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THE EVOLUTION OF ESTATE POETRY IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ENGLISH LITERATURE

ON YEDİNCİ YÜZYIL İNGİLİZ EDEBİYATINDA MALİKÂNE ŞİİRİNİN EVRİMİ

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Abstract

The seventeenth century England saw the increase in the use and popularity of estate poetry as a sub-genre of the pastoral. This paper argues that though estate poetry contains some topics common to the genre of the georgic, such topics as the praise of country life, the retreat from the corruption of the court, the construction of idyllic utopias, as a contrast to the devastating reality of the English Civil War (1642-1649) have more to do with the genre of the pastoral than with literature on the subject of husbandry. This paper presents a contrastive study of "To Penshurst" (1616) by Ben Jonson, in which the author presents Penshurst - the great Sidney country estate - and ethical, religious and interpersonal values inside its household as a paragon for the corrupted Jacobean state. Being the first and one of the most important examples of estate poetry, the poem represents the primary stage of the sub-genre, while its post Civil War successor – Andrew Marvell's "The Garden" (1653), which highlights the retreat into the ideal and harmonious world of one's soul rather than the seclusion of a country house, exemplifies the final stage any sub-genre can evolve into in the process of its development according to Alastair Fowler's system of generic transformation, elaborated in *Kinds of Literature* (1987).

Keywords: *Estate poetry, Pastoral, Georgic, Generic transformation, Ben Jonson, Andrew Marvell, Alastair Fowler.*

Öz

On yedinci yüzyıl İngiltere'sinde, malikâne şiiri - pastoral şiirinin bir alt türü olarak - kullanımının ve popüleritesinin arttığı görülmüştür. Makale, malikâne şiirinin köy şiir türünün bazı konularını kapsamasına rağmen, kırsal yaşamı yüceltme, kraliyet sarayındaki ahlaksızlıktan kaçış, yıkıcı İngiliz İç Savaşı (1642-1649) aksine huzurlu düş ülkelerin kuruluşu gibi konuları daha çok pastoral şiirin temaları arasına girdiğini öne sürmektedir. Makale, Alastair Fowler'in *Edebiyat Türleri* (1987) adlı eserinde ortaya koyduğu türsel değişim sistemine göre, Ben Jonson'un "Penshurst'a" (1616) adlı şiirini, malikâne şiirinin birincil aşaması olarak değerlendirmektedir. "Penshurst'a" adlı şiirin yazarı Sidney, ailesine ait meşhur Penshurst malikânesindeki ahlaki, etik, dini ve kişilerarası değerleri yozlaşmış Jacobean devleti için bir çözüm olarak sunmaktadır. İngiliz İç Savaşından sonra yazılmış olan Andrew Marvell'in "Bahçe" (1653) adlı şiiri bir kır evinin inzivasından ziyade kişinin ruhunun ideal ve uyumlu dünyasına dönüşmesinden söz etmektedir ve böylece malikâne şiirinin alt türünün son aşamasına örnek oluşturmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Malikâne şiiri, Pastoral şiiri, Köy şiiri, Türsel değişim, Ben Jonson, Andrew Marvell, Alastair Fowler

Introduction

The sub-genre of estate poetry has been attracting a great deal of literary critical attention, particularly with regards to the increase of its significance, use and popularity in the period of the English Civil War (1642-1649). What is more, the place of the sub-genre among the major literary genres of the seventeenth century has been the subject of numerous literary debates. While estate poetry is commonly accepted to contain many indispensable features of the pastoral, such as "the value of poetry; death and mourning; the corruption of the city or court versus the 'purity' of idealized country life; and politics (the critique of society or easily identifiable political figures)" (Schwartz, 2010, p. 2), it may also be related to the domain of the comparatively autonomous English georgic, owing to the opportunity of drawing parallels to the so-called *locus classicus* - Virgil's *Georgics* (29 B.C.E.). The book is an elegiac guide to country life combining useful information on farming and tending fields, a reflection on the cycles of life and death, as well as "a heartfelt cry for returning farmers and their families to land they had lost through a series of dispiriting political events" (Lembke, 2006, p. 14) in the Roman Empire of Virgil's times:

> How lucky, if they know their happiness,
> Are farmers, more than lucky, they for whom,
> Far from the clash of arms, the earth herself,
> Most fair in dealing, freely lavishes
> An easy livelihood.
> (Virgil, 1982, ll. 458-460)

Hence, in the light of the contemporary theory of the flexibility of genres, which, nevertheless, allows to define the generic nucleus, the paper argues that though estate poetry contains some topics common to the genre of the georgic, such themes as the praise of the country life, the retreat from the corruption of the court, the construction of idyllic utopias, as a contrast to the devastating reality of the English Civil War, have more to do with the genre of the pastoral, which deals with "the simplistic presentation of complex human issues, within the ideal setting of a rural *locus amoenus* ('beautiful place' in Latin) – the pastoral paradise of Arcadia and the Garden of Eden" (Green, 2018, p.1), than with literature on the subject of husbandry, devoid of any idealization and, therefore, treating nature in a realistic sense.

Alongside defining the sub-genre of estate poetry and investigating into its origins and major themes, the study attempts to trace the reasons for the rapid appearance of new sub-generic forms on the verge of the eighteenth century. Contrary to the canons of the seventeenth century estate poetry, these forms propagated the retreat into the garden of one's self rather than

that of the physical entity of a country house, as in Andrew Marvell poem "The Garden" (1653). This was the garden of one's soul, touched by corruption and, therefore, in great need of perfection. The phenomenon reached its culmination in the famous phrase written by Voltaire in *Candide* (1759) in the middle of the eighteenth century: "Il faut cultiver son jardin" (Voltaire, 2011, p. 4) - 'One should cultivate one's own garden', meaning that the only way to survive in a world of calamity is to concentrate on one's own life and take no notice of anything else around, the country house being no exception. Indeed, the growing prominence of the *nouveau-riche* bourgeois class and the changing social patterns, moral values, architectural canons and aesthetics in the post-Civil war and the Restoration epoch saw the decline of estate poetry. The Jonsonian country house tradition, as a "microcosm of the ideal medieval-like English social organization characterized by the feudal order, interdependence, simplicity, service, hospitality, and balance between the active and contemplative life" (Harris, 1988, p. 182) became obsolete due to the radical change of the social role of the country house. The increase in the number of wealthy middle-class benefactors, desperate to legitimize their family lineage, "were intent to construct monuments to their own wealth, taste and importance, celebrating magnificence, exclusiveness, and self-interest – values which Jonson and Marvell had decried in the seventeenth century" (Harris, 1988, p. 183). As a result, the country houses of the eighteenth century failed to prompt any poems in Jonsonian tradition and the long dusk of the conventional English estate poetry ended. As a consequence, the paper presents a contrastive study of "To Penshurst" (1616) by Ben Jonson, which acts as the foundation and the primary stage of the sub-genre of estate poetry, and its post Civil War successor – Andrew Marvell's "The Garden" (1653), as an exemplification of the final stage any sub-genre can evolve into in the process of its development according to Alastair Fowler's system of generic transformation, elaborated in *Kinds of Literature* (1987).

Estate Poetry: a Georgic or a Pastoral?

In general terms, estate poetry comes to existence at the beginning of the seventeenth century when many grand houses were built in the English countryside as a demonstration of affluence, and as a retreat for the nobles when overwhelmed by the court and urban life. Country houses were not, initially, simply big rural houses inhabited by rich people. Basically, they were power houses - the houses of a ruling class. As such they could function at the "local level as a house of a squire who was a little king in his village and ran the county. Country houses could also function at a national level as a seat of a landowner who was also a member of parliament"

(Jones, 2003, p. 1). In this connection, estate poetry is based on complimentary descriptions of a given country house and its surrounding area, it often contains pastoral details and idealizes cultivated nature in terms of Golden Age assumptions, which celebrate a distant epoch when "the earth gave forth her bounty spontaneously, abundantly, and freely because man's nature was still unspoiled by civilization" (Harris, 1988, p. 9). The pastoral setting in estate poetry is opposed to urban chaos and corruptibility of the seventeenth century English court. The balance between the active and the contemplative is presented in country house poems as the model for the society and the person. "The working country estate is the symbol of this ideal social order, and marriage is the symbol of the ideal order for the individual. In these poems art and nature exist in harmony, and the result is a new Golden Age, a redeemed earthly paradise" (Harris, 1988, p.20). What is more, estate poetry "tends to be closely linked to patronage poetry, in which poets flattered patrons in order to gain sponsorship" (Jones, 2003, p. 1), financial and legislative support of their literary activity, as it was landowners who were in control of legislation, politics and social supremacy in the seventeenth century England.

Yet, in the article "Country House Poems: The Politics of the Genre" Alastair Fowler provides a set of arguments undermining the validity of the above statement, by claiming that

> the mode of representing cultivated nature, [as well as] the seasonal cycle; abundance of produce; contentment with a sufficient estate idealized in terms of the Golden Age; renunciation of grandeur; the gods 'Pan and Silvane'; hunting; moral virtue: all these are contents of the georgic." (1986, p. 5)

Thus, Fowler asserts that the motif of nature's free abundance "properly goes back to Virgilian 'Georgics'" (1986, p. 5). In this respect, the scholar views such themes common for the estate poetry, as "praise of country life, of estate and cabinet, of park and mistress, reconstruction of the estate and retirement poems" (Fowler, 1986, p. 5), as true representations of the georgic tradition.

Before the article provides any further arguments in favor or against this scholarly stance, it is necessary to turn to normative definitions of both, the pastoral and the georgic. Georgic is defined as a "book of poems written by the Latin poet Virgil (from the Greek *georgos*, "farmer") on how to manage a farm. Georgic poems, therefore, are concerned with rural business" (Lynch, 1999, p. 1) and its practical agricultural aspects. At the same time, pastoral "describes literature portraying the idealized life of shepherds or of the country" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2010, p. 1300). According to Bryan Loughrey, this definition "provides an 'outer' form of the genre, and it is the 'inner' contents, or animating impulse, which generally preoccupies critics" (1984, p. 20).

The diachronic examination of the criticism regarding the pastoral tradition made in the seventeenth century brings forward the definition of the pastoral constructed by Thomas Hobbes, who viewed it simply as "a representation of the countryside" (1971, p. 55). Furthermore, Samuel Johnson argued that the pastoral is a "poem in which any action or passion is represented by its affects upon a country life" (2003, p. 357). This led him to reject firmly any theory of pastoral which made the Golden Age or even shepherds necessary features of the genre. Thus, all classes of people could be described in it "because persons of all ranks inhibit the country" (Johnson, 2003, p. 357). Hence, one might infer that with the progress of the seventeenth century the celebration of the countryside with all its masonry, inhabitants, distribution of goods and festivities, as well as its juxtaposition to urban life, becomes the major preoccupation of the pastoral. The concept of shepherds, in its turn, was removed to the periphery of the genre, which made it possible to draw parallels between the pastoral and estate poetry.

In the survey entitled "Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama" W. W. Greg states that pastoral mode occurs as a reaction "against the world, which is too much with us. [The character] yearns to make an escape, if it were but in imagination and for a moment, to a life of simplicity and innocence from the bitter luxury of the court and the menial bread of princes" (1906, p. 79). As a result, the recognition of the "contrast, implicit or expressed, between pastoral life and some more complex type of civilization" (Greg, 1906, p. 79) becomes the leitmotif of the pastoral, and echoes the major themes of the estate poetry. As a consequence, pastoral started to "refer to any literature that described the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban. Here a pastoral was usually associated with a celebratory attitude towards what it described" (Gifford, 1999, p. 2). This fact supports the argument that estate poetry is a sub-genre of the pastoral poetry rather than that of the georgic tradition, which happens to be more of an agricultural manual, than a reaction to the major socio-economic upheavals of the seventeenth century.

Yet, to give a definition of the estate poetry, one should first delineate the meaning of the 'sub-genre' concept. Alastair Fowler in *Kinds of Literature* (1987) states that "sub-genres have the common features of the kind, and, over and above these, add special substantial features" (1987, p. 112). Indeed, estate poetry includes all the major features inherent in the pastoral - an ideal world, contrast to the urban reality, as well as Virgilian elements of the Golden Age, exemplified in the "O fortunatos…" passage of the *Georgics*: "simplicity, natural beauty, study of natural philosophy, contemplation, work, respect for religion and family, the absence of greed, malice and envy" (ll. 475-540). Virgil attributes "moral value to hard work and dutiful toil as

ways for man to redeem himself, rejuvenate his environment" (Wilkinson, 1969, p. 59) and regain the earthly paradise. At the same time, it introduces novel traits into the genre such as the conjunction of the ideal patron's family with the ideal site of the country house including the grounds surrounding it. The purpose of this coexistence is to provide means of reflecting on social values, the nature of the good life, and the ways in which other households fall short of the mark. The estate poetry, in other words, can be a vehicle of social criticism, as well as of praise.

In this connection, the relationship between the estate poetry and the pastoral bears similarity to the notion of the 'family resemblance' introduced by Ludwig Wittgenstein. The idea has some "socio-psychological implications for the genre theory: the dialectics of imitation and innovation within a generic tradition are similar to parent-child relationship or to growing up within a family" (Fishelov, 1993, p. 2). Hence, the concept of a sub-genre may be treated as that of a 'prodigal child', burdened by the family tradition and, thus, eager to rebel. Once such a specimen comes into existence, the fate of the family/genre is never the same. Indeed, new genres can "originate from the achievements of individual writers, which can play a decisive role in organizing a new kind" (Fowler, 1987, p. 154). In this respect, Alastair Fowler cites the example of "To Penshurst" (1616) by Ben Jonson which,

> initiated the country house poem. Due to its high value, it had a paradigmatic function, and its status was more related to its content and personal worth than its formal values. A work of its significance becomes institutionalized and starts a reform, not simply in terms of imitation, but also in terms of the creation of original Works. (Fowler, 1987, p. 154)

Fowler believes that one of the means leading to generic or sub-generic transformation may be that of 'topical invention'. According to the critic, "genres change when new topics are added to their repertoires. It is mainly an issue of specialization – the development of a topic already within the repertoire" (Fowler, 1987, p. 170). Thus, topical invention may also be prevailing in a fresh approach to existing topics, yet this method usually amounts to "modal transformation" (Fowler, 1987, p. 170).

The estate poetry is no exception from the 'topical invention' paradigm. The advent of the English Civil War (1642-1649) with all the following political, religious, social and cultural upheavals led to the destruction of the conventional English values. Perturbations of the kind could not be ignored by literary currents which led to the emergence of new topics within the sub-genre. The antique moral harmony of Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst" was no longer the ideal. The tradition of rural retreat from conflict and court corruption, and the projection of the ideal state onto the world of the country house were modified by something more private – the retreat into the garden of one's self. It was the attempt to regain the uncorrupted and the unfallen human

paradise within the depths of the human soul. The movement reached its climax in the poem "The Garden" (1653) by Andrew Marvell, and in the new sub-genre that emerged in the eighteenth century - the poetry of retirement exemplified by Lord Cobham, William Shenstone, Alexander Pope and many others.

Fowler differentiates among primary, secondary and tertiary stages that any genre/ sub-genre can evolve into in the course of its existence. In this respect, the sub-genre of estate poetry evolves through all three of them. Ben Johnson's poem "To Penshurst" set the paradigm for country house poetry and became the manifestation of the primary stage of the sub-genre, while the succeeding estate poems by Thomas Carew, Richard Lovelace or Robert Herrick built up the secondary stage of the sub-genre, as they are "relative to the historical point, and every writer is secondary in relation to some generic model" (Fowler, 1987, p. 162). Andrew Marvell's "The Garden", in its turn, is a typical example of the tertiary stage when estate poetry was slowly evolving into the sub-genre of the poetry of retirement.

"To Penshurst" by Ben Johnson

Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst" (1616), created about the same time as the first ever written country house poem, "Description of Cookham" (1611) by Aemilia Lanyer, is still considered to be the most significant poem of estate poetry. The poem also acts as the manifestation of the primary stage of the sub-genre due to the scope of its themes, as well as its disguised criticism of the vices caused by the growth of industry and the changing layout of the political, social, and cultural systems. At the same time, "To Penshurst" exhibits the unquestionable mastery of creating ideal worlds populated by ideal rulers, potent of escape, contemplation, recovery and consolation. The poem celebrates a seigniorial way of life in which a great family, that of Sir Robert Sidney, younger brother of Sir Philip Sidney and first lord of Leicester, "lives in symbiotic interaction with the people and products of the surrounding countryside. It is very much the image of rural retreat celebrated in Stuart court pastoral" (Marcus, 2003, p. 503).

"To Penshurst" opens with a compliment to the estate:

Thou art not, Penshurst, built to envious show
Of touch or marble, nor canst boast a row
Of polished pillars, or a roof of gold;
Thou hast no lantern whereof tales are told,
Or stair, or courts; but stand'st an ancient pile,
And these grudged at, art reverenced the while.
(Johnson, 2006, p. 1-6)

This tells us that Penshurst was not built to show off the wealth of its owners, and is far from being ostentatious. The qualities that cannot be found at Penshurst are listed to make it seem humble and down-to-earth if compared to an average country house. Thus, "an 'ancient', native Englishness and moderation, Jonson's speaker indicates, make Penshurst not spectacular but, rather, 'reverenced'" (Cousins and Webb, 2005, p. 4) or ideal.

What is more, Penshurst is said to boast natural attractions:

Thou joy'st in better marks, of soil, of air,
Of wood, of water; therein thou art fair.
Thou hast thy walks for health as well as sport;
Thy mount, to which the dryads do resort,
Where Pan and Bacchus their high feasts have made,
Beneath the broad beech, and the chestnut shade;
That taller tree, which of a nut was set,
At his great birth, where all the Muses met.
(Johnson, 2006, p. 7-14)

The excerpt emphasizes the idea that nature is beautiful and does not need decoration. The opening lines of the poem may lead the reader into thinking that Penshurst is a dull place, so the employment of classical allusions to Pan and Bacchus (as major personae of the pastoral genre) is aimed to seize the reader's attention. In addition, it seems to be saying to the reader that a solidly native English great house has a tradition to it and a set of values, or the golden mean, that link it with the classical and exemplary Greek and Roman past.

After celebrating an ideal accord inside the great house, the author brings the poem to a climax by the sudden appearance of King James I:

That found King James when, hunting late this way
With his brave son, the prince, they saw thy fires
Shine bright on every hearth, as the desires
Of thy Penates had been set on flame
To entertain them; or the country came
With all their zeal to warm their welcome here.
What (great I will not say, but) sudden cheer
Didst thou then make them and what praise was heaped
On thy good lady then, who therein reaped
The just reward of her high housewifery.
(Johnson, 2006, p. 76-85)

The king, whose judgment is of outmost importance, approves what he finds in the estate. Therefore, the family of the Sidneys demonstrate allegiance to their royal master, which was a relatively seldom phenomenon at the time of the English Civil War. Ben Jonson had great "confidence in man's ability to perfect himself through the exercise of his reason, therefore, in keeping with this classical ethic, Jonson strives in his poetry to lead man to the good, either by praise of it or by contrasting it with undesirable behavior" (Harris, 1988, p. 32). Thus, the Sidney estate functions as a microcosm of harmony and reconciliation that was missing from the political, social and cultural scene of England in those turbulent times. Hence, Jonson presents the economy of the Sidney household, as well as its ethical, religious and interpersonal values as a paragon of an ideal framework for the corrupted Jacobean state:

> These, Penshurst, are thy praise, and yet not all.
> Thy lady's noble, fruitful, chaste withal.
> His children thy great lord may call his own,
> A fortune in this age but rarely known.
> They are, and have been, taught religion; thence
> Their gentler spirits have sucked innocence.
> Each morn and even they are taught to pray,
> With the whole household, and may, every day,
> Read in their virtuous parents' noble parts
> The mysteries of manners, arms, and arts.
> (Johnson, 2006, p. 89-98)

As a consequence, "To Penshurst" may be considered to be the foundation of estate poetry, as well as the primary stage of its existence, establishing the major themes and motifs of the sub-genre. Though the work of the succeeding estate poetry writers, be it Carew, Lovelace or Herrick, contains many individual characteristics, it still corresponds to the conventions set by Ben Jonson. Thus, their poems generally argue that the perpetuity of the Golden Age can only be revitalized in the society through the vibrant interaction of the temporal and the timeless, the active and the contemplative, the natural and the man-made. "When the balance between the active and contemplative becomes upset and the bond between man and nature gets severed, the community gives way to a narrow elitism, maintained by exclusion, and leading to stasis and sterility" (Harris, 1988, p.71). Indeed, during the end of the seventeenth century there was a significant increase in the number of "proud piles" (Carew, 1949, l. 61) or lavish new country houses built by the rich and powerful, and "their luxurious and extravagant buildings were the preferred articulation of political and economic power" (Bucknell, 2017, 351), rather Jonsonian

harmonious co-existence of man and nature. This is evident in Thomas Carew's poem "To Saxham" (1640), in which visitors to the house remain strangers; even neighbors are expelled from its area, while in Richard Lovelace's "Amyntor's Grove" (1648), living people are barred from the great hall in favor of their paintings. Thomas Carew in "To My Friend G.N. from Wrest" (1639), "directly contrasts the modest, lived-in houses of his patrons with building projects motivated by vanity, greed, or a love of fine things for their own sake, and describes Wrest Park in Bedfordshire" (Bucknell, 2017, p. 335), as being "blesse[d] with an usefull comeli-nesse" (1949, l. 20), full of "things not fine, / But fit for service" (1949, ll. 56–57), and superior in every way to "prouder Piles, where the vaine builder spent / More cost in outward gay Embellishment / Then reall use" (1949, ll. 53–55). Hence, if we go back to Alastair Fowler's generic theory, the estate poems succeeding "To Penshurst" diachronically build up the secondary stage of the sub-genre, as they derive from the country-house model established by Ben Jonson in "To Penshurst".

"The Garden" by Andrew Marvell

Alastair Fowler believes that the "tertiary stage of the sub-genre is reached when a writer takes up a kind that is already secondary, and modifies it" (1987, p. 163). The situation may be observed in Andrew Marvell's poem "The Garden" (1653). Though created on the basis of all preceding works of the sub-genre, the poem changes its topical scope to such an extent that alongside with the conventions of the sub-genre, it exhibits deeper "symbolical developments that presuppose allegorical, psychological or other interpretations of them" (Fowler, 1987, p. 163). The theme of the 'garden of one's soul', substituting the theme of the physical garden and architectural enclosure is a vivid exemplification of this metamorphosis.

The 'grand locale' of the country house is formally absent from "The Garden". The poem acts as a celebration of the secure natural walls of a countryside garden and has no direct reference to any specific estate:

> How vainly men themselves amaze
> To win the palm, the oak, or bays,
> And their incessant labors see
> Crown'd from some single herb or tree,
> Whose short and narrow verged shade
> Does prudently their toils upbraid;
> While all flow'rs and all trees do close
> To weave the garlands of repose.

(Marvell, 1987, l. 1-8)

It is one's personal knowledge of Andrew Marvell's life that makes one infer that the poem might have been composed in Thomas, 3d Lord Fairfax's Nun Appleton House in Yorkshire, as the poet "acted as tutor to Fairfax's daughter Mary" (Marsh, 2017, p.1). Despite the formal absence of the theme of the country house in the poem, "The Garden" is still representative of the estate poetry sub-genre, but at the transformed and permutated tertiary stage of its existence. The poem succeeds to create a utopian world of contemplation in the depths of the secluded garden, symbolizing the depths of the human soul, created as an opposition to the world of chaos and turmoil, brought about by the English Civil War:

No white nor red was ever seen
So am'rous as this lovely green.
Fond lovers, cruel as their flame,
Cut in these trees their mistress' name.
(Marvell, 1987, l. 17-20)

The adjectives "white [and] red" (Marvell, 1987, l. 17) in the poem exemplify the bloody or "red" (Marvell, 1987, l. 17) clash between the parties of Cavaliers and Roundheads – the two antinomic groups shaping the destiny of English society in the seventeenth century. The epithet "lovely green" (Marvell, 1987, l. 18), in its turn, acts as a foil of Civil War brutality, underlining the attempt to regain the paradise, lost by the English at the fall initiated by the Civil War. As a consequence, Marvell not only elaborates purely literary and aesthetic effects in "The Garden", but also succeeds to forge his own vision of the world, containing both an interpretation and an ideological statement.

In addition, "The Garden" exhibits an endeavor to flee from a society made "rude" (Marvell, 1987, l. 15) by people's incessant struggle for supremacy in the post-Civil War period. In withdrawal from the hardships of social life that "shadow the poem like a second fall (lost "innocence" leads to the inability to recognize the "sacred plants")" (Barnaby, 2000, p.339) the attempt to repossess this natural state is thus linked to a search not only for a "harmonious relation between the human, the natural, and the divine but also for an original site of language, one where signifiers partake naturally of the reality they signify" (Barnaby, 2000, p.339). This challenge to retrieve the language in its unmarred state is symbolized in the poem by the attempt to restore the moral purity of the speaker. For instance, the fifth stanza depicts the "speaker's prelapsarian experience in a paradisal fecundity that seems almost to absorb him" (Barnaby, 2000, p. 339):

What wond'rous Life in this I lead!

Ripe Apples drop about my head;
The Luscious Clusters of the Vine
Upon my Mouth do crush their Wine;
The Nectaren, and curious Peach,
Into my hands themselves do reach;
Stumbling on Melons, as I pass,
Insnar'd with Flow'rs, I fall on Grass.
(Marvell, 1987, ll. 33-40)

As the final two lines of the stanza imply, the portrayal of the 'innocence' deficient in the 'rude' society transforms the 'fall' into a simple game, "where an almost childlike delight in the pleasures afforded by an untainted nature bespeaks an unmarred condition of being" (Barnaby, 2000, 340). This movement gets to a close in the sixth stanza, which displays the narrator's naive happiness in the state of a purified mind. Thus, by "withdraw[ing] into its [own] happiness" (Marvell, 1987, ll. 41-44) the human mind discovers the marvel of the "external scene perfectly replicated in its own conceptions" (Barnaby, 2000, p. 340).

The main idea of "The Garden" is epitomized in the famous line belonging to the sixth stanza of the poem:

Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other Worlds, and other Seas;
Annihilating all that's made
To a green Thought in a green Shade.
(Marvell, 1987, ll. 45-48)

"A green Thought in a green Shade" (Marvell, 1987, ll. 48) stands for the inner harmony in the depths of the human soul inspired by the perfection inherent in nature. The contrast is made with "other Worlds and other Seas" (Marvell, 1987, l. 46), which stand for the chaotic reality of the English society tormented by the Civil War outside of the harmonious seclusion of the garden. It is true that "The Garden" lacks subjects, which are characteristic of the classical sub-genre of estate poetry. Nevertheless, the poem is representative of the tertiary stage of the sub-genre, which "may be burlesque, or antithetic" (Fowler, 1979, p.212) to the primary and secondary stages, yet it talks of the retreat into the ideal and harmonious world of one's soul, secluded from the commotion of the outer world by the walls of the garden and the wondrous perfection of nature.

Conclusion

To conclude, the seventeenth century England saw the increase in the use and popularity of estate poetry as a sub-genre of the pastoral. Governed by the sense of life's absurdity, and influenced by the strife of the pre- and post-Civil War era, both Ben Jonson and Andrew Marvell were greatly driven by the constant search for the meaning of existence, which was reflected in their exploration of the boundaries of estate poetry. The article examined the nature of estate poetry and defined it as a sub-genre of the pastoral poetry rather than that of the georgic tradition, exemplified by Virgil's *Georgics*, which turns out to be more of an agricultural handbook, than a response to the most important socio-economic perturbations of the seventeenth century. The article scrutinized Alastair Fowler's fundamental work *Kinds of Literature* (1987) to support the article's claim about the presence of a constant development within any given genre or sub-genre, which commences with its birth, as nothing fictional emerges, as Northrop Frye puts it, "in a special act of creation *ex nihilo*. Human beings do not create in that way" (1957, p.97). According to Fowler, this stage is known as the primary stage of generic development, as it "brings the various features of a new genre into a recognizable group, or joins originally independent motifs" (Hamilton, 2019, p. 71). Thus, the genre comes into existence and makes a significant influence on subsequent writers. Accordingly, the secondary stage of generic development is reached, as the writers intentionally draw on the primary pattern and transform it to extend the complexity of the genre. The tertiary or the final stage of generic development begins when there appears "quite a new reinterpretation in a different direction, importing new features, or subjecting it to burlesque or imitation" (Hamilton, 2019, p.71).

Consequently, Ben Jonson adopts the 'earthly' locus of a perfect country estate as a starting point for the sub-generic quest in the poem "To Penshurst" (1616), and lays the foundation for estate poetry. Thomas Carew, Richard Lovelace and others, for instance, diachronically correspond to the secondary stage of the sub-genre, as they derive from the country-house model established by Ben Jonson in "To Penshurst", but expand the sophistication of the sub-genre. Andrew Marvell, in his turn, adopts the unprecedented 'spiritual' locus of the soul unified with nature in the poem "The Garden" (1653), which marks the transition to the tertiary and final stage of the sub-genre according to Alastair Fowler's system of generic transformation. Thus, it is the seclusion of the garden, and not the walls of a country house, that are used to reflect the perfect social order, service and hospitality, which originate from the equilibrium between the natural and the human, as well as the active and contemplative life of

the individual. As a consequence, it is the picture of a perfect place that we face at our first acquaintance with estate poetry, and the image of a contemplating soul, harmoniously unified with nature, at the final stage that the sub-genre evolves into in the course of its development.

Structured Abstract

Estate poetry has been attracting a great deal of attention in the literary circles, predominantly with regards to the dramatic rise of its importance, use, and popularity in the period of the English Civil War (1642-1649). What is more, the debate concerning the place of the sub-genre among the major literary genres well-established by the seventeenth century is of momentous importance. While commonly accepted to contain many indispensable features of the pastoral, it may also be related to the domain of the comparatively autonomous English georgic owing to the opportunity of drawing parallels to the so-called *locus classicus* - Virgil's *Georgics*. Hence, in the light of the contemporary theory of the flexibility of genres, which, nevertheless, allows to define the generic nucleus, the paper argues that though estate poetry contains some topics common to the genre of the georgic, such features as the praise of the country life, the retreat from the corruption of the court, the creation of idyllic utopias, as a contrast to the devastating reality of the English Civil War, have more to do with the genre of the pastoral than with literature on the subject of husbandry.

Alongside with defining the sub-genre of estate poetry and investigating into its origins and major themes, the study attempts to trace the reasons for the rapid appearance of new sub-generic forms on the verge of the eighteenth century. Contrary to the canons of the seventeenth century, these forms propagated the retreat into the garden of one's self rather than that of the physical entity of a country house. This was the garden of one's soul, touched by corruption and, therefore, in great need of perfection. As a consequence, the article employs the theory of generic transformation by Alastair Fowler, elaborated in "Kinds of Literature" (1987), who differentiates among primary, secondary and tertiary stages that any genre/ sub-genre can evolve into in the course of its existence in order to present a contrastive study of "To Penshurst" (1616) by Ben Jonson, which serves as an example of the primary stage of the sub-genre of estate poetry, and its post Civil War successor – Andrew Marvell's "The Garden" (1653), as an exemplification of the tertiary stage of the sub-genre. The movement reaches its climax when a new sub-genre – the poetry of retirement - emerges in the eighteenth century, exemplified by the work of Lord Cobham, William Shenstone, Alexander Pope and many others. Thus, it is the picture of a perfect place that we face at our first acquaintance with estate poetry, and the locus

of a contemplating soul, harmoniously unified with nature at the final stage of sub-generic development.

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