” narratives. (Keats is her one exception, while Ariosto, Spenser, and Milton all function, on her account, as epic writers who “dallied” with romance in various ways.) In other words, for Parker, romance is rarely a genre that exists on its own, but is always tied up with other genres, usually epic but also lyric and pastoral, which describe certain “ends” that are then deferred through romance. However, on Parker's account, whenever a work detours into the romance mode, romantic deferral and “dilation,” her term for the interlacing and multiplying of narrative, imagistic, or thematic moments in a text, will dominate the other genres. Romance will always “win” these generic clashes, as it were, because it will show all the ways that ends are not necessary, stable, or guaranteed.\(^{25}\)

Furthermore, by emphasizing romance’s role as a mode that can appear easily within other genres, Parker often forces herself to overlook how the interaction of various modes/genres actually affects the work, opting instead to interpret the action of the romantic qualities as coming to dominate the work. By looking instead at how romance lends itself easily to a variety of genre mixtures, we can borrow from Parker’s readings,

\(^{25}\) Parker often struggles to make this point, even and especially when the works she reads do in fact come to a clear end. With Orlando Furioso, for example, Parker finds herself in the awkward position of trying to claim that a story which does in fact come to a clear narrative ending does not end. Rather, she claims, Ariosto's mere ability to write an end to his story is, somehow, an ironic comment on the fact that he cannot really end the story: “A definitive endpoint, which would also imply a temporal progression towards presence, parousia, or meaning, is studiously circumvented by the detours and divagations of an 'errant' plot, and when the poem does finally take on an epic single-mindedness - with all the appropriate echoes of Homer and Virgil - it is only after the lunar revelations of the mendacity of these models. The exercise of closure, under the sign of a guiding Providence, remains a purely literary tour de force, a demonstration that the author of this 'varia tela' knows...how to bring his carefully woven 'text' to an end” (52-3).
which are often instructive, without being limited to her definition of how the romance mode must always function in opposition to “closure.”

Parker's emphases on the wandering, deferral of ending, and multiplication of story lines reoccur as the primary markers of romance in much of the criticism that follows, but, for the most part, her sense that romance “wins” over epic is a minority view. More often, romance in her sense is read as part of a larger epic story, and David Quint's *Epic and Empire* is the most extended defense of this thesis. Quint focuses on the history of epic from Homer to Milton, arguing that epic is a genre primarily about the teleology of historical and political narrative. Epics are the stories of imperial conquerors, or their ancestors, and epics themselves retell the founding of empires as if they were fated. Romances, he says, may often look like epics but are actually one of two things. First, romances can be failed epics, such as Lucan's *Pharsalia*, which tells the story of the loss of the Roman republic by taking the side of Pompey and Cato against Caesar. Or, second, a romance is actually a moment of a hero's testing on the way toward imperial destiny. Thus, when Virgil writes Aeneas' dalliance with Dido or Tasso gives us Rinaldo's wavering on Armida's magical island, we are in moments of romance which must be overcome to establish the hero's commitment to his epic goal. Quint


27 Quint actually vacillates on whether to classify his “epics of the defeated” as romances, but in the course of his readings, they often do work similar to romance moments embedded in the “epics of the winners.” As he says of Caesar's sea voyage in Book 5 of the *Pharsalia*, which mirrors many other moments of wandering in romance, an “epic of the defeated” will try to characterize an epic hero as a wandering romance knight: “[Lucan's] episode shows the victorious Caesar, as well as the defeated Pompey, cast in the role of a helpless romance wanderer. The loser' epic insists that the victors enjoy no greater mastery over history than the vanquished, and it thus dispenses with epic - a Virgilian teleological - narrative altogether” (*Epic and Empire*, 139-140).
summarizes this attitude toward romance in his description of the “boat of romance,” a
trope which occurs repeatedly when “epic” allows “romance” to intervene in its
teleology:

Such ships embody the adventure principle that is a ubiquitous,
perhaps essential feature of romance narrative: counterbalancing
an equally constitutive quest principle, it accounts for all the
digressions and subplots which delay the quest's conclusion and
which come to acquire an attraction and validity of their own. ... In
epic narrative, which moves to a predetermined end, the magic
ship signals a digression from a central plot line, but the boat of
romance, in its purest form, has no other destination than the
adventure at hand. It cannot be said to be off course. New
adventures crop up all the time, and the boat's travels describe a
romance narrative that is open-ended, potentially endless. 28

The image of the drifting boat encapsulates the formal and ultimately political features of
the difference between the genres in Quint's reading. Epics have determined ends to
which their plots must lead while romances are constantly starting new quests; and, at the
same time, epics serve a political end, establishing the origin and (presumably) necessity
of empires, while romances are genres reserved for those conquered in an empire's
creation or for those diversions and threats to the establishment of a permanent state. 29 In
other words, for Quint, epic and romance are mirror-image ways that genre relates to the

28 Quint, “The Boat of Romance and Renaissance Epic,” in Romance: Generic Transformation
from Chretien de Troyes to Cervantes, eds. Kevin Brownlee and Marina Scordilis Browlnee (Hanover: U

29 This political reading of the epic/romance opposition has actually been active long before Quint
in classical studies, although Quint's work is novel in arguing that the political thrust outlasted the Roman
empire itself. Charles Rowan Beye, for example, makes an almost identical argument for the political
leaning of each genre in Epic and Romance in the 'Argonautica’ of Apollonius (Carbondale, Ill: Southern
Illinois University Press, 1982): “Epic is a product of a closed society, conservative, conventional, with
established beliefs, whereas an open society which is centrifugal and questioning, without fixed beliefs or
set answers - a problematical society - produces romance” (71). Similar attitudes towards early Greek
romances can be found in Ben Edwin Perry's The Ancient Romances: A Literary-Historical Account of their
Origins (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) and B. P. Reardon's The Form of Greek Romances
official ideology of the culture in which an epic is written. As he says, “the equation of power and the very possibility of narrative is a defining feature of the [epic] genre.”

Romance, by contrast, becomes the narrative of the loss or diffusion of power. Although the terms in which Quint's argument are cast are more political than Parker's, they describe an essentially identical opposition, differing only in which term wins the contest.

For the most part, Parker and Quint's characterization of epic and romance as two intertwined generic motivations dominates discussions of romance's mixture with other genres. Patrick J. Cook's *Milton, Spenser, and the Epic Tradition* is perhaps the most thorough application of Quint's central thesis to specifically early modern works, and his book can actually be read as an extension of Quint's argument to Ariosto and Spenser (whom Quint does not discuss at length). Cook argues that, in addition to the narrative (or time-dependent) formal qualities in epic that stress a determined ending, we can also chart a spatial centeredness in which epic always tries to return its varied elements to a “vertical classification.” Like Quint, Cook also reads a political meaning into this formal characteristic:

30 Quint, *Epic and Empire*, 15. Specifically, Quint follows Jameson's understanding of ideology as a controlling narrative, and his larger argument is that epic (and its negation in romance) is the exemplary genre of ideology: “[O]fficial ideology often invokes what Jameson calls 'master narratives' that subsume its own historically contingent situation. Such master narratives are precisely what epic is in the business of producing...Although they can be returned to their original political occasion, these narratives also acquire a life of their own, especially as they draw on and, in turn, become part of a literary tradition whose very continuity seems to constitute another second-order master narrative, a kind of second nature. Here, I approach an analysis, again in Jameson's terms, of an 'ideology of form' - above all of narrative or of an idea of narrative itself- carried through history by the epic genre” (15).


32 Ibid., 5.
Height implies sacrality, proximity to the heavenly realm, and sacrality in turn legitimizes imperial expansiveness, for the space outside imperial bounds is profane and chaotic. It is in this important sense that all empires are universal, for an external empire is a contradiction in terms outside the order that only the expansive center can impose.  

Cook offers extensive readings of Ariosto, Spenser, and Milton that attempt to show that, at politically or ideologically charged moments, the texts engage in a complicated formal and linguistic play of articulating spaces in which “horizontal” wandering must be reined in by “epic verticality” if the political message is to be maintained. As with Quint, epic and romance become pitted against one another in such a way that epic is shown to ultimately be a corrective to romance, and Cook even describes the formal features of each genre in ways that privilege one above the other. Even if it is true, as Cook says, that “these works are filled with discursive tensions, conflicts, indeterminacies, and a recurring theme of...relentless questioning and challenging that lies at the heart of epic's didactic rhetoric,” that genre's rhetoric always has the last word.

By focusing primarily on epic and romance, and by emphasizing the genres as directly opposed, this model precludes attention to alternate ways that romance might relate itself to epic, and, in fact, makes the presence of other genres within romance seem less crucial than the larger epic-versus-romance narrative. But, most importantly, it prevents us from paying attention to what actually happens at the junctures of generic mixtures, asking us instead to see individual works as having to choose either epic or

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid., 2. To be fair, Cook does examine moments when his works seem troubled by their epic spatial organization, even suggesting that Milton used spatial metaphors as explicit critiques of “earthly” ideas about the possibility of fulfilling epic motivations. However, Cook still maintains that, however self-conscious and self-critical his works were, the epic design sets the terms of generic interpretation.
romance as the paradigmatic genre that sets the terms for its interpretation. When we do this, however, we do not in fact read a mixed genre, but, instead, read the mixtures as simply setting the primary genre in relief. What hybrid romances actually did, however, was to force readers to hold different genres in check as two different lenses on similar moments, as when Wroth's Amphilanthus is caught between acting as a conquering epic hero who is the hope of a unified Europe and a wandering, 'errant' knight and lover, a moment I discuss in Chapter 3 which cannot be reconciled on either Parker or Quint's terms.

Colin Burrow is, to my knowledge, the only critic to directly engage the epic-versus-romance opposition in this way, but his method favors reconciliation among different generic mixtures rather than looking to read the consequences of their conflicts, as I do. In *Epic Romance: Homer to Milton*, Burrow attempts to isolate moments in classical and early modern texts where hybrid genres give way to “strange forms of feeling” that are ultimately moments of sympathy for other characters and people, other viewpoints, or other ways reading and writing. Sympathy is the essential issue for Burrow because he thinks the difficulty that classical and early modern writers had with it reflects a central tension in epic and romance motivations: “the pitiful hero [of romance] spares his adversary, and wanders on; the martial hero kills his victim, and proceeds on in a ruthlessly linear progression towards his destiny.” The hybrid genre “epic romance” then marks for Burrow the attempt to reconcile duty and pity, “self” and “other,” the *Iliad*'s martial destiny and the *Odyssey*'s pitiful welcoming of the stranger, of two


36 Ibid., 4
motivations that do not coalesce in any straightforward way. Hybridity becomes the way to inherit and transform a classical literary tradition that included equally powerful but irreconcilable elements, and “sympathy” is how Burrow attempts to understand the way that “self” and “other” never quite separate or merge in the epic-romance tradition.37

Whether or not Burrow’s insistence on the nature and role of sympathy in “epic-romance” is accurate, his method of resisting the urge to collapse or decide between generic distinctions is similar to my own starting point, and what I borrow from his study is the notion that generic hybridity often arises when writers are faced with moments when they do not have a language to say exactly what they mean, and, consequently, they turn to literary history, to the resources of genre, in order to alter the language and genres they have now. As Burrow says:

[I]n their restless revisions, and in their repeated reiterations and modifications of episodes from classical poems, Renaissance writers acknowledge the otherness of the past: the past is - in a powerful sense, in a way that creates uncertainty, a sense of lack, of failure to correspond, and even a measure of guilt - not-present. The most powerful of these poets bring about revolutions in the inherited idiom of the epic tradition as a result of continuing andcontinually incomplete processes of engagement with the difference of the past. The past is not-present; to enter into

37 Burrow’s interest in the way that “epic romance” elicits sympathy is more applicable to the much more sentimental seventeenth century romances. Victoria Kahn argues as much in Wayward Contracts: the Crisis of Political Obligation in England, 1640-1674 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). For Kahn, these later romances both represented and performed the role of that passions that underlay much of mid-century social contract theory: “If contract theory imagined a subject, motivated by his passions, who consents to bind himself, these works solicited the reader’s or spectator’s aesthetic passions of pity and fear in an effort to induce consent to a new social and political contract” (20). Kahn’s argument about romance in Wayward Contracts is in many ways a development of Annabel Patterson’s attention to romance in Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984) where she argues that the genre was a source of both royalist support and sedition under Charles I and Cromwell because of its capacity to use stylizations of personal feelings (which would become eighteenth century “sentimentalism”) as a mask for political commentary.
dialogue with it is to attempt to forgo, or to attempt to transfigure, some significant aspect of the language of that present.38

The point, for Burrow, of tracing a genre's literary history is to see how it changed over time, and to note how that change happens as a result of trying to understand a genre both from the perspective of its present and its past at the same time. Indeed, “sympathy,” for Burrow, seems ultimately to mean something less like the emotion and more of a concept that keeps “self” and “other” separate but touching, each side capable of offering insight into the other without being reduced to its terms.

Burrow's work offers one way out of the epic-versus-romance model of generic hybridity, but his emphasis on sympathy does tend to favor reconciliation of generic differences (or at least their peaceful co-existence) rather than conflict. This causes him to avoid many potentially fraught subjects in the writers he discusses, particularly politics and religious differences.39 My sense of generic hybridity in early modern romance maintains Burrow's notion that genre conflicts do not need a “winner,” but this does not mean that we avoid reading that conflict as antagonistic.

1.3 The Politics of Generic Hybridity

Recent work in political theory has begun directing its attention toward what Davide Panagia calls “the poetics of political thinking,” by which he means the ways that

38 Ibid., 8-9.

39 For example, his reading of Spenser ultimately sounds very much like a nostalgic pastoral poet attempting to escape from the world which is out of step with much of the recent political scholarship on The Faerie Queene: “The enfolding of male with female, justice with mercy, in the complex figure of Nature is generated by Spenser's continuing battle to overcome the constraints of his inherited idiom, and from the closely related pressures of contemporary politics; if Nature lives in a space beyond time, and above mortal authority, it is because the poet has finally created a fiction which can avoid, or perhaps evade, the problems of power implicit in sexual and political relations” (146).
political theories and political positions are not simply decisions taken on various controversial issues, but are rather aesthetic entities, what he calls images of political thought.\textsuperscript{40} Politics, so goes the argument, is as much a contest of which view of the world one has, the image of it one presents to oneself and to others, as it is a philosophical argument, and, consequently, political thought must be examined in terms of the words and images it relies on and employs. This notion goes beyond the truism that political argument often uses rhetoric and poetic imagery to persuade in order to suggest that all political arguments, beliefs, and positions are as thoroughly aesthetic as they are reasoned or ethical, and that those positions are capable of being evaluated on aesthetic grounds as well as more traditionally ethical or political foundations.

My contention is that genre, especially through the broader early modern attention to both form and value outlined in section 1.1, is the place where we can focus on “the poetics of political thinking.” Genres at once organize formal, “aesthetic” aspects of a given literary work, but they also offer ways of relating to the world which, as the epic-versus-romance debate showed, have strong political connotations. Jacques Rancière, whose recently translated work on the role of art and literature in relation to politics, offers a way of understanding “politics” within this aesthetic dimension and specifically for how we can understand genre's complicity in both aesthetic and political arguments.\textsuperscript{41}


For Rancière, art and literature have the capacity to at once establish and contest the parameters for what can and cannot be thought, felt, spoken, sensed, etc. This is not to say that art and literature actually set the broad cultural boundaries for ways of thinking in general, but rather that aesthetic production is always in the process of altering what he calls the “distribution of the sensible.” Much as Colie argued that early modern genres were seen as diverse “forms and fixes upon the world,” Rancière also argues that innovation in artistic forms creates new ways to experience the world.

What is unique in Rancière's analysis, however, is that for him, “politics” is the name best suited to this level of perceptual and epistemological arrangement and rearrangement. Traditional politics, in the sense of policy making, position-taking, resistance, etc., all occur on the level of what he calls “the police,” which he means in the nineteenth century sense of “policing the social good,” which always occurs in well-established forms.\(^{42}\) We know, one might say, the “genre” of elections, the “genre” of activism, and the “genre” of revolution. At this level, what can be said, what actions can be taken, who can speak, and what the terms of debate can be used are already established. But, in Rancière's work, a more fundamental “politics” is played out in the subtle layer of reflection on social categories where the “genres” of conventional political activity are in flux. This type of “politics” is about establishing what can or cannot count as political in visible public institutions and practices. Politics, in other words, is

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\(^{42}\) “Politics is generally seen as the set of procedures whereby aggregation and consent of collectives is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing the distributions. I propose to give this system of distribution and legitimation another name. I propose to call it the police” (Disagreement, 28).
primarily about how we organize our image of the world, or, to use my terms, about establishing the genre (or genres) in which conventional political actors can act.

On the one hand, this notion can be seen as revision of the idea that literature is primarily an ideological tool. Quint's version of epic, for example, is in many ways identical to Frederic Jameson's insistence that genre is an “ideology of form” carried through history and in which the features of a genre can ultimately come to serve as a content projected as necessary. For Quint, this occurs in the epic insistence that the “epics of the winners” show empire-founding to be a teleological necessity - there is no question that Aeneas will complete his task and found Rome because history, destiny, and the epic requires it. Jameson, too, argues as much, although with a different ideological content in mind, about medieval chivalric romance's relationship to the sense of right and hierarchy in its aristocratic readers; for Jameson, genre is a way of organizing and maintaining social codes:

A history of romance as a genre becomes possible...when we project it as a history of the various codes which, in the increasingly secularized and rational world that emerges from the collapse of feudalism, are called upon to assume the literary function of those older codes which have now become so many dead languages. Or, to put it the other way round, the fate of

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43 Frederic Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981. Jameson describes this “ideology of form” as follows: “[G]eneric specification and description can, in a given historical text, be transformed into the detection of a host of distinct generic messages - some of them objectified survivals from older modes of cultural production, some anticipatory, but all together projecting a formal conjuncture through which the 'conjoncture' of coexisting modes of production at a given historical moment can be detected and allegorically articulated” (99). It is true that, in this notion, Jameson may find a single “conjoncture” of ideological contents to contain conflicted aspects, such as how he argues that romance uses dead forms from previous feudal societies to mask and romanticize a dominant aristocratic class’s superiority. For Jameson, it is the critic’s role to uncover and explain these tensions as an effect of ideological pressures. For Rancière, however, “political” art employs such contests against what Jameson would consider “ideology” in order to produce new social forms. If, for Jameson, aesthetics often conceals the effects of ideology, for Rancière, aesthetics produces new arrangements from ideological leftovers.
romance as a form is dependent on the availability of elements more acceptable to the reader than those older magical categories for which some adequate substitute must be invented.44

Jameson insists that genre can reinscribe lost social codes (or, to use Rancière's term, a “distribution of the sensible”) even after their rational, religious, or even explicitly social rationale is capable of being articulated. As Quint argues, epic can be used to defend ideas of empire long after the Roman empire fell, and, for Jameson, chivalric romance could maintain the mystique of the aristocracy long after feudalism had given way to other forms of social order. Genres, in other words, can do political work through aesthetic means.

However, Rancière's sense of the political work done by literature is not limited to the transmission of ideology for which Jameson argues and Quint assumes, although it does include it. Instead, Rancière's work pays closer attention to how novelty and change, even within specific literary traditions, can create new “distributions of the sensible” or, on Jameson's terms, can challenge the “ideology of form.” Specifically, Rancière focuses on moments of political disagreement, but not disagreement in the sense of disagreeing over a particular issue, but disagreeing about the very terms of a political difficulty. Political disagreement is a determined kind of speech situation: one in which one of the interlocutors at once understands and does not understand what the other is saying. ... [It] is not the conflict between one who says white and another who says black. It is the conflict between one who says white and another who also says white but does not

understand the same thing by it or does not understand that the other is saying the same thing in the name of whiteness.\textsuperscript{45}

Fundamental political disagreement is a contest over how to conceive of the contested situation itself, rather than just which side of an issue one takes. For Rancière, political problems are not decided by recourse to more careful and ideal communication because such issues already operate on the basis of established rules of clarity, decorum, and knowing who is allowed to speak and how. “Politics,” however, is actually a contest over those very rules which are only established in messier contests over the “distribution of the sensible.” Politics, as Rancière says, “is aesthetic in that it makes visible what had been excluded from a perceptual field, and in that it makes audible what used to be inaudible.”\textsuperscript{46}

My argument is that early modern romances used genres in ways that attempted to treat “politics” in ways Rancière outlines, which is more about investigating and challenging the terms of a given political situation than simply taking a stance on a given topical issue.\textsuperscript{47} Rancière sees this happen primarily in the creation and reception of novel

\textsuperscript{45} Rancière, \textit{Disagreement}, x. It is important to note that the French title of Rancière's book is \textit{Mésentente}, which implies not only “disagreement” but also “misunderstanding,” as \textit{entente} is an understanding.

\textsuperscript{46} Rancière, \textit{The Philosopher and His Poor}, 226.

\textsuperscript{47} I should note that Rancière’s view of literary and aesthetic history differs somewhat from my own. For him, literary production only directly engages with his type of political redefinition of what counts as “political” under what he calls the “aesthetic regime of art,” which begins in the early nineteenth century and innovations in the novel. This was preceded by what he calls the “representative regime of images” where art and literature were more concerned with correctly representing life and truth than in reconfiguring it; art was here dominated by what he calls a “principle of appropriateness” concerned with hierarchies of subject matter and style. Before that, he describes the “ethical regime of art” in which art was judged by its conformity to a community’s \textit{ethos}. (He articulates this literary history in a number of works, but a thorough summary is found in \textit{The Politics of Aesthetics}, 22-29.) I take his history to be a deliberate oversimplification for polemical purposes since one can find examples of each type of art in each period. Nonetheless, he does mention one important exception in which “political” art emerges in the early modern period: his discussion of how Cervantes was able to write a narrative in which “novelistic” perspectives
works of art and literature which undo old ways of thinking and allow for new voices and positions to be heard as legitimate, or at least to be recognized as voices rather than mere noise. But while Rancière’s work insists on the direct social consequences of aesthetic and literary novelty, I focus on what happens when such challenges occur within the same text. If romances are in fact mixed genres, then we should pay attention to how those genres force us to change our frames of reading within the same text, how we are forced to look at the same character or episode through two incompatible generic lenses at the same time. This differs from the epic-versus-romance model that asked us to see which genre dominated and ultimately controlled the text. Such would occur at Rancière's level of “the police” rather than the actual “politics” of the text's attempts to articulate a political problem. When thinking of the “politics” of a text, in other words, the point is not to see whether the text ultimately falls in line with epic or romance (or another genre) and then to ascribe its political stance to the type of thinking implied therein. Rather, what is important is to see how a text works out the terms of what counts as political, as how political stances might be taken, or as a contest between different ways of articulating political ideas through different generic moments.

A fruitful way to conceptualize such a notion is to see romance's interlacing of different genres as continually narrating what Jean-Francois Lyotard calls differends, or moments of judgment in which irreconcilable criteria clash:

interrupt generic narratives (including romance, of course) that would otherwise be dominated by the “principle of appropriateness” mirrors my own thesis in many ways.

48 “The expression 'politics of literature' implies that literature intervenes as literature in this carving up of space and time, the visible and the invisible, speech and noise. It intervenes in the relationship between practices and forms of visibility and modes of saying that carves up one or more common worlds” (Rancière, The Politics of Literature, 4).
As distinguished from a litigation, a differend would be a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both of the arguments. One side’s legitimacy does not imply the other’s lack of legitimacy. However, applying a single rule of judgment to both in order to settle their differend as though it were merely a litigation would wrong (at least) one of them (and both of them if neither side admits this rule).

Lyotard’s account is particularly applicable to Rancière's sense of conflicting political “distributions of the sensible” because, in his account, the “parties” do not simply have conflicting interests, but also belong to different genres which organize and legitimate those interests and desires: “A wrong results from the fact that the rules of the genre of discourse by which one judges are not those of the judged genre or genres of discourse.”

A given genre implies its own political ends and structures the legitimacy of certain desires within that genre. Lyotard calls this structuring a “linkage,” and a genre (which can be a literary genre, among other types of speech or legal genres) is a consistent set of rules for linking. However, because of Lyotard’s insistence that all genres are particular and are organized around ends that cannot be universalized, there is no “meta” perspective that could organize all political ends except from the strange “between” perspective of the differend:

49 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abeelle (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1988): xi. I should note that while I am aligning Lyotard and Rancière for methodological purposes, their own political philosophies seem premised on different ends. To put it simply, Rancière is optimistic in his belief that art and literature continually promote a renewal of democracy (in the sense of the free discourse of those who disagree) on a principle of equality (since any “distribution of the sensible” is up for grabs at the level of his deep “politics”). Lyotard, however, is cynical, seeming to believe that ultimately what we will have are continual differends and moments of injustice. For an extended discussion of this difference, see Jean-Louis Déotte’s “The Differences Between Rancière's Mésentente (Political Disagreement) and Lyotard's Differend,” *Sub-Stance* 33.1 (2004) 77-90.

50 Ibid., xi.
Were politics a genre and were that genre to pretend to that supreme status [a victory of one genre over all others], its vanity would be quickly revealed. Politics, however, is the threat of the differend. It is not a genre, it is the multiplicity of genres, the diversity of ends, and par excellence the question of linkage.

Lyotard will go on to say that attention to differends will call for a justice that cannot be reduced to rules for deciding them. One must, he says, pay attention to the singularity of specific events (which in his linguistic pragmatics he calls “phrases”) which may not sit comfortably in any one genre or any one political organization of ends. But since we are always speaking within certain genres of discourse, certain prescribed ways of deciding which ends are legitimate, that justice may be impossible.

My own use of Lyotard's work will focus on more localized cases of differends whose resolution may not so dramatically be labeled as a need for justice (the conflicts inherent in Amphilanthus' role as an emperor or a bad lover are not so dire as debates with Holocaust deniers over the existence of Auschwitz, which is Lyotard's most pressing example in the book). I do, however, insist heavily on Lyotard's sense that a conflict of genres creates a conflict where the importance is to understand the source of a disagreement and the consequences of that disagreement rather than simply deciding which is right. If, as Lyotard says, “genres of discourse impose onto their elements the finality of a concatenation able to procure a success proper to each genre,” then generic hybridity results in situations where there can be no “concatenation” that happily satisfies each genre. Early modern romance's intervention into politics occurs precisely when it repeatedly reaches moments of political and generic impasse, and these impasses do not so much call for resolution as they lead us back to the source of the impasse, the presuppositions imposed on political situations by the genre in which they are articulated,
and on the limits of traditional generic categories to think through the problems without changing either the genre or the terms of the problem itself.

Ultimately, thinking of generic hybridity and politics in terms borrowed from Rancière and Lyotard opens up new questions of how early modern writers manipulated genre and how they used those manipulations to think through political issues. We can ask how writers engaged in political thinking in ways that do not reduce their writing to a simple expression of positions, looking instead at more sophisticated accounts of how they conceptualized the stakes and terms of political issues, how they formulated political problems rather than just offering solutions, and how they may have even used their literary productions as a way to explore alternatives and contradictions in the political field as they saw it. In the next and final section, I will show how we can use such questions to open up a more complex approach to the politics of early modern romance appears at its very beginning with Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. The end of Ariosto's work is where critics find him to be most forcefully engaging in the epic-versus-romance contest, and it is also at the point where his commitment to write an epic of destined glory for his d'Este patrons clashes with his own growing awareness of the unsuitability of epic politics for Italy's fractured and factious politics. What emerges is a differend in which Ariosto's generic and political commitments lead to an impasse he can only respond to by changing his expectations of both epic and romance.

1.4 Ariosto and the Legacy of Mixed Genre

Ariosto composed the *Orlando Furioso* in the midst of both political and professional uncertainty. Writing during the Italian Wars that followed Charles VIII of
France’s invasion of the Italian city-states, one of the poem’s primary rhetorical goals was to establish a heroic genealogy for his patrons of the Este court of Ferrara that would celebrate them as potential leaders in the midst of chaos. However, Ariosto’s personal relationship with Cardinal Ippolito d’Este was never secure, nor did it satisfy Ariosto’s personal ambitions since the Cardinal often dismissed his poetry and even underpaid him.\(^{51}\) Ippolito finally released Ariosto in 1517 after the poet declined to accompany him on a diplomatic mission to Hungary. Ippolito’s brother, Alfonso d’Este, Duke of Ferrara, brought Ariosto to his court, but, again, Ariosto was frustrated, finding himself used for his bureaucratic rather than artistic talents. In 1520, Alfonso released him for financial reasons, and Ariosto was posted to the provincial Garfagnana, where he constantly wrote to Alfonso asking to return to court. Since the bulk of Orlando Furioso was written under circumstances of frustration and uncertainty, Ariosto seems to have felt pulled between the need to praise his patrons and their ambitions in an increasingly chaotic Italy, while, at the same time, leaving evidence of consistent dissatisfaction with the court. Furthermore, his larger political reflections seem to waver between optimism and pessimism for Italy’s future, especially where the Este court’s involvement in that future was concerned.\(^{52}\)

\(^{51}\) For the primary documentation on Ariosto’s work for Ippolito d’Este, see Edmund Gardner’s The King of Court Poets: A Study of the Work, Life and Times of Ludovico Ariosto (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1906).

\(^{52}\) Ippolito’s often subtly ironic characterization in Orlando Furioso is discussed in detail by Albert Russell Ascoli in Ariosto’s Bitter Harmony (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 281-89. Alfonso receives at best a few oblique mentions in the poem primarily because Ariosto had already completed most of the poem before Ippolito released him. It should certainly come as no surprise that Ariosto would treat his patrons in this manner, given how playful, irreverent, and ironic much of the poem is. (For a solid overview of such irony in the poem and in its reception history, see Robert Durling’s The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Épic [Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1965]). Oddly, however, Ariosto’s generic playfulness has not been treated with the same eye for irony, opting instead to see him as being the first
Orlando Furioso addresses these conflicts of interest at two points where the poem’s generic hybridity presents conflicting interpretations of the narrative, or, to use Lyotard’s term, two differends. The first occurs in cantos 14 through 18 which depict the siege of Charlemagne’s Paris by the African king Agramante and his champion Rodomonte. The exordiums of these cantos explicitly compare the sack of Christian Paris by the Saracen invaders to the recent chaos of the Italian wars, but the generic interlacing of epic, romance, and pastoral episodes in the cantos offer divergent ways of interpreting recent history. As we shall see, the epic episode calls for a strong unifying leader, specifically Ippolito as the solution to Italy’s fragmentation. The romance episode, however, is skeptical of political figureheads, emphasizing instead the willingness of a populace to be deceived into violence. Finally, the pastoral episode at once calls on a religious solution to the problem while, at the same time, casting doubt on the capacity of any “pastor,” whether Pope or Cardinal, to live up to that call. Following this divergent diagnosis of Italy’s problems, the second differend occurs in the final canto where Ruggiero defeats Rodomonte, supposedly establishing himself as an epic hero and the true ancestor of the Este court which guarantees it a heroic role in re-establishing a powerful Italy. Many critics argue that this canto is the culmination of Ariosto’s purification of epic by ending and eliminating all romance episodes. These readings overlook the generically encoded events of the build up to the final fight, focusing instead

early modern writer to inaugurate the epic-versus-romance opposition, a tradition begun most forcefully by Tasso in his anxiety to set himself apart from Ariosto as a more serious writer. On Tasso’s conflict with Ariosto and its relationship to the history of genre theory, see Sergio Zatti’s The Quest For Epic: From Ariosto to Tasso, trans. Sally Hill and Dennis Looney (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 95-113.

53 See Zatti, The Quest For Epic, 38-60.
on Ariosto’s clear allusion to the end of the *Aeneid* in the last stanza. It is true that this canto pits epic against romance, but it does not decide in favor of epic so much as it leaves them in tension, creating another differend, and, in the process, presenting skepticism about the Este line’s epic role in Italy while still maintaining its centrality.

The first differend occurs in cantos 14 through 18. These cantos contain some of the most thematically unified examples of Ariosto’s use of interlace, a typical medieval romance technique in which one narrative strand is interrupted by another narrative, and these cantos also provide some of the most consistent examples of interlacing of different generic episodes.\(^{54}\) The “epic” story of Agramante and Rodomonte’s siege of Paris is consistently interrupted by flashing to episodes in the “romance” exploits of individual knights errant wandering far from Paris and even out of Europe in “Eastern” lands. At the same time, these cantos are framed by the most topical exordiums in the entire poem, referring to a number of battles in Italy following the French and Spanish invasions that began in 1494 and continued throughout Ariosto’s composition and employment in Ferrara.\(^{55}\) For example, canto 14 begins by comparing Agramante’s success in the siege to the sack of Ravenna by the French in 1512 where he describes the invaders as

\(^{54}\) Interlace is usually understood as a feature of medieval and chivalric romance rather than epic, largely because it proceeds by digressions that move the characters away from central quests. Ariosto’s use of the technique to interrupt different types of generic stories is an innovation he introduces into the narrative strands begun by Boiardo in *Orlando inamorato*, and he stresses the generic differences by including specific allusions to epic and romance predecessors in the respective episodes, whereas Boiardo had largely followed the medieval models of interlacing the exploits of individual knights even when describing potentially “epic” material such as the wars of Charlemagne. On this point, see Daniel Javitch’s two articles, “The *Orlando Furioso* and Ovid’s Revision of the *Aeneid*,” *Modern Language Notes* 99 (1984): 1029–32, and “Cantus Interruptus in the *Orlando Furioso*,” *Modern Language Notes* 95 (1980): 66–80, as well as Durling’s *The Figure of the Poet*, 140–76. For the classic account of medieval interlace as a narrative and thematic technique, see Eugene Vinaver’s *The Rise of Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971).

\(^{55}\) See Durling, *The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Epic*, 140-4.
“thieving rascals who have violated wives, daughters, mothers, monks, and nuns – be they white, black, or grey – and thrown Christ in the Sacrament onto the floor to take from Him a silver tabernacle.” 56 Canto 15 continues to invite comparison between the fiction and recent events by praising Cardinal Ippolito for preventing the Ferrarese troops from being routed during the battle with the Venetians in 1509, in contrast to Rodomonte who sacrificed his own troops in his capture of Paris.

The longest and most pointed of the exordiums, however, occurs in canto 17 which reflects on the causes of Italy’s recent turmoil and speculates about its fate, and, by implication, the Este role in that fate. The canto begins by insisting that God punishes sinful peoples by sending tyrants to torment them, listing a long line of examples from the classical Marius and Sulla all the way up to Charles VIII, making sure to mention along the way Ezzelino da Romano who had conquered parts of Northern Italy during the thirteenth-century and who was finally killed by Azzo d’Este, Ippolito’s ancestor. The exordium ends, however, on a note of relative hope, or at least the promise of revenge:

Now God permits us to be punished by peoples perhaps worse than ourselves, because of our endless wickedness, our constant shameful ill-doing. The time will come when we shall go to ravage their shores, if ever we grow better, and their sins reach the point of moving the Eternal Goodness to anger. (17.5)

The narrative does eventually offer this retribution when the Christians finally expel Agramante and destroy his kingdom in later cantos, but those episodes occur long after the exordiums have stopped paying attention to Italy’s recent military problems. Instead, Ariosto follows canto 17’s opening by interlacing the stories of three different “tyrants.”

each of which occurs in a different generic context, one epic, one romantic, and one pastoral. By interlacing these three generic episodes, Ariosto complicates the exordium’s simple moralistic reading of Italy’s recent chaos, suggesting very different explanations for the source of its susceptibility to political instability, symbolized by three different “tyrants” in the narrative, each of which conceptualizes the appropriate political response to such instability in unique ways.

The first tyrant, Rodomonte, appears in an episode almost universally recognized as a moment that should be read in the context of epic narrative. Finally entering the walls of Paris and laying waste to buildings and people alike, Rodomonte comes closest to the crisis that Ruggiero, Charlemagne, and his Christian knights are supposed to prevent as epic heroes. In his role as epic villain, Rodomonte most clearly represents the divine scourge laid out in the exordium, and Charlemagne’s rebuke to the Parisians for their cowardice and lack of virtue initially mirrors the opening’s insistence that Rodomonte is so powerful because the people are weak and sinful:

‘Whither are you fleeing in such panic, all you people? Is there not one among you to stop and size up the situation? What city, what refuge is left to you once you have so cravenly deserted this one? Look at him: one man alone, trapped in your city, surrounded by walls, unable to escape: shall he leave without a blow attempted against him after he has slain every last one of you?’ Thus exclaimed Charles in high rage, finding such cowardice insufferable. (17.7-8)

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57 See, for example, David Quint’s “Narrative Interlace and Narrative Genres in Don Quijote and the Orlando Furioso,” Modern Language Quarterly 58:3 (1997): 241-268, and Daniel Javitch’s “The Orlando Furioso and Ovid’s Revision of the Aeneid,” Modern Language Notes 99 (1984): 1029-32. Both Quint and Javitch come close to the reading I propose here, but they ultimately find Ariosto to reconcile the generic conflict in favor of epic.
Charlemagne then gathers up seven of his bravest knights to confront Rodomonte and rallies them with a speech suggesting that all they need to defeat him is unity and brotherhood, stressing their previous victories when united. Indeed, Ariosto even comments, after naming the seven knights, that “I can never see [them] apart from each other” (17.16), stressing their solidarity over against the Parisian soldiers and populace who all ran in different directions to escape from Rodomonte’s furor. The epic episode, then, casts the tyrant and, by analogy, the failures of Italy’s recent history, on crises of internal division, both of which are challenges that Ruggiero, the “epic” hero of *Orlando Furioso* (opposed to the wayward “romantic” Orlando), must overcome by gathering the various errant knights in the narrative into a cohesive force and, ultimately, slay Rodomonte in the final canto to end the Saracen threat. And since Ruggiero is also the one who will establish the Este line after his marriage to Bradamante, the larger implication is that Ippolito and the Ferrarese will serve these heroic ends against those who threaten Italy by following the epic example of bringing about unification. Rather than blaming tyranny on moral failure, as the exordium did, the epic tale blames the peoples’ fragmentation. The solution is then an epic hero, like Ruggiero, Ippolito’s ancestor, who could bind people together in a common cause, just as Ariosto praised the Cardinal in the earlier exordium to canto 15.

Such is the most common reading of Ariosto’s strategies for pleasing his patrons, here focused on one particular epic episode.\(^58\) However, before actually showing whether

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\(^{58}\) For a summary of such readings of Ariosto’s ways of pleasing his patrons, see Daniel Javitch, *Proclaiming a Classic: The Canonization of Orlando furioso* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 145-57. Cook makes the larger claim that Ariosto’s attempt to bring epic material into Boiardo’s much more traditional chivalric romance material was, at least initially, politically motivated, suggesting that Ferrara could become the new Rome and center of Italian culture (Milton, Spenser, and the Epic Tradition, 40
or not Charlemagne’s strategy is successful, Ariosto interrupts the narrative, saying that he will “speak no more of wrath…nor of death” (17.17). He resumes the narrative of a wandering knight, the Christian Grifone, who has just arrived in Damascus. The transition stresses not only a shift of story line but also of genre, moving away from the world of urban military sieges (the locale of epic) to an exotic pleasure-realm, described in four stanzas (17.18-21) that share many of the alluring characteristics of the sorceress Alcina’s pleasure gardens from canto 7 (the locale of pastoral and romance). As many critics have noted, the episodes taking place in the “Eastern” lands far from Paris draw most heavily on medieval chivalric romance sources and include the typical digressive and chance-based adventures of quest romance.\(^{59}\) In this episode, however, the romance hero plays the role of the tyrant rather than hero after suffering the injustices of a deceptive companion, and the blame for tyranny is ultimately set at the feet of a populace too willing to be deceived by selfish leaders. The solution is also different, no longer based on the epic actions of a heroic leader, but rather by the more spiritual activity of the revelation of true identity and solidarity, a feature common to much of chivalric romance. As Helen Cooper discusses in her analysis of medieval romance “memes” (her word) the story of a knight misidentified by wearing another’s armor during a tournament (as happens to Grifone) is a common trope in medieval chivalric romances, particularly in

\(^{65-66}\). Although he does not cite this episode, my reading of how it relates epic to political unity fits that claim.

the midst of longer stories of the “Fair Unknown” in which a commoner or unknown individual proves to be a missing heir through the intervention of fate or other cosmic forces. Grifone’s story mirrors the common endings of such romance narratives and, in the context of Ariosto’s political reflections on tyranny, ultimately suggests a spiritual and religious solution to Italy’s turmoil.

To briefly summarize the episode, we learn, in good chivalric romance fashion, that the king of Damascus, Norandino, has just begun a tournament where challengers will have to face eight of the king’s champions, recalling, of course, the eight paladins who just faced Rodomonte. Grifone eventually defeats them one by one, but only after he has been shamed by his traveling companion, the deceptive and cowardly Martano, who flees the tournament after seeing another challenger killed by one of the eight champions. Grifone refuses to accept the king’s congratulations and slips away with Martano rather than face the shame of his companion’s actions. That night, however, Martano steals Grifone’s armor and returns to Norandino to accept the rewards of the tournament while Grifone has to dress in Martano’s armor, and he is mocked and ridiculed as a coward by the entire city. Driven mad by this treatment, Grifone slaughters countless Damascans and leaves the city in almost complete disarray before Norandino finally realizes his mistake after being moved (rather incredulously and miraculously, one might say) by the “noble” and “honorable” way in which he defended himself: Norandino has a vision of

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60 See *The English Romance in Time*, 324-343. Grifone’s story is also part of a larger “Fair Unknown” tale in the midst of *Orlando Furioso* as he has left his father Oliver’s court to seek his own fame and must ultimately return to the court and establish his lineage.
the crazed Grifone, who happened to be standing in a temple fighting off oncomers, appearing like noble Horatius defending his bridge against the Etruscans.⁶¹

If the epic episode blamed Italy’s problems on internal division and the lack of a unifying ruler, the romance episode finds fault with a populace too willing to be deceived into blaming convenient scapegoats for their woes. Throughout the passage, Ariosto never suggests that Grifone’s actions are unjust, despite the fact that he acts as the obvious tyrant. In fact, he is cast as the victim, and, on learning the truth, Norandino mentions nothing of his killing countless innocents, offering instead to help him redress Martano’s wrong. The notion that tyrants can be created by mistaking friends for enemies is further emphasized by the narrator’s digression which immediately precedes Grifone’s participation in the tournament. Here, Ariosto accuses “you men of Spain, you Frenchmen, you Swiss and Germans” of fighting wars against other Christians rather than uniting against a common enemy and spreading the faith in a new Crusade (17.73-75). The digression even begins by noting that “the Syrians were accustomed to wear armor after the Western fashion” (17.73), a detail that explicitly foreshadows Martano’s exploitation of armor as a symbol of identity that can deceive friend or foe. By essentially blaming the Damascan people for their own slaughter by enraging Grifone into attacking them, and by only ending the slaughter when the “tyrant’s” true identity miraculously shines through his actions, the romance episode leaves very little room for the agency of leaders in either the cause or the solution to Italy’s problems. The digression appealing to

⁶¹ Interestingly, Grifone’s massacre is presented in much more detail than Rodomonte’s, and it is one of the primary passages cited by Michael Murrin in History and Warfare in Renaissance Epic (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) who argues that Ariosto’s depiction of warfare was novel in attempting to be more “realistic” than stylized. The fact that such grisly details should appear in the supposedly more fanciful romance episodes underscores the similarities between Grifone and Rodomonte.
religious identity and the romantic trope of a mysterious and fated recognition of true identity through a miraculous vision all point away from a political solution in which Ippolito could play a prominent role.\textsuperscript{62} The romance episode, then, offers a different set of political terms for understanding the recent wars and the Este role in them. The way that the poem casts each genre as a structure for diagnosing a political problem ultimately leaves us with two separate and potentially incompatible political frameworks: epic calls for a strong leader that can overcome internal division in order to provide strength and stability; romance recognizes the pervasiveness of deceit and looks instead for spiritual and even religious revelation to restore solidarity. While not necessarily opposed, there is also no place for the actors and forces in one genre to operate in the other: in romance, the martial hero becomes a misunderstood tyrant, while, in epic, solidarity is a political union to be forged, not a recognition of identity granted by fate or religion. Ariosto does not necessarily privilege one account over the other, instead leaving them in tension (although the apparent absence of a role for Ippolito in the romance episode may well be pointed).

The situation becomes even more complicated with the introduction of a third genre: pastoral. It appears when we learn of the occasion that Norandino’s tournament commemorates, the rescue of his love Lucina from the cannibalistic monster Orco. Although the story is a clear revision of Odysseus’ escape from the cyclops Polyphemus, Ascoli has shown that the episode also deliberately presents itself as a pastoral moment,\textsuperscript{62} Interestingly, the exordium to canto 18 directly praises Ippolito for being “not over-hasty in your judgments” suggesting that he would often “postpone judgment for days, months, years” before condemning a man (18.1-2). Although he contrasts this with Norandino who misidentified Martano as Grifone, the obvious thrust of the exordium is that Ippolito is indecisive, and, consequently, would have done nothing and had no real role in similar circumstances.
drawing on fifteenth century techniques in Italian pastoral poetry.\textsuperscript{63} Orco is at once a shepherd maintaining a flock in peace on his island, but, at the same time, his hunger causes a massacre among Norandino’s shipmates similar to that created by Rodomonte or Grifone. The parallel is made more explicit by the seven surviving sailors who accompany Norandino in his quest to save Lucina from Orco’s cave, just as Charlemagne had his seven nights and Grifone faced the eight champions. Orco’s story might be read as locating the source of tyranny and violence in simple natural monstrosity were it not for the fact that, as Ascoli has shown, Orco is explicitly identified with Pope Leo X, linking “pastoral” here with the tradition of punning clerical critique. Ariosto casts Orco as a shepherd (a “pastor” in Italian, in 17.32 and 17.34), and, earlier in the poem, Ariosto had explicitly blamed Italy’s problems on the failure of ecclesiastical leadership to play its role in a pastoral setting (3.5-8). But when Ariosto directly addresses Leo in the middle of canto 17, the pastoral terms in which he casts papal authority cannot but recall the monstrous shepherd whose story has just been narrated:

Great Leo, you shoulder the heavy burden of the keys of Heaven; if you hold Italy by the hair, do not leave her submerged in slumber. You are the shepherd: and if God gave you that staff to carry, and chose your proud name it was so that you should roar and stretch forth your hands to defend your flock from the wolves. (17.79)

Ariosto explicitly describes Leo, during whose papacy the majority of Orlando Furioso was written, as a potential solution to Italy’s fragmentation while, simultaneously, his

\textsuperscript{63} Albert Russell Ascoli, “Ariosto and the ‘Fier Pastor’: Form and History in Orlando Furioso,” Renaissance Quarterly 54:2 (2001): 487-522. It is also worth noting that the description of Damascus that marks the transition from epic to romance and pastoral in 17.14-20 describes the region in Edenic terms which suggest a “green world” familiar to readers of Sidney and Spenser.
pastoral relationship with Orco implicitly casts him as the very tyrant that threatens Italy. Such worries would seem expected after the fractious nepotism of Alexander VI and Julius II’s military alliances that left Italy vulnerable to French invasion. But Leo himself was a source of very immediate anxiety for Ariosto and the Este court when he reneged on promises to restore the territories of Modena and Reggio to Alfonso, and, as a result of his differences with Alfonso, threatened the legal publication of Ariosto’s own writing. The pastoral episode, then, casts papal neglect of its unifying role as a cause of the violence and civic dissolution represented by the vulnerability to tyrants. The pastoral episode then contrasts the “fier pastor,” or fierce shepherd as Ariosto refers to both Orco and Leo, who does not properly care for his flock and could not tell the true followers or allies from the false, with Norandino who becomes a living symbol of “love and devotion” who endures any personal sacrifice to save his lover and also recognize injustices, such as had been done to Grifone (17.69). Set alongside epic and romance, then, the pastoral episode adds one more way of viewing Italy’s recent history: if epic focused on leadership and romance focused on spiritual solidarity, pastoral emphasizes the failures of the Church.

Canto 17 leaves us with a complex differend that exposes three different criteria for deciding exactly what will count as Ariosto’s political perspective on the source of and solution to Italy’s recent instability, as well as the Este court’s role in addressing it. In each case, the genre sets the terms for how the general political problem announced in the exordium (Italy’s susceptibility to foreign invasion) should be understood; generic conventions offer a way of interpreting the action, given the topical context in the exordiums and the shared features that appear in each genre. In each episode, we are
shown a tyrant and the political violence he does, but the genres provide a separate context in which to interpret the causes and potential responses to that chaos. To return to Lyotard’s formulation of the differend, what we see here is not two or three different sides of an issue being debated. Rather, what the genres put into contest are the very terms within which one could take sides: epic calls for a strong leader, and the question to decide is then “which leader?” Romance blames a lack of spiritual identity, and the question to decide in that context is “who caused it and how can it be restored?” Pastoral blames the recent Church authorities for not maintaining Italy’s strength, and the question then is “What should Leo do, or who should replace him?” The differend is a difference not among two sides of a debate, but among which debate Italy should be having.

Ultimately, of course, all three of these debates could be applicable. But the point of not deciding to locate Ariosto as preferring one above all others is to recognize the solution to one debate may in fact be a problem for another: a strong Pope, say (a good pastoral shepherd) might not make a good epic hero. Each genre has its own rules that may not apply or may even be dangerous in the others’ context. As Lyotard says of the differend, its sense of “justice” is not about deciding an issue correctly, but about being sure that the very terms in which one decides are appropriate: “applying a single rule of judgment to [two parties] in order to settle their differend as though it were merely a litigation would wrong (at least) one of them (and both of them if neither side admits this rule).”64 By reading canto 17 as deliberately avoiding a final judgment on what caused Italy’s susceptibility to tyrants, we are able to see how Ariosto is working through how to

64 The Differend, xi.
understand the problem itself, using genres as frameworks to cast the political situation in a variety of different lights. His generic interlacing exemplifies Rancière’s notion of “politics” as the arena in which the terms of specific political problems find their articulation, often in conflict with incompatible ways of articulating or understanding the same phenomenon. Generic mixing is central to how it engages with political topics since it uses genre as a repertoire of backgrounds against which to understand particular topical problems. Genres offered Ariosto a set of contexts in which to understand political issues, and mixing genres allowed him to show how problematic and complex it could be even to approach thinking about them, much less simply deciding which “position” he would take.

As a final example that draws this point out, a similar diffraction of political viewpoints occurs in the poem’s last canto. Here, Ariosto culminates Ruggiero’s prophetic destiny in the final conflict with Rodomonte. Since the sixteenth century, this moment has been cited as proof of Ariosto’s epic aims for his poem by its direct allusion to the *Aeneid*. John Harington, Ariosto’s Elizabethan translator, summarizes the point early in the poem’s reception: “In the death of Rodomont, to shew himself a perfect

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65 Adeline Johns-Putra’s summary of the final canto is typical of such readings: “Ariosto made substantial revisions to the poem, revisions that steer it towards epic resolution of martial and Christian conquest. That this denoument for both heroes, in the final analysis, is specifically epic in nature is made clear by allusions to both Homer and Virgil. Thus, Orlando’s fury is channeled away from matters of love to matters of war when his friend Brandimarte is killed in battle, an echo of the death of Patroclus and Pallas. … Similarly, Ruggiero’s warrior credentials are highlighted when the poem ends not with his union to Bradamante, but with his subsequent defeat of the pagan Rodomonte. His decision to kill Rodomonte is one of pious self-defence … but it is nonetheless compared to Aeneas’ slaying of Turnus. Ariosto’s detailed revisions, then, demonstrate how the digressions of romance must be raised only to be defeated in order to satisfy the demands of Christianized epic.” (The History of Epic [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006], 64-65). For a summary of the pervasiveness of such views, see Joseph C. Sitterson, Jr., “Allusive and Elusive Meanings: Reading Ariosto’s Vergilian Ending,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 45 (1992): 1-19.
imitator of Virgill, Ariosto endeth just as Virgil ends his Aeneads with the death of Turnus. The final stanza is, indeed, a partial translation of Virgil. However, the rest of the canto leading up to this moment is almost pure chivalric romance. It is true that the final canto differs from most of the poem by showing relatively few interlaced narratives, as Ariosto has tied up most of the errant knights’ various adventures by bringing them back to Paris (44.32). But the canto’s story itself is almost pure chivalric romance, beginning with a mysterious “black knight” (Rodomonte in disguise) who interrupts Ruggiero’s wedding to Bradamante with a challenge. The unexpected arrival of an anonymous knight during a festivity is commonplace among medieval chivalric romances, and more than half of the final canto’s 40 stanzas are devoted to a depiction of the stylized chivalric combat between Ruggiero and Rodomonte. Furthermore, Rodomonte has been absent from the poem for eleven cantos, and his arrival and defeat is narrated without a single reference to his earlier role in the “epic” story of the siege of Paris or to his role in establishing Ruggiero’s (and the Este court’s) prophetic lineage discussed at length in Astolfo’s prophecy of canto 3. Unlike Aeneas’ defeat of Turnus, which finally eliminates his ever-present threat to Roman peace throughout the second half of the Aeneid, Rodomonte’s death does not eliminate any immediate conflicts or threat to Parisian peace since he has long ago disappeared as an active antagonist. His role in establishing Ruggiero’s epic heroism is solely a consequence of Alcina’s prophecy


67 Daniel Javitch is the only commentator to stress this point (at least in English criticism), and he has only done so very recently. See “Reconsidering the Last Part of Orlando Furioso: Romance to the Bitter End,” Modern Language Quarterly 71:4 (2010): 385-405.
rather than due to any substantive threat to Christian (or Italian) stability. When Ariosto finally, allusively, addresses Ruggiero’s epic destiny in the last stanza, it stands in stark contrast to the previous stanza which emphasizes the chivalric *fortuna*, and even simple randomness, of the final encounter that will seal Ruggiero’s destiny. In essence, the final stanza imposes an arbitrary epic reading, reminding us of what Ruggiero’s epic story is supposed to achieve, while never actually narrating it. In fact, the final scenes present action that seems both causally and generically opposed to the epic forces of prophecy and destiny by casting the final confrontation in romance terms that the poem’s final cantos have been steadily returning to an epic center.68

The abrupt generic shift in the final stanza, then, forces us to remember Ruggiero’s epic role even as he participates in a romantic chivalric combat focused on personal honor rather than political consequences. Yoking the signs of an epic ending onto a romance narrative leaves Ruggiero’s final status in the midst of a differend: he is at once a knight-errant, still engaging in battles with occasional “black knights” who appear out of nowhere, and an epic hero fulfilling a prophecy that establishes his destiny of beginning the Este line and potentially founding a new Christian empire. The two roles are incompatible, particularly given the way that Ariosto has consistently used his romance plots, especially those of the ever-distracted and lust-led Orlando, to delay the

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68 Cook’s reading goes a long way toward establishing an “epic” reading of the final canto by its focusing of all of the previously interlaced narrative strands on bringing the knights back to Paris for Ruggiero’s wedding. (See Milton, Spenser, and the Epic Tradition, 78-80) His emphasis on the spatial centering of the final canto, however, ignores the fact that the actual battle between Rodomonte and Ruggiero takes place just outside the walls of Paris.
fulfillment of the epic destiny of the Este ancestors.⁶⁹ The epic hero is implicated in a divine teleology, marked explicitly by Alcina’s prophecy, while the romance hero’s role in such events is purely reactive, responding to the wondrous *aventura* of Rodomonte’s sudden appearance with no guarantee of success. The genres, in other words, create two versions of history that cannot co-exist, an epic history of destined triumph and a romance history of contingency. At the end of *Orlando Furioso*, Ariosto leaves Ruggiero and his Este patrons wavering between the two, using epic to praise their potential in Italy’s future (simultaneously, of course, praising their role in his own fortunes) and romance to indicate their provisional status as not yet having fulfilled their promise. They are at once destined and yet-to-be proven, and by ending on a note of generic hybridity, Ariosto’s poem leaves both of these political directions open.⁷₀

Reactions to Ariosto’s generic hybridity in the sixteenth century were mixed, and the Italian theorists writing soon after *Orlando Furioso*’s publication often greeted it with confusion. As I argue, however, the positive legacy of his generic innovations is found in early modern romance writers themselves rather than in his reception history, which is still instructive for its recognition that more than literary classification was at stake in

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⁶⁹ Patricia Parker makes a similar point about this scene (69). Her reading of Ariosto as using romance to ironize and complicate the epic moments is often applicable, and I do not want my earlier criticisms of her work to suggest that her romance-centric version of the epic-versus-romance is never applicable, even if it not definitive of how romance always functions in generic mixtures.

⁷₀ It can also be argued that the explicit generic contrast created by the last stanza calls attention to the explicitly fictive nature of Ruggiero’s role, whether cast as romantic or epic. The reminder of generic categories is yet another way that Ariosto calls attention to the artificial and flexible ways that poetry relates to history, just as Ascoli has argued that the extended Este lineage of canto 3 at once establishes Ippolito’s glory and subverts it at the same time: “Rather than opening out onto the historical presence of Ippolito d’Este, [the fictional lineage connecting Ruggiero to the Este line] instead begins to draw him into itself, hinting...that his ‘storia’ and that of his family are indeed only Ariosto’s inventions” (*Ariosto’s Bitter Harmony*, 388).
Orlando Furioso’s odd generic playfulness. While Ariosto himself never explicitly gave his work a generic name, invoking both armi (arms, or the matter of epic) and amori (desire, or the matter of romance) in his invocation, literary theorists and poets throughout the century argued extensively about what kind of poem he had written, often associating its quality and morality, not with the poetry itself, but with what they perceived to be his choice of genre. The list of complaints against the poem ranged from simply discomfort over the title (there is, in truth, more about Ruggiero than Orlando) to the Aristotelian objection that it contained no unity of action (true of its multiple characters and digressions) to the moral outrage which suggested that, if this fantastic mishmash was the best epic the Italians could accomplish, they were a poor-souled people, indeed. And yet, in each case, the arguments returned to questions of its formal classification. Certainly the poem had the outward look of previous Spanish and French romances with its multiple stories of medievalized knights encountering wonders, monsters, and trips to the moon. And its subject matter, set against the backdrop of Charlemagne’s wars, had been a romance staple since the Song of Roland in the twelfth century. Yet this was a poem that also had epic pretensions, and, particularly for those critics who wanted to see in Ariosto a new Italian Virgil, it was not hard to find in the book the same encompassing of a great national spirit as the humanists found in the Aeneid. See, for example, Giovambattista Giraldi Cintio’s remark from 1548 that “our Ariosto treated only those things which seemed to him capable of receiving light and splendor and which brought with them neither ugliness nor impropriety, such as are seen frequently in the foreign romances …, all of which he left aside as unworthy of the majesty of our language and of our nation, which now occupies among the barbarian nations that greatness which the Latin nation once held, even though the majesty of empire is found in other hands” (quoted in Bernard Weinberg, A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance, vol 2 [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960]: 962).
variety, all of which forced the Italian humanists, steeped in the classificatory distinctions of Aristotle’s *Poetics*, to either denounce the poem or rationalize its generic multiplicity.

In each case, however, the question of genre was accompanied by a question of the text’s epistemological and moral qualities, in terms that mirror the notion of genre outlined above in Sidney and explored by Colie. Genre was used as both a starting point and as evidence to be marshaled in defense of the way of life the poem inspired, not merely its literary or formal classification. One of the clearest examples comes from Filippo Sassetti in 1575. He argued against those like Giovanni Pigna and Giovambattista Giraldi who tried to create a special poetics for a “high” romance. According to these romance defenders, epic was a dead genre because epic heroic action was impossible in “modern” times, much less “modern” Italy. Sassetti, however, found both his taste and nationalism offended, and responded at great length, arguing that “heroic actions have never been lacking, nor are they lacking now, from which epic and tragic poems might be written.” Epics could still be written because it remained possible for men to act greatly, and, consequently, Italy need not settle for a “new” and second-rate romance. Ariosto, he maintained, may have written the closest thing to an Italian epic yet seen, but the poem’s failures (Sassetti noted many) were due to the poet’s inability to meet the demands (both

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72 For contemporary examples of this mixture of genre and value in Ariosto, see Daniel Javitch’s “*Cantus Interruptus* in the *Orlando Furioso*” (*Modern Language Notes* 95 (1980): 66-80) and David Quint’s “The Figure of Atlante: Ariosto and Boiardo’s Poem” (*Modern Language Notes* 94 (1979): 77-91).

73 Quoted in Weinberg, 974.
formal and moral) of his chosen genre. For Sassetti, then, the greatness of the people and its times and the greatness of its genres go hand in hand.\textsuperscript{74}

These debates became sharper after the publication of Tasso’s \textit{Gerusalemme Liberata} in 1581 and his public criticism of Ariosto’s romance material that did not go far enough in adding epic to the Boiardan source. Critics lined up to champion one poet over the other, some praising Tasso’s more classically unified epic over what seemed, in comparison, Ariosto’s much less cohesive tale of knights, not all of whom are obvious moral exemplars. Tasso himself argued that epic was most supremely defined by Aristotle’s “unity of action” in which one hero can stand for the greatest a society has to offer.\textsuperscript{75} Ariosto’s defenders increasingly found themselves in the odd position of claiming that his art was best for a changed time in which literature must make concessions to its audience – and, in this case, pleasurable variety seems to be what the “masses” wanted. And yet, even among those who wanted to defend Ariosto’s “new” romance, they had a

\textsuperscript{74} One can, of course, also find many examples of the opposite evaluation, particularly when genre is associated with the class of readership. Many readers, such as Camillo Pellegrino (1584) were worried about Ariosto writing in such a popular and dangerously pleasurable genre as romance. Pellegrino said that Ariosto essentially wrote “common” poetry because, unlike Tasso, he elected to please universally rather than appealing primarily to the intellect. One can easily detect a hierarchy of elevated audiences in the following distinction: “[Ariosto] elected rather to be first among the poets who were composers of romances than second or third among the observers of the poetic laws, and therefore in the interweaving of his poem he paid attention only to the enjoyment and the delight, neglecting the utility which (as you know and as is the opinion of the best people) is the end of poetry, sought through the means of pleasure.” (quoted in Weinberg, 996) Ascoli also points out the bitter contests that arose between the neo-Platonist and humanist interpretations of Ariosto’s poem which, again, often used genre as a central point in the argument for what the poem should and could achieve philosophically. See his \textit{Ariosto’s Bitter Harmony}, particularly chapter 2, “Critical Readers of the Orlando Furioso” (43-107).

\textsuperscript{75} Indeed, Tasso, who was writing his epic at the time, created his own hierarchy of genres with romance hardly mentioned at all. But he did show how epic outclassed even tragedy in a way that recreates a kind of social hierarchy of genres alluded to earlier: “The illustriousness of the tragic poet consists in the unexpected and sudden change of fortune, and in the greatness of the events which bring with them horror and pity; but the illustriousness of the epic poet is founded on the deeds of a supremely virtuous warrior, on acts of courtesy, of generosity, of piety, of religion – actions which, while proper to the epic, in no way are appropriate to tragedy” (quoted in Weinberg, 648).
difficult time finding a language in which to define it. Supporters of epic almost always returned to Aristotle. But when it came to romance, the definition was usually a negation of epic with the only apparently positive term being a “multiplicity” of action as opposed to the idealized single plot of epic. Malatesta Porta puts it most strongly:

The heroic poem must imitate a single, entire and perfect illustrious action of an illustrious hero, and the parts which render it such must so spring from the whole and so return … to it that one would not judge the whole plot to be made up of diverse members, and that no part might be removed or changed … without too great a weakening and imperfection of that plot, whereas the romance is not subject to all these restrictions.\(^76\)

The terms of that last phrase, “not subject to all these restrictions,” give free reign to romance as both an art form and, following the implied moral logic, to a different model of action than the “entire and perfect illustrious action of an illustrious hero.” Porta had no desire to damn romance, and, instead, he approaches the genre’s freedom from restriction with a very cautious sense of excitement:

[The romance] often considers neither the decent nor the appropriate; but taking as its object various knights and ladies, whether they be barbarians or not or whether in time of war or of peace, and concerned at once with arms and with love, it varies and minglest character just as it varies and minglest actions and persons, so that with such variety it may more delight the people, from whom it expects applause.\(^77\)

There may well be an implicit denigration of Porta’s “people” (lo populo) here who might not be as sophisticated an audience as Tasso would desire. But the passage does not seem to fulfill its promise to show us what is neither “decent” nor “appropriate” –

\(^76\) Quoted in Weinberg, 1047.

\(^77\) Quoted in Weinberg, 1048.
certainly knights, ladies, war, peace, arms, love, and delight are not indecent. But, if the epic provides an implicitly noble and idealized model of behavior, what counts here as “delight”? It is unclear, but it is certainly not simply opposed to Tasso’s epic “illustriousness” as something intrinsically base and dangerously subversive. What, in other words, is the “virtue” that Porta attaches to romance’s vaguely defined “varying and mingling”?

After seeing how thoroughly later romance writers embraced generic “varying and mingling,” it becomes clear that what Porta recognized was romance’s capacity to include and encourage mixture without losing its own character. Porta, still apparently beholden to a system of generic hierarchies in which epic must be higher and more “illustrious” than romance, a genre’s unity and purity, such as that which he and other theorists assumed to belong to epic, must have been morally and politically superior to romance. And yet Porta also seems to implicitly recognize something which romance writers turned into a positive and productive aspect of romance: its capacity to use mixed genre to ultimately show a wider, if also more fraught and problematic, view of the world. Romance was, of course, the genre of errant and erring knights, of fantastical wonders and un-courtly desires, but it was also that same capacity to wander from its central purpose, to follow flights of fancy and dangerous compulsions, that allowed it to incorporate kinds of writing and experience, genres, other than itself. If Porta seems a bit threatened by how romance “varies and mingles” its subject matter, romance writers themselves embraced that variety, and this dissertation will trace how the “mingling” took a specifically generic turn when the writers turned to politics.
To that end, the following chapters will show that romance’s flexibility and capacity to incorporate generic hybridity without losing its own generic identity made it a suitable genre to explore the possibilities of exploiting the thematic potential of generic hybridity, as Ariosto had already shown in his interlacing of epic, romantic, and pastoral episodes within a single heroic poem. When Sidney, Spenser, and Wroth took up their own romances, they did so against the background of Ariosto’s example, of Tasso’s counter-example that pit romance as a simplistic foil to epic, and of the critical and theoretical confusion over the “purity” of romance and epic as living genres. Because of Ariosto and the tradition that followed him, early modern romance incorporated generic hybridity as an essential part of its set of generic family resemblance, to borrow a phrase from Alastair Fowler.78 And, given the understanding of genre as implying epistemological and value-laden frameworks, these generic mixtures would inevitably find their way toward political issues. The following chapters will show how three early modern English romances inherited Ariosto's attention to the possibilities of generic hybridity within a romance context for the purposes of their own political thinking. Although each chapter will deal with separate political situations encountered by each author, they each mark a progression through which romance increasingly comes to be seen as a genre capable of greater and more varied mixtures.

In Chapter 2, “’Not born to live a subject life’: Sidney’s Romance of Political Agency,” I argue that the clash of contemporary European politics with England’s official aims shaped the problems of Sidney’s political identity as he found himself at

odds with Elizabeth’s reluctance to engage in an international Protestant league. Like Leicester, he made great use of chivalric traditions of aristocratic autonomy, which the Tudors had steadily worked to diminish, and his forced absence from the court was strong evidence for that autonomy’s demise. Nonetheless, his belief in the cause of international Protestantism, as well as his investment in chivalric traditions, forced him to face the problems of the ideals of an independent, martial aristocracy, as well as to question the role and responsibilities of a monarch in a European, rather than English or even British context. In the Arcadia, he approaches these problems generically, using and altering the conventions of medieval chivalric romance to think about the problems of his role when caught between conflicting loyalties to his monarch and an international cause.

The Old Arcadia’s relationship to Greek and Italian pastoral romance has been well-established. But the New Arcadia’s changes look like Sidney was trying to introduce more martial subplots, a more complicated central story (especially in Book 3’s introduction of Cecropia’s assault on Arcadia), and an overall sense that the political fable of Basilus’ failings as a pacifist monarch are no longer the central concern. There is still no critical consensus on where the changes were headed, nor why he decided to take the story in such drastically different directions. I argue, however, that the New Arcadia shows Sidney pitting romance genres against one another to articulate and investigate his own increasingly contradictory sense of political agency, caught between a sense of duty to the English throne while also hoping to act on the continent in ways Elizabeth opposed. If the Old Arcadia addressed political issues by implicitly critizing Elizabeth for neglecting the kind of rule he thought best, the New Arcadia changes its focus to Sidney
and aristocrats like him who needed to act both for the crown and on their own ideals that might not be the same as their monarch’s. Books 2 and 3 in particular add knights errant and quest stories to the pastoral plot of the *Old Arcadia* in a way that leaves none of the easy answers which chivalric romance might offer for allowing a knight to prove his virtue in battle. Instead, Sidney puts his knights in situations where they cannot satisfactorily achieve their quests, or demonstrate their loyalty to all obligations upon them, as shown by the apparent failure of the princes Pyrocles and Musidorus to prove their virtue. The knight becomes a figure whose promise, much like Sidney’s promise and praise on the continent, could become liabilities, a problem exemplified in Amphialus’ failed rebellion. While the *New Arcadia* does not offer a solution to Sidney’s dilemmas (in part simply because it was not finished but also because Sidney’s fiction seems more interested in exploring problems than solving them), the work does suggest that Sidney returned to chivalric ways of thinking in order to dismiss and/or alter his generic characterization of the question of the aristocracy’s divided loyalties.

In Chapter 3, “‘To each degree and kynde’: Spenser’s Genres of Courtesy,” I show how Spenser turns Sidney’s concern with political agency into a reflection on the genres appropriate to the virtue of courtesy. I start by showing how Book V’s presentation of the failures of Justice in sixteenth-century history are also characterized as failures of the chivalric romance in which the Knight of Justice’s story is told. Particularly in the topical episodes of Book V explicitly concerned with European and Irish affairs (the Belge, Burbon, and Irena quests), Spenser highlights the overly rigid way that chivalry requires him to conceptualize pressing political problems, calling attention to the ways in which reliance on a particular genre limits the kinds of political
commentary possible in public poetry. Since up to that point in the poem, that genre of martial, chivalric romance had also been intimately aligned with Spenser’s hope to write a truly national and even imperial poem for Elizabeth’s England, and his criticism of chivalry, along with his apparent turn to pastoral in Book VI, have often been read as a sign that Spenser abandons any hope for his poem to public and political matters.

However, I argue that Book VI’s generic changes cannot be read clearly as a complete shift to pastoral nor as a resignation of his role as a public poet. Rather, Calidore, the Knight ofCourtesy, operates in a narrative landscape that depicts an ongoing confrontation between chivalric and pastoral modes of romance. His quest ultimately claims that the central insight of Courtesy is that mixed and conflicting genres are the best way to think about the problem of relating fiction to politics, or at least an improvement on the forced mixture of topicality and chivalric romance in Book V. For Spenser, Courtesy embodies a new way of thinking about politics which does not relate political questions to timeless or essentialist truths which must be put into practice in history, but, instead, it treats politics as a rhetorical and instrumental form of practical reasoning, and the ability to move through and control the terms of one’s generic situation, as Calidore is able to do, allows the poet to treat political thinking as a poetic rather than philosophical or theological activity.

Finally, in Chapter 4, “‘Noe superior, nor commanding power’: Wroth’s Generic Undoing of Political Romance,” I argue that The Countesse of Montgomery's Urania is perhaps the most complex example of generic hybridity in early modern romance, moving freely between chivalric, pastoral, epic, lyric, and picaresque in its proliferation of interlaced episodes. It is precisely through her use of interlace, the breaking off of one
story in the middle to begin another, that she highlights her notions of the political encodings of genre. Wroth was perhaps the most conflicted of early English romance writers, being part of a well-connected family, but also embroiled in a court scandal that left her far from court. Her romance, then, evinces a particularly cynical attitude toward political issues which finds contradictions and impasses in both large-scale reflections on James’ hopes to play a unifying role in European affairs and more local issues of gendered court and familial politics. In the end, Wroth seems to push Spenser’s image of the practice of Courtesy by presenting a romance world in which political positions are merely rhetorical constructions, and she compensates for her lack of political power in the real world with a mastery of the political genres of her romance world.

I establish this claim by reading three moments of generic clash in the Urania. The first pits an epic vision of her hero Amphilanthus as an idealized pacific ruler of a vast European empire against his failure as an inconstant and adulterous knight in his romance role. The second moment contrasts the power of the Urania’s heroine, Pamphilia, to write lyrics which often present her as articulating the voice of the righteous subject in opposition to a capricious monarch, both literally with James and Queen Anne and figuratively as Amphilanthus is her “tyrant love.” However, after these lyric moments that interrupt the romance narrative, the forward progression of events always take pains to undercut the efficacy of the powerful subject suggested by the lyric. Finally, Wroth ends the published part of the Urania with her knights arriving in England, but the narrative world of her native country deliberately reflects a prosaic picaresque rather her normal stylized European romance world. On the one hand, picaresque seems like an implicit criticism of the country which denied her the political
prominence promised by her family, but, at the same time, Wroth’s sense of the picaresque displays a rugged self-sufficiency and satisfaction when contrasted with the incredibly strained and trying gender politics of Wroth’s romance world. In the end, I suggest that Wroth’s move to the picaresque may point to her sense of the limits of romance’s capacity for political comment through generic mixture. The picaresque’s emphasis on particularity may undo much of the significance that early modern theorists placed on genre’s relation to generalized moral, epistemic, and political frameworks, a point I discuss in relation to romance’s anticipation of the novel in a brief conclusion.
CHAPTER 2:

“NOT BORN TO LIVE A SUBJECT LIFE”: SIDNEY’S ROMANCE OF POLITICAL AGENCY

Sidney wrote the first version of his *Arcadia* in a forced retirement from the court for publishing a letter telling the queen that “Her Marriage to Monsieur” was ill conceived and by losing his temper on the tennis court. But his temper, play, and “advice to princesses” remained focused on what he perceived as Elizabeth’s mismanagement of the realm even in his escapist pastoral realm of Arcadia, since the *Old Arcadia* presents an idyllic country in decline from the neglect caused when its ruler Basilius falls in love. For the still-youthful Sidney, romance offered a site of political critique through rather straightforward topical allegory. But as his fortunes turned and he returned to court, during the same period that his uncle Leicester was finally gaining momentum for his campaign against the Spanish in the Dutch Low Countries, Sidney also changed his fiction. He returned to the *Arcadia* and substantially altered its plot, its characters, and its genre, turning what before had been a pastoral romance clearly modeled on continental precursors such as Sannazarro’s *Arcadia* and Montemayor’s *Diana*, into a story where more than half of the revised material borrows from chivalric romances such as the *Palmerin* and *Amadis* cycles, as well as popular middle English romances. At the same time, Sidney’s political preoccupation in his fiction modulated from a direct and perhaps still overbold critical allegory of his monarch to a reflection on himself, or at least people
in a situation very much like that of himself and the aristocrats whose aims and ideals he shared. The *New Arcadia* is preoccupied with the problem of a courtier’s agency, especially when the actor finds his will unaligned with duty to his monarch. And it is in Sidney’s generic mixtures and experiments that this problem plays out in the narrative.

For Sidney, romance genres become a way of thinking about the possibilities and limits of aristocratic agency, and their mixture in the *New Arcadia* reflects the central conflict of Sidney’s last years: how could he be at once a loyal servant to Elizabeth while also acting on his religious ideals of advancing militant international Protestantism (about which the queen was lukewarm at best) and the personal ambitions fostered in his youth? Pastoral and chivalric narratives in the *New Arcadia* each present possible story-lines, frameworks for decision-making, and goals for their characters. Pastoral romance presents characters interested in passion and personal obsessions (an agency of self-assertion). Chivalric romance presents strict sense of duty to more rigid social structures, from traditional virtues to paternal and monarchical figures (an agency of obligation to others). Rather than thinking of these genres as exclusive options for his characters, however, Sidney deliberately moves his central figures, the princes Musidorus and Pyrocles, through both genres, even forcing them to try to occupy positions in both at the same time. At the beginning of the story, each prince, having just completed a series of chivalric romance adventures, is shipwrecked on Arcadia where they promptly fall in love. But in order to win their loves, these young knights disguise themselves as a shepherd and Amazon warrior, and the remainder of their story follows their attempt to fashion identities as both lover and warrior, shepherd and knight, that will make them worthy of virtuous affection.
The problem, however, is that Sidney left the *New Arcadia* unfinished. Or, put differently, the *New Arcadia*’s unfinished nature highlights the problem of agency that Sidney explores: pastoral and chivalry, an agency of self-assertion and an agency of obligation, never find reconciliation. The figure of Amphialus, a character new to the revision who almost single-handedly destroys Arcadia through rebellion, is a figure of this contradiction. He is at once the greatest knight of Arcadia, and Sidney praises his chivalric virtue to no end, but he is also a lover whose obsession with Philoclea makes him vulnerable to his mother Cecropia’s manipulative ambitions. Amphialus stands as a figure who might be a paragon of virtue in each genre by itself, but, when mixed, he becomes a monster. In the *New Arcadia* as we have it, Amphialus and the princes both stand as figures who oddly seem to represent all the potential problems of someone like Sidney, who found himself hoping to be both a knight for England and a self-assertive aristocrat – but, in his fiction, Sidney intensifies the contradictions rather than crafting a solution.

Given Sidney’s penchant for contradiction and irresolution in much of his other fiction and poetry, this may be less surprising, even if at first glance it seems opposed to his actual political hopes. But it may also explain why it was that Sidney found the potential for generic mixture in romance so attractive in his final imaginative work. As Gavin Alexander has recently argued, Sidney’s revisions to the *Arcadia* seem obsessed with preventing clear resolutions of any of the thematic threads, whether political, erotic, or even rhetorical:

> It is impossible in the revised *Arcadia* to finish anything off: …A basic romance law is in operation, so that solutions to problems cause greater problems. Rather than the single, perfect circle or period of the “old” *Arcadia*, the revised text looks set to become
trapped in perpetual circles of dilatory regression, a cycle of
epanorthosis.¹

For Alexander, epanorthosis, the immediate replacement of one word with another that
does not so much correct as change the original meaning, is one of the fundamental
structures of Sidney’s rhetorical and narrative play in the Arcadia. It accounts for the
ways that Sidney greatly enhances interlaced episodes that seem to present the same
situation with slightly different outcomes, as well as the manner in which he is much
more likely to simply interrupt speeches or episodes. The outcome, for Alexander, is a
work in which the point is not to locate a single interpretation that would organize the
substitutions and interruptions in Sidney’s text, but rather that Sidney may well have been
trying to write a text that staged irreconcilable moments as challenges, both to himself
and to his readers.

This is certainly a view of his fiction that seems at odds with the more
straightforward model put forward in the Apologie in which a poet’s task is to delight his
readers into a smooth and clear reception of a virtuous Idea. And yet, as Margaret W.
Ferguson has persuasively argued, the Apologie does not practice what it preaches.²
Sidney’s defense of poetry itself engages in a number of contradictions and redirections
which, if read as a philosophical treatise, make the work seem muddled. And yet, if we

¹ Gavin Alexander, Writing After Sidney: The Literary Response to Sir Philip Sidney, 1586-1640

² “Sir Philip Sidney: Pleas for Power,” in Trials of Desire: Renaissance Defenses of Poetry (New
Haven: Yale University Press, 1983): 137-162. Ferguson’s tangential gloss of the Arcadia in this chapter is
one I find happily congenial: “Sidney portrays young male heroes who seek to justify their desires for
amorous or political action of a type not allowed by social conventions. At the same time, however, these
heroes explicitly or implicitly acknowledge a ‘fault’ in their rebellious desires; their rhetoric therefore
oscillates between apology in the ‘Greek’ sense of self-justification and apology in the modern sense of a
plea for pardon or indulgence” (137).
pay attention to the way that the work seems to be as much concerned with reading itself, with challenging its own assumptions and even asking its readers to find fault with it and respond critically, as it is with being read correctly, then a new picture of the *Apologie* emerges. Instead, Ferguson argues that the *Apologie* is a work which calls for a dialogue about the value of poetry, even a dialogue which may repeat and intensify the criticisms against it which Sidney attempts to refute, since what Sidney’s rhetoric actually does is intentionally present himself as a contradictory thinker about poetry. Such a work does not straightforwardly defend poetry, but, instead, turns the reader into one who, simply by trying to make sense of Sidney’s text and respond to it, may in fact find himself creating a defense of poetry in response to Sidney’s problematic rhetoric. The outcome, for Ferguson, is a rhetorical display where presenting a defense of poetry as a problem which the reader becomes complicit in solving places the ultimate burden of poetry’s defense as much upon the reader as it does on Sidney. As she says,

Menenius Agrippa [the rhetorical hero of the *Apologie*], the ideal orator-mediator, effects a ‘perfect reconcilement’ between his own desires and his audience’s, between masters and servants, and between authority and the desire to rebel against it. Sidney’s text cannot offer such a ‘perfect reconcilement’; instead it offers a model of that relation between text and reader which consists of a constant turning of master into servant and servant into master. In this turning, at once an exercise of ambition and a contemplation of it, the boundaries between oratory and poetry, play and persuasion, invention and interpretation, are repeatedly drawn and transgressed. The text establishes and undermines rhetorical authority, its own and others’, as it explores the paradox that poetry ‘must be gently led, or rather it must lead.’ It thereby provides an unsettling model for the activity of the reader who is also a writer. (162)

Sidney manipulates genre in the *New Arcadia* in order to provoke a similar problem of how to interpret the agency of his princes and Amphialus. Genre serves at once as an
authority that sets the criteria by which we are to judge their actions, but the generic mixture forces us to call the appropriateness of those criteria into question when certain generic moments are interrupted by other stories. The New Arcadia would then be a work that considered its various topics (and, in my case, political agency) as ongoing problems to be explored, as rhetorical displays that called for substantive responses, rather than as dilemmas in need of a solution. Such a complex response to problems of agency in the Arcadia have also been noted by Amelia A. Zurcher. She locates Sidney’s romance as the primary text to which seventeenth-century prose romances responded when attempting to articulate a notion of “interest” because Sidney was centrally concerned with how to show self-interest as a motivation that was at once selfish and contrary to current notions of virtue, but which was also a powerful and even politically dangerous notion. As Zurcher argues, “interest” was at once a necessary and attractive “vice,” but Sidney also understood that the political potential of a self-assertive agency was something that could not be approached directly for fear of being seen as either devoid of virtue or potentially rebellious.

For romance to address problems of agency, then, Sidney turned to a complex generic presentation in which his own “self-assertion” could be seen as both productive

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3 Seventeenth-Century English Romance, Allegory, Ethics, and Politics (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). The way Zurcher describes Sidney’s conflicted attention to agency or “interest” in romance is similar to my own: “According to the conventional humanist ideology of the late sixteenth-century, self-interest was a form of passion, perhaps even the primary passion, manifested in a simple, self-serving urge to possess that in civil societies was curbed by the more communally oriented calculus of reason. From the very start Arcadia declined to endorse reason’s power, expressing little faith in reason’s ability to trump the self-interested desire that Sidney seemed to see almost everywhere he looked. But this did not necessarily mean that a subject had to give himself over to passion’s single-minded brutishness; instead, Arcadia argued, the enlightened courtier would construe self-interest in the politic way, as the secret everybody knows but no one actually speaks, and thereby put his self-interested desire at a safe and useful distance” (19-20).
and in need of correction. Thus, his pastoral episodes seem at once liberating and full of pitfalls. But, at the same time, his chivalric episodes could present a form of agency which, while publicly acceptable and conventionally heroic, would also fail to satisfy his characters in their pastoral forms. The challenge for interpretation of the New Arcadia, then, is how to articulate a response to mixed form which performs rather than resolves its central conflicts. For Alexander, the best response is, like Ferguson’s reading of the Apologie, to treat the New Arcadia’s lack of a solution as intentional:

The way aposiopesis [structural and intentional incompletion] hovers over Sidney’s endings, and over the efforts of others to understand or complete him, suggests to me that figurative rhetoric may present a framework for thinking about these endings. Aposiopesis is all about words that are not said, or not even formulated; it is about implying by not saying, or failing to communicate; it is about the expressive force of failures to complete and connect; and it is about deciding what has not been said, or what is meant by the not saying. It perches in its literary guise on interpretations of intention: are we moved by the Arcadia’s incompletion, or do we wonder if it isn’t intended; is the work in some way complete?4

My contention is that, at least in terms of its experiments with presenting mixed romance genres as incompatible, the New Arcadia is “complete” because its incompletion calls attention to the very political contradiction that Sidney lived up until his death. Sidney had always found himself pulled between his father’s tenuous status at court, being his uncle’s heir (at least for most of his life), the hope of continental Protestants as an international unifier, a difficult relationship to his queen, and his own confusion over whether his contributions were to be in writing or in action. The New Arcadia uses genre to focus Sidney’s and our own attention on how difficult it can be to choose how to act in

4 Writing After Sidney, 53.
the midst of so many obligations and impulses, and this study begins with Sidney because, with the issue of agency, he formulates a unique and influential mixture of romance, genre, and political reflection to which Spenser and Wroth respond.

2.1 Political and Biographical Contexts of Sidney’s Last Years

Sidney completed the *Old Arcadia* sometime between late 1580 and the middle of 1581, a period roughly corresponding with his return to Elizabeth’s court after his forced retirement. When thinking about its political meanings, critics almost universally agree that this version’s “fore conceit” functions as a warning about the dangers of rulers giving in to passion, a general idea that of course becomes particularly pointed when applied to Elizabeth’s marriage deliberations. (*Sidney’s Letter to Queen Elizabeth* was also written in 1580.) Basilus neglects his government, and Arcadia falls into relative chaos. The individual erotic stories can then be seen as a series of correctives to Basilus’ love-delirium, showing more and more appropriate ways of harmonizing passion and duty in the government of oneself, especially of the two princes, and it is no great reach to then see the *Old Arcadia* operating as a literary version of the “advice” put forward in Sidney’s letter. Politically, the *Old Arcadia* functions primarily as a statement of dissent from Elizabeth’s policies, and it offers “solutions” to the political problems it identifies in terms of self-government of the passions as well as the kingdom. Politically, it is directed toward the monarch.

However, when Sidney revised the *Arcadia*, he was no longer exiled from the court and no longer so directly at odds with Elizabeth. During the period from 1581-1584, Sidney found more outlets for many of his political, military, and courtly aims.
Along with this, the revisions found in the *New Arcadia* are cast less as advice for a monarch, and focus more on the conflicts and difficulties faced by an active knight, one involved in the play of powers (both political and military) that Sidney and his allies had so long desired.

This section will outline those desires to make a case for the specific political context of Sidney’s revisions. Although the *New Arcadia* avoids topical allegory (with a few notable exceptions discussed in the following sections), we can better understand how the *New Arcadia* envisions political problems if we draw some distinctions between Sidney’s pressing political concerns during his composition of the two *Arcadias*. The *Old Arcadia* was written while he was in exile from the court and consequently focuses on his political frustration with Elizabeth. The *New Arcadia* broadens Sidney’s political concerns as his own real political engagements expanded. With this political and historical background established, we can then see how Sidney’s generic experiments in the *New Arcadia* function more as reflections on the potential (and potential for contradiction) in his own goals, activities, and identities, a shift away from the more straightforward political allegory of the *Old Arcadia*.

Long before beginning the *Arcadia*, Sidney’s political outlook was shaped by a host of criss-crossing loyalties and ambitions. Even before his birth, Sidney’s family was directly engaged in what some historians call the “crisis of the aristocracy” under the Tudors, which coincided with their increasing centralization of power.\(^5\) Many courtiers,

\(^5\) The term is borrowed from the title of Lawrence Stone’s book *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1588-1641* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), although it is a sense shared by older cultural historians such as Roy Strong and Frances Yates. James Simpson’s *Reform and Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) has recently tried to resume the argument from a broader cultural perspective, looking at how the Tudors from Henry VIII onwards centralized not only political control by
including Sidney, would complain about early modern monarchs intruding upon the power and autonomy of the nobles, and it became a mainstay of the rhetoric and self-understanding of many aristocratic writers of the period. Castiglione, for example, said the best courtier must “devote all his thought and strength of spirit to loving and almost adoring the prince he serves above all else, devoting his every desire and habit and manner to pleasing him.” In the *Prince*, Machiavelli insists on the prince’s right to keep all of his subjects’ interests on a tight leash, particularly those who, like Sidney, sought out foreign engagements: “The man who is entrusted with the administration of the state of another should never think of himself but of his prince, and should concern himself with nothing that does not pertain to the prince’s interest.” This expectation of submission went hand in hand with the Tudor’s policy of eliminating private armies and making all offices and monopolies dependent upon the crown’s assent, rather than going through the more dispersed feudal centers of power. As Lawrence Stone says, royal centralization of favor led to a situation in which “once-formidable local potentates were

eliminating the liberties and assets of the aristocracy, but also in the church’s hierarchy and management of regional affairs. Whatever the actual extent of Tudor “absolutism” might have been, both Stone and Simpson articulate an idea of monarchical overreaching that Sidney certainly wrote about as a threat to his position and ultimately his religious ideals.

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9 Stone, 217-9.
transformed into fawning courtiers and tame state pensionaries.”

Much of Sidney’s writing during his exile from court reflects resentment at his situation.

At the same time, however, Sidney was one of many who could turn the need to debase oneself into a genre of self-advertisement. Both of the primary genres that Sidney would use in the *New Arcadia*, pastoral and chivalric romance, operated in these opposed ways. Louis Montrose, for example, argues that pastoral became a way to exploit the fictions of love-play and adoration for Elizabeth in ways that courtiers could use to their advantage. A renewed interest in the trappings, if not the codes of conduct, of chivalry was also a popular way to express, especially during the Queen’s annual Accession Day Tilts in which they each fought for her “hand.” As Richard McCoy argues in the *Rites of Knighthood*, chivalry’s symbolic and rhetorical importance functioned both to spread the queen’s rhetorical authority and, at the same time, allowed the aristocracy to express their rights as privileged subjects:

[Chivalry’s] ceremonial forms constitute a kind of cultural resolution of one of the central contradictions of Elizabethan politics, the conflict between honor and obedience, the “customary rights” of knighthood and the duty to “right royal majesty.”

*Richard II*, II.i] Through its conventions of feudal loyalty and romantic devotion, Elizabethan chivalry affirmed Tudor sovereignty. At the same time, it glorified aristocratic militarism and traditional notions of honor and autonomy. ... When chivalric rituals worked, they allowed a compromise between the conflicting interests of the Elizabethan ruling class; this capacity to satisfy

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10 Ibid., 183.

both crown and nobility explains the enduring popularity of chivalry in the sixteenth century.12

Far from being the leftover trappings of a class outmaneuvered by the absolutist Tudors, chivalry remained a contested site during Sidney’s life. In fact, as Michael Walzer argues in the Revolution of the Saints, Calvinist writers often tried to win continental nobles to their cause through the promise of “a Protestant nation presided over by an elite of godly aristocrats waging chivalric warfare for God’s glory.”13 The zeal expressed by such an image was no doubt something Sidney found at least partially attractive, although, as his fiction shows, he was at least as skeptical of it as he was attracted to it. The source of this skepticism is the story of how he found the potential outlet for his ambitions outside of England.

Sidney’s life was filled with and arguably even driven by international diplomatic and military ambitions beyond the borders of the English court. Alan Stewart, a recent biographer, argues that the difference between his English and continental experience was in fact the defining feature of his life (a “Double Life,” to quote the book’s subtitle), as he faced suspicion and frustration at home, but praise and respect abroad.14 From an early age, he was personally aware of the political situation beyond England’s borders, as


14 Philip Sidney: A Double Life (London: Chatto and Windus, 2000). The other three most useful biographies (and there are many more) are, chronologically, Malcolm Wallace’s The Life of Philip Sidney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), James Osborne’s Young Philip Sidney: 1572-1577 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), and Katherine Duncan-Jones’ Sir Philip Sidney: Courtier Poet (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991). Wallace has the virtue of comprehensiveness with the largest collection of primary documents (from letters to bills), Osborne’s account of Sidney’s Grand Tour is by far the most extensive, and Duncan-Jones is most interested in parallels between his life and literary works.
his father was largely absent during his childhood serving as governor of Ireland and, later, Wales. After an education shaped largely by the expectation that he would be the Earl of Leicester’s heir (since Dudley as yet had no son), Sidney was sent to the continent for his Grand Tour, a trip which he extended a year beyond the Queen officially permitted him. During that time, he found a world in which the promise of his heritage and inheritance might find an outlet beyond Elizabeth’s court as he impressed a number of continental scholars, statesmen, and rulers. Chief among these were the Huguenot scholar Hubert Languet and William of Orange. The former became a lifelong correspondent, keeping Sidney abreast of the latest continental writings and occasional bits of foreign gossip, and it seems clear that, beyond friendship, Languet thought of Sidney as a potential leader in a Protestant League that Languet consistently worked to create. Even more attractive to the ambitious Sidney was his fast friendship with William of Orange, who tried to arrange a match for Sidney with his daughter Marie of Nassau. Even after it became clear that Elizabeth would never back a marriage that turned a minor subject of hers into the heir of a continental prince, William always held Sidney in the highest regard, pushing hard for the young Englishman to have a greater role in the campaigns in the Low Countries, hopefully even serving as an English

15 I should note that, although Sidney was knighted only two years before his death, he always presented himself as not only a gentleman, but an aristocrat, due both to his mother’s constant reminders of his Dudley heritage and the well-known fact that he was first heir to an Earl. Sidney insisted on this identity when, in the Defense of Leicester, he claimed “that my chiefest honor is to be a Dudley.” Even during his first ambassadorial trip, Elizabeth apparently thought of him as such, making him display his uncle’s coat of arms so as not to offend foreign dignitaries by sending a youth with no official rank.

16 On the relationship between Sidney and Languet, see in particular Wallace, 124-47, Osborne, 401-18, and Duncan-Jones, 71-5.

17 On the personal relationship between the two men, see Wallace, 184-7, Osborne, 481-6, and Duncan-Jones, 130-34.
governor. In addition to these two men who would have a great influence, Sidney also met and stayed in contact with the future French King, Henri of Navarre, the Palatine Prince John Casimir (who would, like William, often request that Elizabeth send Sidney as leader of diplomatic or military delegations), and the Protestant diplomat and theologian Philippe du Plessis Mornay (whose De la verite de la religion Chrestienne, Sidney would later begin to translate).

His tour also offered him two experiences that would stand in stark contrast to his experience at home. First, near the beginning of the tour, the French King Charles XI, no doubt to pique Elizabeth, created Sidney “gentleman of the bedchamber” and titled him, “baron.” Although Elizabeth would of course never recognize the title, it no doubt made the young Sidney all too aware of the difference between the respect he was able to garner abroad and that of his home where his father, despite years of governing Elizabeth’s “domestic nations,” never won a title of his own. He also experienced the intensity of religious difference in demonstrations that Elizabeth’s religious settlement largely allayed when he was forced to find shelter in Paris during the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre (with Francis Walsingham, his future father-in-law and fellow believer in the Protestant league). The former may well have intensified his sense of the glory he was

19 Osborne, 426-58, passim.
20 Duncan-Jones, 57-9.
capable of receiving abroad, while the latter, often referred to in his letters, made him constantly aware of what was at stake in religious conflicts.  

After returning to England (and after a brief trip with his father to Ireland), the Queen’s first task for him was international diplomacy, as he was sent as an ambassador to the Holy Roman Emperor in 1577. Having spent barely over a year in England, he was to spend another year far from England and Elizabeth. But even more significantly, Sidney was sent with a mission that he would keep even beyond Elizabeth’s instructions: to sound out the Protestant princes about a potential league against the Rome and Spain. While officially presenting Elizabeth’s condolences to Emperor Rudolph II for the death of his father Maximillian, as well the two Counts Palatine (Ludwig and Casimir) for the death of their father Frederick, Sidney’s weightier goal, guided primarily by Languet, was to influence the balance of power in central Europe. It was in Heidelberg that Sidney again met Casimir, who expressed the urgency of putting more pressure on central Europe to bring the Protestants together. Casimir’s brother Ludwig had been showing more favor to Catholic courtiers, and Sidney himself noted the “extremely Spaniolated” style of the Emperor’s court. Although the Protestant league Sidney was sent to help foster never materialized, his continued contact with the sympathizers he met remained strong throughout his life. The high level of correspondence, especially from Casimir,

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21 I am reluctant to make statements about Sidney’s specifically religious zeal. His most recent biographer, Katherine Duncan-Jones, suggests in her biography that Sidney spent much of his time during the Grand Tour toying with Catholicism, due primarily to his association with Edmund Campion, an exiled Catholic whom his father had harbored for a short time before leaving for the Continent. Sidney also corresponded regularly with many English Catholics on the continent, and his attitude in these letters is always conciliatory. (See, in particular, Wallace’s discussion of this issue in regards to Sidney’s support of various suits brought by Catholics for wrongful property appropriations, 286).

22 Letter quoted in Duncan-Jones, 128.
even suggests that, upon returning, Sidney felt his real ambassadorial mission was not complete, although this time, he was serving as ambassador to Elizabeth from continental Protestant powers.  

Upon returning, Sidney’s ambitions consistently looked beyond the English court. He considered following his father to Ireland. He even considered travelling with the explorer and (ultimately fraudulent) alchemist Martin Frobisher to the New World. But what occupied him most was the conflict in the Dutch Low Countries, and he continued to praise William until the older man’s death. As he wrote to Languet, “I have a great regard for that prince, and have perhaps in some way been of more service to him than he is aware of.” Whether or not Sidney’s efforts on William’s behalf proved that claim to be true, Sidney continued to express a desire to do all that he could to favor the prince with Elizabeth. The problem, however, was that Sidney’s voice would soon come to mean little to the Queen.

Although largely touted as a startling successful trip for such a young man, Sidney’s return to England brought no new employment. He spent the next two years shuttling from his father, uncle, relatives, and the court, constantly asking for, but not receiving, a position. During this time, both Casimir and William petitioned the queen for help in the Low Countries, and both princes asked specifically for Sidney to lead the campaigns. Perhaps because she disliked other rulers using her courtiers, Elizabeth

23 Osborne, 356-371; Duncan-Jones, 113-141.
24 Duncan-Jones, 131.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 153.
granted Sidney only a single charge to the continent, but it was pointedly non-military, as she sent him with letters to the Count Palatine explicitly disclaiming any responsibility for military action against Spanish interests. Although we have no letters from Sidney regarding this trip, it likely felt like a sense of personal and political betrayal.

There is an interesting piece of correspondence from this period (1577) which suggests that Sidney may have been thinking seriously about disobeying his queen’s desires in terms of the nascent Protestant League. Languet wrote to him with a strange bit of casuistry in which he debates the distinction between lawful and unlawful killing in a war, particularly as regards one doing it without a sovereign’s authority. Languet insists that to act in such a way would be simply murder, and he chastises Sidney for even considering it (although the long, seriously considered reflection suggests its seriousness). Nonetheless, Languet’s letter gives us some insight into the frustration that Sidney felt at this time:

I am especially sorry to hear you say that you are weary of the life to which I have no doubt God has called you, and desire to fly from the light of your court and betake yourself to the privacy of secluded places to escape the tempest of affairs by which statesmen are generally harassed ... I confess that in the splendour of a court, there are so many temptations to vice that it is very hard for a man to hold himself unspotted by them, and keep his feet on so slippery ground. But you must stand firm on your principle and strength of mind against these difficulties.

Although it seems likely that Sidney was more upset with the Queen’s treatment of him than any “temptations to vice,” it is clear that Sidney expressed severe disappointment

27 Stueart A. Pears, ed., The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney and Hubert Languet (London, 1845), 154.

28 Ibid., 154-5.
with his life at court during this time due both to his own enforced idleness and to his increasing sense that the Queen was not going to assist his continental friends.

Soon, however, Sidney would have even more reason to find himself frustrated both within his own family and with the Queen as he spent 1579-1581 in clear disfavor. A number of factors led to Sidney’s fall from grace. The first was Robert Dudley’s secret marriage to the Countess of Essex, Lettice nee Knollys, in September 1578, which only came to Elizabeth’s attention a year later. The Queen’s anger seemed to have spread to the entire Leicester family as Sidney’s mother seems to have been compelled to leave the court immediately after the revelation. The second was Sidney’s and, by extension, the entire Dudley faction’s vocal dissent from the potential Alencon match (and it seems probable that it was Leicester who encouraged Sidney to pen his famous letter decrying the match since the Earl, now married, no longer had the Queen’s ear). The third was his quarrel with Edward de Vere over a tennis match, the proximate cause of his exile from Elizabeth’s court.

Greville, whose accounts of Sidney should always be approached cautiously, recreates the meeting between subject and sovereign which led to the exile, and, although of course doubtful in its particulars, he suggests that Sidney took this meeting as an opportunity to express his willingness to act, if not in opposition to the queen, at least to question the asymmetric nature of the relationship. Greville begins with the Queen reminding Sidney of “the difference in degree between Earls, and Gentlemen; the respect inferiors ought to their superiors; and the necessity in Princes to maintain their own

29 Duncan-Jones, 160.
creations, as degrees descending between the peoples licentiousness, and the anointed Sovereignty of Crowns.”30 He then has Sidney presumptuously reply that sovereignty “was never intended for privilege to wrong.” The boldness is immediately modified, but it is nevertheless present: “witness her self who how Sovereign soever she were by Throne, Birth, Education, and Nature; yet was she content to cast her own affections into the same moulds her Subjects did, and govern all her rights by their Laws.”31 Although the amplification turns Elizabeth into a model who would not use “privilege to wrong,” the modification insists that Elizabeth is still beholden to the same laws as her subjects, which, whatever its truth, is certainly a bold thing for a boy to say to his monarch while being reprimanded. Whether or not Greville’s recreation is at all accurate, he was a constant friend to Sidney, and it is possible that his recreation of this tale emphasizes some of the feelings of friction Sidney no doubt felt at the time. What is most interesting, however, is that Greville immediately translates a situation of potentially youthful impetuosity into a confrontation with political overtones that border on extremes such as questioning a monarch’s right to rule, their submission to forces beyond their sovereignty (the Law), and, most significantly, the apparent insistence of a subject to determine whether or not he should recognize the proper “difference in degree” that controls the court. Whatever was said, Elizabeth immediately dismissed Sidney from court, sending him off to his sister at Wilton.


31 Ibid., 68.
Although he wrote the *Old Arcadia* during this time, Sidney’s literary pleasures seem to be clearly secondary to his political ambitions. The *Arcadia* was, as he says in the introductory letter to his sister, an “idle work,” and Sidney’s correspondence during this time is filled with expressions of idleness. A letter to his brother is typical of this period:

> Now, sir, for news, I refer myself to this bearer; he can tell you how idly we look on our neighbours’ fires, and nothing is happened notable at home, save only Drake’s return...And to conclude, my eyes are almost closed up, overwatched with tedious business.\(^{32}\)

The sense that he is idly watching his “neighbours’ fires” only intensifies the sense, not only of Sidney being far from court, but far from the real business of the continent, as it is only Drake’s return from abroad that catches his attention on native events. While that may be true, if we pay attention to the political concerns of his writings at the time, particularly the *Arcadia*’s first form, Sidney seems to be thinking not so much about his own potential employment (whether in promising or frustrated terms), but about criticizing the court which had dismissed him. Most critical accounts of the *Old Arcadia*’s politics are, in fact, centered on criticisms and evaluations of Elizabeth and her court.\(^{33}\)

When he was allowed to return to court, however, he would soon find increasing opportunities to turn the international and religious ideals of his youth into action.

\(^{32}\) Duncan-Jones, 171.

\(^{33}\) Duncan-Jones usefully, although somewhat too-dismissively, summarizes the political plot of the *Old Arcadia* in this way: “The whole story hinges on the capriciousness of an ageing monarch who disregards advice given by a loyal courtier, and is unable to control his own undignified and inappropriate sexual passions” (177).
Consequently, the revisions to the *Arcadia* focus less on criticism of bad rulers and more on the kind of choices that an active courtier, diplomat, and knight can make. This is a subtle shift (and the earlier critical bent certainly does not disappear), but I think it shows a broadening of Sidney’s political reflection as it becomes less utopian (or rather, as Basilus’ *Arcadia* falls apart, dystopian) and more responsive to the contradictions Sidney faced as one who could finally act on his contradictory loyalties.

Sidney returned to court in early 1581, bearing a jeweled whip for Elizabeth to symbolize his submission. However, his hopes for political advantage were dealt a serious blow from an unexpected direction: his uncle had an heir. As his friend William Camden wrote:

Sir Philip Sidney, who was a long time heir apparent to the Earl of Leicester, after the said Earl had a son born to him, used at the next tilt-day following *Speravi* [I have hoped] thus dashed through, to show his hope therein was dashed.34

While Sidney would remain loyal to his uncle and the cause of his faction (for example, writing the public defense of his uncle in response to the slanderous *Leicester’s Commonwealth*), he seems to have taken responsibility for his own advancement, and, ultimately the need to secure his own future rather than resting on Leicester’s laurels served him well.

In the midst of serving two terms in Parliament, a marginal but improved form of action for Sidney, the first clear sign of his growing success came when Elizabeth knighted him in early 1583. Most importantly, however, Sidney finally married. His father managed a successful match with Walsingham’s daughter Frances, a coupling that

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34 Duncan-Jones, 194.
had the son’s admiration for the father as much in mind as the daughter, and the surviving letters from this time suggest that Sidney’s main interest in the match had to do with the potential advantage that his father-in-law might bring him (they lived largely apart, and of the 30 letters to Walsingham, only one even mentions Frances).\(^{35}\) Walsingham, a fellow supporter of the potential Protestant alliance, who had also, like Sidney, spent much of his formative time on the continent, was to be a constant friend and confidant for Sidney, and his letters to the older man, particularly from the Netherlands, are some of the most candid we have from Sidney. It is in one of these letters (written in 1586 after Sidney stopped revising the *Arcadia*, having left his manuscripts in England) that Sidney pens his most severe criticism of the Queen that we have:

> If her Majesty wear the fowntain I woold fear considring what I daily fynd that we shold wax dry, but she is but a means whom God useth and I know not whether I am deceaved but I am faithfully persuaded that if she shold withdraw her self other springes woold ryse to help this action. For me thinkes I see the great work indeed in hand, against the abusers of the world, wherein it is no greater fault to have confidence in mans power, then it is to hastily to despair of Gods work. I think a wyse and constant man ought never to greev whyle he doth plai as a man mai sai his own part truly though others be out but if him self leav his hold becaws other marrin[ers] will be ydle he will hardli forg[ive] him self his own fault. For me I can not promis of my own cource no nor of the my [ ] becaws I know there is a hyer power that must uphold me or els I shall fall, but certainly I trust, I shall not by other mens wants be drawn from my self.\(^{36}\)

This remarkable passage which diminishes the queen to a “means whom God useth” also suggests that she is a replaceable actor in a greater cause. It even suggests that near the

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\(^{35}\) Wallace, 390-4.

end of his life, Sidney would oppose her will if it was one of “other mens wants” that
would draw him from himself. The consequences of Sidney’s self-understanding as the
queen’s subject stands in stark contrast to the one who has the courage to “plai as a man
mai sai his own part truly.” That Sidney felt comfortable enough to write this way to
Walsingham suggests more than political alliance, perhaps even a bond stronger than to
his uncle (who seems not to have been personally fond of Sidney, while valuing his
potential talents). But it also suggests that Sidney may have finally found a faction with
Walsingham both influential and dedicated enough to turn his domestic frustrations into
active uses. Certainly, Walsingham became an active supporter of his son-in-law at court,
and he was partly responsible for Sidney’s first successful appointment as a joint Master
of the Ordinance (with his uncle the Earl of Warwick), a job which placed him in
command of Dover’s defenses and, ultimately, provided him enough military contacts to
justify his final trip to the Low Countries.37

These personal developments, combined with a changing situation on the
continent, turned Sidney’s hopes for direct action into realities. Although the French were
reluctant to renew their involvement in the Low Countries after Anjou’s failure, their
initial absence may have been one of the factors that led Elizabeth to begin sending the

37 Sidney had actively pursued a number of other jobs that the Queen denied him, including
replacing his father in Wales, following Lord Grey in Ireland, and becoming governor of the Isle of Wight.
Walsingham’s influence seems to have been necessary for him to attain even the less high profile position
he finally secured. Elizabeth did, however, send him on two smaller missions, neither of which he could
have been grateful for. The first, in 1582, was to accompany Alencon with his mother on their (ultimately
failed) trip to defend the Low Countries. As with his earlier diplomatic trip, Sidney was to play only a
symbolic part, and it is likely that Elizabeth sent him out of spite, forcing him to display his social and
rhetorical skills for a woman whose actions in Paris almost got him killed, and for a man he had publicly
denounced. The second trip was a fruitless excursion to France after Anjou’s death to sound out the new
King Henri for help defending the Low Countries. Elizabeth intended to send no English help, and, Sidney,
all but knowing the trip would be a failure, found even this trip only nominally in line with his real hopes
for employment.
small forces which Leicester and Sidney would lead. He was dispatched in 1585 and, of course, died not long after arriving.

The period after his exile, then, was a period of relative political success for Sidney. This was also the time during which he was revising the *Arcadia*. He left the working manuscript under Greville’s care in England, and we cannot say how the relatively well-documented Sidney of that time, who shows remarkable reflection on the realities and difficulties of managing war, might have altered the increasingly martial story. Nonetheless, in his last few years in England, Sidney suffered significantly less of the “idleness” that occupied the first draft of the *Arcadia*. He was not, of course, assured of any success, and even after serving in the Netherlands for a time, he expresses to Walsingham how troubled he feels is his relationship with England: “how apt the Queen is to interpret every thing to my disadvantage. ... I understand I am called very ambitious and proud at home, but certainly if thei knew my ha[rt] thei woold not altogether so judg me.”

Sidney’s various ambitions and commitments, then, were the source of serious personal and political conflicts. In them, he found praise, success, neglect, slander, and, for a time, defeat. The man who later generations would call the “ideal courtier” was nothing of the sort, and, as the New Arcadia in particular shows, his fiction is quite aware of the troubles that interfere with the creation of such an ideal courtier in a “golden world.” As Sidney became a knight in both title and occupation, he was also altering his pastoral romance into a story more occupied with the difficulties faced by knights trying

38 Feuillerat, 167.
to live up to their own promise. And as I hope will become clear, those problems create a
different sense of what counts as political ways of writing and thinking in Sidney’s
fiction. Sidney would approach this problem generically, using mixed genres to
determine how, and even if, a knight can navigate the conflicting forces, both from within
and without himself, that lead him to turns his ideals into action.

2.2 Critical Background of Politics and Genre in the New Arcadia

Sidney’s politics have been a constant critical concern, but there has been little
discussion of how his political situation affected the revision of the New Arcadia in
particular, which seems to date from 1582-1584.39 This is surprising given how his life
and the political climate both changed significantly during these years. Furthermore, the
New Arcadia adds a full rebellion by Basilus’ sister and nephew, a political possibility
which dwarfs the political danger of the peasant uprisings in the Old Arcadia, as well as
narrating the majority of the episodes from Book II amid political turmoil. Attention to
the New Arcadia’s style and themes of thinking through politics, then, is called for.

Much of the work treats Sidney’s writings and political thinking as a whole, rather
than tracing changes over time. And, with the New Arcadia, this usually involves taking
Amphilanthus’ rebellion as Sidney’s direct reflection on the actual possibilities of
rebellion, which, as I argue in the following sections, is far too literal an understanding of
how Sidney thinks through political issues in the work. In that mode, we find a majority
of critics attempting to classify Sidney as either pro or anti-Huguenot, a classification

39 I depend here upon Katherine Duncan-Jones’ speculations on dating which are generally
accepted, and seem to have been assumed even before her arguments (Duncan-Jones 1991, 168).
which would put Sidney either for or against open rebellion. One of the largest difficulties with these classifications and the arguments surrounding them is that they see Sidney’s assent or dissent as universal, rather than making distinctions between, at the very least, a Protestant queen and a Catholic “tyrant.” Thus, we find Andrew Weiner arguing that Sidney may well have been considering the possibilities of an Essex-like rebellion because he favorably discussed potential Protestant rebellions in his correspondence. Similarly, Louis Montrose suggests that Sidney’s “political allegory” presaged “sociopolitical transformations [that] lead circuitously but surely from Sidney to Milton.” These Whiggish extremes are unwarranted particularly because they neglect the fact that Sidney’s considerations of rebellion always went hand in hand with his identity as a member of a privileged class, as well as a Dudley, Leicester, and Sidney. There have been discussions, especially in the last ten years, about Sidney’s relation to republican thought, but whatever his interest in it might have been, claims for his general endorsement of actually rebellious republicanism certainly overstate the case, or at least

40 See Worden’s scorecard of the wildly differing conclusions, especially in nineteenth and early twentieth century criticism, 144-5.

41 Weiner, 154.

42 Louis Adrian Montrose, “Celebration and Insinuation: Sir Philip Sidney and the Motives of Elizabethan Courtship,” Renaissance Drama 8 (1977): 3-35, 34. This is a throwaway line from Montrose’s article, but one that gets him some rhetorical force. The substance of his argument is that Sidney’s use of court entertainment contained potentially subversive elements that Milton in fact makes explicit by exposing court masques and poetry as mystification: “For Milton, the task of the inspired Christian poet was to destroy the spurious Renaissance analogy of royal encomium and sacred hymn, to reveal that the celebration of kings was a demonic parody of the celebration of God” (Montrose 1978, 35). In terms of literary history and strategy, I agree with Montrose, but the political motivations of these “parodies” do not align easily.
ignore the ways in which Sidney’s literary texts qualify and make problems for such thought. 43

But the predominance of the question of rebellion is also a problem because so many authors seem to treat it as a real option for Sidney (both at home and on the continent) rather than as a literary way of thinking about obedience and autonomy. 44

Thus, Stephen Greenblatt, in “Murdering Peasants: Status, Genre, and the Representation of Rebellion,” finds Sidney to be an uncritical champion of the status quo because Sidney portrays the peasants in the Helot rebellion as helpless while the aristocrats come to bring reason and order to their rabble. 45 When he notes, correctly, that Sidney seems entirely suspicious of outright rebellion, Greenblatt comments that the Arcadia “expressed more than any other the whole ethos of the English Aristocracy and of those – and they were a great part of the entire propertied class – who fashioned themselves after that ethos” (16). Such a statement ignores the differences between monarch and aristocracy, and even among the members of the aristocracy, some of which might side with the loyal Burghley, while others would support the radical and unpopular calls for autonomy under

43 David Norbrook puts the point well: “‘Sidney’s aristocratic consciousness thus affects his political outlook in complex ways: if it makes him sympathize with noble rebels against tyrannous monarchs, it also instills considerable social caution.’” (89) Furthermore, many of those who hope to find a rebellious or republican thrust in Sidney’s work often overlook the fact that the kind of rebellious thinking that Languet had in mind was directed towards Catholic monarchs rather than to those, like Elizabeth, who simply rebuffed ideas of a unified Protestant Europe. On Sidney’s potential flirtation with republican thought, see Andrew Weiner’s Sir Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Protestantism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), Tracey Sedinger’s “Sidney’s New Arcadia and the Decay of Protestant Republicanism,” (SEL 47:1 [2007]: 45-77), and Robert E. Stillman’s Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008).

44 See, for example, Raitiere’s Faire Bitts: Philip Sidney and Renaissance Political Theory (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1984, esp. 73-6), Victor Skretkowicz’s “Algernon Sidney and Philip Sidney: A Continuity of Rebellion” (Sidney Journal 17:2 [1999]: 3-18).

Leicester, both of which could, while opposing each other, join against suspected Catholic factions. In the middle of such various levels of power and alliance (was there such a thing as “the whole ethos of the English Aristocracy”?), literary rebellion can take on many shades of difference from authority that literalizing it may miss.

When we turn to the studies that look at other aspects of Sidney’s politics, they largely neglect the differences between the New and Old Arcadias. Blair Worden, whose *The Sound of Virtue* is the latest (and most comprehensive) attempt to read the Old Arcadia as a political allegory, stays with the earlier work because “political events are closer to the front of Sidney’s mind in the first version than in the second.”\(^{46}\) This may well be true if a political reading strives for identifiable historical topicality and one-to-one allegorization of Sidney’s ideas about Elizabeth specifically, and most political commentary on Sidney’s writings depends on the Old rather than the New Arcadia.\(^{47}\) Worden does make a strong case for such readings of the Old Arcadia (particularly with the topical couplings of Basilus/Elizabeth and Philanax/Burghley), but I believe that we

\(^{46}\) *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney’s Arcadia and Elizabethan Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), xxii. David Norbrook largely agrees, suggesting even that Sidney left his revisions unfinished because, politically, it was incoherent: “Sidney [stopped writing] possibly because he realized that the work’s serious religious and political concerns, and its increasing inwardness, were becoming incompatible with the courtly framework.” (95)

\(^{47}\) See, for example, the roundtable discussion of Worden’s book by Gavin Alexander, Robert Stillman, Victor Skrektowicz, Roger Kuin, and Blair Worden, “A Discussion of Blair Worden’s *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney’s ‘Arcadia’ and the Elizabethan Politics,*” *Sidney Journal* 16:1 (1998): 36-56. Although she does not pursue it, Annabel Patterson comments (uniquely) that the New Arcadia is actually more political than its predecessor: “[I]n the New Arcadia there was a more frontal emphasis on politics throughout, and [a] dissociation of Sidney himself from the erotic or amorous impulses of the work. All of the other developments – the generic shift from pastoral to chivalric romance, the massive expansion of the narrative to broaden the political perspective of the work and to create the taxonomy of political theory and example recognized by Greville – are consistent with a loss of confidence in indirect or covert discourse, or in messages accommodated to the forms of Elizabethan courtship” (“Under...Pretty Tales”: Intention in Sidney’s Arcadia,” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 15.1 (1982): 5-21, 18). I would argue, instead, that it was less “covert” because it was less interested in taking firm (and potentially dangerous) political stances than in reflecting more on the inherent conflicts and possibilities of Sidney’s possibilities.
do not find this in the *New Arcadia* because Sidney is concerned more with his own political potential, and less with thinking about “current events.” In other words, politics in the *New Arcadia* occurs as self-reflection rather than reflection on events around him. So although there is much to be learned from Worden’s reading of Sidney’s dissatisfaction with and criticism of Elizabethan policies on the continent, both he, and the *Old Arcadia* generally, show us less about how Sidney was trying to respond to those events. The *New Arcadia* offers this and calls for a political reading of its own.

The few works that try to address the *New Arcadia*’s politics often find little difference with his previous attitudes, or make arguments that do not address its historical or generic specificity. James Biester’s “‘A Pleasant and Terrible Reverence’: Maintenance of Majesty in Sidney’s *New Arcadia*” argues that Sidney’s text is primarily an educational tool for monarchs such that “however strong [Sidney’s] doubts about the value of absolute monarchy, he hoped his text might bestow rulers more merciful and just upon the world.” It would seem, though, that the work is not directed at educating a monarch, but at questioning the role of an internationally connected noble under, by this time, always flawed monarchs. The *Old Arcadia*’s attention to Basilus’ shortcomings and Euarchus’ idealization is more suited to such a reading since the political topicality of the text focuses on the consequences of a monarch’s decisions, while the *New Arcadia*, by looking more closely at the princes and Amphialus, is instead concerned with what it means to be a good “knight,” and to serve one’s own ideals and one’s loyalty to a crown at the same time.

48 *Philological Quarterly.* 72.4 (Fall, 1993): 419-442, 438.
Clare Kinney’s “Chivalry Unmasked: Courtly Spectacle and the Abuses of Romance in Sidney’s *New Arcadia*” is the sole work that argues directly for a political reading of Sidney’s generic changes to the *Old Arcadia*. She offers a compelling reading of Sidney’s ironic use of chivalric conventions as criticisms of Elizabeth’s ability to “kidnap” the symbols and self-representations of her nobles:

> He has ... created a half-buried but suggestive allegory in which a thoroughly problematized, morally exhausted, and practically moribund version of chivalric romance is repossessed by a virgin queen [Cecropia] whose public mythology is akin to that of Elizabeth Tudor.49

Kinney’s reading, an application to the *New Arcadia* of the same reading Louis Montrose offers of Sidney’s *Lady of May*,50 makes Sidney’s concern focused on Elizabeth rather than attending to the ways in which Sidney’s position seems much closer to Amphialus and in which he identifies the remaining potential of chivalry for the aristocracy. Furthermore, by focusing primarily on Cecropia’s manipulations, Kinney also neglects to discuss the ways that Pyrocles and Musidorus (as well as Philisides, Sidney’s alter-ego in the text) all engage in more successful and less “moribund” versions of chivalric romance tropes.

Two critics who come closer to recognizing the self-reflection at work in the *New Arcadia*, Richard McCoy and Alan Sinfield, both point out that the *New Arcadia* seems to want to weigh the options for actors caught between multiple loyalties, but neither develop the insight satisfactorily. McCoy’s reading in *Sir Philip Sidney: Rebellion in*


50 Montrose’s reading is found in “Celebration and Insinuation,” cited above.
Arcadia is ultimately more interested in a psychological, and specifically Oedipal, view of Sidney that finds the source of his political worries in a resistance to father figures (his own, Leicester, and Languet). Thus, McCoy reads the work as a struggle against paternal authority figures (like Basilus, Philanax, and, gender aside, Cecropia). Although he recognizes the political dimension of such resistance to authority, he interprets the source of Sidney’s complexity on these issues as involuntary psychological blockages rather than thoughtful reflections on his frustrations. As he says, Sidney “cannot follow his more radical impulses through to their conclusion, nor can he accept the conservative orthodoxies of conventional political thought. His uncertainty is increased by feelings of guilt and anxiety...” Where McCoy finds incompletion and confusion, I find reasoned engagement (at the least about the causes of the impasses).

I have little quarrel with Sinfield’s “Power and Ideology: An Outline Theory and Sidney’s Arcadia” other than that it does not develop a reading it claims for the work. The article’s primary goal is to challenge broad claims for the power of Elizabetian

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52 McCoy, Rebellion, 216.

53 I agree wholeheartedly with McCoy’s call for reading the political dimension of Sidney’s late fiction, although I might not be doing it here if he had not decided to turn a biographical and historical orientation into a largely psychoanalytic reading: “A new understanding of Sidney’s life and art is essential for several reasons. It will allow full recognition of the various contradictions in his fiction, in all their intensity, as well as a more satisfactory account of their significance. A knowledge of their origins in his own situation should allow both a more sympathetic understanding of his predicament and a greater realism, for one can appreciate the actual obstacles to his success in both his artistic and political undertakings. An understanding of the difficulties and risks and limited alternatives should discourage facile abuse. On the other hand, such knowledge will certainly hinder the hagiographic tendencies of most Sidney criticism, which oversimplifies the assessment of his literature as well as his life. Such overestimation is ultimately a disservice, for the human and historical significance of his conflicts is diminished by such easy solutions” (Sir Philip Sidney: Rebellion in Arcadia, 35).

absolutism or its subversion (associated with older new historicist accounts of containment/subversion), paying attention instead to “the continual exploitation of diverse opportunities for specific classes, fractions and categories to confirm or extend economic, political or ideological power.” The Arcadia, he asserts, is an exemplary text of complex questioning of power because it asks to be read “not necessarily as subversive, but as a site of contest” because, while it certainly criticizes absolutist tendencies, it offers no clear alternative. Instead, written from the point of view of a state servant who had both something to gain and to lose from the power structure, Sidney’s work expresses admiration and skepticism towards oligarchy, constitutional restraints to power, rebellion of the commons, rebellion of the aristocracy, and the difficult role of counsel. For Sinfield, “Sidney is prepared to endorse none of the socio-political groups who claim to bring order to the society of the Arcadia... . We require a more elaborate model of the potential for dissent in the Elizabethan state, a model that will enable us to theorize Sidney’s relative independence of thought about the power structure of his society and the competing groups within it.” While I agree with the spirit of these claims, Sinfield offers almost no concrete examples of how this functions in the fiction itself, something I hope this chapter will provide.

One work remains which, although purporting to examine the effect of Sidney’s politics on the last years of his life, is ultimately unsatisfactory. In Faire Bitts: Sir Philip Sidney and Renaissance Political Theory, Martin Raitiere finds Sidney to be a “royalist”

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55 Ibid., 397-8.
56 Ibid., 407.
57 Ibid., 401.
because he writes only about monarchies – “simply counting pages would prove this.”

Apart from the fact that just about every writer in the period would have written exclusively about monarchies, to be in favor of them does not mean that one cannot be critical of them. Raitiere reads the _Arcadias_ as countering the Huguenots, and particularly his mentor Hubert Languet, on their “monarchomach” (or “king fighter”) stance, which justifies rebelling against tyrants (where “tyrant” often simply meant Catholic). While I think Raitiere is right that Sidney was less radical than his continental friends, his methodology sees only two options: absolutism or all out Protestant republicanism and possibly English rebellion. Sidney in fact lies somewhere in between, and where Raitiere sees rejection and opposition, I find Sidney simply to be evaluating differences and contradictions among his own divided loyalties.

The _New Arcadia_ has received much more attention to its generic status and modifications, although these studies rarely discuss the work’s generic politics. Michael McCanless, for example, shares my view that the _New Arcadia_’s generic mixing is

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59 The most influential studies that address the _New Arcadia_’s generic changes (but which do not address them in relation to Sidney’s politics) include Walter R. Davis’ _A Map of Arcadia: Sidney’s Romance in its Tradition_ (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), Thelma N. Greenfield’s _The Eye of Judgment: Reading the New Arcadia_ (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1982), Nancy Lindheim’s _The Structure of Sidney’s Arcadia_ (Toronto-Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1982), and Joan Rees’ _Sir Philip Sidney and Arcadia_ (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1991). Recently, more attention has been paid to tracing Sidney’s relation to popular romance sources. See V. L. Forsyth’s “The Two Arcadias of Sidney’s Two Arcadias” (SEL 49:1 [2009]: 1-15), Elizabeth Bearden’s “Sidney’s “mongrell tragicomedy” and Anglo-Spanish Exchange in the _New Arcadia_” (The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies, 10: 1 [Spring/Summer 2010]: 29-51), and Tiffany Werth’s “The Reformation of Romance in Sir Philip Sidney’s _The New Arcadia_” (English Literary Renaissance 40:1 [2010]: 33-55).
deliberate rather than a failed experiment, as Norbrook argues. For McCanless, however, the generic mixing follows the general Renaissance trend toward generic and encyclopedic completeness rather than a conflict of interests. If Sidney does recognize conflict, he says, it is ultimately something to be overcome when we understand the whole is greater than the (generic) parts:

It was indeed as a critique of pure generic distinctions which cannot accommodate the dialectics of human moral identity that Sidney recomposed the old Arcadia as the new. By exploiting the established identification of specific generic conventions with equally specific categories of human experience, Sidney was enabled to create a multifaceted fiction in which he fused the world of human ethical choice and action, the rhetorical generic resources through which men textualize this world, and the purely verbal world of his own Arcadian fiction.

Such a reading ultimately ignores the very specific and localized clashes of generic moments in the text as addressing or even creating specific problems about a given topic. It instead defers to a universal perspective in which these differences become meaningless, especially if we are to interpret generic conflict as a conflict of political interests where, in action if not in rhetoric, choices have to be made.

Colin Burrow applies the epic-versus-romance category to the New Arcadia, in a way that is close to my sense of how genres collide in the New Arcadia, but he ultimately finds the experiment to be unsuccessful and, for Sidney, unproductive: “It was probably with this confrontation of his impossible desire to write an epic in the language of romance, a work which praised vehement justice in a culture attuned to the power of pity,


61 Ibid, 161.
that Sidney’s quill hit the desk for the last time.” Furthermore, while Burrow does implicate a kind of political frustration to be part of Sidney’s “impossible desire,” he ultimately suggests that text gives up on this political reflection as a hopeless endeavor, a notion which to me seems incompatible with Sidney’s preparation at that time to finally act on his political and religious convictions after a life of almost resigned inactivity.

What is more, Burrow’s attempt to see the New Arcadia as a struggle between romance and epic neglects to mention that a full half of the revision remains pastoral, and it is unclear how he sees that third genre functioning alongside epic and romance in the work.

Finally, Victor Skretkowicz argues that Sidney makes use of Greek romance models in both versions of the Arcadia, specifically drawing on their politicized republication in early modern Europe. Although the general argument of Skretkowicz’s monograph is that Greek romance was generally understood as part of the rhetorical repertoire of activist Protestants, his chapter on Sidney largely repeats interpretations that have come before, specifically Blair Worden’s and Robert Stillman’s, pointing out how Sidney’s use of Greek romances enhance those readings. In the end, Skretkowicz’s reading of the New Arcadia says, again, that Sidney simply shared Languet’s politics:

Sidney’s fictional recipe for how to achieve regional stability represents the Protestant League’s desire to build a dynastic hegemony of monarchomachist, anti-papal states. The New Arcadia especially provides glaring instances of tyranny defeated, or at least compromised, by self-righteous, self-sacrificing heroes who install popularly supported monarchs.

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62 Epic Romance, 142.

63 European Erotic Romance: Philhellene Protestantism, Renaissance Translation, and English Literary Politics (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010).

64 Ibid., 179.
While this reading is probably accurate as far as it goes, Skretkowicz pays relatively little attention to how the fading remnants of Greek romance in the New Arcadia seem to work in ways that oppose their easy integration with chivalric romance and even epic overtones, as Burrow pointed out above.

Previous criticism, then, largely neglects the political consequences of Sidney’s generic mixtures in the Arcadia revisions. They also neglect the potentially changing political attitude of a young man who, for the first time in his life, was about to be offered a chance to act on his political and religious convictions which, previously, had been only theoretical and rhetorical. Sidney’s alterations to the original story are remarkable and, despite some critical evaluations to the contrary, do not seem capable of resulting in the same conclusion offered in the *Old Arcadia*, which was tacked on to the revision when it was finally published in 1593. Sidney’s entire personal and political situation changed after he completed the Old Arcadia, not only because he was slowly regaining Elizabeth’s favor, but also because he was finally able to help his friends and allies in what he hoped was a Protestant rebellion in the Netherlands against the Catholic Spanish. But Sidney had learned about political misfortune first-hand, and his new fictions recorded both potential victories and contradictions in the path he was about to embrace. As the most remarkable aspect of the revisions in the text, the extreme generic changes seem to be the perfect place to look for these new concerns, as the following sections will show.

2.3 Knights, Lovers, and Genre: the Princes and Plangus in Book II.

In the revisions, Sidney uses genre to chart his expanding but still conflicted loyalties to issues that tested his obedience to the limitations the English throne had
placed upon him. The political ramifications of his new fiction thus go beyond the more
monarch-centered politics of the *Old Arcadia* to investigate the self-understanding of
political actors who have to navigate multiple commitments which may not always
cohere. Specifically, Sidney seems most interested in attempting to find a way to
reconcile two opposing motivations. On the one hand, he dramatizes multiple
understandings of submission to traditional notions of public duty, whether to a crown, a
sense of civic stability, or an idealized “heroic” public purpose. But, on the other hand, he
complicates these duties with an analysis of desires and self-assertions that may conflict
with traditional authorities. The revisions are an attempt to reconcile Sidney’s reflections
on authority and submission, each of which is given alternatingly positive and negative
interpretations.

These issues are certainly present in Sidney’s biography, particularly toward the
end of his life when circumstances forced him to face conflicts of obedience both to
Elizabeth and to his friends’ hopes for a unified Protestant confederation. His letters, as
well as his actions and how they were received, particularly by Elizabeth, show Sidney’s
own sense of duty to be something which he continually re-interpreted: when he tried to
act on his sense of duty towards his friends’ ideals on the continent, he risked Elizabeth
seeing him as disobedient. But he also was careful to avoid thinking, writing, or acting
like a rebel, and his return to Elizabeth’s court with a jeweled whip seems at once a sign
of his contrition, but also a sincere statement that he remained a loyal servant. For
Sidney, then, what it actually meant to be a public servant was a contentious issue, and
the *New Arcadia* explores how obedience and self-assertion, especially in relation to
multiple social duties, may well have been an irresolvable issue, both in Sidney’s life and his fiction.

Sidney approaches this issue generally through the New Arcadia’s mixing of pastoral and “heroic” romance. In the broadest terms, Sidney’s uses pastoral romance to explore issues of self-assertion, usually cast in terms of love and passion, that lead his characters to withdraw from their traditionally understood public duties. It is this activity of withdrawal that ultimately marks how Sidney understands pastoral to function in the narrative, and it is instructive that, unlike the Arcadia’s namesake in Sannazarro’s version, pastoral withdrawal is usually responsible for creating new conflicts rather than an attempt to flee from them and find harmony in a green world. In the Old Arcadia, for

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65 I use Sidney’s term “heroic” rather than calling the martial additions chivalric or epic, as other commentators have, for two reasons. First, it is the term Sidney uses for such generic qualities in the Defense. Second, although the actual tropes Sidney includes are most like the chivalric tradition, particularly in Book III, their obvious pedagogical use for the education of princes in Book II is closer to how the critical tradition speaks of epic, especially when the education of a ruler is meant to offer an image of a larger society’s political ideas. Sidney alternates between both chivalric and epic modes of “heroic” writing in his revisions, and it seems clear that he is less interested in pitting epic against chivalric modes (as Ariosto may have done) than he is with pitting both against pastoral romance.

66 I would note that pastoral romance should be understood as distinct from a more general understanding of “pastoral” itself. This distinction is important because, as we will see, Sidney includes the themes of pastoral romance in the midst of stories where the action is decidedly chivalric, and pastoral romance need not be identified primarily as being set in a physically removed “green world.” As Sidney inherited the genre from Jacopo Sannazarro and Jorge de Montemayor, pastoral romance was typified by narratives in which lovers give up their traditional identities in a kind of love-fugue in order to lament their longing or praise their beloved. (Sannazarro does more of the former while Montemayor prefers the latter.) The action itself may be minimal, as with Sannazarro in which the narrative primarily provides opportunities for eclogues and singing contests among shepherds, or it may borrow more of the chance-filled wandering adventures of the Greek romances, as in Montemayor’s Diana. Although pastoral romance of course borrowed much from Virgilian eclogues and other examples of early modern pastoral poetry, it was a genre guided by the consequences of distracting and all-consuming passion with less of the spiritual overtones and pointed social critique of much pastoral lyric, such as Spenser’s Shepherdes Calendar. See especially Greenfield’s chapter “Literary Sources” in The Eye of Judgment: Reading the New Arcadia, 123-142 and Walter Davis’ “Sidney and the Pastoral Romance” in A Map of Arcadia, 45-58. Renato Poggioli also elaborates this distinction in The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975): 200-212.

67 The unusual nature of how Sidney understands and uses pastoral in both Arcadias has been a topic of much critical debate. A majority of critics, largely influenced by the clearer judgments of the Old
example, Basilius’ love-inspired retreat from governance is the central political fable of the entire work, and much of the narrative, especially Books 3-5, concerns how to undo the problems created by his retreat and, essentially, how to undo the effects of pastoral thinking. In the New Arcadia, however, Sidney broadens the scope of pastoral to include a wide range of “withdrawals” from duty, some of which turn out to be more complicated mixtures of alternative social and public obligations that initially create social discord. But, especially in the New Arcadia, pastoral is not always negative, and, as I show below, each of the more publicly-minded heroic episodes seems to pass through a period of pastoral testing in which knights or rulers must try to incorporate their personal obsessions with their public roles. Pastoral moments may well be read as examples of withdrawal from public life, but, in the New Arcadia, Sidney is much more interested in exploring the variety of ways that various “withdrawals” create new and often unsettling rearrangements of public obligations.

Sidney’s extensive additions of heroic, and specifically chivalric, material initially seems to function as an outline of his characters’ public duties, particularly in the Arcadia, find Sidney to be simply critical of the genre, coming down hard on the side of virtuous reason against dangerous and possibly sinful passion. See, for example, Weiner, Jon S. Lawry, Sidney’s Two Arcadias: Pattern and Proceeding (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), and David Kalstone, Sidney’s Poetry: Contexts and Interpretations (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), and Richard Helgerson’s The Elizabethan Prodigals (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976): 147-51. Others, however, argue that Sidney’s work attempts to redeem pastoral in one way or another, usually as a spiritual or philosophical fable. Walter Davis, for example, argues that Sidneian pastoral is really a process of withdrawal and return for spiritual renewal: “The action of the pastoral romance is simply the progress of the hero through the various areas of the setting: from the outer circle into the inner circle, hence to the center and out again. Since each circle of the setting encourages a certain kind of activity this progress is equivalent to entrance into Arcady in pain and turmoil and reemergence in harmony with oneself.” (38). Similar readings can be found in Elizabeth Dipple’s “Metamorphosis in Sidney’s Arcadia,” Philological Quarterly 50 (1971): 47-62, William Craft’s “Remaking the Heroic Self in the New Arcadia,” SEL 25 (1985): 45-67, and Thelma N. Greenfield’s The Eye of Judgment: Reading the New Arcadia (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1982).

68 See Lindheim, 128-130.
“chivalric” education of his two princes which ostensibly establishes them as idealized courtiers and future monarchs. If this was their only role, the heroic additions would operate as a corrective to the pastoral failures of the *Old Arcadia*. However, it becomes clear that the heroic episodes cannot provide satisfactory models for public action since they are unable to incorporate the pastoral intrusions which the princes encounter in their adventures. Sidney’s aim is not to say that a hero should resist the temptations that lead to withdrawal from obedience to public authority; on the contrary, the true romance hero of the *New Arcadia* would be one who could excel at both heroic and pastoral roles simultaneously. If the heroic serves as a corrective to the dalliance of pastoral romance, the attention to self-assertion and insistence on personal authority within pastoral saves heroic romance from an empty formalism of abstract virtues which, as the princes consistently show in the Book II, do not easily translate into the messy world of politics.

Generically, then, the *New Arcadia* is designed around the confrontation of pastoral and heroic genres, each of which offer a model for Sidney’s conceptions of how a political and social agent organizes its goals. But Sidney seems ultimately less interested in finding a clear way to reconcile these goals than he is to explore exactly how they conflict. It is possible to see this aspect, like so many other examples of apparent contradiction in the *Arcadia*, as a sign of Sidney’s intellectual or philosophical failure in the face of apparently irreconcilable motivations. 69 As the plot progresses and Sidney’s

69 C. S. Lewis raised and immediately rejected this interpretation of the *Arcadia*’s conception of the self in *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954): 341. His perspective was broadly philosophical rather than political, however, and his reading, like others that find Sidney to be interested of reconciling rather than exploring opposites, looked for evidence that would confirm his implied intentions according to the *Apologie*. Lewis ultimately praises the *Arcadia* as stylistically triumphant, but philosophically confused. I simply take this “confusion” to be the point, not a failure.
additions become more complicated, these multiple and almost dialectical implications of pastoral and heroic genres place the heroes in what appear to be increasingly irresolvable circumstances, and, by the end of the extant *New Arcadia*, Sidney found himself in the midst of a generic differend: pastoral and chivalric dynamics in the narrative do not cohere. In fact, by the end of the Book III, the *New Arcadia* seems to have crystallized the incompatibility of the conflicting generic motivations in the figure of Amphialus, who has completely confused and corrupted both his duty to himself and to the public good by creating a rebellion and imprisoning Philoclea, the object of his love. In the end, Amphialus stands as a figure whose contradictory commitments seem to mark the impossibility of the heroic and pastoral coexisting in a single figure, since his attempt to reconcile his role as knight and lover lead to ruin both for the country of Arcadia and for Amphilanthus’ romantic fulfillment. And yet, as I tried to show in the biographical section above, Sidney himself lived this irreconcilable difference of loyalty and self-assertion. His fiction, then, tries to explore the shape and effects of a notion of agency that seems irreducibly conflicted, and we should read this apparent contradiction in the *New Arcadia* as a structural, and generic, starting point, rather than a failure of form.

Although the *New Arcadia* opens with a scene of two shepherds praising their idealized love in an idyllic setting, the narrative almost immediately instructs the reader that “pastoral” in Sidney’s country of Arcadia will become a problem rather than a simple generic marker of literary expectations. In fact, as soon as we meet Musidorus and Pyrocles, whose adventures in Arcadia make up the main plot, we realize that their still protean self-understanding revolves around the question of what type of story they occupy. Their first speeches about each other, in fact, can be read as simultaneously an
attempt to cast them into proper generic roles (Musidorus as the exemplary knight and Pyrocles as the exemplary pastoral lover) and as recognitions that these roles are, by themselves, insufficient to exhaust the potential of their characters.\textsuperscript{70}

From the beginning, the princes set the terms of the general conflict of generic markers through which the characters initially judge both themselves and others. Musidorus initially casts himself as an idealized martial hero and expresses contempt for Pyrocles’ having fallen in love. He readies an entire list of arguments to persuade his cousin to return to the heroic life they have just left, and the speech he intends to give is a standard recitation of action versus passivity and public duty versus selfishness:

For having in the beginning of Pyrocles’ speech which defended his solitariness framed in his mind a reply against it in the praise of honourable action (in showing that such a kind of contemplation is but a glorious title to idleness; that in action a man did not only better himself but benefit others; that the gods would not have delivered a soul into the body which hath arms and legs, only instruments of doing, but that it were intended the mind should employ them; and that the mind should best know his own good or evil by practice – which knowledge was the only way to increase the one and correct the other; besides many other arguments which the plentifulness of the matter yielded to the sharpness of his wit)... \textsuperscript{71}

These virtues are immediately set against those of lovers whose passion leads to the negation of all “manly” and heroic virtues: “the effeminate love of a woman doth so

\textsuperscript{70} See Elizabeth Dipple, “Harmony and Pastoral in the \textit{Old Arcadia}” \textit{English Literary History} 35:3 (1968): 309-328. As she notes, almost immediately after the opening of the \textit{Old Arcadia}, Sidney breaks the expectations of genre, which he also does in the \textit{New Arcadia}: “Because of the romance’s generic precedents, the reader should expect either the extreme of pastoral melancholy archetypally imaged in Sannazaro’s laments, or that of omnipotent joy found in the heart of the pastoral through the ministering of Montemayor’s Felicia” (310). Instead of fulfilling generic expectations, Dipple argues that the characters of the \textit{Old Arcadia} immediately begin debating its terms, a debate which I show happens generically in the \textit{New Arcadia}.

womanize a man that, if you yield to it, it will not only make you an Amazon, but a launder, a distaff-spinner, or whatsoever other vile occupation their idle heads can imagine and their weak hands perform” (72). After realizing that his arguments will not sway Pyrocles, Musidorus laments that his friend has abandoned his earlier heroic role and become “one of those fantastical mind-infested people that children and musicians call lovers!” (53) When Musidorus himself falls in love, he intensifies the suggestion that heroes and lovers operate according to different rules which are completely incompatible:

“‘I recant!, I recant!’ cried Musidorus; and withal falling down prostrate, “O thou celestial or infernal spirit of love, or what other heavenly or hellish title thou list to have – for effects of both I find in myself, have compassion of me, and let thy glory be as great in pardoning them that be submitted to thee, as in conquering those that were rebellious.”” (106)

Both figures also literally change their character, exchanging their martial dress and names for the roles of the shepherd Dorus (Musidorus) and the Amazonian lover Zelman (Pyrocles). For the remainder of the New Arcadia, the two princes suffer from this identity confusion, trying on the one hand to prove their love to Pamela and Philoclea by telling tales of heroic exploits that belie their appearance and, on the other, to act heroically without dislodging the disguises that provide them access to the two women’s company. Furthermore, both disguises enhance the generic confusion over what role they are supposed to play: Musidorus, whose initial speeches are the most categorical dismissals of pastoral love and how it leads away from heroic action, must play the love-sick shepherd, the very emblem of pastoral idleness. And Pyrocles, described by
Musidorus as the perfect warrior who he tries to emulate, must play a parody of his previous identity: a female warrior who is too love-struck to fight.\(^{72}\)

Book II shows the princes trying to play both roles at once, speaking as pastoral lovers who also try to prove themselves heroically worthy as a way of wooing the women. Musidorus initiates the princes’ back stories in Book II to make his “estate known” to Pamela (246). Interestingly, his “estate” emerges as a specifically nested story in which Musidorus asks Pamela to infer his “worthy” identity of a chivalric hero as an identity separate from the shepherd Dorus who is capable of actually wooing her. The prince essentially tries to occupy two genres at once, but the manner in which he tells his story emphasizes their separation. Even when Pamela finally recognizes that Dorus is the Musidorus about whom he narrates, her recognition only occurs after he narrates the end of his tale in which he abandons his heroic identity for a pastoral one. Musidorus remains two characters, the heroic prince and the pastoral Dorus, but the two remain actors in separate stories.\(^{73}\)

Furthermore, the princes’ stories do not straightforwardly prove their heroic worthiness, showing instead that they lack some essential quality to be true heroes. The nature of their failures in Book II’s episodes shows that what they continually fail to understand is the nature of passion and its consequences, the very topic of pastoral in the

\(^{72}\) Although it may be tempting to find hints of a feminist bent in Pyrocles’ disguise, Sidney stresses how “unmanned” Pyrocles is by his disguise when “Zelmane” is a passive prisoner along with Pamela and Philoclea in the captivity episode of Book III.

\(^{73}\) McCanles makes a similar point in the context of his larger argument that Sidney’s moral thinking is always inscribed as the consequences of specific rhetorical strategies: “Musidorus is one text reciting another text. The notion, in other words, that Musidorus is really the same Musidorus hiding behind the disguise of Dorus is called into question and invalidated because his love for Pamela has transformed him into a living denizen of pastoral love comedy” (154).
New Arcadia. The general arc of the stories brings Pyrocles and Musidorus from unqualified promise as young princes still in the household of their perfect father/uncle Euarchus, to a catastrophic shipwreck, leaving quests unfulfilled and the men in seclusion (and female/shepherd disguise) on a remote island. The parallels with Sidney’s life up until his retirement at Wilton cannot be overemphasized. But we can also see that the failures in each of the episodes are caused by the princes’ inability to understand why someone might rebel against a rightful ruler or a social order. The princes insist that they have been educated in all aspects of heroic virtue, but what this virtue neglects in its glorification of duty to a larger social order is an understanding of the nature and origins of dissent, self-assertion, and even passion. The sources of discontent and rebellion that the princes encounter can all find analogues in the pastoral withdrawal to what may seem like selfish passions or disruptive obsessions. The episodes of Book II, then, show that Sidney’s understanding of pastoral is not simply an erotic withdrawal from public affairs. Instead, pastoral displays the political implications of following convictions and desires that conflict with established orders, and the challenge for the princes is to learn how to incorporate these desires without causing complete social chaos. After all, the obsessions which the “villains” of Book II’s episodes enact are the same passions with which Dorus and Zelmane must learn to incorporate into their own princely education.

74 Margaret E. Dana has a similar understanding of how Sidney employs pastoral tropes, despite not attending to its implications for Sidney’s politics: “The pastoral world is also, for Sidney … a fallen world in which disordered relationships have woven a net of subterfuge into which the princes must enter if they are to win their ladies, who are at the center of the net. In order to function in this world, they themselves are forced to put on disguises, thus becoming part of the deception. Disguise becomes, in this frame of reference, a metaphor both for the ambiguous surfaces life can present, and for the adjustments the hero must be able to make in order to live in such a world. The test is whether the princes can keep their integrity intact in such circumstances” (“Heroic and Pastoral: Sidney’s Arcadia as Masquerade,” Comparative Literature 25 (1973): 308-320, 315).
The Book II episodes narrate the difficulties of becoming a complete knight, particularly in the ways in which heroic virtue strangely comes into conflict with loyalty (to father, cause, or king). The princes’ backstory is not simply a study of their character, nor does it neatly prove their worthiness to Pamela and Philoclea, and the various episodes show them undergoing a test of the over-praised political and intellectual learning which Musidorus touts at the beginning of the tale. Although told as the adventures of knights-errant (complete with destroying evil kings, defeating giants, and saving tormented princesses), the princes’ martial prowess is never in question. They emerge from all physical combats unscathed, but where they fail is in their choice of fights, their ability to anticipate the outcome of the conflicts they choose, and, ultimately, their freedom to choose their adventures at all. Their conflicts continually result in double binds where the very virtues the princes want to display (like Sidney’s own ambition to strengthen the Protestant cause) become themselves barriers in the way of achieving that virtue (as, for example, Sidney’s respect abroad may have led to Elizabeth’s suspicion of him). Particularly when placed in the larger context of the princes’ desire to bring order to Basilius’ disrupted kingdom, the episodic additions to Book II suggest that a knight’s highest calling is not to be a passive subject, but an agent for virtue even against the flaws of rulers while asserting, at the same time, that such a task will inevitably bring the knight into conflict with his own sense of loyalty to his king, his role, and himself. The princes’ heroic training has not prepared them to address the pastoral diversions they encounter, and, rather than suggest that pastoral passions are simply to be resisted, the stories, as well as the fact that Musidorus and Pyrocles are now themselves pastoral lovers narrating
their previous failures, insists that they must be educated in pastoral as well as heroic virtues in order to achieve their full education.

Rebellion dominates the digressive episodes of Book II, and the princes’ adventures all take place amid situations of questionable rule, both in terms of the rulers’ legitimacy and regal qualities. Even their ideal homeland was in turmoil before Eurarchus came to power, and Musidorus makes it clear that his effectiveness is a combination of his talent, exemplary virtue, and ability to listen to counsel.  

It is important to note, then, that even with his idealized ruler, the Arcadia’s political scene is relatively open and fluid, with no real sense of the monarchical mysteries and hyperbolic praise expected of Elizabeth’s courtiers. Instead, the princes find themselves in a world in which their capacity for virtue is praised as being made not only for courtiers but for making decisions of state, and their education is designed not for show but for use. Although they are of course princes in their own countries, their virtues are designed to be useful for the other kingdoms they visit, potentially modifying and even usurping the decisions of the rulers they meet. Musidorus describes their early education as one in which their own practice of excellence was also supposed to breed excellence in others: “they were so brought up that all the sparks of virtue which nature had kindled in them were so blown to give forth their uttermost heat, that, justly it may be affirmed, they inflamed the affections of all that knew them” (258). Their virtues are like the tales the princes themselves write and recite which operate in the terms Sidney sets forth for the use of ———

75 Euarchus becomes king of Thessalia after it has been destroyed by infighting when its previous king died heirless (an obvious parallel to Elizabeth of which Worden makes much, see The Sound of Virtue, 253-66). When Euarchus comes to Arcadia in Book V, he is elected governor by the estates after Basilius’ death, and he agrees to limit his rule within “the laws, customs, and liberties of Arcadia” (NA, 787), a sign of his willingness, like Phrygia below (another decent ruler) to submit to constitutional limits on his power.
poetry in the Apologie: “the delight of tales being converted to the knowledge of all the stories of worthy princes, both to move them to do nobly and teach them how to do nobly” (258). As becomes increasingly clear, however, neither the possession of virtue, nor even is demonstration, can guarantee its good consequences, and their heroic virtues may be insufficient to deal with a wider range of political conflicts than those of chivalric stories.

Although the princes go out into the world equipped with the best heroic training available, they soon find that heroism actually creates rather than solves problems. Sidney marks this failure generically, as a limitation on the kind of story the princes expected to live. As the princes’ adventures show, for Sidney, genres seem to posit specific ends, and an actor’s agency is designed around his ability to act toward those ends. However, when circumstances arise that make those ends seem less desirable, the type of actor or agent created within that genre may not have the resources to change. Sidney’s own experiences seem to play that out, as he was raised and educated to represent the type of Protestant internationalism he found among his friends and family in Leicester’s faction. But when he returned to England after his grand tour, Elizabeth prevented him from playing that role. After being rebuked with exile, he seems to have returned to court, and to the Arcadia’s revisions, with a much more complicated sense of agency and the multiple genres that could express that complicated sense of self. The problems of the prince’s early failure to prove their education, and their eventual realization that they may need to learn how to operate in a new genre, is Sidney’s fictional response to his experience.
The first two episodes are brief, somewhat easily glossed examples of the princes’ ability to “fall to the practice of those vertues, which they before learned” (191). As such, they serve to highlight the increasing failure of the following episodes. In the first, Musidorus and Pyrocles encounter a rebellion of the Phrygian citizens against a tyrant (which actually interrupts Musisdorus’ near-execution by the king, who feared his association with well-regarded Thessalia). During the fighting, the tyrant’s soldiers and the rebels fall into confusion and disorder as a (false) rumor of the king’s death spreads. In the chaos, men of both sides begin to fight against each other as “certaine young men of the bravest minds, cried with lowde voice, Libertie; and encouraging the other citizens to follow them, set upon the guard, and souldiers as chief instruments of Tyrannie” (269). As the confusion increases, “some of the wisest (seeing that a popular licence is indeede the many-headed tyranny) prevailed with the rest to make Musidorus their chiefe” (270). In this situation where the line between citizen and those who follow “popular licence” becomes blurred, the “wisest” recognize in Musidorus a sense of structure and balance (although since all he has done so far is fight, Sidney has not expressed what these governing qualities actually are). Indeed, even when the people under Musidorus’ command learn that the king has not been slain, they feel that “they

Lindheim argues that the juxtaposition of contrasting episodes, combined with their increasing complication, is the defining factor of Sidney’s allegorical thinking. Although this schema seems difficult to apply in the expansions of Book III, I find it quite useful for understanding how Sidney develops his thought in the New Arcadia.

I should note, against those critics who try to find an emerging republicanism in Sidney’s work (Weiner in particular), that the term “libertie” is always a contested term in the New Arcadia, appearing most often with the rebellion of commoners (which are always put down or moderated into noble reform by the princes). At the same time, it is used of Plangus as one of his greatest virtues, but also a potential threat to his father’s rule. Sidney also uses it as one of the limits to Euarchus’ rule (as in the peoples customary “liberties”). Its appearance in such disparate places attests to the fact that “liberty” is a troubled term whose meaning and connotation is one of the main issues at stake in the Arcadia.
had run themselves too far out of breath, to go back again the same career ... therefore
learning virtue of necessity, they continued resolute to obey Musidorus” (270). This is
one of the few times in Book II where taking virtue of necessity is possible, as will soon
be clear. Here, however, virtue and necessity align easily for, although they grant the
crown to Musidorus, he instead passes it to a noble exiled under the Phyrgian tyrant,
“thinking it a greater greatness to give a kingdom than get a kingdom,” with the caveat
that “with such conditions, and cautions of the conditions, as might assure the
people...that not only that governor, of whom indeed they looked for all good, but the
nature of the government, should be no way apt to decline to tyranny” (270).

While we do not know what these conditions are, nor, again, exactly what it is
that makes Musidorus’ statecraft seem so worthy of praise (apart, perhaps, from his
humility and magnanimity in giving the throne to a native noble), the episode does tell us
what we should expect of the princes’ “demonstrations” of worthiness: heroic action
requires the correct application of political knowledge, which at the very least requires
avoiding tyranny (thus, the limits to the new king’s power). On a theoretical level, the
political lessons sound like truisms. But I think what we actually see here, and which the
next episodes make clearer, is the princes were free to show themselves virtuous because
they did not face anything but a simple test of choosing between good and bad (tyrant and
good king). After the second episode, when conflict between traditional authorities and
personal desire and conviction play a larger role, the princes do not looks so heroic.

The second episode begins by emphasizing the princes’ success, but also their
naïveté and, perhaps, hubris. They leave Phrygia hoping to prove themselves as
traditional martial knights in terms of older, more self-centered pursuits:
And not content with those public actions of princely and, as it were, governing virtue, they did, in that kingdom and some other near about, divers acts of particular trials, more famous because more perilous. For in that time those regions were full both of cruel monsters and monstrous men, all which in short time by private combats they delivered the countries of. (273)

These “private” exploits (associated with fighting monsters) soon become “public” as well. The princes set off to battle “two brothers of huge both greatness and force, therefore commonly called giants, who kept themselves in a castle seated upon the top of a rock” (273). This fanciful situation, perhaps the closest to that sense of the romantic “marvellous” that the two face, quickly becomes a test of the princes’ political wit as they are charged, again, with choosing the rulers of this newly-freed land. Indeed, the princes themselves suggest that they are beginning to recognize the kind of heroism they are supposed to display when they decide to search for new kinds of honor after these two initial successes:

[T]hey determined in unknown order to see more of the world, and to employ those gifts, esteemed rare in them, to the good of mankind; and therefore would themselves (understanding that the king Eurarchus was passed all the cumber of his wars) go privately to seek exercises of their virtue, thinking it not so worthy to be brought to heroical effects by fortune or necessity, like Ulysses and Aeneas, as by one’s own choice and working. (275)

Although the princes compare themselves to Ulysses and Aeneas here, the passage emphasizes how far from epic designs they actually are: “privately to seek exercises of their virtue” is at odds with the public duties undertaken by Ulysses and Aeneas, and those heroes’ prowess was as much determined by their stories’ spiritual and imperial destinies rather than the heroes’ “own choice and working.” In other words, the princes here do not understand the real difference between exercising virtue for a public good and
exercising it for personal glory. The further difficulty, however, is that their remaining adventures in Book II, while showing them perfectly valiant (they never lose a battle), prove them unable to put those “gifts” to good use, particularly when it comes to saving the kingdoms they encounter, as they did in Phrygia and Pontus.\textsuperscript{78} The challenge of virtue ultimately becomes a question of the difficulty of the use of virtue for selfish reasons as opposed to the public “good of mankind,” a distinction which the young princes incorrectly think is only a matter of effort.

The next tale ends in an ambiguous statement of the princes’ political virtues. The story of Leonatus (the source of Shakespeare’s Lear and Gloucester) is initially introduced as an occasion for the princes to right an injustice: the Prince of Paphlagonia has been blinded and usurped by his ambitious bastard son Plexirtus. The princes help the good son Leonatus enlist the populace in a revolt against Plexirtus, and the blind Prince bequeaths the crown to Leonatus just before dying. Although this would be the place for a happy ending, Leonatus and Plexirtus (who was not killed) only appear to be at peace. In fact, Leonatus cannot read through his brother’s false claims of a change of heart, and the princes leave Paphlagonia in an unsteady state with Plexirtus still plotting secretly against his brother. Musidorus even comments that, although they knew he meant some mischief, they were unsuccessful in convincing Leonatus of this.\textsuperscript{79} The princes are

\textsuperscript{78} Musidorus himself says that the experience was “not so notable for any great effect they performed,” but for “the un-used examples therein” (280).

\textsuperscript{79} This is a strange episode because, although Musidorus as narrator seems to know much of Plexirtus’ motivations, he only hints at the possibility that the princes knew it at the time. What is clear, however, is that Sidney wants it known that Leonatus’ pardoning of Plexirtus is wrong, particularly since the latter had killed the messengers sent to bring him to justice and directly lies about his motivations of doing so in self-defence.
ultimately unable to turn Plexirtus’ selfish designs to a public good, and there are even suggestions that Leonatus’ filial love for his brother is his central liability, a loyalty that, in other circumstances, would be laudable. The blame for this unresolved situation falls on both Leonatus and Plexirtus, neither of whom have a truly public good in mind, and the princes are ultimately unable to reconcile between both types of good.

If the Leonatus tale is the first sign of the princes’ political failures, the next tale increases their complicity in public failure while maintaining their good intentions. In the fourth episode, we meet Queen Erona who falls in love with a low, unworthy subject (as a punishment for scorning Cupid), which is one of many analogues to Basilius’ poor choices in love. She, however, is the idol of King Tiridates, who begins a war for her hand. The princes arrive hoping to help save Erona from imprisonment, and Tiridates calls for three personal combats to decide Erona’s fate as the war has gone on too long. The princes, after winning their fights, must save Antiphilus (Erona’s lover), who has been treacherously captured by Tiridates instead of fighting him. Erona and Antiphilus marry, but the base Antiphilus’ new power turns him into a tyrant, and Erona’s kingdom is left in ruins. What has happened, then, is that the princes have found themselves compelled “by virtue” (saving Erona, a distressed damsel) to help a villain (Antiphilus), and rather than displacing a tyrant, as they did in the first two episodes, they have given one a crown. Following an otherwise straightforward code of conduct for a heroic knight (here saving the princess) has led to contradictory outcomes because of the princes’ inability to anticipate how susceptible men like Antiphilus are to motives that pull them away from public duty.
At this point in the narrative, Sidney leaves the princes for Plangus, a figure who can amplify the kind of dilemma they encountered with Erona without ruining the princes’ reputation. Plangus becomes an expression of the personal despair to which knightly ambition can lead, and he is, of all the figures, closest in circumstance to Sidney at his lowest point in exile from court (and Plangus is a Prince of Iberia, just as Phillisides, Sidney’s fictional alter-ego, is also said to be an Iberian in Book III) as he becomes the victim of increasingly complicated double-binds. The logic of Book II’s episodes suggests, in fact, that Plangus’ is the cautionary tale which is included to be set alongside the princes’ failings, and his story also anticipates Amphialus’ more explicit tension between pastoral and heroic impulses.

Plangus, a prince, falls in love with a subject’s wife, Andromana. His father learns of the affair and, in due course, falls in love with Andromana himself. She, now a widow, marries the king, and the father sends Plangus off to war to avoid his jealousy. When Plangus returns, sadder and wiser, she tries to renew their attraction, but he demures, causing her to seek revenge by turning his father against him. What she does, however, is create a situation in which she destroys Plangus through his loyalty to his father. She simultaneously praises Plangus while explaining how his qualities could become threats to the older man’s power, creating a situation in which Plangus can do nothing to prove his worthiness to his father:

“Nay,” would she say, “I dare take it upon my death that he is no such son as many of like might have been, who loved greatness so well as to build their greatness upon their father’s ruin. Indeed ambition, like love, can abide no lingering, and ever urgeth on his own successes, hating nothing but what may stop them. But the gods forbid we should ever once dream of any such thing in him, who perhaps might be content that you and the world should know
what he can do; but the more power he hath to hurt, the more admirable is his praise, that he will not hurt.” (316)

The son’s natural youth and natural strength, the very qualities that make him a good son, make him a dangerous subject. His ambition, which leads to his praise, is also a threat. She says the same of his other qualities, such as “the liberty of his mind, the high flying of his thoughts, the fitness in him to bear rule, the singular love the subjects bear him,” all make him one “not born to live a subject life, each action of his bearing in it majesty” (315). Note, however, that it is his good qualities themselves, and not the lack of a particular virtue, that urges him toward the dangerous “majesty,” and Andromana creates a situation in which all virtues are a threat to potentially weaker virtues in others. She reads any quality as a power that will compete with other powers with the only goal being to rule, “majesty” seeming to be a necessary end of goodness. It is impossible to be a good subject, since the very things that make one good apparently necessitate dangerous ambition. Even when he presents himself to his father as humbly as possible, Andromana claims that he feigns humility to earn praise, and, in the end, Plangus can only flee the kingdom. Any assertion, even an assertion of utter loyalty, is turned on him (the people will praise his loyalty, she says), and Plangus is left with no possibility of acting out his submission successfully. His retreat, however, is absolutely passive, and the virtues for which he was praised (and, by contrast, for whose demonstration the princes always want to act) are lost. In the end, submission to his father requires such a passivity that he must destroy himself, and he is utterly debilitated. Virtues that would otherwise be politically advantageous, especially for a courtier and possible ruler, become perceived threats to the
established order. Autonomy and loyalty are not simply in conflict, but mutually destructive.

To emphasize this problem, Sidney gives Plangus one final adventure before Basilius finds him complaining in verse. Plangus stumbles onto Erona, falls in love, and, despite himself, agrees to join the princes in saving Antiphilus from imprisonment. But by helping Erona, he has enraged one of the few friends he still has left: Artaxia, Tiridates sister. She revenges herself on Plangus by killing Antiphilus and capturing Erona, leaving Plangus with a series of wasted efforts and now with a love (who does not love him back) imprisoned with no one to help him (he believes the princes are also dead). Plangus ends by simply beseeching Euarchus for help, appealing to the last idealized ruler left. Despite Andromana’s lies, then, Plangus, like the young princes, is still born to be a subject, even as, especially in Plangus’ case, it is practically impossible for him to successfully subject himself to a flawed ruler. Euarchus is then a reminder that Sidney is not challenging the heroic knight’s status as subject, but rather exploring the difficulty of living up to being a subject who also has ambitious virtue. However, if the only monarch to which such a knight can subject himself is not present, then Plangus’ despair may be the only appropriate response.

80 We are here in part of the narrative’s interlace form in which we have gotten part of the story from the princes’ perspective already.

81 McCoy expresses this dilemma in a way which suggests that Euarchus’ haunting presence may actually be threatening rather than naively hopeful: “Two essential narrative tendencies are still clear in these episodic developments: for better or for worse, the heroes are eventually overwhelmed by the difficulty of their adventures and reduced to dependence on paternal authority; and at the same time, the father to whom they submit evokes great ambivalence. His authority is clear, whereas its nature is not” (151).
In effect, by being left in a state of complete withdrawal from public life, Plangus involuntarily rests in an extreme pastoral situation: Andromana has forced all of his claims of public duty to be read as utterly selfish motivations. Regardless of his intentions, Plangus occupies the same narrative space as Basilius, withdrawn from public life while his kingdom crumbles around him. Although he is, as McCoy says, “the image of wronged innocence” because he does not share Basilius’ responsibility for political withdrawal, he has also been stripped of any resources that could help him reestablish both himself and the moral virtue of his father’s kingdom.\textsuperscript{82} If the princes’ stories show them culminating in pastoral out of chance from falling in love, Plangus’ story suggests that pastoral withdrawal may actually be implicated in the vicissitudes of heroic virtues themselves.

The final episodes return to the princes with Pyrocles’ exploits predominating, and they moderate Plangus’ extreme despair by ending in ambivalence and a situation in which it becomes impossible to complete the quests. First, Pyrocles agrees to fight Anaxius, Tiridates’ nephew.\textsuperscript{83} On his way to the battle, however, he encounters a group of women beating a bound man. Pyrocles intervenes, driving away the women and killing their guards. One woman, Dido, remains, however, and Pyrocles learns that the man,

\begin{quote}
\textit{Rebellion in Arcadia}, 149. McCoy’s point that Plangus lacks responsibility for his situation is a common response, but it ignores the consequences of Plangus’ situation as it applies to the princes’ education in the vagaries and contradictions of how easily intentions can become corrupted.
\end{quote}

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Interestingly, Pyrocles takes this challenge not out of a sense of duty to Erona, but because he wants to achieve something individually without his cousin: “to do something without the company of the incomparable Prince Musidorus.” (323) He says that he feared their friendship had been a “weakness, and a mistrustfulness of myself, as one strayed from his best strength, when at any time I missed him.” (324) Although the kind of autonomy suggested here is more self-sufficiency than the autonomy of not being subject to another’s sovereignty with which I am most concerned, the princes unusual separation suggests that this issue of dependence and independence occupies many aspects of Sidney’s thinking.
\end{quote}
Pamphilus, had been a cruel and deceitful lover to countless women in the kingdom. Pyrocles swears to help her, and he soon gets the chance as Pamphilus’ friends arrive, chasing the others for a time before they all strike a truce. Pyrocles then makes his way to the appointed place for his battle with Anaxius, but just before they begin, Dido enters chased by Pamphilus’s friends. Pyrocles must then run from Anaxius to defend Dido, and the crowd that gathered to watch the tilt mock his cowardice. At the same time, we are returned to the third episode above as Plexirtus has broken his truce with Leonatus. Pyrocles, who gave his word to Zelmane (the real one, not Pyrocles in disguise), Plexirtus’ daughter, that he would defend her father, and he must now leave off following Dido’s pursuers to defend a villain. Pyrocles description of how he decides which quest to follow is as tortured as the summary of the story I just gave:

Now the day was so accorded, as it was impossible for me both to succor Plexirtus and be there, where my honor was not only engaged so far, but (by the strange working of unjust fortune) I was to leave the standing by Musidorus, whom better than myself I loved, to go save him whom for just causes I hated. But my promise given, and given to Zelmane, and to Zelmane dying, prevailed more with me than my friendship to Musidorus: though certainly I may affirm, nothing had so great rule in my thoughts as that. But my promise carried me the easier, because Musidorus himself would not suffer me to break it. (369)

The logic of how to navigate obligations becomes almost impossible to follow; it is, I would argue, literally impossible because Pyrocles arrives at his conclusion through a contradiction. His promise to Zelmane was more important than his friendship with Musidorus, but “nothing had so great rule in my thoughts” as his friendship; or, in other words, his promise was more important than his friendship, which was also the most important. All of the obligations placed upon Pyrocles become too much to handle, and it
is quite appropriate that this decision leads to the shipwreck which strands the two princes in Arcadia in the first place. All of the final quests are left unresolved, and the princes, while not despairing, have yet to achieve the renown and demonstration of virtue which began their stories. The knights become refugees from a heroic story and have taken on the roles of lovers who, in each other stories, have been the cause of political unrest. Furthermore, the manner in which they pursue their loves actually mirror the methods of their heroic antagonists, courting the women indirectly through deceiving others as well as being courted by a selfish queen and a bemused and lazy monarch-in-repose. Heroic motives seem to result in a pastoral farce.

As Book II ends, then, the princes have not proved their virtue or valor. They have told stories of themselves as knights that resulted in their generic demotion, at least according to the hierarchy of genres Sidney gives in the Apologie. The complication and multiplication of obligations has reduced them to inaction and impotence, and they now occupy a genre in which they play roles analogous to their antagonists in the heroic episodes. Sidney’s use of the heroic genre in Book II displays a logic in which even those acts which are expressions of selfless public virtue, such as Musidorus outlines when he is first introduced, can become almost tyrannical forces of submission. Without a clear guide to navigate them through the difficult entanglement of public and private motivations, the princes turn heroic impulses toward the worst interpretations of pastoral withdrawal, preventing them from engaging any public good. In other words, Sidney does not simply blame figures such as Andromana or Plexirtus for Plangus and

84 See Chapter 1’s discussion of Heroic poetry in the Apologie.
Pyrocles’s failures, but he recognizes that it is part of the nature of these heroes’ situation to exist in double binds. If a knight cannot successfully integrate his personal motivations with his public duties, he will not even get a chance to be a knight; that is the paradox of submissive autonomy that emerges at the cusp of heroic and pastoral at the end of Book II.

2.4 Amphialus’ public/private rebellion in Book III

Book III’s new material explores the broader political consequences of the dilemmas of Book II’s knights. With Amphialus, the narrative displays a knightly paragon who, with no malice in his heart, succumbs to personal desires (his love for Philoclea) that pull him into rebellion, despair, apparent suicide, and the potential collapse of Arcadia. Furthermore, Sidney has Amphialus use an identifiably Huguenot rationale for his rebellion, one which he would have known not only from his correspondence with French Protestants, but also through his familiarity with the Huguenot tract *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*, a work that argued for the deposition of failed (presumably Catholic) monarchs and general resistance to the French crown. 85 Although

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85 The work is translated as *A Defense of Liberty Against Tyranny* (trans. Harold J. Laski, Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963), and its authorship is in question. Raitiere has a recent compelling argument for attributing it to Languet in *Faire Bitts* (Appendix A, 113-141), but Stillman, among others, argues that it was Philippe du Plessis-Mornay’s (*Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance*, 195-204). In regards to rebellion, I do not want to suggest that Sidney seems to be toying with the prospect of actual rebellion, although many critics who find Sidney to be sympathetic with Huguenot theory flirt with just that possibility. Instead, Book III uses the fiction of rebellion to attempt to understand the knight’s relationship to authority, and, as I will show, in the end we find that he is placed between two equally impossible poles of total submission and total self-assertion. To be caught in such a situation, however, is hardly a plea for actual rebellion. At the same time, I find his biographers’ speculation on early marriage attempts that would place Sidney in reasonable proximity to the throne should Elizabeth die heirless to be a compelling argument that the Leicester faction as a whole was willing to explore any and all options available to them. (See Duncan-Jones, 46-54 and Wallace, 88-92.)
we might expect Sidney to support the terms of this defense, particularly given the fact that he was about to engage in an attempt to depose a Spanish “tyrant” in the Netherlands, he in fact places it in a much more problematic context. As I argue, Amphialus’ motivations, even those which Sidney shared, are interrogated in the terms of conflicted loyalties and mixed public and private drives which the princes’ episodes establish. But even beyond the topical similarity of Amphialus’ situation, he also radicalizes the differend of pastoral and heroic genres which the princes themselves have to undergo.86 Book III is even more critical of a knight’s clear public obligations and recognition of established authority that he follows in his heroic role as we learn that Amphialus has in truth been duped by his atheistic mother Cecropia, who articulates a vision of politics as guided by fear, violence, and manipulation. But Amphialus’ love for Philoclea also implicates him in pastoral as he attempts to withdraw into a focus exclusively on his personal desires. What emerges is a character who suffers the worst of the difficulties Sidney has displayed by both genres in earlier portions of the revisions. Although unfinished, what we have of the tale of Amphialus and Cecropia presents us with a world in which the virtues of a celebrated courtier do not simply lead to difficult, intractable situations, as they did with the princes; instead, Sidney seems to consider whether political autonomy and divergence from established lines of authority can be

86 Most critics focus on Amphialus’ obvious martial prowess and its misuses, ignoring the ways that Sidney inscribes his motivations in particularly love-worn and ultimately “pastoral” terms as well. McCanles is one of the few exceptions who sees this tension at the heart of Amphialus’ presentation: “His emotions and thoughts, motivations and actions, indeed his very words, are imprisoned within the rhetorical figuration that constitutes the Renaissance understanding of human love. Caught between enslavement to love and the need to dominate, between tenderness and violent rapacity generated by this tenderness, Amphialus goes beyond any other Renaissance version of this self-division, such as Ariosto’s Orlando and Spenser’s Artegall, and becomes the most precisely drawn example of love’s pains before Shakespeare’s Othello” (65).
motivated by anything other than violent, selfish ambition. Amphialus almost seems like a refutation of the very values that Sidney tried to live late in his life, not least because of his direct topical reference to a political tract that was likely written by his friends. But despite what he said in the Apologie about crafting clear models for action, in his fiction, Sidney often seems to prefer conflict over clear resolution, and the fact that he would explore an analogue to himself in such critical terms seems similar to his method of expanding on and dilating potential conflicts in his own character, as he did with the princes. What is ultimately most interesting about Amphialus is not that he seems like a distasteful version of Sidney’s political commitments, but that it shows Sidney pushing the problems of his own sense of agency to their limits, perhaps with the end result of better understanding those limits and contradictions that he continued to embody in his life.

Although Amphialus never takes on the exclusive role of a pastoral figure, as do the disguised princes, his motivations and actions are cast as an explicit dichotomy of the private/pastoral and public/heroic impulses that Sidney establishes in the first two Books. We see this from the beginning of the main action of Book III when Amphialus learns that his mother has captured the princesses. (He had already fallen in love with Philoclea when he saw her bathing in a stream in Book II.) Amphialus immediately finds himself caught between conflicting impulses: he wants to keep Philoclea captive in order to woo her, but he also knows how this damages her as well as Arcadia in general because of his mother’s rebellion. As Cecropia says, he becomes a slave to love, and also a slave to the ways his private desires can corrupt his public virtues as an exemplary knight. Everything about Amphialus’ situation turns on itself, such that his chivalric actions in the service of
love destroy his chivalric honor; and those actions done for love also damage that love. In his first face-to-face dialogue with Philoclea, the terms in which he describes his passion clearly align him with the pastoral lovers whose identity in a heroic tale becomes compromised by submission to private desires:

But Amphialus was like the poor woman, who loving a tame doe she had above all earthly things, having long played withal and made it feed at her hand and lap, is constrained at length by famine (all her flock being spent, and she fallen into extreme poverty) to kill the dear [sic] to sustain her life: many a pitiful look doth she cast upon it, and many a time doth she draw back her hand before she can give the stroke – for even so, Amphialus by a hunger-starved affection was compelled to offer this injury, and yet the same affection made him with a tormenting grief think unkindness in himself that he could find in his heart any way to restrain her freedom. (323)

He claims that he would never intentionally enslave Philoclea and cause her pain, but he also claims that he is not responsible for his own actions, being enslaved to the “tyrant, love” (323). All of his self-understandings reject his chivalric capacity for heroism, even as it becomes clear that he is directly responsible for the worst of his situation: “What then shall I say, but that I who am ready to lie under your feet; to venture, nay, to lose my life at your least commandment, I am not the stay of your freedom, but love – love, which ties you in your own knots” (323). Amphialus comes to occupy the odd space of a knight who withdraws from one public role (the standard hero who serves the public good), but whose personal desires force him to employ his virtues for private and ultimately self-destructive ends. Amphialus ultimately illustrates what happens when a pastoral lover, like Basilius, does not simply neglect his public duties, but confuses his public and private roles altogether. If Pyrocles and Musidorus find themselves in the position of alternating between pastoral and heroic without being able to successfully occupy both at
the same time, Amphialus becomes a monster in trying to occupy both roles simultaneously. The rest of his story is an investigation of how this “monstrosity” corrupts each of his public roles as a heroic ideal.

It is important to note that Book III marks a significant change in how Sidney understands pastoral in the New Arcadia. Pastoral moves from an explicit kind of space, whether it be the country of Arcadia or a place of retreat (such as the end of Book I where everyone retires to bed alone) to an idea of personhood in which an interest in personal ends dominates. These ends begin as expressions of love and erotic desire, which occupies Book I. But in Book II, the princes’ experiences and misunderstanding of desire’s role in public matters start to change what it means to belong to a pastoral romance: the love entanglements they meet in figures such as Erona start to align “pastoral” withdrawal to other forms of self-interestedness and even self-assertion. In the final transition in Book III, pastoral comes to mark almost any personal assertion that leads to avoiding a public duty. Amphialus ultimately embodies the conflict between this understanding of pastoral, in his misguided love for Pamela which has clear public consequences, and his otherwise ideal chivalric identity. Pastoral and heroic romance clash by pitting public against private commitments, and, in Amphialus, Sidney creates a figure who allows him to explore how these divergent motives create a sense of agency that is fundamentally conflicted.

Book III performs this investigation first by extending the chivalric component of the romance toward ever more elaborate armed, emblematic tournament set-pieces with challenges between heavily adorned (and lengthily blazoned) knights, and it employs them in such a way that chivalry is shown to be just as capable of withdrawal from public
duty as pastoral love. This fact makes Amphialus’ manner of self-assertion all the more applicable to Sidney’s class since armored tournaments and costumed pageants performed for the queen’s honor were a regular part of Elizabeth’s court. We have a number of accounts of Sidney’s participation in these jousts, and as his friend Peter Molyneaux suggests that Sidney not only mastered the rhetorical, emblematic, and ritualistic aspect of them, but the martial side as well:

As time wrought alteration in his deep and noble conceit at jousts, triumphs, and other such royal pastimes (for at all such disports he commonly made one) he would bring in such a lively gallant show, so agreeable to every point which is required for the expressing of a perfect device (so rich was he in those inventions) as, if he surpassed not all, he would equal or at least second the best.\(^{87}\)

What Book III comes to challenge, however, is precisely the braggart tone of Molyneaux’s comments which accompany these chivalric displays; the obsession with martial glory that such tournaments inspired in their participants is emblematic of a chivalric code which has forgotten that honor does not mean victory and praise. As we will see, Amphialus’ chivalric self-understanding, like that which maintained much of the aristocracy’s feudal pride and sense of entitlement, could become self-destructive. This was a particular danger for one who, like Sidney, seems to have sought to use his status for the larger Protestant cause. If, as Michael Walzer argues, many aristocratic leaders of the Protestant cause throughout Europe relied on a sense of feudal entitlement, with the mystique of religious chivalric heroism enervating them, to justify their resistance to

\(^{87}\) Duncan-Jones, 314.
rulers that did not share their zeal, then to admit that chivalry was nothing but veiled self-assertion was a catastrophe.\textsuperscript{88} Such a catastrophe is precisely what Book III narrates.

Even before we meet him, Amphialus, Basilius’ nephew, is spoken of as “one of the best knights in the world” (320). His reputation alone causes the Queen of Iberia to hold a joust in his honor in Book I, and other knights, especially those about to show their valor, are often compared to him.\textsuperscript{89} We are meant to be shocked, then, when his mother Cecropia, Basilius’ sister, manipulates him into rebelling. Cecropia, upset that Basilius has married Gynecia and kept her from the throne, captures the princesses Pamela and Philoclea along with Pyrocles disguised as Zelman. We then learn that Amphialus has fallen in love with Philoclea, and Cecropia, afraid that he will turn against her, decides to exploit his love, convincing him that rebellion will actually be a path to the princess’s heart.\textsuperscript{90} For the moment, let us at least note that Amphialus is a rebel, not for power, but for a noble, although potentially selfish, goal: love. While it will soon become clear that this does not excuse the chaos he causes, it does separate him from Cecropia’s unambiguously deceptive intentions. The narrator asserts that Amphialus “was utterly ignorant of all his mothers wicked devises; to which he would never have consented,

\textsuperscript{88} Walzer explains this position by linking feudalism to the theory of the “subaltern magistrate” (cited in the context of Ratiere’s book above and to which I will return in what follows): this doctrine was “the nearest approach of the French nobility of early modern times to an independent ideological position. It attempts a highly rationalized and legalized view of the rights and duties of the aristocracy, considering its members not as heads of households, but as officers of the realm. Huguenot theory may be considered an unsuccessful effort to transform feudal status into constitutional position” (Walzer, 72-3). He also cites one Huguenot officer as attributing much of his motivation to “the medieval romances of Amadis [which] still caused ‘un esprit de vertige’ among the men of his generation” (72).

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{New Arcadia}, 122-4, 319, 325.

\textsuperscript{90} Cecropia’s fear of subjection is actually what drives her, a position strangely analogous to the princes’ desires to be master of their own fates. As she says, she hates her “Royal blood...stained with the base name of subjection,” and one of she expresses her distaste for Amphialus’ love of Pamela in the same terms: “For Hate often begetteth victory; love commonly is the instrument of subjection” (444, 447).
being (like a rose out of a brier) an excellent son of an evil mother.” (441) Amphialus, who remains ignorant of his mother’s real motives for most of the book, is in a more sophisticated position for, while in itself good, his love also blinds him to the consequences of his actions beyond the satisfaction of desire. As such, his defiance of authority must be read as ambiguous, and, as Book III begins, Sidney does not condemn him for his actions; on the contrary, Book III’s fourth chapter, immediately following his assent to rebel, is filled with nothing but praise for his leadership, eloquence, and virtue.91 Sidney leaves it to the narration to display his faults.

The first and most telling evidence of these faults comes in the proclamation that Amphialus writes to justify his actions (and sway men to his side). It is one among many pieces of propaganda that Sidney describes him undertaking, but it is the only one he gives in detail. It is also cited as one of its defenses, a term used by Huguenot thinkers when justifying rebellion: the “subaltern magistrate,” or a sanctioning of “official” disobedience under the command of noble authorities. The argument insisted that private individuals cannot take up arms against tyrants, but those with a previously official authority, like the aristocracy, can.92 Amphialus’ “justification,” however, does not simply rely on such a theory, but in fact provokes us to examine the contradictions inherent in it, contradictions at the heart of Sidney’s thinking about aristocratic autonomy. I quote here at length:

91 New Arcadia, 452-57.

92 Languet makes his case in “The Third Question” of the Vindiciae, subtitled, “Whether it be lawful to resist a prince who doth oppress or ruin a public state, and how far such resistance may be extended: by whom, how, and by what right or law it is permitted” (117). The rationale he gives for which estates, legal bodies, etc., can in fact rebel are as torturous as the princes’ dilemmas, suggesting that Languet, like Sidney, also dealt with the intractable problem of linking autonomy and authority.
But because [Amphialus] knew how violently rumours do blow the sails of popular judgements, and how few there be that can discern between truth and truth-likeness, between shows and substance, he caused a justification of this his action to be written, whereof were sowed abroad many copies which, with some glosses of probability, might hide indeed the foulness of his treason, and from true common-places fetch down most false applications. For beginning how much the duty which is owed to the country goes beyond all other duties since in itself it contains them all, and that for the respect thereof, not only all tender respects of kindred or whatsoever other friendships are to be laid aside, but that even long-held opinions (rather builded upon a secret of government than any ground of truth) are to be forsaken; he fell by degrees to show that since the end whereto anything is directed is ever to be of more noble reckoning than the thing thereto directed, that therefore the weal-public was more to be regarded than any person or magistrate that thereunto was ordained: the feeling consideration whereof had moved him (though as near of kin to Basilius as could be) yet to set principally before his eyes the good estate of so many thousands over whom Basilius reigned, rather than so to hoodwink himself with affection as to suffer the realm to run to manifest ruin. The care whereof did kindly appertain to those who, being subaltern magistrates and officers of the crown, were to be employed as from the prince, so for the people; and of all other, especially himself who being descended of the royal race and next heir male, Nature had no sooner opened his eyes, but that the soil whereupon they did look was to look for at his hands a continual carefulness… (452–453)

The passage mixes noble right and superiority, the good of the nation, an expression of duty and loyalty to rank, and an apparent nationalism. It only seems to work by claiming these goals to be aligned when, in fact, as both the passage and the narrative suggest, they are not. First, the ultimate justification for rebellion is that the end good of the country (“the end whereto anything is directed”) outranks all else, and we should recall that, inasmuch as Basilius has in fact abandoned his responsibilities, Amphialus’s complaints are well-grounded. That “duty which is owed to the country goes beyond all other duties” is something of which Basilius needs to be reminded (particularly as he flirts with
Zelmarne), and this duty justifies replacing him. So far, Sidney is clearly still thinking in
terms put forward by the Huguenot thinkers.\(^93\) (Interestingly, the justification also seems
to follow a logic similar to that of how Greville described Sidney response to Elizabeth
after the tennis court incident, as quoted in section one.) What follows, however, is that
the ethical and nationalistic burden of proof shifts as Amphialus begins to speak in terms
of his ancestry. He is capable of rebelling because he is “descended of the royal race, and
next heir male.” He alludes to his noble nature, which is more suited to rule than to
others, and the barb here is particularly aimed at Philanax, at times read as a stand in for
Burghley.\(^94\) Unlike Languet’s defense of rebellion, which insisted on the right of
previously legal authorities to rebel, Amphialus claims instead that he has a royal right to
the throne, regardless of any wrong done by Basilius. Royal right itself, separated from
any sense of wrongdoing on Basilius’ part, particularly as Amphialus begins to make
claims for his majestic virtues, becomes a self-centered right, the right to assert his own
intrinsic worthiness to rule. Although it began with redressing wrongs, a public goal, it
ends by praising Amphialus’ nobility for itself, a private goal. The challenge to royal
control, then, ends equivocally, wanting to have it both ways: it alternately puts down and
relies on feudal standards of authority and loyalty. Monarch, nation, and nobility, each
with a different logic, are yoked together as competing justifications for rebellion.

But, returning to the beginning, we should note that Sidney calls each of these
“true common-places” and insists that Amphialus uses them because they are all, in fact,

\(^{93}\) On the similarity between this passage and Huguenot rhetoric beyond the Vindiciae’s use of the
term “subaltern magistrate,” see Briggs (1931) 141-150, Walzer 74-87, and Raitiere, 21-32.

\(^{94}\) See Worden, 253.
acceptable to “popular judgment.” The danger, he insists, is in their “false application,” as Amphialus shows. However, by framing this ideological mess as “true” in theory and only “false” in application, Sidney redirects our understanding of both the justification and Amphialus’ use of it. For, although used here for deception, Amphialus does not disprove the right of “rebellion,” but only of its particular application. Sidney himself will rely on each of these strategies in his political writings, particularly when trying to dissuade the queen from the Alencon match (and, to lesser extent, in *The Defense of Leicester*). What we are in fact given, I argue, is a set of (perhaps impossible) criteria by which to judge Amphialus (and, I would ultimately presume, Pyrocles and Musidorus) as a successfully autonomous knight. The fact that he fails does not mean that we are to read the *New Arcadia* as seeing Sidney as opposed to these “true commonplaces,” but rather that we are to judge where his “application” was false. The larger question, however, is whether their application is even possible.

As I said before, our initial view of Amphialus after embarking on his rebellion is positive, and we see him acting as an incredibly competent general, capable of moulding himself to the needs of any situation presented to him – the model of practical wisdom.

He sends appeals, for examples, to all his potential allies for help,

conforming himself after their humours. To his friends, friendliness; to the ambitious, great expectations; to the displeased, revenge; to the greedy, spoil: wrapping their hopes with such

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96 Those who read the problems with the justification as evidence of Sidney’s anti-Huguenot stance often point to the fact that Sidney condemns Amphialus’ revolt and ultimately seems to mock his knighthood, painting him as “self-serving, opportunistic, and flagrantly false to his word” (Raitiere, 23). But, as I argue, his actions do not contradict the justification so much as question how it is possible for a knight to embody it.
cunning as they rather seemed given over unto them as partakers than promises sprung of necessity. (452)

He manages his defense expertly, anticipating lines of flight and strategic advantages, and he even serves as gracious model to his soldiers. He is capable of turning disadvantage to advantage (something Plangus could not do), as “[e]ven of vices he made his profit,” putting a coward on the watch since his fear would keep him awake (455). As soon as the battle begins, however, we see this ability to manage all demands placed upon him crumble. His self-assertion, taking the form of martial prowess, begins to get the better of him:

before the enemies came [Amphialus] was careful, providentially diligent and not sometimes without doubting of the issue, now the nearer danger approached...the less still it seemed: and now his courage began to boil in choler and with such impatience to desire to pour out both upon the enemy that he issued presently into certain boasts... (467)

This rage, soon combined with his thoughts of love that constantly press him to want to gain glory in Philoclea’s eyes, overcomes him. And while the depictions of Amphialus’ early victories are glorious, the narrator often interrupts these descriptions of idealized combat with realistic descriptions of the battlefield, and we are meant to feel the contrast:

at the first, though [the battle] were terrible, yet terror was decked so bravely with rich furniture, gilt swords, shining armours ... that the eye with delight had scarce leisure to be afraid; but now all universally defiled with dust, blood, broken armours, mangled bodies, took away the mask and set forth horror in his own horrible manner (469). 97

97 A similar terrible and beautiful passage begins with the personification of raised lances and swords saluting each other, but ends with a scene of dismemberment in which the personification has transformed from romantic metaphor to grotesque reality: “There lay arms, whose fingers yet moved as if they would feel for him that made them feel; and legs, which contrary to common reason, by being discharged of their burden, were grown heavier” (469).
Sidney shows the reader both views of the battle, but to Amphialus, the view cannot “seem ugly to him whose truly-affected mind did still paint it over with the beauty of Philoclea” (469). His self-centered perspective can only interpret the consequences of his actions as they relate to himself, and he remains blind to the narrator’s, presumably more objective perspective.

As Book III continues, the narrative intensifies this trend since what began as a large-scale siege with Amphialus having to attend to feeding his troops and cleaning the battlefield of carnage soon transforms into a series of highly stylized combats. Although some critics have seen this as Sidney either losing interest in his story or losing control of the generic patterns, it is consistent with the intensification of Amphialus’ position.98 We see him begin to narrow his focus to his own sense of right, forgetting completely the moral reasons for rebellion he cited at the beginning of his justification. Sidney flags this transformation within the story as an old mentor of Amphialus’ upbraids him at one point for turning his attention towards single combat with Musidorus (dressed as the Forsaken Knight). The old man chastises him for “stand[ing] now like a private soldier, setting your credit upon particular fighting while, you may see, Basilius with all his host is getting between you and your town!” (470) Private concerns are replacing the public concerns, and, although the old man upbraids Amphialus once more, even his voice is soon lost amid Amphialus’ transformation of the rebellion into a personal stage.

Selfishness, though, has larger consequences, and as the battle progresses, Amphialus’ singularity spreads to the Arcadian camp. A number of knights serving Basilius challenge Amphialus for personal reasons, and, as such, the entire civil conflict is transformed into a staged tournament with Amphialus’ challengers fighting, not for their country, but for personal honor and for such ridiculous reasons as to prove that all women are “shops of vanities.” (502) Phalantus, one of Basilius’ knights, at one point goes so far as the challenge Amphialus to private combat out of boredom. He insists he is a “hateless enemy” spurned on only by “liking of martial matters without any mislike of your person.” (494) Amphialus’ neglect of public duty has become a public problem, and the chivalric displays which once helped develop and judge virtue have, as McCoy observes, made “the cult of personal glory a vacuous ritual.”

It soon becomes apparent that Amphialus’ neglect of public consequence will even destroy his personal goals. We see this first reflected in his destruction of figures who represent the ideal of courtly love in the book, what we assume he would want with Philoclea. Basilius enlists Argalus to fight Amphialus, who was presented in Book I as the ideal of virtue and fidelity to his love. The first problem, of course, is that Basilius is now thinking like Amphilalus, thinking that he needs a champion in single combat, and thus meeting Amphialus on his diminished terms. The result, however, is that Argalus’s ideality becomes tainted. Argalus’ love, Parthenia, begs him to stay, but Argalus insists “how much [the duke’s command] imported his honour (which since it was dear to him he knew it would be dear unto her)” (497). Sidney comments that Argalus is here taken

99 Rebellion in Arcadia, 177.
from his love (and the source of his noble fidelity) by “the tyranny of honour,”, and, as we see him killed by a momentarily unchivalrous (and cheating) Amphialus, it becomes clear that the love which Argalus embodied (and which Amphialus supposed fights for) is in deadly conflict with this “tyrant honor” (498). When they meet, Amphialus implies that his own love is equal to Argalus’: “love, which justifieth the injustice you lay unto me, doth also animate me against all dangers, since I come full of him, by whom yourself have been (if I be not deceived), sometimes conquered” (499). When Amphialus equates himself with Argalus, they are in a world in which honorable love does not win, but only the “tyrant love” (the love that makes him forget all obediences) which makes him act (423). Indeed, this “tyrant love” even brings Parthenia to the battlefield, whom Amphialus also kills, unaware of her identity.

Having destroyed an image of his desire’s fulfillment, the last step is its real destruction. By chance, Amphialus learns that Cecropia has been mistreating the princesses, and he soon deduces her real motives. He despairs, realizing that all of his martial displays, because implicitly directed against Philoclea’s loyalty to her father, only made her hate him. Amphialus becomes, like Plangus, a figure whose very virtues become his own enemies. He makes this paradox literal, turning his sword upon himself, and the narrator emphasizes that this last act was a “pitiful spectacle, where the conquest was the conqueror’s overthrow, and self-ruin the only triumph of a battle fought between him and himself” (574). Left with no way to act without failing, Amphialus goes one step further than Plangus, not simply despairing, but removing himself utterly from the
dilemma. One other descriptive comment, however, suggests a slightly different reading of his attempted suicide, one which suggests that the real reason for his self-destruction was his unwillingness to submit to any authority but his own: “he needed no judge to go upon him, for no man could ever think any other worthy of greater punishment than he thought himself” (574). With no judge but himself, and his punishment the greatest possible, Amphialus has found the one remaining way to maintain control of his situation, realizing at the last moment that Cecropia’s warning that love (and perhaps any attempt at self-assertion) leads to submission, even and ultimately submission to one’s own potentially impossible desires.

Such a reading suggests that Sidney has ruled out any real autonomy for his characters. Cecropia, in fact, gives voice to just such a position, despite her claims to fear submission, and in her battle of philosophies with Pamela earlier in the captivity, she offers a world-view that outlines the world in which figures such as Amphialus and Plangus are the norm. Cecropia, attempting to persuade Pamela to join her, finds the princesses’ faith in earthly and heavenly authorities to be naive, insisting that the strongest virtue is skepticism and self-reliance, ultimately an extensive atheism:

For as children must first by fear be induced to know that which after, when they do know, they are most glad of, so are these bugbears of opinions brought by great clerks into the world to serve as shewels [scarecrows] to keep them from those faults whereto else the vanity of the world and weakness of senses might pull them. But in you, niece, whose excellency is such as it need not to be held up by the staff of vulgar opinions, I would not you

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100 In fact, the wound is not fatal, and Helen of Corinth, hearing what happened, comes to take him away. Since the narrative ends soon after, we do not know what (if anything) Sidney had in store for him. Since Helen was his first love, it is possible that Sidney planned later to have this relationship redeem the failed relationship with Philoclea, perhaps also restoring Amphialus’ honor as a knight. But, of course, these are mere speculations.
should love virtue servilely, for fear of I know not what which you see now, but even for the good effects of virtue which you see. Fear, and indeed, foolish fear, and fearful ignorance, was the first inventor of those conceits... so as it is manifest enough that all things follow but the course of their own nature, saving only man, who while by the pregnancy of his imagination he strives to things supernatural, meanwhile he loseth his own natural felicity. Be wise, and that wisdom shall be a God unto thee. Be contented, and that is thy heaven... (487-8)

There is no stronger statement of authority’s demystification in the New Arcadia, and, although it is presented as a theological discussion, it expands on the political uses of “long held opinions” and “all tender respects of kindred” used to sway the populace in Amphius’ “justification.” In Cecropia’s account, authority is the result of fear used by the powerful. “Excellency” and “virtue” are not to be loved “servilely,” or for the purposes of those who make her afraid, but for themselves. “Excellency” is not to be “help up by the staff [of office] of vulgar opinions,” for it can rule itself best. In Cecropia’s world, authority is nothing but power, and the contradictions felt by Plangus and ultimately Amphius are self-imposed illusions.

Pamela’s response is a defense of hierarchy, both earthly and heavenly, and the need to submit to one’s betters. She ends on a note of utter resignation to Providence, but it is a worldview which the princes and Amphius have shown to be all but impossible, especially if one’s station, like the knight’s, requires self-assertion and autonomy. But this philosophical debate is not, I think, offered for us to choose.101 Instead, Sidney emphasizes what is at stake in his heroes’ desire to become worthy knights. Cecropia’s

101 Others, particularly early twentieth century critics, have argued that the theological reconciliation is the only viable solution to the antimonies of Book III. The most extensive argument for this position is E.M.W. Tillyard’s in The English Epic and Its Background (London: Chatto & Windus, 1954): 312-317.
world is a world of chaos and politically repellent, but the knights experience it as a real possibility, at times threatening (for Plangus) and at times promising (for Amphilanthus). Pamela’s world, however, is impossible for men like Pyrocles, Musidorus, and, ultimately Sidney, since total submission would mean denying their loyalty to forces that go beyond the relationship to the monarchs they happen to find themselves.

Such is the position of a knight with both personal and public commitments in Sidney’s Arcadia. He offers no solution to these problems, and it is thus appropriate the revision is incomplete. For Sidney, though, this is no reason to despair – Plangus and Amphialus are certainly not “speaking pictures” we are meant to emulate. Nonetheless, Sidney suggests that it is precisely as an “errant” wanderer that a political actor with his ambitions, convictions, loyalties, and obligations (to state, self, family, and religion) must understand himself. It is a position of both assertion and waiting, autonomy and submission. It is one that, far from always finding the glory typical of knightly stories, must strive above all for, as he wrote to his father, patience:

So strangely and diversely goes the course of the world by the enterchanging of humors of those that govern it, that though he be most noble to have allways one mynde and one constancy, yet can it not be allways directed to one pointe; but must needs sometymes alter his course, according to the force of others changes dryves it. ... Particularly to your lot, it makes me change my style, and write to your Lordship, that keeping still your minde in one state of vertuouse quietnes, you will yet frame your course accordingly to them. And as they delay your honorable rewardinge, so you by good meanes to delay your returne, till either that ensue, or fitter time be for this.102

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102 Feuillerat, 122.
For Sidney, the potential of hybrid romance to articulate his conflicted sense of agency as a problem is a clear example of Rancière's notion of the “political” work that aesthetic innovation can do, as outlined in the introduction. Amelia Zurcher’s monograph on seventeenth-century romance argues that Sidney’s work laid the groundwork for later writers to develop ever more nuanced ways to depict and explore the notion of self-interest as a political concept, which before would simply have been seen as vice or sedition. And, if my sense of Sidney’s biography is correct, then his final years also showed him developed a greater sense of confidence and subtlety when it came to his own political agency. But Sidney also left his generic innovations to writers more closely concerned with the same pressing issues of the late sixteenth-century. When Spenser turns to the issue of Courtesy in *The Faerie Queene*, it is no surprise that he looked to Sidney, and from the beginning, commentators have wondered how much of Philip is mirrored in Calidore. In the following chapter, however, I suggest that we should look for Sidney less in the character that Spenser creates than in the way the poet seems to have learned how Sidney could manipulate genre and generic conflict for political, rhetorical, and poetic ends.
CHAPTER 3:

“TO EACH DEGREE AND KYNDE”: SPENSER’S GENRES OF COURTESY

If Sidney used generic conflict to explore the contradictions of political actors, opening questions of the limits of generic traditions’ applicability to his particular situation, Spenser responds by manipulating genre in the Faerie Queene to explore problems of how poetry itself relates to politics. In the Arcadia, genres marked out different ends that could organize and justify a knight’s actions in the public world, and they served primarily as tools for Sidney’s disjunctive play with self-interpretation. For Spenser, however, literary genre was less a tool for self-reflection than a way of relating to the larger political world. At least in his self-appointed role as England’s national poet, poetry would not be opposed to action, as Sidney said of his “idle toie” Arcadia, and, at least according to the dominant interpretation, genre would indicate the type of action taken by England’s “newe poete” throughout his Virgilian career.¹ The Shepheardes Calendar would thus mark his appearance on the scene with pastoral poetry that allowed

¹ E.K., epistle to The Shepheardes Calendar in The Shorter Poems, Ed. Richard McCabe (New York, Penguin, 1999), 20. In Self-Crowned Laureates (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), Richard Helgerson gives the most influential account of Spenser’s choice of genres as explicitly Virgilian markers of his desire to be a national poet. See also Patrick Cheney, Spenser’s Famous Flight: the Renaissance Idea of a Literary Career (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1993). Recent accounts have started to challenge this view which has become almost universally accepted, and Pugh Syrthe’s Spenser and Ovid (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005) makes an interesting case that Spenser also deliberately crafted a parallel career to his Virgilian claims along the lines of an exiled Ovid. Unlike Helgerson or Pugh, however, I do not see Spenser’s generic choices, especially later in his life, as clear indications of his career aims.

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him to test his public voice behind a veil of rustic love-complaint. After proving himself there, he would move onto the more serious work of epic poetry, aligning the individual art of “fashion[ing] a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline” with the patriotic duties of glorifying English Protestant imperialism.²

But of course career paths change, and, especially after publishing the 1590 Faerie Queene, Spenser’s reputation was not as grand as he had hoped. Furthermore, many recent critics agree that his experiences in Ireland tempered the ease with which he had earlier praised Elizabeth and her government and perhaps even increased his support for the more militantly Protestant Leciester/Essex faction.³ In the 1596 Faerie Queene, particularly in Books V and VI, the epic aims laid out in the proem to Book I seem to wander away into romance errantry and even regress along the Virgilian axis to pastoral; Redcrosse’ epic vision of an English Cleopolis that stands at the end of all of Gloriana’s champions’ quests seems like a lost dream, replaced by Calidore’s transcendent and other-worldly vision of the pure poetic Graces on Mount Acidale. And yet, these last two books still contain the most topically pointed episodes in the poem, as well as personifying its two most explicitly political virtues: Justice and Courtesy. It would seem then that when politics becomes a problem for Spenser, so does genre.


³ On Book V and Ireland, specifically how Spenser’s attitudes towards Ireland in Book V and in the View of the Present State of Ireland were shaped by service to Lord Grey and his patronage relations with the Sidney/Leicester faction, see Richard McCabe’s Spenser’s Monstrous Regiment: Elizabethan Ireland and the Poetics of Difference (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), ch. 6, and Andrew Hadfield’s Edmund Spenser’s Irish Experience: Wilde Fruit and Salvage Soyl (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), ch. 5.
This chapter challenges the notion that Spenser’s generic decisions in the *Faerie Queene*’s final two books are the result of political pessimism, resentment, and resignation, as has often been argued.\(^4\) It has become a critical commonplace, especially following Helgerson’s account of Spenser’s career, that the poem’s apparent renunciation of chivalric romance in the explicitly pastoral Mount Acidale scene is a repudiation of the poem’s earlier claims to broad national relevance as a statement of apocalyptic English (or Elizabethan) election. This type of reading grants political relevance to chivalry alone and sees the explicitly pastoral sections as, at best, uninterested in politics in favor of “poetic” issues and, at worst, an outright rejection of poetry as politically engaged. As Helgerson says, “[t]he epic poet ends with the bitter regret that because of the Blatant Beast – the image of the great world’s hostility to heroic accomplishment – poetry must be reduced to mere pleasure.”\(^5\) A closer reading, however, shows that Book VI reacts to the potential political failures enacted in Book V not by fleeing to pastoral escapism, but actually by examining the more nuanced ways that poetry can manipulate genre for political ends.

It is certainly true that Book VI is less topical than Book V, but it is hardly less political. In fact, the primary political insight of Calidore’s role as the Knight of Courtesy is that mixed and conflicting genres are the best way to think about the problem of


\(^5\) *Self-Crowned Laureates*, 96.
relating fiction to politics, or at least an improvement on the forced mixture of topicality and chivalric romance in Book V which seems to leave many questions unanswered and many plot threads unfinished. As the poem moved closer to Spenser’s lived historical experience in the final cantos of Book V, its explicit chivalric motifs became obviously and even violently unsuited to dealing with the range of Spenser’s multiple perspectives, needing both to glorify England and the Queen’s actions in recent events while also noting his disappointments and dissenting opinions. Book VI does step back from relating itself directly to current events, but, rather than claiming that poetry is therefore best suited to reflection on personal or spiritual matters, it chooses instead to focus on the way that the forms and genres of poetry can be applied to the world beyond the poem. Courtesy, the book’s titular virtue, is about matching outward conduct to inner virtue, and, especially in the final cantos when the genre of Calidore’s story comes into question (is he a pastoral or a chivalric hero?), the poem begins to address the appropriateness of its multiple and often conflicted generic nature to its stated public and political goals, as well as the way it has been misused and misread with troubling political consequences for Spenser himself. In the end, Spenser transforms the notion of Courtesy from an expression of essentialist truth, a timeless inner virtue that transforms appearance and behavior as if by nature, into a very worldly and contingent practice. It responds to traditional concerns about courtesy being a mask for dissembling and deceitful purposes by suggesting that Courtesy’s potential to be misused is a misinterpretation of its real potential as the ability to rhetorically and poetically match appearances and behavior to changing circumstances.
While Book VI is just as political as the topical sections of Book V, then, it is most concerned with the politics of poetry (or, more specifically, how politics is represented, manipulated, and addressed by and within poetry) and, in particular, the politics of the genres within which its previous political statements have been articulated. What occurs in Book VI is a re-evaluation of the romance or epic-romance world in which the poet originally exchanged his “Oaten reeds” for “Trumpets stern” (I. Pr. 1.4), or the Virgilian move from pastoral to heroic poetry. As Leigh DeNeef says, the very first Proem implies that “pastoral has failed to provide an adequate model for social action and that ‘higher argument remains,’” and, thus, a return to pastoral in Book VI can easily be read as a statement of the *Faerie Queene*’s failure to achieve clear “social action.” But while many critics have taken just that stance, particularly in the reappearance of the shepherd Colin Clout, Spenser’s alter ego from *The Shepheardes Calendar*, on Mount Acidale in canto 11, such a reading oversimplifies the generic hybridity of Book VI, in which pastoral is deliberately contrasted with chivalric romance in ways that do not immediately suggest that Spenser claims one or the other as embodying his ultimate poetic identity. These two books are fundamentally preoccupied with the conditions for, consequences of, and limits to the genres in which the work presented its celebration and

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7 DeNeef, uniquely, makes a similar point in his 1982 essay, but it remains in the realm of moral instruction rather than politics: “[W]e can redefine Spenser’s task in Book VI as the development of a literary mode which can serve as a suitable model for moral action in general. And since neither pastoral nor chivalric is privileged in this way, we must seek another generic form.” (160) For DeNeef, that new form is georgic, and, as evidence, he points to a number of passages in Book VI in which “tilling” becomes a metaphor for a person’s moral development. While novel, this reading largely overlooks the narrative level that continues to mix chivalric and pastoral even after the Mount Acidale episode and through the Book’s final reappearance of the very romantic Blatant Beast which can only be challenged by a knight, not a farmer.
analysis of Elizabeth’s militantly Protestant England, namely epic, chivalric romance, and finally pastoral. As most critics acknowledge, Books V and VI (and, often IV), turn from the “inward” virtues to social virtues, but there has been little discussion of how the political visions (and criticisms) relate to the mixed mode of romance in which Spenser writes. Since Courtesy is a social virtue intimately tied to appearance, rhetoric, and even effective dissembling (or fiction), it seems entirely appropriate that a poem about courtesy, a political virtue, would also look like a poem about poetry. Indirectness and self-reflexiveness, both seen as reasons to dismiss Book VI as a retreat from the public and political goals of earlier Books, are in fact integral to Spenser’s sense of courtesy as a necessary public virtue. It is important, then, to read precisely how Spenser mixes what seems to be a genre of withdrawal from the world, pastoral (and pastoral romance), with what has before been seen as the poem’s genre of political action, chivalric romance. It is true that *The Faerie Queene* presents these generic roles as almost opposite, marked most clearly by the constant donning and doffing of armor, shields, and shepherd’s clothing in Books V and VI. But, in fact, what Calidore ultimately shows is the political necessity of being able to maintain a conflicted and even disjunctive political identity, and the conflicting and mixed genres of Book VI are not signs that Spenser is waffling in his role as public poet, but rather that his sense of the generic encoding of that role must change.

That said, the kind of political reflection that we get may not, in the end, look altogether unsatisfactory to those critics who sense a note of “disillusionment” in Book VI, to use Helgerson’s term. Harry Berger has argued that while Book VI expresses a sincere desire for poetry to be transformative, it simultaneously recognizes that poetry
strives for a withdrawal into the ideal “second world.” For Berger the complex, ambiguous scene on Mount Acidale in which we get both a glimpse of poetic sublimity and its inevitable dissipation by the very figure who desired to see it is endemic of this paradox. While this may be a moving image of a poet who laments the fragility of his dreams in the face of an ever-returning actuality (or whose political ideals seem constantly broken when they crash on the shores of history and contingency), there is another level not discussed by Berger in his essay: the way that a “second world” may not simply be an abstraction or transcendence of history, but rather one in which the poet can create a speculative difference from reality and even question the forms (and genres) made available by the imagination. The conflicting genres of Book VI may well look like withdrawal from a straightforward representation of political issues, but the character of that withdrawal is not simple abstraction or negativity (not an escape to an otherworldly Mount Acidale). It is, instead, a withdrawal from easy generic categorizations and embracing conflicted generic roles at the same time: Calidore

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8 For Berger, there is a fundamental contradiction between the very idea of public poetry, especially of courtesy, and poetry itself: “The armor of courtesy consists of ‘outward shows’ which fulfill rather than deceptively conceal ‘inward thoughts.’ It is not simply a virtue, nor merely an ornamental polish distinguishing gentry from boors, but a technique of survival in a difficult world; courtesy makes virtue and virtuous behavior possible, maintains trust between men, keeps open lines of civilized communication. Actuality, with its dangers, requires a movement out from the virtuous center to the circumference of the self where others are met. But – and this is the trouble for the poet who must exercise this technique even in poetry – such a movement diametrically opposes the poet’s tendency to journey inward toward the mind’s center, toward the source of his ravishing gift.” (“A Secret Discipline: The Faerie Queene, Book VI” in Revisionary Play: Studies in the Spenserian Dynamic, ed. Louis A. Montrose [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988], 222).

9 Ironically, this is precisely what Berger claims for Spenser’s use of pastoral in The Shepheardes Calendar in his later essays: “I think pastoral that criticizes itself rather than (or as well as) the great world is an enduring element of the mode, and I shall try…to substantiate the assertion that reflexive criticism is fundamental to Spenser’s pastoral.” (“Introduction to The Shepheardes Calendar” in Revisionary Play: Studies in the Spenserian Dynamics, ed. Louis A. Montrose [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988]: 282). Berger’s single essay on Book VI, however, was written some 15 years before his more influential studies of pastoral.
ultimately learns to be a better knight by also becoming a better shepherd and by knowing how and when to use the resources of genre for effective ends. In many ways, this is precisely how Spenser had manipulated his genres in earlier episodes of *The Faerie Queene*, but here, that poetic practice becomes associated with the specific virtue he is attempting to teach.\(^\text{10}\) In the end, Calidore comes to represent a living contradiction, a Shepherd Knight, whose ongoing task is to operate effectively in those spaces where he is pulled in opposite directions. But his ability to operate in irreconcilable genres at the same time is also a mark of his mastery of Courtesy, or, as the Proem says, of an ability to match “inward thoughts” with “outward shows,” even when he finds himself with no well-worn generic path to his goal.

By the end of Book VI, Spenser seems to have developed in Calidore an image of a generically mutable figure capable of responding to generic differends, or moments where one situation can be figured in multiple and conflicting generic contexts. The “courteous” response to such situations is to address them in their generic complexity, rather than enforcing a single generic structure onto them. In Book V, Artegaill’s quest is ultimately labeled a failure in specifically generic terms: he could resort to only one understanding of politics, that of imposing a hierarchical order typified by his particular understanding of chivalric romance, on situations where justice might mean something in

\(^{10}\) Redcrosse’s education in Holiness, for example, requires him to learn that the genre of chivalric romance forces him to rely too much on his own resources so that he can relinquish his agency to faith. Guyon, too, must temper his expectations that the fallen world follow his romantic idealism, and, in many ways, his destruction of the Bower of Bliss represents that he has finally let go of his belief the naive ideals of romance in favor of Christian temperance. However, neither character is able to step out of their own genre, reflect on it as a rhetorical construct, and then choose what story they will return to, as Calidore does.
opposition to an order imposed from on high. His philosophical understanding of justice was correct, but he lacked a sense of how to enact that justice in a way that was not confrontational – as a knight, he only knew how to fight. But Calidore is able to move between multiple worlds and multiple kinds of stories, weighing the different perspectives of those he meets and finding a solution within the circumstances of the particular situation, seeing genre primarily as a means rather than a way to impose ends. Calidore’s skill is a rhetorical skill: the ability to match his role to the type of story in which he finds himself, or perhaps even to create new and hybrid roles, even if those stories may demand that he be both a knight and a shepherd at the same time.

3.1 Spenser’s Political Context for the 1596 Faerie Queene

Before moving on, I would note that my reading depends on taking a middle ground among the various interpretations of Spenser’s actual political viewpoint during the writing of the 1596 Faerie Queene. Even though my attention to these Books is more about Spenser’s poetic understanding of politics than his actual beliefs, offering a reading of them requires that one relate them to what we know of Spenser’s political circumstances and relationships, especially since recent criticism has been dominated by arguments about what his beliefs actually were. The political orientation of Books V and VI in particular is usually articulated as determining the extent of Spenser’s “orthodoxy” in the poem, or his positioning along a spectrum which places him as a devoted servant of Elizabeth’s absolutism at one end and as a potentially subversive mouthpiece for

11 Of course, there are topical/political and allegorical explanations behind Artegall’s failure, as well, but as I show below, Spenser describes each in terms that also implicate the genre in which he figures them.
Sidney/Leicester/Essex’s ideas of limited monarchy (expressed as Protestant internationalism and, in some extreme cases, emergent republican Puritanism) on the other. The “orthodox” reading takes Spenser’s rhetoric of praise in the *Faerie Queen* at face value, which would suggest, as Simon Shepherd has said, that “Spenser was a penpusher in the service of imperialism” and a sincere believer in the “cult of Elizabeth.”

Furthermore, much of the early work on Spenser and Ireland repeated these claims to some degree, in large part reflecting Edward Said’s comments in *Culture and Imperialism*: “it is generally true that literary historians who study the great sixteenth-century poet Edmund Spenser, for example, do not connect his bloodthirsty plans for Ireland, where he imagined a British army virtually exterminating the native inhabitants, with his poetic achievement or with the history of British rule over Ireland, which continues today.” Unfortunately, many of the earliest works on Spenser’s Irish influence did just that, and many of the most brutal-sounding passages from *The View of the Present State of Ireland* were taken as signs, not only of Spenser’s continuing belief in English imperialism and the glorification of Elizabeth’s reign and power at all costs, but also as proof that the fictional violence of his chivalric knights was, at best, wish-fulfillment and, at worst, an endorsement of the simplest notion of politics-as-force.


14 The pieces collected in *Spenser and Ireland: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, ed Patricia Coughlan (Cork: Cork University Press, 1989) all seem to reflect this attitude, with the notable exception of Richard McCabe’s contribution. Joan Fitzpatrick’s *Irish Demons: English Writing on Ireland, the Irish, and Gender by Spenser and His Contemporaries* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000) is an example of this extreme reading of Spenser’s Irish experience.
On the other extreme are those who seek to locate a version of Spenser more sympathetic to dissenting voices, perhaps even going so far as labeling him a republican and to find evidence of these claims especially in his later works when his experience with the Leicester/Essex faction and his experiences in Ireland moved him further from the Queen. Louis Montrose, in fact, goes so far as to suggest that Spenser was a republican, not in Hadfield’s specific sense of advocating mixed monarchy that would include serious and binding input by dissenting aristocrats like Leicester, but that he was something of a proto-populist. As he says, the real reason Spenser supported Leicester and Essex was not simply for patronage reasons but because of “the religio-political ideology that they shared with a broader political nation that included ‘the voice of the commons.’” Such readings, while attractive, risk downplaying or even excusing Spenser’s more absolutist and violent imagery as either necessary rhetorical evils or as simply ironic.

In between these positions, we find accounts that place Spenser at different points politically at different times and in response to different issues, and the best work on Spenser’s Irish experience, as well as that which finds him trying to navigate between aristocratic and monarchic sympathies, seems to capture the ways his writing can actually


be read in a multiplicity of political contexts. My reading of Books V and VI assumes an understanding of Spenser in this final conciliatory and conflicted group for two reasons. First, it simply seems that looking at Spenser, like Sidney, as someone who found himself coming to terms with the motives of historical realpolitik, a renewed sense of idealism, and an experience as a colonist which made him at once a representative and absentee of his home court allows us to throw the widest net on the facts of his biography. But, most importantly, such a collection of perhaps irreconcilable political views seems to make better sense of the end of The Faerie Queene, which is at once more political and more skeptical of particular political stances than anything else he had written up to that point. It also, as I hope to show, allows us to make the most sense of what he was doing when mixing genres in ways that otherwise seem simply contradictory if we find him occupying a rather straightforward political position at that time in his life. In the end, I do not wish to make any strong claims for Spenser’s specific political beliefs, but it does seem to me that the moderate and perhaps even conflicted view fits

17 On the issue of aristocracy contra monarch in Spenser’s writing, see Richard Helgerson, Forms of Nationhood, where he argues that the Faerie Queene follows “a Gothic ideology of renascent aristocratic power” (59). A similar reading can be found in David Norbrook’s Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance (13, 126-132). For those readings which find Spenser’s political identity somewhere in between imperialist propagandist and a frustrated anti-monarchist, see Colin Burrow, Edmund Spenser (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1996), 51-2; Paul Suttie’s “Edmund Spenser’s Political Pragmatism” Studies in Philology 95 (1998): 56-76, and Kenneth Borris’ Spenser’s Poetics of Prophecy in The Faerie Queene V (Victoria: English Literary Studies Monograph Series, 1991). I would note that, although Borris’ work is not specifically addressed to the political concerns, he is trying to counter what he sees as over-politicized readings of Book V’s final cantos, an aim which, to my mind, in effect does show Spenser having a less extreme politics because the obvious political readings of the topical episodes are also crossed with potential religious and confessional politics. On how Spenser’s Irish experience may have significantly tempered his patriotic sense of imperialism, see especially Hadfield’s Edmund Spenser’s Irish Experience: Wilde Fruit and Salvage Soyl, McCabe’s Spenser’s Monstrous Regiment: Elizabethan Ireland and the Poetics of Difference. The best is, of course, Graham Hammill, “‘The Thing/Which Never Was’: Republicanism and The Ruines of Time” Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual, 18 (2003): 165-83, which argues that, whether or not Spenser may have in fact been sympathetic to republican thought, his rhetoric can force his readers to consider such positions.
best with the ways that \textit{The Faerie Queene} is interested in thinking about political problems.

This more sophisticated political orientation also allows us to better understand why it is that Book VI can be read as at once less topical and more political. Book V of course ends with three very pointed topical episodes, but it also, as I will show, stages their failure in specifically generic ways. Rather than see Artegall’s apparent failure in these episodes as evidence of Spenser’s extra-poetic frustration with politics, it seems better to notice the ways that the chivalric fiction of which Artegall is perhaps the most stereotypical representative, even more than Redcrosse, is what truly fails at the end of Book V, not the Elizabethan policies themselves nor Spenser’s own political hopes, as is so often argued. Instead, what Book V ultimately challenges is the value of heroic poetry, in both epic and romance forms (which, as I will show, are separated in the figures of Arthur and Artegall, respectively) to adequately figure a fictional way of treating political issues. This is the problem of genre and politics that ends Book V.

3.2 Book V and the Failure of Chivalric Romance

In Book V, Spenser writes what is, arguably, his most typical chivalric romance narrative of the 1596 \textit{Faerie Queene}, and includes within it the topical episodes which bring his “Faerie Iond” into direct contact with three international episodes that force the poem to address recent and ongoing political moments in Elizabeth’s reign: Belge (the English intervention in the Netherlands), Burbon (Elizabeth’s support for the ex-Huguenot Henri IV), and Irena (Ireland which must be saved from the lawless and savage
Grantorto). Many readings of the end of Book V conclude that Spenser abandons his hope for poetry to have direct political influence when Envy, Detraction, and the Blatant Beast accost Artegall on his way back to Gloriana’s court. This has been particularly true of criticism focused on the Irish context which often finds that Spenser’s cynicism about Elizabeth’s handling of the Irish leads to a situation where the English will never be able to “civilize” the “salvage nation” – no matter how much anyone, particularly a poet, says to the contrary. Spenser comes to believe that poetry, so go the readings, cannot change a harsh political reality. Thus, when Envy, Detraction, and the Blatant Beast intrude on Artegall’s victory over Grantorto, the fantasy of an allegorical Lord Grey pacifying Irena’s land (Ireland) is interrupted by figures which represent the failure and corruption of attempts to speak truth to power. Artegall’s victory is shown to be a poetic sham because, while he may have won on the superficial terms of the chivalric narrative (he beats the giant and saves the lady), the actual effects of Grantorto’s tyranny still ravage the land. Furthermore, Artegall’s frequent reliance on his companion, the “yron man” Talus, to settle disputes rather than his own knightly prowess seems as if Spenser may be pointing out the limitations of chivalric actors to adequately address complex issues of

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18 On the history of the generic classifications of Books III-IV, V, and VI as, respectively, Ariostan romance, chivalric romance, and pastoral romance, see Andrew King’s *The Faerie Queene and Middle English Romance: The Matter of Just Memory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 1-12. King also makes a convincing source-study argument that Book V is designed to appeal even more strongly than Books I or II to the generic expectations of chivalric romance, and especially native English romances such as *Guy of Warwick*, *Sir Bevis of Hampton*, and *Lybeaus Desconus*, suggesting that we are supposed to take Artegall’s chivalric role much more seriously than Redcrosse’s, for whom the chivalric story almost immediately becomes a foil for the lessons of Holiness. See esp. King, 189-209.

19 See Wily Maley, *Salvaging Spenser: Colonialism, Culture, and Identity* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997): “One may feel behind Arthur’s elusiveness [at the end of Book V] a greater absence, that of Gloriana, an absence felt both by Arthur and the reader, as well as by Spenser in Ireland – if not the absence of the Queen herself, then the absence of that royal power that Irenius wished to see impose itself upon her Irish dominion” (117).
justice. When Spenser seems to abandon chivalry for pastoral in Book VI, then, the poem is said to be employing genre as a textual metaphor for how it relates to the larger political world. Chivalric romance would represent Spenser’s attempt to engage the public good while pastoral stands for withdrawal from outward concerns and self-absorption in song and beauty, and the poem wanders off into the latter, having given up its political aspirations.

Closer attention to how Artegal actually fails in Book V offers a different picture in which the tropes of chivalric romance need not stand in for the overall political effectiveness of Spenser’s poem. Instead, Artegall’s failures are marked as specifically generic failures, as if the resources of a chivalric knight simply pale in comparison to the more complicated demands of unjust situations. This becomes particularly true as the poem moves from the more conceptual allegorical episodes early in the Book towards the topical episodes of the final cantos that bring Artegall almost literally out of Faerie and into the sixteenth century. Spenser seems to be saying that political problems are ultimately too complex for the chivalric genre, or perhaps any one genre alone, to address.

From the beginning, Book V is at pains to mark the distance between an idealized, romance narrative and historical reality. The Proem points out how far the world has fallen from its original perfection, a perfection which Spenser has previously, in the Proem to Book II, identified as the “happy land of Faery” and which may still be glimpsed through the poem’s “certaine signes here set in sundry place.” (II.Proem.1) Book V’s Proem, however, immediately suggests that the world in which the poem’s
audience lives looks very little like how we might imagine it in the “antique world” of poetry:

Through long continuance of his course,
Me seems the world is runne quite out of square,
From the first point of his appointed sourse,
And being once amiss growes daily wourse and wourse.
(V.Proem.1)

Even the heavens “are wondred much” from their original perfection and “now all range,
and doe at random roue / Out of their proper places farre away.” (V.Proem.6) Further, the constellations are now mixed up, and their mythological references no longer make sense, a notion which emphasizes that stories, perhaps even the stories of The Faerie Queene, may no longer mean what they might in their original contexts:

For that same golden fleecy Ram, which bore
Phrixus and Helle from their stepdames feares,
Hath now forgot, where he was plast of yore,
And shouldred hath the Bull, which fayre Europa bore.

And eke the Bull hath with his bow-bent horne
So hardly butted those two twines of Ioue,
That they haue crusht the Crab, and quite him borne
Into the great Nemoean lions groue. (V.Proem.5-6)

Book V begins, then, with a reminder that it is not just the heavens and the world which no longer function properly, but even literature itself cannot follow the same patterns it once did. The Legend of Justice will be a very old kind of story, but we are immediately warned that these old stories no longer apply quite as well as they once did.

Artegall’s story soon makes this clear. It begins as a typical chivalric quest. A lady, Irena, comes to Gloriana, “to whom complaining her afflicted plignt, / She her besought of gratious redresse,” and the Queen chooses Artegall “to succour [this] distresd Dame” by freeing her from the giant tyrant Grantorto (V.1.4, 3). His training in
justice by the goddess Astraea and his pedigree (he is named as Arthur’s half-brother in III.3.27) should make him an ideal candidate, but, as he makes his way save Irena, he continually finds his chivalric nature unable to respond to the challenges of Justice. For example, when he is “Beaten with stones downe from the battilment” (V.2.20) of Munera’s castle, he is not given the chance to respond in face-to-face combat, the kind of challenge he repeatedly insists is the only kind proper for a knight of Gloriana’s court, and he must resort, as he often does, to sending Talus ahead. But he does not even have Talus fight, commanding instead that the golem “inuent / Which way he enter might, without endangerment” (V.2.20). Artegall is essentially shown here as incapable of acting as a knight should, opting instead to send a servant to find a safe rather than potentially valorous way across a bridge. Episodes like this show Artegall continually lowering himself to the base conditions of the fallen world outlined by the Proem, rather than challenging them in terms of his chivalric nature in order to set them right, an outcome which is often ironically caused by his fear of breaking those same chivalric rules.

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20 Interestingly, Geoffrey of Monmoth describes his namesake Arthgallo as an unjust king until he was deposed, after which he returned to his throne “exercising strict justice towards all men” (British History, in Six Old English Chronicles, ed. J.A. Giles [London, 1891]: 89-292, 3.17). Arthgallo’s apparent double failure, of being unjust before his fall and perhaps too just after, is apt for the Knight of Justice whose ultimate allegorical consequence is of a knight who always falls short of his goals.

21 Artegall’s insistence on the rules of chivalry, which often lead to him doing little at all, is typically glossed by more sympathetic allegorical interpreters as Artegall’s ability to maintain decorum and hierarchical order, of which chivalric laws of combat are a part. See, for example, Thomas Dunsheath, Spenser’s Allegory of Justice in Book Five of “The Faerie Queene” (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968): 87-95. Such readings often overlook or explain away the even more chaotic and violence outcomes of his reluctance to fight with social inferiors.

22 See Nicholas Canny, “Introduction: Spenser and the Reformation of Ireland,” in Spenser and Ireland, 9-24 (20). Canny actually connects this to arguments in the View which posit that “any civil people who settled in such a society [as Ireland] and who sought to achieve social amelioration through persuasive means would inevitably become absorbed into the corruption of their host community” (20).
At other times, Artegall simply finds himself unable to decide how to respond to his environment. In his encounter with the “Communist Giant” in canto ii, for example, he is at a loss when attacked by a mob rather than a social equal:

He much was troubled, ne wist what to doo.
For loth he was his noble hands t’embrook
In the base blood of such a rascal crew. (V.2.52)

Artegall’s confusion here occurs because the circumstances of his narrative do not fit his generic identity. His “noble hands” cannot attack the “base blood” of the multitude according to his sense of honor, but, at the same time, inactivity is unacceptable. He decides instead to send Talus “t’inquire / The cause of their array, and truce for to desire” (V.2.52). The mob reacts to this as if attacked, and they in turn attack Talus, only to be decimated and routed. Although Spenser claims that Artegall’s intentions for sending Talus were noble and diplomatic, Talus is of course an “yron man” (V.1.12) whose mere presence is threatening, and Spenser devotes two stanzas describing the effects of Talus’ appearance and actions on the people, all of whom end up either dead, dazed, or cowering in fear of death (V.2.53-4). Talus’ indiscriminate violence against a mob whose emotions are humanized and seem meant to provoke sympathy after-the-fact certainly stands as an extreme consequence of a knight’s indecision in a situation where he simply lacked an equal to challenge.  

If we remember as well that, at this point in the episode, Artegall has already made his allegorical point about the limitations of enforced equality in the direct argument with the giant, Talus’ violence cannot but seem excessive, and the fact that it

23 Stanza 54 seems to mark this deliberately, contrasting the trained “Faulcon…with nimble flight” to a “flush of Ducks” suggesting again the large gulf between the highly trained and “artful” bird with common water foul.
results from a nicety of the strictures of chivalric combat simply underscores its lack of proportion, or, in essence, its injustice. In unexpected moments, in other words, chivalric romance can actually create the opposite of what it is supposed to articulate and work against the very terms of the overt allegory.

Talus himself also gradually begins to look like a generic problem that has outlived its allegorical usefulness. Talus is initially introduced as a magical gift to Artegaill from Astrea, the goddess of Justice from whom he learns his virtue, along with his magical sword Chrysaor. Talus is traditionally interpreted as a representation of the force of law which is supposed to only exert itself in the service of justice, just as Talus will only “execute [Astrea’s] steadfast doome” (V.1.12). But, like the sword, he is also a boon in a chivalric quest, and there are a number of similar “yon men” who follow knights which can mark him as a very typical chivalric figure, in addition to his similarity to the “brone man” of Apollonius’ Argonautica. But Talus frequently oversteps his allegorical bounds to become a problem both for Artegaill and for his role in relation to Justice. He will often stand in for Artegaill to complete the challenges which other knights, such as Redcrosse or Guyon, would undertake themselves. And, despite the fact that he can only act on just commands, Spenser often allows the descriptions of Talus’

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25 The one detail that has always bothered critics who want to identify Talus’ source as primarily classical (and, thus, more closely associated with specifically Aristotelian ideas of justice) is Talus’ “yon flale…with which he thresh out flashood.” (V.1.12) But there are a number of metal men that appear particularly in French romances wielding flails, such as Huon of Bordeaux where two men made of brass attack each other with iron flails. See Bernard Davis, Edmund Spenser: A Critical Study (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933): 124. John Steadman also notes that two iron men appear with flails in English traditions, starting with Lyf of Virgilius, a Middle English prose chivalric romance printed in 1518 from which other prose romances borrowed (“Spenser and the Virgilius Legend: Another Talus Parallel” Modern Language Notes 73:6 [1958]: 412-413).
That excessive violence is a common target of critical concern that Spenser has become particularly pessimistic about the possibility of justice in a fallen world, but it also serves to highlight Aregasus’s increasing generic incompatibility with his allegorical role throughout the book.

However, what is important for the generic encoding of Talus’ violence is that it operates almost exclusively as a supplement or even alternative to more honorable forms of chivalric combat. Aregasus uses Chrysaor only twice throughout the Book, once to defeat Grantorto at the end (V.12.23) and the other to cut off Pollente’s head after he has already been bested (V.2.18). Otherwise, apart from losing his battle with Radigund, which I discuss below, Aregasus leaves the fighting up to Talus. If, as in the Munera episode, Aregasus is unable to act according to his generic expectations, Talus’ violence serves as both a marker of chivalry’s inadequacy to deal with complex situations and, at the same time, as a monstrous intensification of what happens when it is forced to apply, nonetheless. But the golem far outstrips his iconographic role, becoming a symbol that can interact with the less idealized landscape of Book V only through impersonal violence rather than the more honorable combat that Aregasus seems to desire. Talus, in other words, begins as a metonymic figure of Aregasus’s justice, but his generic role soon

26 Elizabeth Fowler reads the supposed justice and impartiality of Talus’ violence as almost always rhetorically undercut by Spenser’s language, which is more judgmental. See “The Failure of Moral Philosophy in the Work of Edmund Spenser,” Representations 51 (1995), 47-76.

27 There is, of course, a long tradition of interpreting Talus according to different types of justice, particularly those outlined by Aristotle. But what is important for my argument is the way that Spenser figures him as one of a number of wondrous images in the Book’s chivalric iconography. His allegorical relationship to various interpretations of the Book’s legal registers does not undermine the way he is also figured generically. See Geoffrey Wagner, “Talus” English Literary History 17. 2 (1950): 79-86.
mutates in the presence of the all too literal and un-chivalric situations the knight faces, and he becomes a problem for both the allegory and the narrative. In fact, after Talus’ final onslaught against Grantorto’s followers in canto 12, Artegaill finds himself ultimately unable to control the golem, and he is forced to restrain him from doing the one and only thing he is meant to do. After Artegaill defeats Grantorto, Talus wades into the countryside leaving bodies scattered “as thicke as doth the seede after the sowers hand” (V.12.7), and “Artegaill him [Talus] seeing so to rage, / Willd him to stay, and signe of truce did make” (V.12.8).

The same excessive and even unjust consequences follow Artegaill throughout the progress of his quest. It seems clear that the first five cantos of Book V are supposed to show Artegaill failing or misunderstanding his role as a Knight of Justice, much like Guyon’s and Redcrosse’s early misadventures, before being transformed after his meeting with Arthur in canto 6, just as Redcrosse experiences spiritual renewal after

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28 Britomart also has to restrain Talus after she defeats Radigund in canto xii, and it is a telling point that Britomart, whose knightly identity is much more nuanced and mixed with other aspects than Artegaill’s (and, as Spenser insists, whose relationship to Justice involves more of heavenly mercy than secular law), finds herself having to face the consequences of Artegaill’s rigid modes of response to circumstances. Britomart follows Talus to where he has slaughtered Radigund’s retinue, and:

> When she saw the heapes, which he did make,  
> Of slaughtred carcasses, her heart did quake  
> For very ruth, which did it almost riue,  
> That she his fury willed him to slake:  
> For else he sure had left not one aliue,  
> But all in his reuenge of spirite would depriue (V.7.36).

Although a knight, Britomart’s relation to her generic presentation is much more fluid than Artegaill’s, and her ability to supplement Artegaill’s trouble with his virtue, as with Arthur’s that I discuss below, lasts only so long as she and the Knight of Justice are physically together. Just as Artegaill cannot deal with complicated applications of justice after Arthur leaves to fight Belge, Artegaill seems lost after Britomart rescues him from Radigund and leaves him to continue his quest alone.
encountering and resisting Despair. And each early failure is marked by an increasing rift between Artegall as a chivalric knight and the virtue he personifies, culminating in his battle with the Amazon Radigund in canto 5. Radigund herself is initially seen as evil specifically because she spurns knights from their quests and emasculates them, offering a direct challenge to the chivalric identity in addition to the more traditional allegorical interpretations which read her tyrannical feminine dominance and representation of Pride as her primary threat to justice’s hierarchical decorum. Sir Terpin describes her to Artegall in terms that seem to challenge him more as a chivalric romance figure than as a personification of Justice:

For all those Knights, the which by force or guile
She doth subdue, she fowly doth entreate,
First she doth them of warlike armes despoile,
And cloth in womens weeds: And then with thread
Doth them compel to worke, to earne their meat,
To spin, to card, to sew, to wash, to wring;
Ne doth she giue them other thing to eat,
But bread and water, or like feeble thing,
Them to disable from reuenge aduenturing. (V.4.31)

Her “evils,” then are initially the common threat to a chivalric knight of losing his armor

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30 It is even possible to argue that Radigund is ultimately not a test of Artegall’s justice, but of Britomart’s. Radigund is the mutation of female knighthood (her main goal is revenge against the Knights of Maidenhead), and, of course, it is Britomart that defeats her, not Artegall. That fight itself mirrors the fight of Bradamante with Marfisa in Orlando Furioso (Canto 36) in which there is no analogue for Artegall; Bradamante battles Marfisa for her own honor, not to save her lover. Again, then, even this extended episode which seems designed to mirror the structure of Books I and II in which the hero comes to himself after suffering his worst defeat, pits a better knight, Britomart, as the hero rather than Artegall. For similar readings of the Radigund episode as being focused more on Britomart’s development and meaning than Artegall’s, see Carol Schreier Rupprecht, “The Martial Maid and the Challenge of Androgyny,” Spring: An Annual of Archetypal Psychology and Jungian Thought (1974): 269-93; Louis A. Montrose, “‘Shaping Fantasies’: Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture,” Representations 2:61-94, and Mihoko Suzuki, Metamorphoses of Helen: Authority, Difference, and the Epic (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1989).
and being delayed from adventuring, as well as being humiliated through feminization.\textsuperscript{31}

But when he actually encounters her, one of the few times he actually engages in combat, Artegall’s real threat is a self-created one that arises out of his inability to understand what his role should be. He initially wins the fight, but, right before beheading her, he sees in her face the “miracle of natures goodly grace’ and is overcome with “astonishment.” (V.5.12) As the next stanza explains, he is caught between two vices, one of unfeeling cruelty which offends justice, the other of unearned pity, which offends true mercy, and he throws his sword away.\textsuperscript{32} Artegall is here caught between the choice of betraying his allegorical role (allowing a killer to live) or his chivalric role (killing a beautiful lady), and, relinquishing the sword Chrysaor, chooses to obey chivalry for the wrong reasons. Radigund, of course, humiliates him, and the following cantos leave his fate up to Britomart, who must save and redeem him. In the end, Artegall’s lowest point in Book V is then cast in terms that make him suffer the worst a chivalric figure can endure for, ironically, trying to maintain that chivalric identity rather than discard it in the name of another virtue.

\textsuperscript{31} See Cooper, \textit{The English Romance in Time}, 214-234.

\textsuperscript{32} Stanzas 12 and 13 here correspond directly to Artegall’s surrender to Britomart in Book IV, and the primary difference is that Artegall here throws his sword of his own will, whereas Britomart’s beauty seemed to move his sword out of his hand before: his “cruell sword out of his fingers slacke / Fell downe to ground” (IV.6.21). Judith Anderson glosses the importance of these differences for this scene in particular: “At this point in the poem…, although Spenser offers insistently ironic reflections on Artegall’s ‘goodwill’ (v.17), he offers no dramatically meaningful alternative to the ‘wilfull’ choice Artegall makes. Nor does history. Artegall falls here because after five cantos of dispensing impersonal justice, he acts like a private and sentiental human being.” (SpEnc, 63). Anderson’s reading says that Artegall’s fails here because he ultimately has no way to satisfy his various imposed roles, either as allegorical justice or as a knight, and his actions as a “private and sentiential human being” are, in this context, not humanizing, but ultimately a mark of his failure to live up to any code. (See, further, Anderson’s “‘Nor Man It Is’: The Knight of Justice in Book V of Spenser’s \textit{Faerie Queene}” PMLA 85:65-77.) I largely agree with Anderson’s reading, as it seems to point to the fact that Artegall’s very existence depends on his living in certain generic codes, but that, unfortunately, those codes are either in conflict with or insufficient to achieve his other ends.
Even after the Radigund episode, the disjunction between Artega\'s chivalric instincts and his ability to carry them out in the increasingly factual and historical world of Book V is heightened by his meeting with Arthur. Arthur is, of course, supposed to represent each of Gloriana\’s knights\’ fulfillment, and Artega\, both in name and lineage, is supposed to be closest to Arthur. And yet, in their first meeting, they misrecognize one another and duel. Neither, however, is disguised, but their armor, one of the symbols of their knighthood, conceals rather than exposes their true identities. But it also soon becomes clear that the poem does not figure Arthur and Artega\ in a relationship of fulfillment and potential, as it did Arthur and Redcrosse or Guyon. Instead, as Andrew King has argued, Arthur\’s characterization in Book V seems to rely more on historical romance, medieval historiography, and even epic influence than chivalric romance.

Arthur, in his role of conqueror who jousts with emperors rather than other knights, is not constrained by the fictions of chivalric conduct which plague Artega\, acting instead as if he lives in a world overseen not by an artificial code of behavior best suited to stylized narrative, but rather to a literary history in which national glory and personal and public success complement one another. Here, Arthur seems much closer to what Spenser says of him in the \“Letter to Raleigh\” than anywhere else in The Faerie Queene, in which he

33 Artega suggests \“Arthur\’s equal,\” and Artega\’s marriage to Britomart is supposed to tie Elizabeth\’s lineage back to Arthur\’s bloodline.

34 \“The historical Arthurian matter which Spenser assumes is Arthur\’s extensive foreign conquests. Geoffrey of Monmouth\’s Historia, the prose Brut, Hardyng\’s Chronicle, and Malory\’s \‘Tale of the Emperor Lucius\’ relate Arthur\’s victories over various parts of Europe, and the battles in V.8-12 [in which Arthur assists Artega]\ build upon this image of the British king.\” (King, 196-7)
chose to show individual knights as aspects of an idealized Arthur because he was an English analogue to other specifically epic heroes:

I chose the historye of king Arthure, as most fitte for the excellency of his person, being made famous by many mens former works, and also furthest from the daunger of enuy, and suspicion of present time. In which I haue followed all the antique Poets historicall, first Homere, who in the Persons of Agamemnon and Vlysses hath ensampled a good gouernour and a virtuous man, the one in his Ilias, the other in his Odysseis: then Virgil, whose like intention was to doe in the person of Aeneas: after him Ariosto comprised them both in his Orlando: and lately Tasso disseuerred them againe, and formed both parts in two persons, namely that part which they in Philosophy call Ethice, or vertues of a priuate man, coloured in his Rinaldo: The other named Politicie in his Godfredo. By ensample of which excellente Poets, I labour to pourtraict in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a braue knight, perfected in the twelue priuate morall vertues, as Aristotle hath deuised, the which is the purpose of these first twelue books: which if I finde to be well accepted, I may be perhaps encouraged, to frame the other part of politicke vertues in his person, after that hee came to be king. (715-6)

Spenser here characterizes Arthur not as a figure limited to the romance tradition, but as inheriting the full span of both private and public virtues depicted in epic poetry from Homer to Tasso. Although the plan for the full 24 Books which would show this development of course never happened, many have speculated that Spenser’s overall design of the 1596 Faerie Queene might well be a compacted version of the “politicke vertues”; and Friendship, Justice, and Courtesy are public rather than private.35 The Prince Arthur of Book V may not be designated as a king, but his role seems consistent with a more epic and even imperial interpretation.36 Indeed, his first battle after meeting

35 See especially Hamilton, 50-58; and Nohrnberg, 44-45.
36 On the Arthur of Book V as a specifically epic rather than chivalric hero, see Nohrnberg, 42-50; Elizabeth Mazzola, “Apocryphal Texts and Epic Amnesia: The Ends of History in The Faerie Queene,”
Artegall in which he bests the Souldan and his wife Adicia seems designed to distinguish him from Artegall and chivalric romance. On hearing Arthur’s challenge, the Souldan mounts a chariot “With yron wheeles and hookes arm’d dreadfully” (V.8.28), which Michael West has argued is one of the few places in the poem where Spenser draws on specifically classic and Virgilian types of warfare.37 Arthur engages him on horseback and proceeds to treat the combat like a chivalric joust, with even Talus “Playing his pages part” (V.8.29). However, Arthur cannot match the chariot’s speed nor “nigh vnto him goe, / That one sure stroke he might vnto him reach / Whereby his strengthes assay he might him teach” (V.8.37). Instead, he unveils his magic shield which shines brighter than the sun and blinds the Souldan, routes his horses, which leads to his death. The description of Arthur’s shield given in Book I is modeled specifically on Atlante’s shield from Orlando Furioso, but here, as Patrick Cook has argued, the shield can also reflect Achilles’ overcoming Hector, especially in the context of the Souldan’s “classical” warfare and the heroic simile comparing Arthur to Hercules at V.8.31.38 Furthermore, the fact that the Souldan represents the first deliberately topical allusion in Book V, standing in for Philip II of Spain, enhances the epic overtones: Arthur’s unveiling of the shield figures England’s defeat of the Spanish Armada, and his role here, as it will be with Belge later, is closely allied both to England’s ability to overcome potential tyrannical


empires, like that of the Souldan who held “tortuous [illegal] power and lawless regiment” (V.8.30) as the English would say of the Catholic Philip, and to project the potential of England’s own imperial potential, not only by resisting Spanish advances but by potentially replacing their sovereignty, as Arthur almost does in Belge’s Holland. The Arthur of Book V, then, is not a figure limited either by the abstract rules of a personified virtue, nor by an inadequate generic context, and the gap between him and the figure who is supposed to learn from him only widens.39

As long as Arthur and Artegall remain together, Artegall’s knighthood does not seem to interfere with his actions. However, after they separate, Artegall again finds himself unsure of how to carry out his generic role, and that confusion is specifically set in contrast to Arthur’s almost effortless successes. In the final topical sections, we are first shown Arthur easily slaying Gerioneo and saving Belge, a kind of wish-fulfillment fantasy of Leicester’s encounter in the Netherlands. Spenser seems to offer this first episode as a foil for the two more questionable victories that follow. As Tobias Gregory shows, this episode “presents a whitewashed version of recent events, smoothing away the inconvenient particulars so as to glorify all concerned.”40 Here, although Arthur again acts as a chivalric knight who sets forth from Mercilla’s court to save a damsel in distress, his chivalry is never challenged because Belge’s world is almost purely that of

39 Although she does not discuss Arthur in particular, Elizabeth J. Bellamy does find Book V to create an “epic topos” of an empire in decline, both in its own undoing of epic motifs and in its borrowings from Ariosto’s Cinque Canti, in which Charlemagne and his knights suffer disintegration after the otherwise epic end of the original Orlando Furioso. Elizabeth J. Bellamy, “The Aesthetics of Decline: Locating the Post-Epic in Literary History,” Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual 11 (1994): 161-186.

almost stereotypical chivalric romance: unlike the more complicated situations of Burbon’s France and Irena’s Ireland, Belge’s Holland is topical in name only and elides the tricky details of historical circumstance that showed Leicester’s Dutch expedition to be at best a qualified success.\textsuperscript{41} In other words, chivalric romance works smoothly when creating an idealized version of events in which Arthur/Leicester really does simply slay the Catholic tyrant, rather than the much less successful historical truth in which the political players had mixed motives, the outcomes were qualified, and opinions about the historical truth of the situation remain contentious. Politically, the Belge episode leaves little room for sophisticated political commentary that addresses the nuances of the situation that Spenser allows himself with the next two episodes, and the contrast between them ultimately calls our attention less to the specifics of Spenser’s specific political opinions and more to how his figuration of politically delicate situations allows for various levels of sophistication.

Once the narrative returns to Artegall, his world seems again to intensify the difference between romance and history. When Burbon and Flourdelis are attacked by a mob, Artegall again vacillates between acting like a knight and the demands of justice, opting again to let Talus intervene than to act himself. Furthermore, his attitude towards Burbon shifts back and forth between loving him as a fellow knight and seeing him as a self-serving pretender, and he seems unable to decide whether Burbon’s shield is a chivalric weapon of war or a moral and religious icon, moments of indecision that

\textsuperscript{41} Linda Gregerson has argued that this episode demonstrates a “tactical amnesia” toward the actual complicated origins and questionable outcomes of Leicester’s Dutch expedition, specifically those which discussed Elizabeth’s reluctance to intervene, the limited military successes, and Leicester’s disobedience once on the continent. See especially Gregerson, \textit{The Reformation of the Subject} (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), 101.
ultimately lead to greater chaos in Burbon’s kingdom (V.11.44-57). And, of course, after defeating Grantorto, Artegall begins to do the work of reforming Irena’s land, but he is prevented from restoring actual order among the populace when his Fairy Queen recalls him to the magical court. Artegall the knight defeats the giant and saves the lady, but he leaves the actual recalcitrant political problems of governance unresolved.

In the end, Artegall’s relation to chivalry may actually be the opposite of that figured in earlier knights. Unlike Redcrosse whose quest is to become a true knight, Artegall begins his quest as a full knight of Gloriana’s court, and seems to steadily lose that identity, or at least what it should represent, as he moves further from her court. And the world in which he moves seems increasingly inhospitable to the ways in which he has been trained. It might be that this is simply the difficulty of being a single character made to represent a virtue which is, ideally, objective and impersonal, or specifically not limited by a specific character’s perspective. No one can be truly and totally impartial (with the possible exception of Talus). And Spenser’s obvious concern throughout the book that such an ideal of impartiality can often translate into oversimplification, inhumanity, and excessive violence is evidence that Artegall’s failure is in some sense endemic to the problem of justice itself. But it is vital to note how much Spenser implicates the genre in which this allegory is told, chivalric romance (and, at least tangentially through Arthur, epic heroic poetry in general) also reflects how justice can be executed in overly abstract and ultimately imperfect ways. What emerges at the end of Book V is an insistence that the Legend of Justice remains incomplete and that the Knight of Justice, a typical chivalric figure, may not be up to his task. Unlike the earlier books, the central hero leaves Book V no longer having achieved his goal (as one could
argue Guyon has) nor knowing how to soldier on (as Redcrosse does). In fact, Artegałl’s final appearance in the book is a confrontation with the Blatant Beast which Spenser stresses he cannot win, and his enemy here is not only immune to Artegałl’s chivalric resources, but may well even be created by them. The problem, then, is not only that Justice is difficult to achieve in a world “runne quite out of square,” but with how it is represented in this narrative, and the book’s genre is consistently singled out as at least partly culpable for Justice’s imperfections. In fact, there is an odd irony that Artegałl’s and Talus’ actions may well have been precisely what Spenser desired for Ireland, at least according to most readings of the View: it seems clear that Spenser meant Artegałl to figure Lord Grey, whom the poet clearly supported and publicly defended, and the military pacification of a savage Ireland, interrupted by a Queen who recalls her knight right when he seemed to be making progress. The easy allegorical reading of such a topical meaning would place the blame for the unfinished problems solely on Gloriana/Elizabeth, leaving Lord Grey and Artegałl looking like heroes unsupported by their distant monarchs. But Book V ends in a manner that places the blame squarely on Artegałl and, most interestingly, on the way in which his story has been told.

In this last episode of canto 12, which is at once pointedly topical and pointedly generic (Artegałl finally slays the giant and saves the lady), Spenser focuses directly on the limits of addressing politics through genre. Artegałl’s quest fails despite the fact that his actions may well have represented a kind of wish-fulfillment for Spenser concerning Ireland’s pacification. But Artegałl fails not because his “position” was wrong or because Spenser wanted to criticize the policy he represented, but because his genre did not allow him to portray that position adequately. He was a chivalric hero, and, although he may
have been politically right (in terms of Spenser’s likely political beliefs), he could not communicate the justice of his actions adequately. Spenser underscores this problem of the representation of political truth with the final episode of the Book.

After defeating Grantorto, which takes eleven stanzas, Spenser has Artegall recalled to Gloriana’s court “ere he could reform it [Ireland] thoroughly” (V.27.1), and, in 18 stanzas, describes his encounter with Envy, Detraction, and the Blatant Beast. By introducing these figures of fraudulent speech, Spenser exits the book of Justice on an image of deceit that has, previously, been Justice’s job to overcome, as when Bonfort’s tongue is nailed to a post for having “blaspheme[d]” Mercilla “for forged guile” (V.9.25).

In the course of abusing Artegall, however, Spenser calls attention to the ability of these figures of misshapen speech to “read,” as it were, Artegall’s chivalric romance against the overt political allegory championing England as an international justice bringer:

Then the other [Detraction] coming neare, gan him revile,  
And fouly rayle, with all she could invent;  
Saying, that he had with unmanly guile,  
And foule abusion both his honour blent,  
And that bright sword, the sword of Justice lent,  
Had stayned with reprochfull crueltie,  
In guitiesse blood of many an innocent:  
As for Grandtorto, him with treacherie  
And traynes [wiles] having surprised, he fouly did to die.  
(V.12.40)

Artegall’s honour, his worthiness as a knight, is here claimed to be “abused” by his own guile and “traynes,” having presented a mighty show which masks “crueltie” with a false invention that glorifies and excuses violence. (One should note here how closely Detraction’s reading of the poem matches many of Spenser’s harsher critics on the subject of Ireland.) His magic sword, Chrysaor, the central symbolic weapon described
earlier as being a divine instrument of justice likened to Jove’s thunderbolt used against the Titans in their revolt against the just decrees of heaven (V.1.12), is now “stayned” by how Artegaill has used it. What is interesting, however, is that Detraction calls on those standard marks of chivalric romance, honor, the magic sword which excels even Excalibur, supposedly righteous violence, the quest to free a lady from a giant, and claims that it is all merely an “invention.” In effect, Detraction claims that Artegaill, and, by implication, his chivalric narrative, is not her enemy, but her ally, ultimately becoming what he opposed by way of the very symbols of his heroism.

Envy and Detraction do not undermine Artegaill’s justice per se, but rather show Spenser worrying about the relation of his idealized allegory of Justice set forth in romance terms, and the historical reality which, of course, never corresponds to stylized narrative. Again, Andrew King, who has done the most work recently to trace Spenser’s relationship to chivalric romance, makes a similar point when he notes how the later sections of the book in particular show a widening gap between Artegaill and Arthur’s characters. Arthur becomes, in King’s words, the “intangible and unhistorical phantasm” of England’s self-representation while Artegaill’s ambiguous narrative ending underscores his closeness to a historical world which has, according to the Proem, “runne quite out of square.”42 This is true even if Arthur is given an epic characterization as well since that role of epic and imperial glorifier is made to seem even more idealized and unrealistic, perhaps even more fictitiously generic, than Artegaill’s inability to apply his notions of chivalric romance to a world that seems at times far too prosaic. For King, a realization of

42 King, 209.
this split between an idealizing romance world and a corruptible and corrupted historical world marks a complete end to Spenser’s political endeavor in heroic poetry because, as he says, mirroring those critics who also follow the interpretation of Spenser’s career following Helgerson, “there can finally be no crossing through the mirror of romance in relation to the British nation’s history.”43 However, the question that remains at the end of Book V is whether or not Artegall’s chivalric romance is the only “mirror of romance” available.

3.3 Calidore and the Courtesy of Mixed Genre

And yet there is another full Book of The Faerie Queene that follows chivalric knights. And even though it is true that Calidore spends much of his time in the book chasing rather than actually fighting the Blatant Beast, pining for his love while dressed as a shepherd, or simply absent from the narrative altogether, he does not neglect his quest. In fact, the overall form of the Book begins with Calidore taking up Artegall’s quest where the Knight of Justice was at the mercy of the Beast and concludes with Calidore proving his chivalric duty by subduing the Beast, making him, at least in terms of the surface narrative, the most successful of Spenser’s titular knights. Helgerson is half right in his summary of Book VI when he says that, in Calidore’s tale, “chivalry is reduced to empty forms…[and] the chivalric ideal as a way of dealing with the problems of ethics and politics now seems like a hopeless dream.”44 Chivalry is, indeed, reduced to forms, but they are not empty, even if they do need to be supplemented and perhaps used

43 Ibid.

44 Self-Crowned Laureates, 95.
in different ways than Artegaill was able. Instead, Calidore’s tale shows that what Artegaill lacked was Courtesy, and Courtesy is about using rhetoric, of which forms and genres are a part, in the best ways.

Against those who see a vast gulf between Books V and VI, it is vital to remember that Book V ends but also continues. While Artegaill’s quest to restore Irena’s land to peace may be prematurely aborted, the next quest emerges as a direct response to the figures that passed judgment on Artegaill. The Blatant Beast is Envy and Detraction’s pet and tool whose “hundred tongues” they continually “sharpen” and set loose to spread slander in the world (V.12.41). When Calidore meets Artegaill “by chaunce” (V.1.4) and learns that Artegaill has seen the Beast, Calidore insists that “where ye ended haue, now I begin” (V.1.6), and even claims that “now some hope your words vnto me add” (V.1.10) since he has not been able to find the Beast in his adventures. Rather than signal that Artegaill’s failure is somehow Spenser’s failure to make his poetry meet the challenges of a harsh world, Calidore’s remarks suggest, if not intentionality, then at least a stronger design behind the transition from Artegaill to Calidore that appears to maintain a sense of allegorical purpose. After all, if Book V truly did mark the end of Spenser’s reflections on public poetry, why write another full sixth of it just to say that it had failed?

It is also important to note exactly how Calidore explains his quest to Artegaill, since many negative accounts of the Book mark the knight’s inability to actually kill the Blatant Beast as a sign of Calidore’s failure (and of Spenser’s cynicism in regards to his
Calidore’s quest is quite specifically not to slay the Beast, but to follow it:

The Blattant Beast (quoth he) I doe pursew,
And through the world incessantly doe chase,
Till I him ouertake, or else subdew:
Yet know I not or how, or in what place
To find him out, yet still I forward trace. (VI.1.7)

Calidore’s quest is to “pursew,” “chase,” “ouertake,” and “subdew” the effects of the Beast’s “hundred tongues” which give voice to Envy, Detraction, as well as Despetto (spite), Decetto (deception), and Defetto (offensiveness) who nurtured it (VI.5.13-15). His quest is not to rid the world of all these abuses to which language can be put, but rather to counter them, and, as he says, it is a quest that is filled with uncertainty because he can never be sure exactly where and when the Beast will appear. From the beginning, then, Calidore realizes that his quest is not as straightforward as slaying a monster or a giant, and he comports himself appropriately. Indeed, when he finally does face the Beast at the end, he first tries to use his sword, which only makes the Beast speak more and louder, and instead pulls out his shield to smother the sound (VI.12.26-31). Calidore’s virtue is in many ways a reactive rather than active virtue, and one of the clearest ways he marks that is how he reshapes the terms of his role as knight to his quest, rather than insisting on arbitrary rules, as Artegall did.

But his quest remains, at first, thoroughly chivalric. The Beast itself is a direct borrowing from the chivalric tradition, and Spenser himself points out that it will become

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the “Questing Beast” pursued by Sir Pelleas and Sir Lamoracke in Malory after Calidore’s tale is finished.\textsuperscript{46} Malory’s beast is often read as an exemplar of the “unending quest” structure of romance (as opposed to the idealized circular returns and miraculous magical conclusions which are much more common).\textsuperscript{47} And with Calidore, the quest’s completion is endlessly deferred (just as King Pellinore, his primary pursuivant in Malory, never slays the Beast). Spenser chooses initially to identify Calidore’s story as a chivalric story, but it is a story which aligns itself against the idealizing impetus of those romance quest structures in which all must, as if by generic rule, turn out for the best. Instead, Calidore’s “chivalric” identity is wrapped up with a goal that can, according to generic tradition, never be achieved. Far from abandoning chivalry as a genre, Spenser begins to modify it, and Calidore’s self-awareness of the type of quest in which he operates is markedly different from Artegall’s continual misapplication of his knighthood.

While it may be true that the bulk of Book VI puts its characters in pastoral situations rather than allowing their knightly prowess to be challenged, I think it is vital to recognize that the generic shift is not a complete break. Furthermore, Spenser does not abandon chivalric roles with Calidore since the bulk of the last two cantos involve his rehabilitation from pastoral withdrawal to remembering his quest to slay the Beast. What changes in between, however, is how he relates to his own generic role. If Artegall failed

\textsuperscript{46} Technically, neither of these knights actually pursues the Questing Beast, but Sir Lamoracke meets Sir Palomydes, who tells him the tale. King Pellinore is the knight who actually pursues the Beast throughout most of Malory’s romance. See Thomas Malory, \textit{Caxton’s Malory}, Ed. James W. Spisak and William Matthews (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 9.12. Malory also describes the Beast as making a raucous din: “that is in English to say the [yelping] beest, for that beast, wheresoever he yede, he quested in the belly with such a noise as it had been a thirty couple of hounds” (10.13).

\textsuperscript{47} See Vinaver, \textit{Form and Meaning in Medieval Romance}, 145.
by trying unsuccessfully to live out an overly-stylized role in a historical and imperfect
world, what Calidore must learn is how to move in a story that does not posit such
oppositions between fiction and reality. Artegall’s failure was identifying himself with
the clear goals of a divine and cosmic justice which he could only establish imperfectly.
And since he was living out a genre which defined success by the perfect completion of
an oversimplified quest, Spenser does in fact find the chivalric romance mode unsuitable
for successful political thought. The lesson of Artegall’s failure has as much to do with
specific failings of Elizabeth’s foreign policies (specifically calling Lord Grey/Artegall
back to England too quickly) as it does the dangerous ways that fictionally representing
politics can go astray and turn, say, an image of justice into an image of unrestrained
violence. Calidore’s success, however, is to learn from the way that Artegall’s strategy of
representation became a liability and a problem, and Spenser’s linkage of Courtesy with
generic flexibility is a response to that problem.

In the Proem to VI, which is bookended by Artegall’s sad return to Gloriana’s
court, Spenser insists that Courtesy is a matter of appropriate mediation between truth
and presentation, “inward thoughts” and “outward showes,” precisely Artegall’s problem
in his attempt to express his inward Justice. True courtesy is a matter of finding and
presenting the truth which lies hidden behind fair seeming. It is not, as the Proem to Book
V suggested of Justice, an ideal against which we judge a broken reality, but instead a
virtue that brings other virtues into the world. Spenser describes Courtesy as planted in
the Earth by the gods from “heavenly seeds of bounty sovereign,” which “though it on a
lowly stalke doe bowre, Yet brancheth forth in brave nobility And spreads itself through
all civility” (VI.Proem.3-4). It does not descend perfectly formed from a retreating
Cosmic order, as did Justice, but instead becomes highest by transforming the lowest. Courtesy is then a virtue which does not work in opposition to the imperfect world, but through it, and, as such, it is not a virtue that can prove itself once and for all, but one which must be continually practiced. Courtesy is a matter of judgment, mediating between an inward truth and outward shows which can err or deceive, which also means that it is a virtue that must respond to circumstance.

Spenser’s manipulation of genre is itself an exercise in judgment and mediation between virtue and situation, and Calidore exemplifies that aspect of his virtue explicitly by deliberately changing the genre of his own story when circumstances require. When Book VI returns to Calidore after following Arthur and Calepine’s encounter with the Salvage Man, Spenser takes Calidore from court to country. This indicates of course that the story will move from chivalric to pastoral romance, but it also stresses that this is actually part of Calidore’s quest, rather than a withdrawal from it, by the fact that it begins as a direct result of his staying committed to pursuing the Beast wherever it takes him:

So sharply he [Calidore] the Monster did pursew,
That day nor night he suffred him to rest,
Ne rested he himself but natures dew,
For dread of daunger, not to be redrest,
If he for slouth forslackt so famous quest.
Him first from court he to the cities coursed,
And from the cities to the townes him prest,
And from the townes into the countrie forsed,

Calidore’s absence from so much of the middle of the Book can easily be read as emphasizing and even foreshadowing his “truancy” in the pastoral episodes. But Calepine and Arthur’s adventures have also been read as showing the necessity of education and art to understand true Courtesy, something which distinguishes the Salvage Man, however much natural courtesy he may possess, from Calidore. See, for example, Humphrey Tonkin, Spenser’s Courteous Pastoral: Book Six of The Faerie Queene (London: Butler & Tanner, 1972), 58-65.
And from the country back to private farms he scorned. (VI.9.3)

The fact that the Beast leads Calidore out to the country could, of course, just be a convenient way to have him encounter Pastorella, but Spenser stresses here the valor of Calidore’s actions, especially that he never “for slouth forslackt [his] famous quest.” Furthermore, the common notion that a pastoral retreat offers the poet a “rest” from public engagements is doubly denied, since he never allowed the Beast “to rest, / Ne rested he himself” except for the sleep based on “natures dew” rather than a poetic or spiritual “rest” figured by pastoral. The entire pastoral episode begins, then, with a stanza that seems to anticipate the charges that will be brought against Calidore in relation to his knightly role, and to suggest that what follows is not a simple denial of that identity but rather somehow integral to it. What may look like rest may actually be showing Calidore continuing to “sharply…pursue” the Monster.

Calidore’s “truancy” actually begins when he sees Pastorella and is enraptured by her beauty. As many have noted, the effect of Pastorella is initially one that seems to challenge his primary skill of courteous speech since he is, for the first time, struck dumb:

He was vnwares surpris’d in subtile bands
Of the blynd boy, ne thence could be redeemed
By any skill out of his cruell hands,
Caught like the bird, which gazeing still on others stands.

So stood he still long gazeing thereupon,
Ne any will had thence to moue away,
Although his quest were farre afore him gon. (VI.9.11-12)

But immediately after this, he begins speaking to the shepherds, and Spenser stresses that he is able to meet their types of speech in ways that do not show him losing his virtue, but
rather beginning to apply it in a specifically pastoral way, by learning the speech of the shepherds and trying to master it:

But after he had fed, yet did he stay,  
And sate there still, until the flying day  
Was far forth spent, discoursing diversly  
Of sundry things, as fell, to work delay;  
And evermore his speech he did apply  
To th’heards, but meant them to the damsels fantasy. (VI.9.12)

It is possible to read this passage, and Calidore’s subsequent discussion with Pastorella’s adopted father Melibee, as ultimately a rebuke for turning his rhetorical skills to mere instrumental dissembling and seduction by hoping to act and speak like whatever will attract Pastorella’s attention. But the situation is actually more complicated, especially when we remember that Pastorella is, herself, not what she seems. Rather than a forest-born shepherdess, Pastorella is actually a character who has been stolen from a chivalric narrative and dropped into a pastoral one: her father is the “lusty knight” Sir Bellamoure and her mother, Claribell, had to give Pastorella up as an infant to avoid her father’s hatred of the father (VI.12.3-6). And even from the moment Calidore sees Pastorella, he notices that, rather than just being the most beautiful shepherdess, she seems to belong to a different world:

Her whyles Sir Calidore there vewed well,  
And markt her rare demeanure, which him seemed  
So far the meane of shepheards to excell,  
As that he in his mind her worthy deemed,  
To be a Princes Paragone esteemed… (VI.9.11)

So seemingly convinced by her “demeanure” is he that his initial wooing is not in pastoral terms at all, but rather Petrarchan, as courtly a love song as one could write (VI.9.34). This is an important point that is often overlooked, but it seems to stress that Calidore’s suspicion, however small, that Pastorella may not be what she appears may be part of the reason he feels justified in changing his own “demeanure” when courting her. That she is not Melibee’s own daughter is certainly no secret, since the old shepherd tells Calidore so. For although Pastorella acts very much like Melibee, “And of her selfe in very deede so deemed; / Yet was not so, but as old stories tell / Found her by fortune” (VI.9.14). The aside, “as old stories tell” even marks her situation as itself part of a well-worn pastoral and chivalric romance trope of a foundling. As Helen Cooper notes, the foundling is one of the common romance motifs that seems equally present in both chivalric and pastoral romance traditions, going back to Heliodorus with pastoral and the earliest medieval adventures of the “Faire Unknowen” knights. Pastorella is a figure who both in terms of her specific narrative and her generic tradition straddles both of the genres in which Calidore will eventually have to function, and she is not, as so often described, a figure of pure pastoral or amorous lyric. This moment stands in somewhat

50 See The English Romance in Time, 324-343.

51 Kenneth Borris offers one of the few dissenting voices to the overwhelming allegorization of Pastorella as simply a representative of pastoral, arguing instead that her homecoming should be read instead in terms of Neoplatonic “homecoming” and even certain strong Protestant readings of The Book of Revelations. On Borris’ reading, the theological overtones of Pastorella’s homecoming far outweigh, and even undercut the resignation and resentment by which most people interpret the Blatant Beast: “If we further attend to the quasi-parabolic implications of Pastorella’s homecoming, we find that Spenser proceeds to engage the Beast in canto 12 only by first allegorizing such an apotheosis, by way of a vehicle emotionally appealing enough to promote assent. Even literally, the Belgard story instances how happy endings can serendiptiously unfold beyond all our expectations. The attendant allegory endues this outcome of romantic wish-fulfillment with the ideological foundation of a justificatory theodicy.” Kenneth Borris, “Sub Rosa: Pastorella’s Allegorical Homecoming, and Closure in the 1596 Faerie Queene,” Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual, 21 (2006): 133-180, 163.
direct contrast with Sidney’s Pyrocles and Musidorus, who are also exemplars of Courtesy, but whose generic wooing is ultimately construed as potentially less “virtuous.” In the *Old Arcadia*, however, Musidorus’s courtship eventually turns into an attempted rape, and the *New Arcadia* never shows the princes completely winning their ladies. So while both Spenser and Sidney point out how courtesy manipulates genre in particular moments of courtship, the comparison suggests that, for Spenser, theatricality and role playing, even if it may look on the surface like dissembling and deceit, need not be opposed to a more “virtuous” deception. If, as is the case, Calidore’s dissembling as a shepherd brings Pastorella back to the story from which she was lost, then dissembling can even be the most virtuous course available.

Calidore’s courtship of Pastorella itself looks like a very self-conscious recognition that what is happening here may ultimately be less about actual love and more about the ways that Calidore has to learn a new way of presenting himself. The story is overtly about Calidore learning how to become a shepherd, of course, but it also about Calidore learning which signs and behaviors are appropriate to a knight, whom Pastorella will not love, and which are appropriate to a shepherd, and how to use each appropriately. For Calidore, courtship is a lesson in how to change genres. When his Petrarchan wooing fails, as mentioned above, he does what he does best: he talks to the other shepherds, particularly Pastorella’s adopted father Melibee:

The gentle knight, as he that did excel
In courtesie, and well could doe and say,
For so great kindnesse as he found that day,
Gan greatly thanke his host and his good wife;
And drawing thence his speech another way,
Gan highly to commend the happie life,
Which Shepheards lead, without debate or bitter strife. (VI.9.18, my italics)
As Paul Alpers has argued, Calidore’s conversation with Melibee in canto 9 is largely a back and forth where Calidore experiments with certain pastoral conventions only to have them corrected by Melibee.\(^{52}\) For example, in this passage, Calidore tries out the word “happie” to describe the pastoral life, which he knows is a word with plenty of pastoral authority, only to have Melibee correct him by insisting that “happie” has less to do with pleasure than with contentment (VI.9.20). And while it is possible to take such education, as Alpers does, as a sincere pastoral dialogue on the character of the pastoral life, Calidore’s motives for learning about the pastoral life are never so straightforward.\(^{53}\) Indeed, right in the middle of Melibee’s tale, the narrator interrupts Melibee’s speech to show us Calidore listening while also watching Pastorella, which reminds us that there are multiple motives behind the generic education:

\[
\text{Whylest thus he [Melibee] talkt, the knight with greedy eare} \\
\text{Hong still vpon his melting mouth attent;} \\
\text{Whose sensefull words empierst his hart so neare,} \\
\text{That he was rapt with double rauishment,} \\
\text{Both of his speech that wrought him great content,} \\
\text{And also of the obiect of his vew,} \\
\text{On which his hungry eye was always bent;} \\
\text{That twixt his pleasing tongue, and her faire hew,} \\
\text{He lost himself, and like one halfe entraunced grew. (VI.9.26)}
\]

This stanza is easily read as the moment when Calidore truly loses sight of his quest, not least because of the alexandrine’s insistence on his losing himself. But, of course,


\(^{53}\) Alpers larger point is, admittedly, not that Spenser retreats to a naïve example of pastoral education in the simple life. Instead, Alpers sees passages such as this, as well as a similar education with Colin Clout, as Spenser moving his poetic voice away from allegorical narrative toward pastoral dialogue, a reading ultimately at odds with my own sense of Calidore.
Calidore here was only “halfe” entranced, and it seems that we are meant to pay attention to the fact that the rest of the stanza is at pains to emphasize how much talking and listening occupies Calidore’s mind. Both his “greedy eare” and “hungry eye” seem to contrast with the pastoral “great content” that the fifth line insists upon, and the ultimate outcome of this stanza is that of one is learning new tools to new ends, and who can master them because he can allow himself to at least “halfe” believe them. The next stanza says just that:

Yet to occasion means, to worke his mind,  
And to insinuate his harts desire,  
He thus replyde...(VI.9.27)

And Calidore launches into a speech about how he hates the “vaine shadowes” of courtly life as opposed to the “safe retyre” of the forest (VI.9.27). But, of course, the entire time, he himself is plotting to employ “vaine shadowes” in order “to insinuate his harts desire.” On the one hand, this obviously makes Calidore seem to fully embrace deceitful seduction, and the ways in which he later-shames Pastorella’s other shepherd hopeful Coridon through faint praise also seem particularly harsh.54 But, on the other hand, even that recognition continues to stress that Spenser seems at pains here to point to the ways that Calidore is coming to realize that all of his skills in rhetoric Courtesy, though said to be “planted naturall” are artificial, generic, and capable of being manipulated in different ways for different ends. That this can be used for ignoble ends is precisely what Spenser warns against in the Proem: now, “[Courtesie] indeed is nought but forgerie, / Fashion’d to please the eies of them, that pas, / which see not perfect things but in a glas”

But Calidore’s education throughout the Book is as more about learning how that is so than the simple fact. Courting Pastorella allows him to experience firsthand how one may even go so far as to change one’s story and one’s role; learning to do that for the right reasons will come later. It is even possible to argue, I think, that rather than being a selfish lover here, Spenser may have stacked the deck in favor of a better interpretation of Calidore. After all, Pastorella really does not belong in this world, and when Calidore returns her to a chivalric story, he has finally matched her “inward thoughts” with an appropriate “outward show” for her. Furthermore, the pastoral figures seem to believe their own lifestyle uncritically, while it is Calidore’s presence that allows them to enter into a discourse that turns their pastoral existence from simply being in a pastoral setting to reflective awareness of its generic and poetic status. Melibee himself, who first gives voice to the pastoral virtues, can come to seem almost stereotypically generic after awhile, as Judith Anderson argues, since his most strident declaration of the pastoral ideal at VI.9.29-30 is made up of stock sayings that are among the most repeated, and most parodied, of pastoral sentiments.55

But even with all of this insistence on Calidore’s learning and practicing of generic pastoral conventions without necessarily succumbing completely to their “enchauntment,” an education that might otherwise seem in line with the practice of Courtesy, the narrator ultimately claims that Calidore has simply abandoned his quest. The opening of canto 10 seems to state this with no hesitation, insisting as well that, by

55 She counts nine, although suggests there may be more. Judith Anderson, “Prudence and her Silence: Spenser’s use of Chaucer’s Melibee,” English Literary History 62: 29-46.
renouncing his chivalric role, Calidore has given up on his public duty. The first two
stanzas are easy to read as such:

Who now does follow the foule Blatant Beast,
Whilst Calidore does follow that faire Mayd,
Vnmyndfull of his vow and high beheast,
Which by the Faery Queene was on him layd,
That he should neuer leaue, nor be delayd
From chacing him, till he had it attchieued?
But now entrapt of loue, which him betrayd,
He mindeth more, how he may be relieued
With grace from her, whose loue his heart hath sore engrieued.

That from henceforth he meanes no more to sew
His former quest, so full of toile and paine;
Another quest, another game in vew
He hath, the guerdon of his loue to gaine:
With whom he myndes for euer to remaine,
And set his rest amongst the rustic sort,
Rather then hunt still after shadowes vaine
Of courtly fauour, fed with light report,
Of euery blaste, and sayling always on the port. (VI.10.1-2)

And yet, as Harry Berger has maintained throughout his career, when Spenser has the
narrator speak directly to the reader and offer interpretations of the poem, we should be
skeptical, for this may, itself, be a rhetorical or even generic pose, rather than a statement
of intent:

The poem must in some manner persuade readers both to embrace
the kidnapped discourses [the genres and tropes which The Faerie
Queene uses and revels in] and to reestablish the critical distance
that acknowledges – and questions – their appeal. One device
Spenser uses to encourage this divided response is, as I have
suggested, the occasional comment on the story that promotes the
narrator from the role of teller to that of reader and interpreter of
the tale he tells… [T]he narrator’s expressive and interpretive
interventions are not authoritative guides to reader
response…[T]he reason they aren’t authoritative is that Spenser
uses the commentator as the voice of the discourses, the voice of the kidnapped genres parodied in *The Faerie Queene*.

If Berger is right, and I think he must be, especially in this Book where genre itself is such a fluid and distrustful thing, then the narrator’s very straightforward generic reading which pits pastoral romance as withdrawal to the personal and chivalric romance as the public duty to his Fairy Queen, must be taken as an oversimplification, especially since the statements here are eventually proven to be patently false: Calidore in fact does eventually “sew / His former quest” and even proves, at the end of canto 12, that he will succeed in the “hunt … after shadowes vaine / Of courtly fauour.” In the next two stanzas, the narrator does start to soften his criticism, but, again, the overall tone seems like one of sympathy rather than a real change of interpretation. The narrator insists that we cannot blame Calidore, or anyone else for being attracted to “The happy peace, which there doth ouerflow, / And prou’d the perfect pleasures, which do grow / Amongst poore hyndes” (VI.10.3).

But, in the fourth stanza, the narrator offers an aside which, I suggest, completely undercuts the his assessment of Calidore at this point, and ultimately should make us think that Calidore’s “truancy” is nothing of the sort, but is rather just as much a part of his “courtly” identity and quest as pursuing the Blatant Beast. The stanza turns our attention to what Calidore has *seen* that caused him to look away from one vision for another:

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For what hath all that goodly glorious gaze [of the court, in the stanza 3]
Like to one sight, which *Calidore* did vew?
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The glaunce whereof their dimmed eies would daze,  
That neuer more they should endure the shew  
Of that sunne-shine, that makes them looke askew.  
Ne ought in all that world of beauties rare,  
(Saue onely Glorianaes heavenly hew  
To which what can compare?) can it compare;  
The which as commeth now, by course I will declare. (VI.10.4)

Literally, the stanza says that nothing in the world of the court was as beautiful to see as the image of Pastorella. But the parenthetical aside also directs us, as if he had not done so already throughout *The Faerie Queene*, to compare the vision of Pastorella’s beauty to “Glorianaes heavenly hew.” From Calidore’s point of view, and without the parenthesis, “Ne ought” in the entire world can he compare Pastorella’s beauty. And the aside by itself also claims that Gloriana’s beauty is without compare. And while, in context, the aside seems simply to be in contradiction to the sentence it bisects (i.e., Gloriana’s beauty is incomparable and Pastorella’s beauty is incomparable), the syntax of line 8 by itself says “To [Gloriana] what can compare? Pastorella can it compare.” Careful readers do compare them anyway, one imagines, but what is striking is that Spenser reminds us in these stanzas of Gloriana for the first time since the Proem. Although implicit given the relationship of every other knight to their quest and the “Letter to Raleigh,” Spenser only reminds us of this, and of Elizabeth’s specter in the Book, at the point where he deliberately, and falsely, claims that Calidore is disobedient. But, after just labeling him as a truant chivalric knight who has given up his loyalty to Gloriana, he also asks us to compare all the visions which seem to draw him away from Gloriana to her.

If we do that, I suggest, the pastoral and courtly “visions” which inspire very different types of Courtesy in Calidore become intimately related, even if they seem to look very different in their effects. As the narrator says, he is about to show us another
vision that may well compare favorably to Pastorella, and outshine her: the dance of the Graces that occupies the center of so much commentary on Book VI. But, after seeing the Mt. Acidale vision, we know that it is just one more image of a beautiful figure in the midst of other dancers arranged in a ring about them. Calidore first saw Pastorella in the middle of a ring of dancers (VI.9.8). Furthermore, the one image we have of Gloriana/Elizabeth so far in Book VI occurs in the Proem in which she, too, is pictured as the center of a host of gazing courtiers:

But where shall I in all Antiquity
So faire a pattern finde, where may be seene
The goodly praise of Princely curtesie,
As in your selfe, O soueraine Lady Queene,
In whose pure minde, as in a mirror sheene,
It showes, and with her brightnesse doth inflame
The eyes of all, which thereon fixed beene;
But meriteth indeed an higher name:
Yet so from low to high vplifted is your name.

…
Right so from you all goodly vertues well
Into the rest, which round about you ring,
Faire Lords and Ladies, which about you dwell,
And doe adorne your Courts, where courtesies excel. (VI.Proem.6-7)

The obvious trope of the Proem is that Spenser’s poetry of Courtesy derives from the light that shines from Elizabeth as the center and paragon of the court, and she, too, inspires Courtesy in those “which round about you ring.” But when our attention is drawn back to it after being reminded that the vision of Pastorella, too, led Calidore to “change the manner of his loftie looke” (VI.9.36) and will, after seeing the Graces, lead him to learn the source of poetry and song from Colin Clout, the effect is to say that each vision does in fact inspire the same Courtesy. Pastoral courtesy and courtly, chivalric courtesy may wear different specific symbols, but they all serve the same “brightnesse / which
doth inflame the eyes of all.” Pastoral, in other words, may still serve the court, although, as the rest of Book VI shows, it must do so by very different rules.57

Spenser invokes Gloriana again after Calidore has inadvertently dispelled the Graces, but also engaged Colin Clout in a long digression on their meaning. After describing the vision in which it is Elizabeth Boyle (Spenser’s wife), not Elizabeth Tudor, who stands at the center of the Graces, Colin Clout offers an apology:

Sunne of the world, great glory of the sky,
That all the earth doest lighten with thy rayes,
Great Gloriana, greatest Majesty,
Pardon thy shepheard, mongst so many layes,
As he hath sung of thee in all his days,
To make one minime of thy poore handmaid,
And vnderneath thy feete to place her prayse,
That when thy glory sha ll be farre displayed
To future age of her this mention may be made. (VI.10.28)

The apology should be confusing. At the beginning of the canto, the narrator almost commands his reader to compare Gloriana to what he is about to see. But, here, he apologizes, in his poetic personae, for not placing her at the center of the Graces.58 The apology here is actually another moment of politic Courtesy, not an admission of retreat or withdrawal. Perhaps the most important line in the stanza, then, is not “Great Gloriana,

57 David Miller comes to the opposite conclusion in “Abandoning the Quest,” English Literary History 46 (1979) 173-192: “Mt. Acidale displaces the court as the symbolic center of the poet's world,” and poetry for itself replaces poetry for the court. This might well be true if Calidore’s adventures ended on Mt. Acidale, and he remained enraptured in that vision, but he does, in fact, return to court. For Miller, though, as for so many others, the last two cantos are simply ironic.

58 William Oram points to how such a moment might in fact be a very thinly veiled criticism of Elizabeth: “The problem with the apology…is that it raises more hackles than it smoothes. What reader, including the queen, would ever consider Colin’s praise of his love an act of disloyalty? Even if one refrains from stressing the uncertainty of the relation between Colin and Spenser, poets are always praising their ladies. The needless apology thus has the effect of highlighting what its language of transcendent divinity pretends to hide, the all too human vanities of the historical Elizabeth I.” “Spenser in Search of an Audience,” Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual 20 (2005): 23-48, 41.
greatest Majesty,” but the next one: “Pardon thy shepheard.” Colin Clout, or Spenser in his thoroughly pastoral guise, is the shepherd, and it is the believer in pastoral as a poetic vision which can only be opposed to the court, who must apologize to the Queen for ultimately believing in the vision of the Graces and singing his final song as a lament for their loss. Colin’s reappearance is too easily glossed as Spenser returning to explicitly pastoral roots which deny the “Trumpets stern” of public poetry announced at the beginning of *The Faerie Queene*. What we see instead is that Spenser invokes Colin to contrast him with another, more agile shepherd in Calidore.

Unlike Colin, Calidore only pretends to be a shepherd. He can certainly be enraptured by the Graces’ dance, but he does not live completely in their story, in their genre. Calidore need not apologize to Gloriana, for he can still see her figured in Colin’s personal love for his lady because he has already seen how easy it is to move between genres. For Colin, however, the fragility of the Graces’ vision is so moving that, when they are frightened off by Calidore’s appearance, he breaks his pipe, the symbol of his poetic prowess (VI.10.18). But what if Colin breaking his pipe is not simply a sign of frustration at what Calidore has done, but rather an admission that the poet who has access to the vision has now shown us the vision, and a new instrument is needed? When Colin broke his pipe in the *Januarye* eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calendar*, it indicated that he was done with singing because his singing did not please his love:

> Wherefore my pype, albee rude Pan thou please,

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59 See “Colin Clout” in the *Spenser Encyclopedia*, 172; and Shore, *Spenser and the Poetics of Pastoral*, 137-143.

60 The next stanza even has Calidore explicitly address Colin as “gentle Shepheard” and himself as “the courteous Knight,” despite his shepherd’s attire (VI.10.29).
Yet for thou pleases not, where most I would:
And thou vnlucky Muse, that wontsts to ease
My musing mynd, yet canst not, when thou should:
Both pype and Muse, shall sore the while abye.
So broke his oaten pype, and downe dyd lye. (67-72)

But in Book VI, Colin is moved to poetry, if not music, after breaking his pipe. It is true that he no longer pipes a song which to his love and the Graces themselves dance, a kind of unmediated poetry in which lover and beloved are at one. Instead, he creates a secondary poetic image of his love for a new audience in Calidore. Colin quite literally moves from a self-absorbed poet to a social poet, and his lesson to Calidore of what the Graces teach those who view them (even if it must be mediated through another poet) is itself a social lesson of Courtesy:

These three on men all gracious gifts bestow,
Which decke the body or adorne the mynde,
To make them louely or well fauoured show,
As comely carriage, entertainement kynde,
Sweete semblanunt, friendly offices that bynde,
And all the complements of courtesie:
They teach vs, how to each degree and kynde
We should our selues demeane, to low, to hie;
To friends, to foes, which skill men call Ciuility. (VI.10.23)

Colin is the poet who can transform the poetic vision of beauty which may well be so opposed to the fallen world that, as the Proem says, “in the trial of true curtesie, / Its now so farre from that, which then it was, / That it indeed is nought but forgerie” (VI.Proem.5). But this image of the poet, a pastoral figure himself who withdraws from the world to the realm of his private vision, is not where the passage ends. It is true that Calidore brings his worldly concerns onto Mt. Acidale and stumbles into the midst of the dance, scattering them and ending the pure vision itself. But Calidore is also the one who turns Colin from simply making “great mone” back to poetry (VI.10.18). As David Miller
says, Calidore emerges from the bushes “like a literary critic, unable to contain his questions despite the uncomfortable feeling of being an interloper,” but he is not an interloper, and his presence saves the vision from being simply lost. 61 Spenser, I think, does in fact mean that Calidore is a kind of “literary critic,” but this is a recreative role rather than one that simply disperses poetic visions through interpretation. He begins to engage in a civil dialogue, an interpretation, with Colin about what he has just seen:

But Calidore, though no lesse sory wight,  
For that mishap, yet seeing him [Colin] to mourne,  
Drew neare, that he the truth of all by him mote learne. (VI.10.18)

Calidore immediately transforms the vision from something lost into a lesson through bringing Colin back to speech. While perhaps tragic for Colin, who wants only to dance with the Graces in bliss, this is precisely what Calidore’s role as the Knight of Courtesy should be: both to view the “inward thoughts” or the visions of truth and to be able to turn them into outward shows. To put his experience into words, to hear Colin’s experience and integrate it into his own, is exactly what Spenser has said Courtesy should teach us to do. It is exactly how he hoped the court would respond to his images and how he has portrayed his own response to Elizabeth which he hopes others will follow. This may not be as transcendent as simply viewing pure poetry and the Graces themselves, but it is what didactic poetry should do: teach us how to turn delight into action.

Calidore’s Courtesy, then, identifies his role as a mediator between poetic truth and its use in the world of appearance and action. He is, like Colin, responsive to the Graces, but, unlike the shepherd, he can bring the vision down from Mt. Acidale and

61 Miller, “Abandoning the Quest,” 189.
back into the world. He becomes the necessary medium that can translate the light of the Graces (VI.10.26), which also “compares” to Gloriana’s “brightnesse” (VI.Proem.6). The beautiful woman ringed by dancers is one motif in the Book of the center and circle, so often noticed by especially structuralist and mythological critics, and, when it comes to thinking of that center/circle as the poetic relationship of inspiring vision and its distribution and representation to the rest of the world, Calidore is the one figure who can cross between each level.62 And, in fact, what follows this lesson in poetry, the vision of the Graces, and the most extreme moment of Calidore’s apparent “truancy” in pure poetry, is that he returns to the world. But not only does he return, he also returns with a renewed understanding of his relationship to genre and the artificiality of its “outward showes.” If the Graces can teach, as Colin says, how to use their “gracious gifts…Which decke the body or adorne the mynd / To make them louely or well fauoured show” (VI.10.23), then what Calidore subsequently proves is that he is capable of showing “how to each degree and kynde / We should our selues demeane, to low, to hie” (VI.10.23, my emphasis).

*Kynde*, and specifically genre, becomes one of the primary ways that Calidore proves that he has learned how best to maintain civility when the pastoral idyll breaks down. What follows Mt. Acidale is a gradual return to narrative from the relative stillness of Calidore’s vision, and this narrative expansion is marked in specifically generic ways. If the vision of the Graces was the ideal of pastoral lyric, it cannot sustain its image in a

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world of pastoral narrative. The mere fact of "things happening," of a world of action rather than simple contemplation, destroys the vision and exposes its fragility: Calidore simply stepping out to look scatters the Graces. But even pastoral narrative eventually slides towards pastoral romance, and, with it, Calidore is forced to employ his Courtesy in ways that are not just contemplative, but which have to respond to circumstance. The first "adventure" occurs when

A Tigre forth out of the wood did rise,
That with fell clawes full of fierce gourmandize,
And greedy mouth, wide gaping like hell gate,
Did runne at Pastorell her to surprize. (VI.10.34)

Women being threatened by wild animals are common in pastoral romances, and Sidney, too, has Musidorus save Pamela from a lion. But for Spenser, the adventure becomes a chance to reflect on how well his characters manipulate their generic markers. Coridon, the real shepherd simply flees, but Calidore, still dressed as a shepherd himself, improvises in ways that show that he is in control of his genre, rather than subject to it:

He had no weapon, but his shepheards hooke,
To serue the vengeaunce of his wrathfull will,
With which so sternely he the monster stroke,
That to the ground astonished he fell;
Whence ere he could recou’r, he did him quell,
And hewing off his head, it presented
Before the feete of the faire Pastorell;
Who scarecely yet from former feare exempted,
A thousand times him thankt, that had her death preuented.
(VI.10.36)

Miller, Berger, and Alpers all point to the ways that the first half of canto 10 has more poetic affinities with Spenser’s lyrics than the rest of the Faerie Queene, most notably the Amoretti and Prothalamion. As Alpers says, “[t]he character of the pastoral cantos is consistent with the fact that Spenser, in the mid-1590s, felt that authoritative poetry might lie outside the heroic narration of The Faerie Queene, and in, for him, new forms of lyric.” (“Spenser’s Late Pastorals,” 248)
Using a “shepheards hooke” as a weapon may seem like a small point, but when Spenser says that Calidore infused this “outward show” of a pastoral nature and bent it to chivalric uses “To serue the vengeaunce of his wrathfull will,” this is showing Calidore doing precisely what Courtesy should do: make the outward match the inward truth. And Calidore is able to prove his chivalric valor in the midst of a pastoral story. This is also precisely what Artegaull never could achieve, and why his genre became a liability.

A similar moment occurs as the narrative moves closer to resuming its fully chivalric character. Brigands attack Melibee’s pastoral retreat, killing the shepherds and capturing Pastorella. Calidore’s next step on the way back to his quest is, again, explicitly pictured as a mixture of generic tropes. While preparing to invade the brigands’ cave, Calidore dresses himself like a shepherd but conceals his knightly armor underneath:

So forth they [Calidore and his rival Coridon] goe,
Both clad in shepheards weeds agreeably,
And both with shepheards hooks: but Calidore
Had, underneath, him armed privily. (VI.11.36)

Calidore’s secret arming shows that he reacts to the implicit vulnerability of a supposedly “escapist” pastoral world by bringing his chivalry into the service of pastoral ends. And yet, Calidore would never be able to save Pastorella were he not disguised as a shepherd, allowing him to sneak arms in close to the brigands, making the pastoral necessary for the chivalric to succeed. The emblematic nature of the scene asks us to consider the conditions under which either mode is appropriate, suggesting, for example, that private ends (love) can be served by public means (his status as knight). These moments of generic mixture actually show Spenser moving away from the Virgilian model of poetry he outlined at the beginning of *The Faerie Queene* where pastoral marks private reform and chivalric romance works for public reform. Calidore begins to trace a breakdown of
this Virgilian opposition to insist instead on the successful manipulation of multiple
genres that allows the poet to mediate between private and public, or visionary
“withdrawal” and a public and even didactic role for poetry. Spenser may well be
abandoning a clearly Virgillian career, but that does not mean that is, therefore,
abandoning the political content of his poetry.

The final canto, in fact, brings the political consequences of Calidore’s adventures
back into focus, albeit in a way quite different from the final cantos of Book V. Canto 12
begins with the story of Pastorella’s homecoming to Belgard castle, and it seems that
Spenser may perhaps be starting to resume his topical allegories once we learn that
Claribell, Pastorella’s mother, is the daughter of “The Lord of Many Islands” who wanted
to marry his daughter to the “Prince of Picteland.” We seem to be coming out of the
anonymous Faeryland and back to a direct depiction of a very real and historical Britain,
and the association of Picteland and the “Many Islands” as the Scottish or Irish
borderlands does suggest a comparison with Irena’s disturbed Ireland at the end of Book
V. 64 This is not to suggest that the Belgard episode somehow completes or corrects the
failures of Irena’s partial victory, and Ireland’s partial reformation, in Book V. But the
comparison does draw our attention to how much more successfully Calidore can
complete a mixed, hybrid story of both pastoral and chivalric tropes, than Artegall could
complete his rigidly chivalric story. Spenser points out that there is a difference between
Justice and Courtesy as a solution to political conflicts in terms of narrative form. In
Book V, Justice has apocalyptic forms, and chivalry can articulate those only as the

64 See Wayne Erickson, Mapping the Faerie Queene: Quest Structures and the World of the Poem
imposition of unchanging and rigid structures onto the shifting and imperfect material of history. Courtesy, however, is an on-going engagement with the world. It may never have a final successful completion, but it also never suffers dramatic failure. We never will have the kind of narrative ending for Calidore that Spenser promises for Artegall because Courtesy places a political actor within the very worldly practice of historical and flawed interaction, as opposed to Artegall who was supposed to somehow mediate between eternal Justice and the world. When Artegall met with contingency, he was either caught in decision, or his use of Talus resulted in a picture of incongruity between ideal Justice and its implementation. But Calidore’s fluidity in how he acts on his virtue is much more mutable.

While not as clear and pointed a topical reference as what happens in Book V, the Pastorella’s homecoming does suggest that there is more effective way to write political poetry, one which has a more explicitly self-conscious and self-critical attitude towards its own genre. In fact, her return to her “home” story is made possible only because both her own genre and Calidore’s were never really distinct. Pastorella, the allegorical representation of pastoral, never truly belonged to the pastoral world. And Calidore, who can bring her back to her chivalric origins, could only do so by removing his armor and becoming a shepherd, at least for a time. Compared to Artegall and Talus’ condemnation by Envy and Detraction who blame the knight’s failure on his knighthood, Calidore is finally successful in a comparable episode because he was both a knight and a shepherd without being confined to either. In the end, there is no genre proper to Courtesy, nor is there a genre improper to it since Courtesy is always about the mixing of genre.
But it is finally the quest to quell the Blatant Beast that transforms Calidore’s relationship to politics from the failures of political disappointment that dominate Artegall’s story. With the Blatant Beast, Spenser’s concerns shift from politics as issues of policy to a politics of reading and reception. In other words, if Spenser’s poem had, to this point, not been as well received as he wanted, if it had been, as the last stanza of Book VI says, brought “into a mighty Peres displeasure” (generally taken to be Lord Burghley), his response was not to give up, but to try to change the ways his readers responded to him. Artegall tried to intervene directly by mixing pointed, topical criticisms of controversial topics, and Spenser certainly seems to have enjoyed taking clear sides. But, at the same time, he immediately pulls back with Envy and Detraction who do more than complain that Lord Grey was not appreciated or supported; instead, they anticipate the very response that Spenser expected such pointed political critique to have: backlash in slander and loss of reputation. The Blatant Beast, brought into the poem with Envy and Detraction, is not a resentful image of a world that does not appreciate his poetry, but a conscious creation which shows Spenser anticipating what happens when you stake clear political claims. One will make enemies, and the glance at Burghley is as much calling out an opponent as it is a lament that people do not like the poems.

If Artegall’s story exposed a certain kind of political poetry as far too confrontational to be truly effective since it only created enemies, then Calidore shows a more conciliatory kind of political poetry, one which might be able to criticize without drawing condemnation upon itself. Calidore’s capacity to be a figure who can live through and effectively employ traditionally opposed generic tropes signals this desire, and, if I am right, Spenser’s ability to find a (hopefully) more effective public voice for
his poetry. Reintroducing pastoral in the midst of a chivalric romance is not, finally a withdrawal. And, although I may disagree with his conclusions, one thing Helgerson argument makes perfectly clear is that Spenser’s sense of poetry, of whatever genre, and politics is indivisible. Helgerson ends up implying, against his own argument, that Spenser’s very move to inwardness was a kind of political protest: poetry did not fail the court so much as the court failed poetry. Even on Helgerson’s terms, the final pastorals are not about actively developing a sense of inwardness as they are about lamenting the world that has let him down:

If there is any tendency toward repentance at the end of his career, what he repents is not poetry but his engagement with the active world. Melibee may speak for this side of Spenser when he castigates the vanity of the court and regrets that he “spent [his] youth in vaine” seeking public position. As in Colin Clout Comes Home Againe, the great world is presented as a place of hollow aspiration and inevitable repentance, a place opposed to the virtuous tranquility of the pastoral world.65

But isn’t this opposition precisely the opposition that pastoral makes when it becomes political, when it does not so much seek the country for its own sake, but rather to go to the country to lament and criticize the failures of the city? Isn’t this also precisely the kind of world that would need a poem that could help “fashion a gentleman”?

Calidore is the most mature of Spenser’s knights because he is the one knight who does not believe in his own romanticization, or rather who believes in it as a literary construct, as a tool of Courtesy. His virtue is to be at once a pastoral and a chivalric figure who can show the limits of his figuration when necessary. Berger argues that this is precisely what makes Spenser’s early pastorals so interesting: that they were able, on

65 Self-Crowned Laureates, 98.
the one hand, to articulate the pastoral desire for withdrawal, for a paradise that was at once recreative and led to complaint that the real world lapsed so far behind it. But, on the other hand, his pastorals recognize the difference between a pastoral *world* and a pastoral *work*, which artificially creates that world. Spenser’s pastorals were both invested in and critical of pastoral:

[Spenser’s pastoral writing] asserts that the disintegration of the golden world and the plaintive response to love and experience are consequences of the very ‘retreat into the imagination’ that produced that world. Romantic expectations are the source of failure and premature bitterness. And since poetic conventions are in turn the source of romantic expectations, the pastoral critique is first and foremost a critique of pastoral.\(^{66}\)

In the same way, Calidore responds to the straightforward identification of ways of life, of public and private differences, to his own generic roles by displaying the distance between the world of a genre (its “inward thoughts”) and the works within that genre (their “outward shows”). Spenser does not abandon chivalry and politics for personal reflection in pastoral, especially not since Spenser’s own sense of pastoral was already, in some sense, public, in as much as it understood the ways that pastoral itself was often co-opted by desires and motives that were quite worldly and involved in other contests and conflicts, rather than purely pastoral. What finally makes Book VI a reflection on the politics of poetry itself, rather than a poetry of a particular political stance, is its reflection, through genre, on the relationship between the advantages and dangers of articulating poetic performance for worldly goals. Calidore’s capacity to finally

\(^{66}\) Berger, 289.
“subdew” the Blatant Beast, even for a time, should argue that Spenser sees Calidore’s politics of genre is an improvement over Artegall’s.

And yet, of course, Calidore fails to put a final end to the Blatant Beast and never goes so far as to kill him, instead always holding him momentarily in abeyance, whether it be under his shield or tied in chains. The Beast always escapes and courtesy, being a matter of judgment, always begins again. And yet I think it is wrong to simply end with a reading of the Beast’s attack on the poem as giving up on the poem’s ability to successfully address and even improve a community. It is finally The Blatant Beast, a fictional trope of a romance quest, which attacks the poem and not simply prosaic “slander.” When the Beast jumps out of the narrative to attack the poem, it transforms the poet and reader into knights themselves who must decide how to understand their own complicity in a generic structure. Even Spenser’s supposed bitter withdrawal from the role of public poet takes a generic form by, in a sense, restarting the entire quest of Book VI. But the quest of Book VI is not a thoroughly private quest, and not a private concern of Spenser’s at all. After all, it is now the reader, not Calidore (or perhaps the reader as Calidore) who must subdue the Beast in their reading of and response to the poem. This time, however, the political referents, the “characters” who play out the narrative in generic forms, are not historical or topical, but are, instead, the readers who take up a position between the fiction and the world.

By the end of The Faerie Queene, Spenser has created a new relationship between his readers, genre, and political rhetoric and poetry. If the common fear aroused by Courtesy, and invoked by Spenser in the Proem to Book VI, is that the virtue can simply be another name for dissembling, lying, and manipulating appearance, his portrayal of
that virtue as a performance of generic manipulation insists that the potential for dissembling is not a threat to Courtesy but its strength. Although the Book starts by suggesting that Calidore is the paragon of courtesy because his inner virtue was naturally and effortlessly matched by his appearance and behavior, by the end of the Book, it is clear that his virtue operates through his ability to create radically artificial appearances in any genre. While the potential for immoral misuse is as present as it ever was, Spenser creates a political figure whose primary virtue is to turn dissembling, exemplified by his ability to operate in a genre not his own, into a form of political power. By then, at the very end of the Book, suggesting that his readers are, themselves, implicated in a generic structure, Courtesy becomes a project to be undertaken rather than a virtue that proves inner goodness. Courtesy, like Calidore’s ability to mix and change genres, becomes a form of practical and instrumental rhetoric, and politics becomes a question of efficacy rather than truth, a question of practice rather than absolutes. If Book VI could be said to “demystify” the relationship between genre and content in The Faerie Queene, then it also demystifies the relationship between political Courtesy and truth suggesting that the best way to write political poetry is as an ongoing engagement with circumstances rather than making strict judgments.
CHAPTER 4:

“NOE SUPERIOR, NOR COMMANDING POWER”: WROTH’S GENERIC UNDOING OF POLITICAL ROMANCE

In *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, Mary Wroth radicalizes the political consequences of romance’s generic self-consciousness begun by her uncle and Spenser. For Wroth, the generic representation of political positions reduces them to the status of literary conventions: empire becomes a problem produced by epic, agency a problem produced by lyric, and self-sufficient liberty a problem created by picaresque. This allows her to use her fiction to exert control over the same political circumstances which, in her fractious personal and court life, left her familial, marital, and political status continually insecure. That Wroth would turn to ways of manipulating genre as a source of agency is, itself, not a new insight. As almost all of her critics have noted, Wroth’s romance is an extended reflection on her personal trials which makes the *Urania* read like an uneasy mix of pointed *roman a clef* allegories and counterfactual wish-fulfillment. Most of these reflections depend on the conventions of romance in which Wroth both idealizes her failed relationship with her cousin William Herbert, with whom she had two children, and presents herself as a female heroine whose constancy becomes the central honored virtue. Thus, Wroth’s usual placement in histories of romance praise her innovation in creating a uniquely feminine virtue that can replace chivalric notions of honor or the male-centered perspective of most erotic characterizations of pastoral romance. Most
critics recognize that Wroth’s primary innovations, then, are specifically generic, and it is commonly noted that she possessed a uniquely sophisticated awareness of what it means for a work both to belong to and alter a genre, particularly in terms of the Petrarchan conventions in her sonnet sequence *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus.* But little attention has been paid to the ways that Wroth’s most interesting political writing is also engaged with generic innovation, particularly in the way that it builds on the types of generic mixture that both Sidney and Spenser employed in their own romances.

When Wroth addresses issues of political concern, whether they involve her personal situation or that of her family more generally, she presents political situations as a conflict of genres. Like her uncle and Spenser, both of whom she alludes to specifically throughout the *Urania*, Wroth interrupts her narrative with moments that break the otherwise typical romance expectations she creates. What these moments tend to do is to articulate politically difficult or controversial moments into conflicts of directly opposed images of how that situation might be resolved. What emerges from these conflicts, I argue, is a sense that Wroth responds to political dilemmas not by trying to determine a solution to them, but, instead, by creating fictional circumstances in which each political perspective begins to look artificial, rhetorical, and potentially false, at least from the perspective of the larger romance narrative. When the plot continues, these moments begin to look like mere performances which have little or no effect on the larger fictional

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world. As such, Wroth is able to exert a kind of literary control over political issues in which she was, in truth, subjected to the decisions and whims of others. Literary and generic “undoing” of the truth of politically encoded genres becomes a source of agency for Wroth, even if that agency ultimately looks very cynical, maintaining control only in a fictional creation. But, at the same time, such an ultimately skeptical stance toward the political content of politically inflected genres shows that Wroth builds on insights borrowed from Sidney and Spenser’s generic innovations. For Sidney, genre could encode different conceptions of political agency, and generic mixture allowed him to think through and articulate a sense of his own agency as at once bound and assertive. Wroth combines this sense of a conflicted agency, assertive in its control of the representation of agency, even if its content is extremely limited, with the political insight of Spenser’s Courtesy, where generic fluency and manipulation turns politics into a rhetorical exercise, rather than an expression of timeless, authoritative truths. While Wroth’s romance leaves her seemingly pessimistic about her political options, the sense of literary authority, and particularly the authority of romance in relation to politics, is perhaps even more confident in the end than either Sidney’s or Spenser’s.

The clearest example of Wroth’s political use of genre occurs in the oft-cited moment of Urania’s political mythmaking. Amphilanthes’ peaceful election to Holy Roman Emperor is the culmination of a story-line which does not seem to fit the work’s romance classification: it is straightforwardly epic. And yet this epic narrative culminates halfway through the printed text, leaving almost two more books which continue Amphilanthes’ story, not as an epic hero, but as a knight-errant who wanders far from both his role as imperial hero and also from his erotic fulfillment with Pamphilia. An
epic, idealized pan-European empire is set against a story of erotic deferral in which the establishment of a unified Europe seems to have no political consequences whatsoever. Josephine Roberts influentially reads Amphilanthus’ election as a criticism of James’ failed pacific strategies for religious unity on the continent.² But, while certainly available as one reading of the section, that interpretation makes sense only if we isolate Amphilanthus’ political role from the rest of the narrative in which he is ambiguously unsettled. (Wroth names him “lover of two” in a book which champions its heroine’s constant fidelity to him.) Reading with an eye to how Wroth interlaces Amphilanthus’ election with its narrative context, we find that Wroth is interested less in simply putting forward a critical “counter-myth,” as Roberts calls it, to James’ failures than in trying to understand how political visions are the consequences of particular genres of political thinking.³ Following such a line of thinking through the text, I argue that the Urania uses interlace to pit genres against one another as incompatible political myths, to use Roberts’ word, which reduce political thinking to very stylized, and very limited, political visions. Roberts’ reading to the contrary, the work displays a strong cynicism about politics which imagines various idealized political representations as incompatible rhetorical constructs, and it is easy to understand the sources of Wroth’s cynicism in her life after the first part’s publication in 1621 (exiled from court for her illegitimate children by William Herbert, her Protestant Sidney family heritage losing its predominance at court, and her relation to the pro-Spanish politics of Queen Anne’s now scattered coterie looking


³ Ibid.
increasingly like James’ failing pacifist and de facto isolationist policies). But political
cynicism hardly means that Wroth avoids thinking about the ways that political issues are
figured in her work, and it seems, instead, that her way of dealing with her own
misfortunes and dissensions in political matters may well have been to reflect on the
problems inherent in how political problems can be articulated in fiction. Generic
interlace becomes, for Wroth, a commentary on the intractability of her own personal and
political commitments, much like her almost obsessive attention to the tragedy of
constant lovers allowed her to transform her personal heartbreak into fictional and poetic
control.

Wroth’s political visions are most clearly articulated at three points in which epic,
lyric complaint, and picaresque interrupt the romance narrative of quests and
enchantments that organize the narrative of Part I. I argue that when the narrative veers
into these modes, Wroth associates a particular political vision with each of them. In the

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4 Some critics suggest that Part I of the *Urania* has little narrative structure apart from
Amphilanthus’ fluctuating fidelity to Pamphilia and the *ad nauseam* repetition of jilted lover stories. Mary
Ellen Lamb’s otherwise constructive *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle* (Madison, WI: University
of Wisconsin Press, 1990) makes this claim, going so far as to include two rather deceptive “plot summary
appendices” which make it sound like the plot of the *Urania* is all but impossible to untangle. Her essay
“The Biopolitics of Romance in Mary Wroth’s *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*” (*English Literary
Renaissance* 31.4 (2001): 107-130) also tries to make a virtue of “anti-narrativity” and “an aesthetics of
diffusion” (108), which seems to me to mistake “confusion” for deferral and lack of closure. Nonetheless, it
seems to me that we can quite easily find Part I to be broadly organized by a rather conventional romance
quest structure. Book I is dominated by the quest to free the first group of lovers from the Throne of Love.
Books II and III follow the male characters’ attempt to free the various women from the Enchanted
Theater. And Book IV describes Amphilanthus’ lieutenants trying to find and free him from Musalina and
Limena’s Hell of Deceit. In each case, despite the proliferation of digressions and stories told by sub
characters (and the Albanian revolution in Books II and III, which I treat in the next section) the narrative
consistently returns to a pattern of trying to get couples back together when one half is “enchanted” in order
to establish a happy union after challenges to their constancy. The three generic shifts mentioned above
(epic, lyric complaint, and picaresque) are the most significant departures from what is otherwise an easily
recognizable romance device and are, thus, conspicuous. It seems more useful to me to locate a structure
first and then deal with complications rather than to assume, from the start, that the text lacks any narrative
cohesion.
epic moments of Books II and III when Amphilanthus rises to power, for example, she describes an alternative vision of a unified Europe under a universal (and peaceful) empire. In Pamphilia’s lyric complaints that halt the narrative completely after Amphilanthus’ infidelity with Musalina in Book III, Wroth articulates a defense against tyranny which is, I argue, skeptical not only of the imperial rhetoric in the “epic” mode, but of monarchy. Then, in Book IV when the narrative occasionally shifts to London, the picaresque atmosphere presents an isolated, self-sufficient England which revels in its own unromantic exceptionalism. These political moments are obviously at odds with one another (idealized empire vs. the dangers of monarchy, nationalistic isolation vs. imperial desire, etc.), and, what is more, all of them occur in the midst of a romance narrative that continues after them (and which itself remains unresolved, both Parts I and II ending in mid-sentence with major plot points left hanging). Instead, the Urania calls into question the sufficiency of generic thinking for politics, particularly for the characters that move through and beyond those visions, just as Wroth herself moved through and beyond the political identities offered her (a favored-then-exiled female courtier, a Protestant Sidney, a member of Queen Anne’s court, etc.).

My reading is structurally similar to what I find to be the most perceptive feminist interpretation of the Urania in Naomi J. Miller’s Changing the Subject: Mary Wroth and Figurations of Gender in Early Modern England (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1996). Against the majority of feminist readings of Wroth’s work, Miller wants to avoid pigeonholing Wroth into either a victim of her culture or a straightforwardly oppositional and subversive writer, both of which, she argues, place Wroth in a position of a reactive rather than creative subjectivity. Instead, she tries to read Wroth as a writer who explored multiple “figurations” of gender within her cultural and literary resources, none of which she wanted to hold as her definitive position. As Miller says, “[m]y aim is to explore a range of the sometimes ambiguous or seemingly contradictory textual discourses that attended Mary Wroth’s efforts to claim a voice not just as a second-generation Sidney and a ‘second sex’ author in a misogynist court culture, but as a seventeenth-century woman writer with a diverse cultural heritage and legacy” (13-4). This sense of Wroth using her fictions to explore multiple possibilities rather than craft a single perspective seems absolutely right given the diversity of female perspectives within the stories and, if I am right, the use of different genres and political agendas. For Miller, this “multiplicity” became a source of agency and self-determination (or at
The understanding of genre that Wroth seems to be questioning is, admittedly, a very fixed notion of genre as stable, conventional, and easily defined -- one which Wroth’s own rather dexterous generic manipulations elsewhere easily escape. However, these moments within the *Urania* seem less about doing something novel within particular genres than about what happens when different genres, understood as rather limited and conventional forms of expression, come into conflict. Politically, the *Urania*’s interlacing of different genres continually narrates *differends*, or moments of judgment in which irreconcilable criteria clash. Politically, one might say that Wroth characterizes romance as this multiplicity of genres or a diversity of ends and desires, and romance interrupts the other genres she includes in order to highlight the disjunctions (or *differends*) between the different generic utopias included in her narrative. For Wroth, the text’s inability to settle on a single political vision, to organize its various utopias into a consistent whole, might look in the end like capitulation to a kind of political cynicism. But it is important to notice that when Wroth finds political problems irreconcilable, she becomes intensely interested in how they are represented as *problematic*. This deliberate attempt to find reasons that make it impossible to decide, to come to an end, seems typical of Wroth’s attitude in the *Urania*, and it is this chapter’s goal to read what looks like her political cynicism and exhaustion as in fact coming up against the limits of political representation she found in the resources of early modern genre. But beyond the question of “which” politics Wroth championed, what attention to genre allows us to see are the ways that an early modern woman with a number of conflicting personal and least choice of given options) for a woman limited by her culture, and, in my argument, multiplicity in forms of political representation generates a similar level of critical distance on political matters.
political affiliations, understood herself using genre (and even at times its limitations) as itself a political rhetoric. What Wroth often expresses as political frustration, much like her expressions of frustration in love, often results in a deliberate performance which proves that she can master the rhetoric of that frustration. Just as her favored virtue, Constancy, was an effort to turn a lover’s betrayal into an exercise of her own honor, her expressions of political frustration allow her to exercise control of the rhetoric that created that frustration.

4.1 Amphilanthus’ Epic

In the clearest political allegory of the first part of Wroth’s Urania, she draws on the traditional conflict of epic-versus-romance. Here, Wroth begins by repeating the terms laid out by David Quint in Epic and Empire where the fundamental opposition between epic and romance is political. Epics are written by political victors who write stories that end in magnificent triumphalism, most often the establishment of a new empire. Romances, on the other hand, are written by political losers (and are included in epics as moments when the empire was almost lost or when a hero momentarily forgets his destiny). Epics are teleological because they narrate the heroic establishment of a political entity while romances are digressive and wandering because they narrate stories of those who want to win, but haven’t yet (and, thus, are still wandering). On Quint’s model, epic is always a dominant society’s preferred mode of narrative, and, even when epic includes romance in it (Aeneas dallying with Dido or the moment in Tasso), this

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only intensifies by way of contrast the epic’s political destination. (And even romances, when they are political, really want to be epics in so far as they want to narrate social and political dominance rather than deferral and wandering.)

What Wroth does, however, is to present an epic in the midst of a romance, rather than romance moments appearing in the midst of epics, as exemplified by Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata* where Rinaldo’s dalliance on Armida’s island presents a romance episode as a fundamental test of the hero’s devotion to his destiny. The inversion changes the political consequences significantly from the pattern Quint identifies, and when Amphilanthus becomes Holy Roman Emperor in the middle of *Urania’s* Book III, epic ultimately becomes a test for the virtues of romance. After the central characters are freed from the Throne of Love at the end of Book I, Books II and III follow two different sets of stories. The first set, which comprises most of the narrative, involves the events that follow after the characters meet the enchantress Melissea, whose prophecies set most of the characters on the path to being trapped in (and trying to achieve the quest of) the Enchanted Theater. This set of stories repeats many of the same themes that critics often address and that comprise what is characteristic of Uranian “romance”: troubled constancy, female lovers in difficult positions, and marriage problems. But, at the same time, a smaller group of stories, centering almost exclusively on male characters, follow the military trials of the knights who try to put Steriamus on the throne of Albania, displacing four usurpers. Along with this military campaign, Amphilanthus and his friend Ollorandus of Bohemia try to rejoin their friends (after having to return to their respective home countries in order to gain the crowns), along the way establishing their heroic might, setting various corrupt regimes to rights, and culminating in Amphilanthus’
election to Holy Roman Emperor after all of his other friends have established (or are about to establish) themselves as monarchs by either inheritance or marriage.\footnote{Technically, some of the marriages and coronations occur after the Enchanted Theater is opened, it being a bit hard to coronate someone gazing longingly into a lover’s eyes while magically frozen on an Adriatic island.}

What Wroth has done, then, is provide us with a small epic narrative in the midst of a larger romance narrative. The generic difference is even stressed, as I show below, by the epic being completed just before Amphilanthus becomes trapped in the Enchanted Theater, the magical quest that dominates the middle of the *Urania*, and which is involved in marking his larger failures as a lover. The interlacing of generic forms becomes particularly emphasized here, in addition to the interlacing of different narrative threads that come together in the scenes at the Enchanted Theater. In the epic narrative, however, Amphilanthus’ infidelity, which defines his character throughout the rest of the book, is never even mentioned. The question becomes, then, how we are to understand Amphilanthus’ character, praised on the one hand as the “Light of the Western World” and on the other as the central source of Wroth’s alter-ego Pamphilia’s unhappiness. And, furthermore, since Amphilanthus’ election has been seen as central to defining Wroth’s stance on international politics, I think it is important to read the political consequences, not just of the potential idealizing picture of a European empire, but of why Wroth would undercut it by including it at a moment in the narrative where Amphilanthus’ romantic failures are highlighted. The epic storyline may seem straightforward as a counter-myth, if Roberts’ reading is correct, but it becomes much more sophisticated when Wroth calls attention to its strange inclusion in the larger context of the narrative in which its generic encoding and its generic differences become conspicuous.
First, we should note that the epic mode fits well with the reading of Amphilanthus’ election as an implicit criticism of King James. Wroth wrote her romance in the midst of both political and personal encounters with early seventeenth-century international problems and imperial ambitions. These issues were not only topically resonant with James’ desire for a unified Christendom, but also with her family’s leadership in the Protestant faction (particularly her father Robert Sidney and cousin William Herbert) which hoped for England’s leadership in a continental Protestant league. Her familial and national involvement with these issues came to a head two years before the first part of the Urania was printed in the Bohemian revolt of 1619, but James’ failure to support his son-in-law Elector Palatine Frederick against the Catholics within the Holy Roman Empire led many, the Sidneys and Herbergs not least among them, to doubt their monarch’s resolve, or at least his pacific strategies, in bringing about a unified Christian Europe. Wroth’s romance recalls these events not only geographically, as most of Part I takes place within central Europe, but in the way she imagines the ability of a new Holy Roman Emperor to bring about universal peace and establish international peace and justice. As already noted, many critics cite as well-established Josephine

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8 Mary Sidney Wroth was Philip Sidney’s niece, daughter to Robert Sidney. There is a host of historical and literary critical literature addressing the Sidneys’ and Herbergs’ involvement on the continent, but Wroth has been excluded from these discussions. For standard accounts of the families’ political affiliations (with attention to literary contexts), see Michael Brennan’s Literary Patronage in the English Renaissance: The Pembroke Family (New York: Routledge, 1988), Margaret Hannay’s Philip’s Phoenix: Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), and Blair Worden’s The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney’s Arcadia and Elizabethan Politics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

Roberts’ introduction to her edition of Part I where she argues that Amphilanthus’
election to Holy Roman Emperor and unification of the “Western World” is what she
calls a critical “counter-myth” to James’ failed ambition of uniting Christendom. It is, she
says, a “critique of the failures of James’ original foreign policy of non-involvement,”
and his refusal to follow the more militantly interventionist policy of the Sidney/Herbert
faction.  

Brian Lockey’s chapter on Wroth in Law and Empire in English Renaissance
Literature, the only other critical work to specifically address this part of the Urania in
detail, simply expands on Roberts’ reading, attempting to link it to burgeoning imperial
ideas in Britain, a reading which fits well with Quint’s understanding of epic politics.  

However, neither Roberts nor Lockey addresses the fact that Amphilanthus’s role does
not remain ideal, not only as he continues to be seduced by women other than Pamphilia,
but also since his election is immediately followed and contextualized by his failures in
the romance quest-structure.

Amphilanthus’ election to Holy Roman Emperor comes as no surprise and
formally establishes his office as keeper of international justice which he previously
championed because of his straightforward virtuous nature. Early in Part I, before we
even meet him, we learn that he has been named “King of the Romans” (he had
previously been King of Naples) after defeating the usurping Duke of Saxony (45). This


11 Brian C. Lockey, Law and Empire in English Renaissance Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 2006). As Lockey writes: “In the figure of Amphilanthus, Wroth was constructing a
notion of imperial justice, which was ultimately intended as a more muscular version of King James’ timid
foreign policy. In terms of the hostilities that were engulfing Europe from 1618 to 1621, the period in
which most of the Urania was written, its author was encouraging its English readers to support a more
aggressive foreign policy” (195).
first act is to be repeated throughout most of Books I and II as he is shown overthrowing usurpers and establishing justice for figures who have lost their crown or their liberty. In each case, his actions gain him the love of those he has helped, and Wroth is always at pains to point out how this love translates into freely given oaths of loyalty. Consequently, the “epic” resolution of Amphilanthus’ military story is one not only of conquest, but of just conquest in which the establishment of empire is something universally good and never marred by questions of Amphilanthus’ legitimacy. She makes this clear in the speech given by the Prince of Transylvania announcing the hero’s unlooked-for election:

Ollorandus your worthy friend, having the greatest stroke in the election, making all the assembly remember your right hath chosen you, and truly Sir not onely hee, but all, as soone as you were named gave an equall consent, as if borne and made of one temper to serve you, having justly chose you to it. … my selfe, Sir, am fortunate to bee commanded in this service to you, whom above all men, I honour, your owne true virtue causd that respect in me. (441)

The notion that it is his virtue that causes respect and loyalty in others “as if borne and made of one temper to serve you” reinforces that Amphilanthus rules not because of his power to conquer but because of his love for and that he inspires in others. All of the electors are friends of Amphilanthus’ but friends who, like the Bohemian Ollorandus, he has helped to maintain or regain positions they were born to.  

12 Amphilanthus is presented

12 I must mention that the Urania is not free of straightforward topical allegories. Amphilanthus’ setting of Ollorandus, the rightful ruler of Bohemia, back on his throne is a direct jab at James’ inaction. Unlike Frederick, who lived the rest of his life in exile, Ollorandus becomes the primary spokesman for Amphilanthus’ suitability to rule as Emperor, suggesting quite a different public reaction than met with James’ neglect of the Bohemia elector. Roberts finds Ollorandus to be a a clef representation of Sir Benjamin Rudyerd, Herbert’s friend and political ally who also spent a great deal of time traveling, like the Bohemian character, in the pursuit of Protestant alliances (most prominently joining Sir Henry Wotton in the Low Countries in 1610 (Roberts, xcii). However, if Amphilanthus is to be both Herbert and an idealized
as the ideal knight and becomes Emperor not because of his chivalric valor or combination of military virtues, as with many a typical chivalric romance hero, but because he acts to preserve what rightfully belongs to others and to keep people in positions that are justly their own. In his fight to overcome tyrants in Albania, Romania, Macedon, Hungaria, Bohemia, and Celicia, Amphilanthus always justifies this imperial role, not of dominating other monarchs, but of helping them to maintain their own rightful sovereignty. Peace in the *Urania* is always achieved after a usurper or tyrant has been replaced with a rightful ruler, and the utopian vision is in Amphilanthus’ promise of bringing about this rightful order throughout the world.

Wroth’s epic narrative, then, is not only the story of a victor, as Quint says, but of a universally just victor, a man loved by his peers and by the most beautiful and virtuous women of the world. The imperial vision associated with epic in the Urania is a vision of peace through unification, using force when necessary (as James was unwilling to do), but culminating in a world where force becomes necessary only to rebuke rebellions (since Amphilanthus’ only military action, after acquiring his title, is to defend Pamphilia’s kingdom from the encroaching King of Celicia). Otherwise, as Lockey rightly insists, Amphilanthus’ single maxim as political ruler (both in the actions the gain him his reputation and which he and his friends uphold as emperor) is that empire in the *Urania* is associated with the idea that “love must be given and received freely, that it cannot be coerced.”

Empire is, then, a form of government that ideally eliminates

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James, it makes sense that Ollorandus could also be an idealized Frederick, the friend and son-in-law who could have supported James’ unifying aims.

13 Lockey, 203.
conflict by giving to all what is rightfully their own (and, indeed, throughout much of the 
_Urania_, kingship is presented as something rightfully possessed and righteously regained 
by “rightful” heirs and princes). Epic is then the story that establishes the permanence of 
this right.

However, just before Amphilanthus gains his title and, having just put Steriamus 
back on the throne of Albany, bringing a large portion of the political tension to a close, 
Wroth has Amphilanthus, by chance, cross paths with an old lover, Musalina. She even 
highlights the incongruity of his actions by suggesting that, in the midst of his political 
virtue runs a streak of adolescent distraction:

> Amphilanthus was like the King, received and followed by all 
> men, acknowledging their peace, gaine, and liberty to come from 
> him. Then backe againe to Neapolis he and Ollorandus went to 
> conduct Musalina, one of his first Loves in his youthfull travailes, 
> where some time they spent in all sweet and studied for delights, 
> the search [for the Enchanted Theater] being quite forgot…(397).

The passage, I suggest, contrasts two forms of love that Wroth will begin to explore after 
Amphilanthus is elected Emperor and subsequently betrays Pamphilia: selfless and 
selfish love. So far in the narrative, Amphilanthus’ selfless love has earned him the love 
and loyalty of everyone he meets, so much so that he is named Emperor and treated

14 Wroth explores the contrast of these two forms of love in many episodes apart from 
Amphilanthus which point to its political problems. Perhaps the most significant example outside of the 
lyric moments is the story of Nereana who, after being rescued by and falling in love with Perissus, returns 
to find her kingdom in the hands of her sister. Nereana’s illicit love for Perissus, already married to another, 
Nereana suffers imprisonment. We learn that Nereana has not gained her people’s trust, and they wish to 
keep her sister illegally in power rather than suffer Nereana’s revenge, and, so, in this tale, Wroth links 
pride and selfish love to both personal and political downfall. Indeed, as Eileen Beilin argues when reading 
Nereana’s eventually about-face and return to power at the behest of her people, Nereana’s story 
emphasizes “this theme of princely self-control as a prerequisite to gaining the people’s support” 
(“Winning ‘the harts of the people’: The Role of the Political Subject in the _Urania_.” _Pilgrimage for Love; 
Essays in Early Modern Literature in Honor of Josephine A. Roberts_, ed. Sigrid King (Tempe, AZ: Center 
universally as a guarantor of justice. Apparently, however, even being the exemplar of selfless love does not exclude the possibility of selfish love, the Tyrant love which dominates so much of Wroth’s lyric (both in the *Urania* and in *Pamphilia and Amphilanthus*). In the remainder of Book III, Wroth turns the consequences of this selfish love into a critique of the utopian ideal of a just empire, a critique which, in political terms, examines the difficulty of maintaining justice between rightful sovereigns within a greater empire. Amphilanthus’ infidelity to Pamphilia becomes a political problem by showing the difficulty of imagining at one and the same time an emperor who can recognize the legitimate sovereignty of the constituents of his empire while also insisting on his own separate sovereignty. The difficulty of loving fairly and, in Wroth’s terms, loving with constancy becomes a problem of conceiving a sovereign emperor who can maintain the legitimate sovereignty of other rulers without interfering with their liberty.

What is more, however, this debate between forms of love coincides with Amphilanthus’ return to the romance form of magical quest structures. Just after receiving news of his election, Amphilanthus arrives at the Enchanted Theater (and enchantments have had nothing to do with his military exploits that garnered him international respect). Furthermore, his dalliance with Musalina, barely mentioned when he first encounters her just before rejoining the Albanian campaign, takes narrative priority when he returns to the role of knight errant rather than conqueror and general. Consequently, the selfless love that grounded the political ideal of empire is lost when Amphilanthus returns to his role as a private lover and an adventurer in the more magical romance landscape of enchantments that dominates the rest of the book. So, what Wroth does is give us the same character who was championed in the epic becoming a figure of
infidelity in a romance. Figuring out how to reconcile Amphilanthus’ two “characters” (and the types of “love” they represent) becomes the differend of this part of the story, or the point at which we are given two ways of judging Amphilanthus with no clear signs of which we should choose.

By the time the Prince of Transylvania delivers his news to Amphilanthus, the Emperor is already in a courtship with Musalina. Furthermore, having just finished the Albanian campaign, Amphilanthus and the other princes learn that most of the main female characters, Pamphilia among them, have been trapped in the Enchanted Theater, awaiting his prophesized arrival to free them. The messenger’s appearance seems to remind the Roman King of his quest only momentarily. Interestingly, he has also just met the Queen of Bulgaria whose earlier encounter with Rosindy and Meriana granted her the title “Empress of Pride.” The Transylvanian, about to give Amphilanthus the news of his election, briefly compliments the Bulgarian Queen, and Wroth takes a moment to note that “she tooke it like her owne conceit, and so as shee lovd him better for commending her, then for his owne worth” (441). Chiding one who responds to praise rather than virtue should perhaps qualify our reception of the grand compliment Amphilanthus receives as “the earths glory” (441) when presented with his new title.

His experience in the Theater stands in direct contrast to the unqualified praise he receives from the electors in Germany. It casts doubt on his worthiness for the throne and his ultimately questionable role in the quest to free his friends from the enchanted Theater implies that while he has proven himself in one form of love, he has yet to prove himself in other ways. First, Amphilanthus’ ability to lift the charm that keeps Pamphilia and the others trapped is only part of what is necessary. The gate remains locked until “the man
most loving, and most beloved, used his force, who should release them [Amphilanthus],
but himselfe be inclosed till by the freeing of the sweetest and loveliest creature
[Veralinda]...he should be redeem’d” (373). Before Veralinda arrives, Amphilanthus is
also trapped within the Theater and, while there, Wroth emphasizes the effect of his
infidelity on Pamphilia. All the other characters are in pairs, except for Pamphilia who
sits alone, and Amphilanthus sits beside Musalina, directly before Pamphilia. (The Queen
of Bulgaria also sits beside Amphilanthus, again emphasizing his proximity to pride.) But
what stands out most in this passage is the contrast between the way Amphilanthus’
actions persuaded the princes of Germany and the effect he has on Pamphilia:

a sad spectacle, but she must and did indure it, though how, with
such unquietnesse, affliction, and multitudes of teares as what
succeeded? losse of so much beauty, as made many have cause (I
meane slight lovers) to see her lesse amiable, then less love-
worthy, and so she was left, and this is the truth of mans affection,
yet did hee not imagine, or rather would not consider this was
cased by his leaving her, she poore Lady beholding nothing but
affliction, and making herself the true subject to it, yet did she not,
nor would accuse him, who was altogether so faulty as condemnd
to be, though more then she deserved unkind (442).

The man later called the “Light of the Western World,” is here cast first as so unkind the
he destroys his love’s beauty, and, furthermore, as oblivious to his effect on her, a mere
two signature pages after his election as “the earths glory.” In contrast to his political
success, this Amphilanthus seems ineffective since he is not sufficient to undo the
enchantment, but also thoughtless and cruel with Pamphilia. The emperor alienates the
one he supposedly loves most.

The political vision of the epic narrative is further challenged in the later rhetoric
of empire which recurs in many of Pamphilia’s complaints. Most interestingly,
Pamphilia’s primary virtue, constancy, is often articulated in a way that challenges the political valences of empire offered above. What it seems to do is suggest that “empire” has one meaning in a very public, masculine, and military setting, but that in a romance context, in which affect, passion, and personal relationships dominate, it offers a strikingly different political vision. Thus, it is not only Amphilanthus who creates a differend, but the notion of idealized empire as well. Consequently, it is not only the different narrative strands that are interlaced, but the rhetorical use to which “empire” can be put as well. What happens, I suggest, is that the value of a political ideal comes to look quite different, even incompatibly so, when it appears in different generic contexts, a move that suggests that the political vision of empire is attractive only in a certain genre of political discourse. What happens, I argue, is that Wroth’s generic shifting around the notion of empire calls into question not simply the content of empire as a political ideal, but the form of its representation.

If Amphilanthus’ selfless love and quest for justice exhibited towards his friends and allies is the masculine virtue Wroth champions, then constancy is the virtue of her heroines. Almost all the major female characters in the Urania are deserted, forgotten, or even betrayed by the men they love for at least a short time.\(^{15}\) Pamphilia, however, is its champion, and she transcends to its allegorical representation when she “becomes” Constancy by taking the keys from the iconic figure of constancy in the first enchantment, the Throne of Love where “at which instant Constancy vanished, as

\(^{15}\) Simply to emphasize its centrality to the narrative, we can list among the “major” characters who suffer this fate Dalinea, Allarina, Alena, Liana, Bellamira, Lady Pastora, Dorolina, Musalina, Lindamira, Pellarina, Mirasilva, Antissia, and, of course Pamphilia. It is no surprise that attention to female constancy dominates Urania’s critical reception.
metamorphosing herself into her [Pamphilia’s] breast” (170). After Amphilanthus’ election, however, Pamphilia’s rhetoric of constancy acquires political overtones not found in Wroth’s early discussions of the virtue. Wroth even suggests that constancy changes how we are to conceive of empire, as she reimagines constancy not as a public empire of justice but as a private empire of the mind immediately following Amphilanthus’ election. The consequences of this new formulation occur in the attempts of her friends Urania and Veralinda to comfort her after seeing Amphilanthus with Merlina in the Theater, and the picture they offer of Amphilanthus is the exact opposite of the unifying champion of justice:

“Those days are past, my deere Veralinda,” cride Pamphilia, “and hee is changed, and proved a man.”

“Hee was ever thought soe,” sayd Veralinda. “‘Butt you were, and are the discreetest of your sex. Yett you would have impossibilities: you say Amphilanthus is a man. Why, did you ever know any man, especially any brave man, continue constant to the end? … All men are faulty. I would nott my self have my Lord Constant, for feare of a miracle. … Banish him as a traiter. … Hee is a brave man; soe are more. Hee is a mighty man of command; others are as great. Hee did love you; soe did as good, as great as hee. Butt say hee hath left you: lett him goe in his owne pathe; treatd nott in itt, an other is more straite. Follow that, and bee the Emperess of the world, commaunding the Empire of your owne minde.” (461-2)

In this advice of Veralinda’s, we see Wroth turning empire into a sense of a thoroughly private self.17 This is a self that turns away from love and towards a kind of protected

16 For an extended discussion of Wroth’s literalization of allegory (not unlike Spenser’s Jealousy), see Beilin’s “‘The Onely Perfect Vertue’: Constancy in Mary Wroth’s Pamphilia to Amphilanthus,” Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual 2 (1981): 229-45.

17 Amelia Zurcher Sandy sees Wroth using pastoral moments to create a similar insular sense of self in “Pastoral, Temperance, and the Unitary Self in Wroth’s Urania,” Studies in English Literature 42:1
isolation. The “Empire of your owne minde” is a response to a man who seemed like the
“world’s majesty,” but who turns out to be simply a failed man. Pamphilia, however,
does not fully accept Veralinda’s advice and, instead, tries to understand a different path
in which she can remain constant to Amphilanthus and his virtue even as he betrays her.
However, in the end, it is unclear whether constancy really allows Pamphilia to achieve
any more than this private “Empire of the mind,” the political consequences of which are
ultimately cast the notion of Amphilanthus’ empire of justice as a false hope.

In her subsequent discussions with Urania, Pamphilia articulates the form of
constancy that she will try to maintain, but she does so in such a way that constancy in
love comes to look less like loyalty to another than love of oneself:

To leave him for being false, would shew my love was not for his
sake, but mine owne, that because he loved me, I therefore loved
him, but when hee leaves I can doe so to. O no deere Cousen I
loved him for himselfe, and would have loved him had hee not
loved mee, and willl love though he dispise me; this is true love,
and if not this the contrary, should I rejoice for misse of any ill
might from trusting, or being true to his amisse, in such bond had
my blessing beene, and my curse the fayling of them, or had they
hapned. Pamphilia must be of a new composition before she can let
such thoughts fall into her constant brest, which is a Sanctuary of
zealous affection, and so well hath love instructed me, as I can
never leave my master nor his precepts, but still maintaine a
virtuous constancy (470).

Although initially inspired by Amphilanthus’ virtue, Pamphilia continues to love him in
spite of his betrayal in order to maintain the integrity of her virtue. Pamphilia’s love turns

(2002): 103-19. As she say, pastoral moments in the Urania show that Wroth “understands temperance to
be a goal not for the community, nor for the individual in relation to the community, so much as for the
individual in and of herself, as she struggles to bring her unruly passions into line with what her culture has
deemed feminine virtue. …[Pastoral is used] to express an ideal of individual self-mastery and temperance,
and Urania shows us that despite the proliferation of lords and ladies and their stories, Wroth’s work is not
really interested in community … but in the construction fo the individual by herself, independent of all but
her passions” (116).
from love of Amphilanthus for himself to a love of her own love. This stands in stark contrast to the kind of love Amphilanthus inspired in those he rescued in which love was reciprocally earned through the public admiration of virtue. Here, Pamphilia’s virtue becomes a private affair. Urania’s responses to Pamphilia further this emphasis by stressing the political consequences of Pamphilia’s despair, not for her ties to other kingdoms, but to her own subjects. While Pamphilia is in despair, Urania rebukes her: “if your people knew this, how can they hope of your government, that can no better govern one poore passion? How can you command others, that cannot master your self; or make laws, that cannot counsel, or soveraignise over a poore thought?” (468) Here, sovereignty is figured as command rather than as maintaining justice, a very different notion from Amphilanthus’ justice. This form of constancy is focused on maintaining oneself and the political emphasis upon being good to one’s subjects does not advance a notion of justice, or defending right legitimacies. Instead, even Pamphilia’s good rule is cast as loving oneself in order to keep possession of what already belongs to her: her subjects’ goodwill. But maintaining popularity among subordinates rather than inspiring loyalty among equals, Pamphilia’s constancy produces an “Empire of the mind” that appears much more subject to the tyrant of selfish, or at least self-absorbed, love than Amphilanthus’ empire had promised.

I do not want to overstate my case, and I should remark that this somewhat negative interpretation stands in contrast to the more affirmative self-sovereignty that many feminist critics have found in these same passages. Naomi Miller has argued in a

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18 In addition to Miller’s account, which I discuss in the text, see Shannon Miller, “Constructing the Female Self: Architectural Structures in Mary Wroth’s Urania,” in Renaissance Culture and the
reading of Urania’s attempt to lift Pamphilia from her despair that if the object of
costancy is to one’s own integrity in love rather than to a jealous lover, constancy can
become a source of strength and agency.19 It is this sense of constancy to oneself, Miller
argues, that justifies Pamphilia’s later public marriage to the Tartarian Rodomandro,
although her heart still belongs to Amphilanthus. This more complex form of constancy
allows Pamphilia to be publicly constant to her husband while privately (and chastely)
constant to Amphilanthus. As Miller says, “Pamphilia begins to forge new parameters for
a subjectivity that is not singular, bound by social definitions of female sexuality and
domesticity, but rather multiple, encompassing both public roles and private self.”20 One
of the most important consequences of this change in self-understanding according to
Miller is Pamphilia’s ability to find satisfaction in relationships with other women rather
than her beloved (most notably Urania, Veralinda, and Limena), relationships that do not
operate on hierarchical power relations, or the constant “tyranny” of love and
“subjection” to jealousy that Pamphilia so often bemoans.

Sovereignty of the self is indeed a powerful configuration of the role of feminine
sovereignty, but, against Miller, I would argue that after the promise of Amphilanthus’
universal empire, Pamphilia’s political understanding of constancy is a mere consolation.
Wroth’s promise for the resolution of the entire narrative, in which Amphilanthus and

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19 Naomi Miller, Changing the Subject, 61-3.

20 Ibid., 61.
Pamphilia could finally marry, suggests that constancy may retain some lack of fulfillment. In Part II, Wroth suggests that the two could come to some sort of harmonic union, with “noe superior, nor commanding power butt in love betweene united hearts.” The manuscript, of course, ends before we know what such a resolution would look like, and, in political terms, what a marriage of East and West into an empire that spans the entire known world would involve. That the marriage never happens, however, is key to how we are to interpret the political implications of Wroth’s romance, and this deferral is already figured in the way in which Wroth crosses the personal and political consequences of Amphilanthus’ actions in Book III.

At the end of the romance, we still have an Amphilanthus who is nominally Emperor, but whose actions, apart from his heroic deeds, leave us curious about what other virtues he possesses that make him worth his title. (Furthermore, he remains a “knight errant,” never settling into his throne.) Similarly, Pamphilia remains unhappy despite her increasing insight into the power of constancy. Throughout their story, the marriage of the “light of the westerne world” and “Pamphilia the Eastern Star,” the ultimate Empire, remains an unfulfilled promise, and a happy political marriage of different countries is as far away as a happy marriage between Wroth and Herbert. Their roles in fact seem to be mutually frustrating. As an Emperor, Amphilanthus does not represent a foreign policy that sees its nation constituents as equals. His successes lead him repeatedly to gain higher forms of authority (King of the Romans and then Holy Roman Emperor). As an imperial figure, his authority and sovereignty are always tinged

with the possibility of selfishness, pride, and authoritarianism, and, after gaining the title of Emperor, his primary narrative role is to frustrate Pamphilia’s love (the political glory of the Albanian campaign is never repeated). Pamphilia’s relations, particularly with her female friends and their nations, work on a model of equality, and her hope for a marriage with Amphilanthus is, as others have shown, fearful of being dominated and desirous of a relationship of union without sovereignty. As Maureen Quilligan has noted, Pamphilia’s “erotic desire is another language for the nuanced flux of hierarchically organized power relations,” and the self-sovereignty she learns from Urania is one way of avoiding the hierarchical consequences of love, or of submitting herself wholly to another. Amphilanthus’s imperial, authoritarian role, however, depends on just such a hierarchy, and this is perhaps why his Empire never truly encompasses the independent East. But, at the same time, Pamphilia’s constancy remains internal and passive, in stark contrast to Amphilanthus’ apparent ability to inspire loyalty in others.

Even more than this potential criticism of empire itself, however, is that the political ideal looks quite different when articulated in different genres. Within epic, empire is a glorified end state. In romance, it is an impossible refuge. And yet, within the narrative as we have it, Wroth puts both forms forward as valid. The strangest differend of all is that Amphilanthus remains Pamphilia’s beloved (and the beloved of the Western World) despite his obvious failures. He is simultaneously perfect and flawed, and, since the characters always react to him from within the context of either epic or romance (they are not given another option), there is no third place from which to reconcile the

opposites. Amphilanthus is judged based on the genre from which one judges, and Wroth’s refusal to offer a place outside of either epic or romance from which to view Amphilanthus makes the problem less one of whether or not “empire” itself is politically desirable, but turns the problem into one of genres of political desirability. At least in regards to how we view Amphilanthus, genre is both limiting (insofar as we, and the narrator, are forced to ignore certain aspects of his character at different times) and inescapable. The question then becomes one of how and when to move between genres. Wroth’s insertion of lyric complaint in the romance suggests certain strategies of such movement.

4.2 Lyric and “Lindamira’s Complaint”

At the end of Book III, Pamphilia recites a lyric complaint she has written ostensibly about another woman (Lindamira), but actually about herself. The long poem closes the section of the book most densely packed with other lyric complaints, many of which are collected in Pamphilia and Amphilanthus. The source of complaint is not only Lindamira’s lost love, but her exile from court, facts which immediately make the poem ripe for biographical treatment. But the question of why Wroth creates one of the closest analogues to her own political position in a marked generic moment offers insight into her use of genre for different political purposes.

I read the complaint as doing two things politically: on the one hand, the poem is quite Sidneyan, and includes a number of allusions to Wroth’s heritage which is insinuated to be morally superior to the court of Queen Anne (as Lindamira was also banished by a temperamental queen). But on the other hand, the complaint is a plea to
return to that center of power which she has just demonized. The complaint becomes a
genre that is at once public and private and which allows the speaker to both reveal and
hide herself (and aspects of herself) at the same time. In Pamphilia/Wroth’s hands, the
lyric complaint becomes a genre that overcomes some of the narrative limitations of
either romance or epic (and the differends I noted above) by its encoding of strategic
indirection and careful self-representation.

At the same time, however, it is in the complaint that Wroth most clearly develops
the motif of love’s tyranny. Consequently, the agile self-representations are also
presented as victimized subjects of an irrational ruler who is almost always deaf to the
complaints themselves. The subtility, in other words, is always too subtle to be effective.
The suggestion is that such a poetics is, at least within the complaint genre, opposed to
power rather than a means of power. Within the larger romance narrative, then, the
complaints are presented as withdrawals rather than serving their composers. (The only
counter examples occur when poems are misattributed and used for deceptive purposes.)
Although lyric appears as a source of incredibly agile self-representation, it is never
politically effective within the larger narrative (the complainers never benefit from
writing them); and, in fact, at best, they turn against the poets when they fall into the
wrong hands.

“Lindamira’s Complaint” appears in part of the Urania that is more easily
identifiable as a straightforward roman a clef than much of the rest of the book, which

23 Such a rhetorical use of complaint, and its potential political performance, is well-noted among
early modern lyric complaints. See particularly John Kerrigan, Motives of Woe: Shakespeare and the
has more oblique contemporary references. Lindamira (an anagram for Ladi Mari) is the daughter of parents whose story aligns easily with that of Robert Sidney and Barbara Gamage, and her own story of loss of favor at court and unhappy marriage combined with a forced withdrawal to the country closely matches Wroth’s own experience. Further, the complaint itself narrates the loss of a beloved who abandons her for “new loves” after “fourteen years unchang’d affection” (502), a story easily linked to Wroth’s affair with William Herbert after Robert Wroth’s death. Pamphilia has put Lindamira’s story into verse “because I lik’d it, or rather found her estate so neere agree with mine” and its audience, Dorolina, describes the tale as “some thing more exactly related than a fixion” (502, 505). Furthermore, the speaker repeatedly describes her own constancy toward the betraying lover as her “worth,” where the pun continually calls attention to the way the poem attempts to defend its author. That the poem’s political purpose is to prove Wroth’s “worth” after her forced personal and political withdrawal from, respectively, Herbert’s company and Queen Anne’s court, emerges when we pay particular attention to the generic markers of complaint she manipulates throughout Lindamira’s story.

The tale begins in the private erotic sphere, where the economy of love is depicted as inherently fickle. Despite presenting herself as constant with “twise seven yeares love,” others will want “new loves,” “And be assur’d they likely will choose more” (502). But this private frame is soon used to comment on a broader culture of “world-like change” where worth is replaced with a passing love for transient appearance:

24 See Roberts’ “Introduction,” lxxi, and Lamb’s “Biopolitics,” 120.

Conscience is lost, and outward fairness gaines
The place where worth did, or else seemd to move,
Thus world-like change new triall still brings forth. (503)

Although the poem vents most of its anger ostensibly blaming the betraying lover for simply being close to this corrupt world of change, and supposedly wishing for a reunion, what actually emerges from her criticisms of both her lover and her world is a further separation of lover and beloved in terms of their “worth,” which, in the end, damns not only the lover’s character but his entire cultural world. But by moving the terms of the lament away from the simple private affairs to a public critique of the character of both the lover and, by extension, his “world,” the poem becomes a public self-defense. Indeed the final sonnet ends by placing the speaker in a position of defiance against those who would hear her complaint as simply a song of small jealousy rather than, as she insists, a sign of a fiery moral virtue willing to stand its ground against the erotic changes of fortune in a capricious world:

Some doe, perhaps, both wrong my love, and care,
Taxing me with mistrust, and Jealousie,
From both which sinnes in love like freedome, free
I live, these slanders but new raised are.

What though from griefe, my soule I doe not spare,
When I perceive neglect’s slight face on me?
While unto some the loving smiles I see,
I am not Jealous, they so well doe fare.

But doubt my selfe lest I lesse worthy am,
Or that it was but flashes, no true flame,

26 Rosalind Smith insists that the autobiographical elements are particularly appropriate here: “The autobiographical identification of Lindamira and Wroth connects this lover with William Herbert, and the constant stress in the sequence upon his inconstancy and unreliability corresponds with contemporary political critiques of his character. Archbishop Abbot observed in 1617 that he ‘looketh only to his owne ends and whatsoever leagues, promises and confederations are made within one hour they come to nothing.'” (“I thus goe arm’d to field”: Lindamira’s Complaint in Women’s Writing 1550-1750, 75-6)
Dazl’d my eyes, and so my humour fed.

If this be jealousie, then doe I yield,
And doe confesse I thus goe arm’d to field,
For by such Jealousie my love is led. (504-5)

The complaint becomes a defense. But it is, in the end, a particularly public defense which sees itself as challenging those who would judge the speaker as lacking both an erotic and moral fortitude. This tone, combined with the insistently autobiographical narrative frame in which it appears, turns the complaint into a piece of lyrical ammunition in the Jacobean coterie public sphere.27

The frame narrative intensifies the lyric’s use as a public defense of the speaker’s virtue by presenting Lindamira as one who has suffered not only an erotic but a political fall from grace, and, in so doing, turns personal defense into courtly criticism. Pamphilia describes Lindamira as “a lady of great spirit, excellent qualities, and beautifull enough to make many in love with her,” as well as exercising a political loyalty on par with her constancy in love (499). However, Lindamira’s queen suddenly withdraws her favor, “as if never had: Lindamira remaining like one in a gay Masque, the night pass’d, they are in their old clothes againe, and no appearance of what was” (500). Lindamira’s lover later admits that the queen loves him, creating a complicity between erotic and political betrayal: both the lover and queen are inconstant both in love and in public virtue. Indeed, in the narrative, erotic and political terms become mixed in Pamphilia’s explanation of Lindamira’s plight:

27 This is quite a different reading of Wroth’s lyrical work than Jeff Masten’s, who argues that the sequence is “a sustained inscription of emotion [which is] deployed as a withdrawal into a privatized discursive space – deployed against the making public, the circulation, of a woman’s story,” (“Shall I turn blabb?: Circulation, Gender, and Subjectivity in Mary Wroth’s Sonnets,” in Reading Mary Wroth, 79.)
Yet love she knew had commanded her, who borne a Princesse, and match’d to a King, yet could not resist his power, might with greater ease soveraignize over a subject: but in Loves Court all are fellow-subjects; and thus her Majesty was deceived in her greatnesse, which could not, as she thought, be subject: and therefore, though others must be Vassals when they are all companions and serve alike. (500)

It is important to notice, here, that in “Loves Court,” both queen and subject become “fellow-subjects,” and “greatnesse” becomes no longer a standard of rank but of merit, itself “subject” to a higher authority. The quality of love determines the lover’s “greatnesse,” and, thus, even monarchs are capable of being judged on a level equal with their subjects.

If the lyric can then intertwine erotic and political virtue, the question becomes in what sense “Lindamira’s Complaint” presents a specifically political defense of the speaker. Certainly, the lover claims constancy in love as the virtue that makes her worthy to withstand her fallen reputation after her betrayal. But the courtly analogue to constancy is more difficult to determine beyond the general complaint of “world-like change” and fickleness. Rosalind Smith has argued persuasively that Wroth’s choice of lyric at this moment actually articulates her public voice as inheriting both Spenserian and Sidneian generic interventions in political rhetoric with the aim of presenting herself as an idealized model of Protestant virtue over and against a corrupt world.28 Although Smith’s argument addresses Pamphilia to Amphilanthus in isolation from its narrative placement in the Urania, her analysis of Wroth’s positioning herself among her generic precursors

suggests that, here, too, we can read Lindamira, the long-suffering constant lover, as an idealized version of Protestant virtue.

According to Smith, Wroth’s sonnet sequence writes the speaker in a position of “retirement [which] corresponds to the Spenserian construction of a group of Protestant patrons perceived to be independent of courtly corruption and intrigue, withdrawn from court to country,” including, among others, Susan Herbert, Countess of Montgomery, and Lucy Harington, Countess of Bedford.29 But, at the same time, the sonnets present a more “exemplary,” or Sidneyan, “impulse which seeks to wrest her text from a Spenserian inscription of nostalgia for a lost Protestant golden age as a counterpoint to Jacobean courtly corruption, towards an active, exemplary role in the Jacobean court.”30 This would be the role Pamphilia takes for herself when she seeks a court which is “The lasting lampe fed with the oyle of right; Image of faith, and wombe for joyes increase,” ruled by a monarch “just as truthe, constant as fate, joy’d to Requite” (236). The Spenserian and Sidneyan poles allow Wroth to take upon her own poems the responsibility to both remember a better, lost court and to present its mirror in the lyric voice of the constant lover. According to Smith, Wroth’s poems gain the authority to make these claims on the basis of their generic inheritance from both Spenser’s (and Spenserians’) and Sidney’s sonnet sequences.

29 One can see a similar argument made by David Norbrook about Samuel Daniel’s valorization of the Countess of Bedford’s “retirement” to a Spenserian withdrawal in the country during the Overbury affair. (David Norbrook, Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984, 214ff).

30 Smith, 79.
If Smith’s argument is correct, then Wroth’s use of lyric complaint as a public defense is part of a tradition of lyric opposition that could well accuse both James’ unwillingness to engage in a project of militant Protestantism (addressed above), but also Queen Anne’s Catholic and Spanish leanings of being complicit in the sonnets’ denunciation of “world-like change,” infidelity, and corruption. The latter seems specifically apt, given the narrative’s insistence that Lindamira’s fall came through a contrary queen. It even allows her to recast her exclusion from Anne’s court (most likely due to the public revelation of her bearing Herbert two illegitimate children) as a virtuous self-justification. Wroth had participated in the Masque of Blackness presented at Anne’s court, recalling that Lindamira was described as “one in a gay masque,” and even participated as part of the official procession during Anne’s death. But, at the same time, Wroth’s own personal and familial commitments set her at odds with Anne’s support of Spanish Catholic interests and the hispanophile members of her court. Here, then, “world-like change” could well be a resumption of old complaints against Anne’s continental politics as a way to turn Wroth’s personal exclusion from the court into a political gain in self-representation.

Lindamira/Pamphilia/Wroth are speakers for whom lyric complaint becomes an implicit critique not only of the forces that have diminished Wroth’s political standing personally (both in the embarrassment with Herbert and her expulsion from Anne’s court), but also of the public politics of the reigning monarchs. The speaker of the sonnet sequence is able, generically, to occupy a position of subjectivity which transcends the wronged lover and actually produces a stance of moral and political superiority which aligns Lindamira’s constancy with the greater moral and political virtue of the complaint
genre’s ancestors (in this case, Sidney and Spenser specifically). Complaint is not merely a bitter response to a bad situation, but actually a way of producing a position of power in response to that situation, a separate platform from which Wroth can speak.

As rhetorically sophisticated and even “heroic” as this interpretation may seem, however, the complaint’s rhetorical power is never acknowledged within the romance narrative. It is here that we find another differend. The image of the complainer going “arm’d to the field” insisted upon so strongly by Lindamira’s last sonnet is at once literalized and refuted in the paragraph immediately following Pamphilia’s recitation when she hears

unlookt for news, which was, that the young and proud King of Celicia, being her neighbour, her Wooer, and refused by her, would not as it seemd endure the scorne, or goe without her, wherefore he with an invincible Army, was come neare the confines of her Country, by force to win, what he could not by love, or faire meanes gaine (505).

Returning immediately to the romance world, the complaint’s rhetorical power is shown to be apparently empty as a military force impinges upon Pamphilia’s careful reconstruction of her own story through Lindamira. The King of Celicia throws her back into a position of powerlessness in which she must come ultimately to depend upon the one she perceives as her betrayer: Amphilanthus (who comes to her rescue at the beginning of Book IV). Politically, what Wroth is doing asserts the voice of the righteous subject in opposition to the capricious monarch but then denies this voice any efficacy in the world of the fiction. The complaint poses as a passive, suffering subject which turns out, in the end, to provide the suffering subject with a rhetorical avenue for speaking against corruption and tyranny. (It is less like pastoral “indirection” than outright reversal
of subject positions.) But, at the same time, she undermines the power of this political
stance by insisting that the rules by which one would count her rhetorical performance as
a victory are easily ignored and, further, that the rhetorical “arms” of the sophisticated
complaint are merely shadows of the more literal arms that the King of Celicia brings to
threaten Pamphilia. For while Wroth has created a rhetorically powerful speaking
position, it is a stance that the world of the romance, in which love is figured as a
capricious tyrant, seems to deny her utterly. The complaint, it would seem, operates only
in withdrawal from the narrative in which positions of power (whether in love or politics)
actually have consequences. The greatest threat to the complaint’s speaker, then, is not a
world in which change and infidelity run rampant, but rather a world in which others
seem to have the option simply not to play the same generic game. The King of Celicia
comes “by force to win, what he could not by love,” suggesting that the romance world
can easily separate force from “faire means” which the complaint had tried to yoke
together by mixing political and erotic terms. If the complaint here is the world of the
idealized, withdrawn, and virtuous speaker whose power is synonymous with her
virtuous speech and self-representation, the romance world treats the complaint as mere
artifice, capable of, at best, simply postponing the chaotic and violent effects of love
understood primarily as a selfish tyrant.

The differend here involves Pamphilia’s representation. Within the complaint, her
ability to recast herself, through Lindamira, as a suffering heroine gives her incredible
strength. However, that power exists only within the narrative withdrawal from unfolding
events, suggesting that the rhetorical subtlety of complaint is merely withdrawal; it
actually emphasizes Pamphilia’s powerlessness in the face of love which causes ever
increasing jealous, strife, and misunderstanding. Paradoxically, the display of power she creates within the complaint serves in the end to underline her powerlessness, and the image of victory she crafts for herself through Lindamira’s defiant self-assertion proves to be merely an illusion once the poem is finished. Lyric complaint and romance narrative, then, are set at odds in understanding a subject’s relation to those forces (political or erotic) to which one is subjected. In lyric, it is the quality and virtue of that to which one subjects oneself that determines one’s power. In romance, one is simply subject to powerful forces. Pamphilia operates in both genres at once, ultimately leaving the nature of being subject between two irreconcilable choices.

4.3 Picaresque London

By the time the Urania comes to a close, its presentation of political matters seems determined to undercut the ability of its political genres to hold sway for long. The imperial promise of Amphilanthus was undercut by the romance world in which inconstancy turns from a threat to lovers into a threat for political stability. And, with “Lindamira’s Complaint,” even the potential for constancy to appear as a successful monarchy of the self pales when tested by the interruption of time and the most basic continuation of romance narrative momentum. The only constant in each of these moments is the self-conscious manner in which Wroth casts the political issues as made problematic by their very generic nature.

At the end of Part I, Wroth turns to England and introduces both a new genre and a new political model. While Amphilanthus is trapped in the Hell of Deceit, his lieutenants search for him throughout Europe, and a few of his knights arrive in Brittany.
Their adventures, however, are strikingly different from the high romantic conceits of most of the *Urania*, and Josephine Roberts has labeled this last section as an exercise in “parodic” and “quixotic” romance because of its similarities and allusions to Cervantes.\(^{31}\)

I would go further, however, and say that this section is not only parodic of romance but in fact borrows heavily from picaresque. Certainly picaresque can be seen as beginning in a parody of chivalric romance, but it differs from straightforward satire by not only ridiculing “high” cultural and aesthetic values, but also introducing and reveling in “low,” “common,” and “earthly” matters.\(^{32}\) The adventures no longer happen in a rarified world of romance, populated (in the *Urania*’s case) by enchantments, castles, seers, and aristocrats, but with inns, prostitutes, and “common” people of all types from laborers to corrupt administrators.

Within this picaresque landscape, however, Wroth presents a political image of Britain which is, on the one hand, far removed from Amphilanthus’ ideal empire, but, on the other hand, as self-contentedly independent and comfortable in its mundane (and markedly unromantic) everyday existence.\(^{33}\) Britain figures neither as one of the defiant

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\(^{31}\) Roberts, “Introduction,” xxv.

\(^{32}\) One can point to debates over whether Don Quixote itself is more of a picaresque or a parody of romance, although the classification of “early novel” usually elides these distinctions. Although most prominent as a Spanish genre, the picaresque of course made its most famous English appearance with Thomas Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594). For a brief survey of the picaresque in English, see Madelon S. Gohlke’s “Wits Wantonness: ‘The Unfortunate Traveller’ as Picaresque” in *Studies in Philology* 73:4 (1976): 397-414, and Calhoun Winton’s “Richard Head and Origins of the Picaresque in England” in *The Picaresque: A Symposium on the Rogue’s Tale* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994): 79-93.

\(^{33}\) The “picaresque” context of this “unromantic” context is particularly noteworthy given the contemporary readiness in continental literary theory to oppose romance not to epic (as we often do) but to the picaresque. On this point, see Fredson T. Bowers’ “Thomas Nashe and the Picaresque Novel,” *Humanistic Studies in Honor of John Calvin Metcalf* (Charlottesville: University of North Carolina Press, 1941): 201-16, and Stuart Miller’s *The Picaresque Novel* (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1967). [Note: find Lazarillo de Tormes quote in Salzman.]
rogue nations ruled by a rebellious tyrant which the knights had to conquer in the earlier books, nor as a willing ally in the grand game of political and erotic unification played by the book’s aristocrats. Brittany is an isolated nation, but its isolation brings with it a peace which few other nations or characters in the novel enjoy (even after Amphilanthus’ election). Instead, Wroth depicts it as unromantically independent, free from foreign invasion (as we will see when Celina refuses to succumb to the Prince of Venice’s wooing). The “low,” picaresque characters she introduces, while not as corrupt as the cast met by Nashe’s Jack Wilton, often scoff at and see through the romantic pretensions of their foreign visitors. They are particularly unmoved by the discourses of love the knights bring with them, and, further, the “tyrant” love does not hold sway in Brittany; as Rossalea says, love is not “the true [Monarchy] of this country” (483). Instead, Wroth depicts Brittany as independent and, above all, peaceful, not because of a strong monarch, but because of its isolation, particularly the women’s immunity from romantic (both generic and passionate) excesses. Wroth’s British characters may be humble, but they are also much happier than the rest of Wroth’s sad lovers.

The picaresque, then, presents a world which is free of larger political struggles, and political stability seems to be a result of the naturalness of Wroth’s everyday, unromantic life. (And this is of course a sense of “natural” that is not pastoral, but actually anti-romantic.) The lack of political instability and political conflict goes hand in hand with what may be, for Wroth, the least stylized of the genres within the Urania. And withdrawal from confrontational political struggles may go along with withdrawal from the pretensions of traditional generic literary representation (the picaresque, of course, being a relatively new genre).
The adventures of Book IV begin with an episode reminiscent of *Don Quixote* which introduces both a changing attitude toward the romantic conventions that have come before and the consequences of belief in them. Amphilanthus’ German and Italian knights’ first adventure involves the pilgrim Pelarina who believes herself to be in love with a perfect man (528-34). However, her lover is thoroughly inconstant. Like Don Quixote and his love for Dulcinea, Pelarina refuses to give up her dream despite her lover’s rebukes and all other evidence of reality. Wroth stresses the incongruity of this situation by having Rosindy’s lover, Perselina, remark after hearing the pilgrim’s story that she “found in her selfe she should never come to that excellency of constancy” (534), although, of course, this is an “excellency” that has left poor Pelarina to wander lost and unhappy while insisting on retaining an unreal image of her beloved. This kind of parody of the virtues that have so far organized Wroth’s romance set up the tone of most of the rest of Book IV. The adventures that follow for the most part follow the private follies of the knights looking for Amphilanthus, and they culminate in “Brittany” (by which Wroth signifies England, since they must cross the English channel to get to this un-French “Brittany”) where romance becomes picaresque.

The first description of Brittany establishes its distance and difference from the rest of the romance territory. The Prince of Venice, the Duke of Savoy, and the Duke of Florence are lost in a tempest and their ship is compared a “distempered government” and then blown “into the Brittain Sea.” (627) When they land, Wroth emphasizes the difference between Britain’s landscape and that which has come before, and she does so largely in terms of unromantic descriptions of everyday life. The knights encounter an inn filled with those who “fellow-like drunke” sing, dance, fight, and “call for more drinke”
They see a countryman “driving a Cart which had carried wood, (a commodity in those parts)” (630). And even the mundane affairs of bureaucracy are shown when they see judges and officers who carry a prisoner to a “sharpe prison” (646). Although the Italian knights meet a number of British ladies, they encounter only one knight, described as “talking” or talkative, and the Duke of Florence finds him particularly tedious since the Duke “bore with his (as he heard it in his language) rudeness” (634). Furthermore, the cultural homogeneity that apparently reigns throughout Wroth’s Europe and near East does not apply to Brittany. Wroth notes, for example, that the princes were unfamiliar with “the nature of the Britaines,” something she never remarks throughout the rest of the international travels. Similarly, the British seem not to understand the knights’ ways; when they speak in typical courtly language to the British ladies, the women leave the Duke of Florence “in his speech, and taking handes walked away, as who would say, by that time the Oration is done, wee will come again” (629). Although two of the princes characteristically fall in love with British women (one even with a shepherdess), their love is never returned, and it becomes clear that Wroth intends to mark Britain as separate from the rest of her romance world.

On the one hand, this can be read as a kind of repudiation of Britain’s inability to live up to the imperial ideal to which Wroth and her family hoped James would aspire. The Italian princes travel to Brittany specifically looking for their Emperor Amphilanthus, and his absence remains marked throughout their episodes. The inability of the Princes and Dukes to either find Amphilanthus or bring Britain into the imperial fold through marriage, at the least, seems, as Lockey claims, “to be a veiled indication of James’ personal refusal to honor the alliances that he had formerly made with anti-
Spanish forces in Italy.” Such a topical reading is quite reasonable, given the fact that the governments of Venice and Savoy sought military assistance from James against Spanish aggression. The Duke of Savoy, in 1617, went so far as to offer a Savoyard princess to prince Charles, which James refused, refusing as well to honor the Treaty of Asti, under which he was supposed to help defend the Venetian government. These diplomatic failures certainly make sense of why it is specifically Italian Dukes that Wroth sends to England to suffer the disregard of English ladies. And such a reading also fits well with the notion of Amphilanthus’ “counter utopia” mentioned earlier, since England is not only distant from a universal empire, but actively resists it.

The tone of this last section, however, does not fall so easily into a reading that pits Wroth with the militant Sidneys against a passive James. Instead, she presents a Britain that seems perfectly content to remain independent, insisting instead that Britain is a place that is naturally peaceful and self-content. Indeed, the English characters find very little attractive in the romantic codes that govern Amphilanthus’s empire and particularly the rhetoric of love that governs its interactions. The Prince of Venice’s first encounter with Englishwomen, the shepherdess Celina and lady Rossalea, stresses the difference of custom when Wroth marks that “both [ladies] thanked the Knight, desiring to know what accident brought him thither, especially armed, where little Armes was required, or used; blessed Peace, the comfort of soules, having only government in that place” (639). When Venice asks Rossalea if there are knights in England, she responds by saying that there are many, but “they seldom are put together, our Knights leaving the

34 Lockey, 211.
adventuring part, unless out of necessitie, none loving a happy, and worthy peace better” (640). One many very well read such a situation as further evidence of Wroth’s indictment of James’ motto of *Beati Pacifici*, since it suggests that England is thoroughly unprepared for war. And yet, within the context of the tale, Wroth insists that the absence of such knights and their military strength is not a weakness, but a result of a deeper virtue.

This virtue, which marks the exceptional nature of Wroth’s Brittany, is described as a natural resistance to tyranny. Celina explains: “We are armed with strong resolutions … and defended by our own virtue, so as wee feare no enemy, if not lurking in our owne breasts, which yet have not appeared, I am certaine have not had the boldnesse to adventure in my sight” (640). Celina then remarks that not only is the land free from potential tyrants, but that she is also free of love’s tyranny. Rossalea then admits that she had recently shared the same independence: previously she “had the same subject-like freedome which [Celina] had, [but she] yielded to another Prince [the Keeper of the Forest], and in that am a Traytor; for alas I have another Monarchy ruling in me, than the true one of this country” (640). Apparently succumbing to love means, in England, to give up one’s true monarch (“freedome”), and Celina rebukes Rossalea for giving up “the richest stocke, and treasure of true, noble, and virtuous freedome” (641). The Duke of Venice, however, continues to operate in terms that would place him within love’s tyranny, even when he recognizes the power of this virtue within Celina. Of course, he

36 Such is Lockey’s reading, when he finds evidence in book IV of “Wroth [conveying] this sense of British isolation and a general lack of military preparedness” (212). It of course also fits well with Roberts’ view of Wroth as consistently critical of James’ policies in line with the militant Protestant faction.
begins to fall in love with the shepherdess, and, in so doing, turns her language of peace into a language of conquest: “you doe carry charmes enough about you to overthrow Armies of hearts, then making so many yield, how can you be but in peace none dare warre against such powers” (640). While Venice responds to love by finding himself “overthrown,” Celina resists his advances, falling back on “our owne virtue” which keeps her free from the passionate entanglements of either conquering or being conquered.

Celina is, in this way, similar to the traditional hero of a picaresque who often remains free from both authority and pretension through an exercise of wit. Although Celina is far from the rougish characters that usually amble through picaresque narratives, she has the capacity, not only to resist a “tyrannical” rhetoric, but also to break it down in others. For example, she, Rossalea, and Venice later play a game of “King of Queens” (something like “truth or dare”) in which she is able to persuade the troublesome Venice “to stay no longer in those parts, but to goe unto his friends, and in witnesse of his captivitie, to travel unarmd, till he met them or was forced by injurie to put them on” (651). It is in the context of a game that Celina contrives to free England of the main representative of the “tyranny of love,” and, soon after, Venice and the other knights leave England.

The importance of this independent “freedome” is underlined by the fact that Wroth compares Celina to Urania, who is also, of course, the fictional version of the book’s dedicatee, Susan Herbert, Countess of Montgomery.37 The “picaresque” Celina, then, is put forward as another aspect of Urania who, although she moves almost

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37 Wroth says of Celina, “close by on the banke lay such a Shepheardess as Urania was” (638). See also Roberts’ “Introduction,” lxxvi-lxxix.
exclusively within the rhetoric of romance, never suffers by it as does Pamphilia. After one failed love (for Perissus), Urania learns a more moderate love, marrying Steriamus, and soon comes to represent the clearest voice of moderation in the otherwise passionate and turbulent romance world. Both seem opposed to the extravagances of romance.

Holding Celina up as a paragon, however, also places her in contrast to Amphilanthus’ imperial epic, and Wroth herself seems unsure of how much to praise England’s distance from Amphilanthus (who is not pictured in this part of the narrative, much less on English soil). On the one hand, Wroth paints an idyllic picture of the English society in a way that matches the virtuous “freedome” that Celina praises. The Duke of Florence, for example, claims that Brittany “hath beene counted the most pleasant, delightful, and happiest Countrey in the world, being for all bounty of contents a world it selfe, nothing missing or wanting to the full plenty of happiness” (653). Venice as well calls it “the flower of peace, beauty, honour, virtue, happinesse, and most of Shepherdesses” (654). However, she also questions its civility in passages that make it more fitting with the usual picaresque landscape that would contain the common inn mentioned above, as when she describes the Italians’ first view of the land from the shore:

On in the Country they pass’d till they came to a Desart that prov’d onely rich in Ayre, and that in greatest bounty, in a few places it was inhabited, the rest all Desart, and as Wilde as any civill Country could bee. Many places they passed, stony, woody, rocky, and as odde as could bee, lamentable traveling in it, the people rude and churlish. (627)
Wroth keeps these descriptions in conflict, just as she does the apparently incongruous political ideals of both belonging to a universal empire and maintaining an isolated “freedome.”

What seems even more interesting here than a question of Wroth’s politics, however, is the way that the narrative introduces both a different generic style and a different articulation of political ideals (ones that, perhaps, actually contradict one another) just before the book’s most climactic scene. Amphilanthus is found, and he and Pamphilia become reconciled when she learns that his “treason” was in fact no treachery at all, but a trick by Antissia and Musalina. And the published *Urania* ends at a moment just after they are happily reunited. So, although of course the published version ends in mid-sentence, the narrative at least points toward a final reconciliation of East and West (and it is not until early in the manuscript continuation that we learn of the complications that actually prevent their marriage).

When Wroth includes the English, picaresque excursion just before the romance’s long-wished-for ending, she is doing more than engaging in another exercise in interlace (although that is certainly part of it). She is also calling attention, once again, to the ways that narrative closures, and, in this case, of the political resolutions they outline, are tied to generic conventions. In other words, the narrative does not ask us to determine which politics the *Urania* ultimately endorses (the imperial or the isolationist). Instead, it asks us to consider how those political visions find their form in generic articulations. Both are idealized visions within their context: Amphilanthus brings peace to Europe and Celina maintains a happy, peaceful independence. And we can certainly find reasons for Wroth to value either of them based upon her biography, her family, her alignment with friends.
at court, etc. But what happens at the end of Book IV, however, is that Wroth begins to highlight the form of her political imagination rather than its content, emphasizing how, for example, Amphilanthus’ otherwise universally-praised empire could look like a colonial aggressor to an English shepherdess – or, alternately, how a common woman’s stubborn resistance to a Venice Duke promising a profitable and strengthening alliance could look naively provincial to an international courtier. But Wroth always stresses how these viewpoints are articulated in terms of generic conventions. One might say that in the *Urania*, a political subject-position is not only “situated,” but in fact thoroughly *generic*.

If we return to Lyotard’s notion of the differend, then the political incongruities that Wroth narrates in terms of generic juxtapositions do not appear as simple contradictions in political thinking. Rather, they indicate a subtle attention to the ways that Wroth descries political ideals and identities in ways that cannot incorporate the full range of political motivations otherwise present. Peace and military strength, for example, are not necessarily opposed to one another (i.e., the latter may lead to the former), but Wroth’s peaceful, picaresque Brittany can view the imperial, epic knights only as threats which must be eventually banished. If Wroth was unable to successfully occupy any of these positions in her life with consistent authority, her control of the genres themselves, and she replaces political autonomy with literary autonomy, showing her mastery of the rhetoric of politics, if not the political forces to which she was in truth subject.

But there is also another sense in which Wroth’s turn to picaresque seems already to anticipate what other critics have noted about the Urania’s manuscript continuation: it
seems to grow tired of its own basis in romance. While still certainly a clear and emerging genre during the early seventeenth-century, the picaresque was also a very different kind of genre, one where stylized manners began to give way to more to the particularities and detail of circumstance, locality, and behavior. To put it bluntly, Wroth’s turn to romance makes the rest of the Urania look, for lack of a better word, unrealistic, and Mary Ellen Lamb, for example, finds Wroth increasingly frustrated with this lack of “realism” allowed by romance, especially when we trace how her romance seemed to increasingly highlight the difference between its conventions of wondrous encounters and magical reunions, and the increasing disappointments of her later life:

Rather than an artistic flaw, the disorder of Wroth’s Second Part exposes the increasingly painful inadequacy of romance conventions to shadow the events occurring in the lives around her. This distance between the conventions of romance and the circumstances of real life becomes most apparent, and most painful, in William Herbert’s refusal official to acknowledge his son by Wroth, figured in the Second Part as Faire Designe…the real-life narrative of Wroth’s son appeared, without his father’s official recognition, to be bleak indeed. Thus, it is surely no coincidence that Wroth ends her romance mid-sentence just before describing Amphilanthus’ emotion at hearing of Faire Designe’s search for his company. …The Second Part does not so much conclude as undo itself, pointing to the gap between the anticipated father-son relationship of romance and the real-life father-son relationship that never materialized. In this most disappointing and much diminished world, the wonder elicited by romance seems utterly out of place.

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Even in the midst of a generic mixture, which would pit the more “real-world” and unromantic qualities of a picaresque England against her idealized romance Europe, the compulsion to return to romance, no matter how mixed, seems, for Wroth, to necessitate a return to wonders, magical reconciliations, and perhaps even a sense of hope for recuperative adventures which were not available to her in her life. While mixing genres within romance might be able to point to the artificial nature of political images which Wroth found wanting, romance itself still required her to insist on the artificiality of those images. Every individual genre that Wroth interlaces in her romance, including romance itself, holds up an ideal by which the real seems to be found wanting. Her use of picaresque, an otherwise satirical and even cynical genre, may even do that in the way it comes to look almost pastoral in her hands, with shepherdesses claiming that their rustic simplicity and lack of heroism is a sign of peaceful self-sufficiency.

And yet the picaresque does seem to offer a kind of genre against which romance may find an interesting limit. The picaresque may actually be a genre which no longer quite fits the sense of genre outlined by Colie in my introduction which can in fact serve as a model or a “form or fix upon the world.” It may, instead, in its insistence on particularity, fragmentation, and mere circumstantial randomness (quite a difference from potentially providential chaunce and fortuna in romance) be a genre opposed to the very moral and political registers of genre that I have argued romance puts to use. When contrasted with romance, picaresque may well empty early modern genre of its richer substantive content that made mixed romance so capable of political thought at a formal level, suggesting the much more fully modern sense that genre, by itself, is mere contentless form, a convention whose only meaning is conventionality itself. Whether or not
Wroth herself intimated such consequences of the generic experiments at the end of the *Urania’s First Part*, the fact that it coincides with the beginning of what Claire Kinney calls her “undoing of romance” in the *Second Part*, “as if she is weary of those unending rehearsals of loss and reconciliation,” suggests that the picaresque may have been an attempt to free herself from the structures of desire that she found so continually painful in both her life and romance itself.⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ Kinney, “‘Beleeve this butt a fiction,’” 248.
CONCLUSION

If the final remarks about Wroth’s tenuous relationship with picaresque and what it may reveal about the limits of romance is correct, then the trajectory of hybrid romance that I have traced may well anticipate and, in some ways, update certain critical commonplaces about the relationship of romance to the novel. It is often said that, after the seventeenth-century, the novel superseded or replaced romance, which seemed like an increasingly anachronistic genre in the face of the novel’s greater “realism.” This, of course, depends on how one understands the “realism” in novels. M. M. Bakhtin’s account of the novel’s development is one influential model that may actually help us better understand the relationship between romance and novel, even though Bakhtin himself largely dismissed romance (whether medieval, Italianate, or prose) as a fallen form of epic. But what Bakhtin defines as one of the central innovations of the novel, heteroglossia or the presence of a multitude of different voices and perspectives in a single narrative which does not easily cohere, is strikingly similar to the picture of mixed genre I have tried to present. Michael Holquist summarizes Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia as follows:

Heteroglossia is Bakhtin’s way of referring, in any utterance of any kind, to the peculiar interaction between the two fundamentals of communication. On the one hand, a mode of transcription must, in order to do its work of separating out texts, be a more or less fixed system. But these repeatable features, on the other hand, are in the power of the particular context in which the utterance is made; this context can refract, add to, or, in some cases, even subtract from
the amount and kind of meaning the utterance may be said to have when it is conceived only as a systematic manifestation independent of context.¹

In my own terms, we can apply this to the notion of generic mixture by pointing out that individual genres in the romances I have been reading are at once the “more or less fixed systems” but at the same time, they provide a context for other genres. This is, interestingly, a notion that anticipates what Bakhtin says of the novel.

Novels were generically innovative, on Bakhtin’s account, because they could incorporate different moments of heteroglossia without being reduced to them or reducing them to other “contexts.” In his essay “Epic and Novel,” Bakhtin contrasts the titular genres by showing that epic reduced all diversity and difference of context to its own controlling narrative destiny (a notion similar to David Quint’s), while the novel can include that same diversity without making the individual moments subservient to a dominant genre.² But romance was capable of mixing genres in precisely the same way, allowing each genre interlaced within its own narrative to maintain its generic identity, and, furthermore, many of the interpretive possibilities offered by early modern romance depend on other genres maintaining their distinctiveness, rather than being a foil for a larger genre’s purposes, as epic is often said to subsume or correct its moments of romance.

Attention to mixed genre within romance, then, suggests that the novel did not supersede romance, but, instead, that generic experiments in late romance may well have


² “Epic and Novel” in The Dialogic Imagination, 3-40.
led to the phenomenon of narrative heteroglossia that Bakhtin finds so central to the novel. If there is a difference between how romance and the novel approach genre, it seems to have less to do with the preservation of diversity than it does with how complete a “context” for interpretation individual genres are supposed to be. Romance holds onto a very substantial and even world-implying sense of genre, typified by the early modern assumption that genres were as much about emotional, intellectual, and even political ways of relating to the world as they were about formal and stylistic features. The novel, much like the way Wroth seems to think about picaresque, has a thinner sense of the “resources of kind,” treating them more as simple formal decisions about convention and style than about implied content or even world-view. It is only against the backdrop of such a broader conception of genre that the simple activity of mixing, crossing, and juxtaposing the formal features of a narrative could be read as having the political consequences so central to early modern romance.
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