



"Youthe and Elde are often at Debaat":  
Medieval Conflictus  
and Renaissance Pastoral Debate

Upon his first arrival in Arcadia, Spenser's Sir Calidore delivers an after-dinner speech in praise of "the happie life/Which shepheardes leade, withoute debate or bitter strife." Addressing his rustic hosts on a full stomach, he declaims the familiar outsider's conception of the pastoral world as a place of unperturbed pleasures and simple satisfactions, a fantasyland of heart's desire.<sup>2</sup> But the author of *The Faerie Queene* then subjects the young knight to a series of debate-like encounters and inner conflicts within the confines of the green world that correct this callow conception of bucolic life. Likewise, much recent criticism has moved beyond a simple, idyllic notion of the genre and has come to recognize the central role played by the juxtaposition of opposing points of view in all pastoral; indeed scholars have often used the term "debate" to characterize the structure of statement and counterstatement typical of pastoral works:<sup>3</sup>

The moral debates are real and exploratory, not staged, debates between pastoral perspectives of varying but plausible legitimacy . . . It is the major purpose of the moral debates, therefore, to explore the conflict of perspectives and meanings that, by the time of the Renaissance, pastoral was fitted to express.<sup>4</sup>

Indispensable as the term has become to analyze, say, the pastorals of Spenser or Marvell, practically no attention has been paid to its literal meaning or its derivation.<sup>5</sup> The word "debate," as it is used loosely here to name a literary dialogue between opposing speakers, descends from *debat* or *debaat*, a Middle English word which refers specifically to a formal poetic convention. This convention evolved out of the classical eclogue, became widely popular during the middle ages, and then lost its generic identity, but continued to survive during the Renaissance in the guise of pastoral debate. This essay argues that the explicitly articulated structure of medieval verse debate remains an essential formal model for Elizabethan pastoral poetry, first because that particular structure expresses the mode's inherent thematic antinomies, and second, because

that same structure embodies the conflict of opposites that Renaissance writers found to be the formal principle of all human experience.<sup>6</sup> An implication of this thesis guides the essay's analysis of particular poems: knowledge of the rules governing medieval verse debate can illuminate the practice and intentions of Renaissance pastoralists.

Although there are no modern critical studies of pastoral debate per se, the genre was held in great esteem by Tudor writers-as attested by its ubiquity in song books and collections of eclogues. Its most celebrated example, the shepherdnymph dialogue by Marlowe and Raleigh, first appeared in an anthology containing twenty-eight additional pastoral debates. Sidney's *Arcadia* includes eighteen; and, out of the twelve eclogues of *The Shepheardes Calender*, five follow this convention.<sup>7</sup> Shakespeare's purest pastoral work, *As You Like It*, is filled with dramatic debates, and its overall structure has reminded many readers of the debate's balanced consideration of topics from opposing points of view.

In order to focus inquiry into such a large genre, I have limited my sampling of pastoral debates to the thematically defined subgroup of conflicts of youth and age. But this essay's analysis of formal structure is drawn from and applies to pastoral debates on other subjects as well: summer vs. winter, body vs. soul, passion vs. reason, ambition vs. humility, leisure vs. work, city vs. country, or to bed vs. not to bed. Of all these topics, youth vs. age is the most familiar of traditional rhetorical topoi, and it also brings into sharpest relief the central thematic concerns of pastoral.<sup>8</sup>

"Amant alternae camenae"--the muses love alternating songs--says Vergil's Palaemon, inviting his companion to share in the composition of poetry inspired by the landscape.<sup>9</sup> The ensuing amoebic contest, in which the singers try to outdo each other as they trade symmetrical lines, has been a familiar feature of the pastoral eclogue since Theocritus. J.C. Scaliger, the sixteenth century scholar, saw in this bucolic convention a literary imitation of the verse debates of primitive peoples.

Scaliger surmised that all later poetry evolved from elements of these contests. 10 His speculations were echoed by the Romantic critics, Uhland and Grimm, who found the ultimate source of the lyric in the ritual songs sung during folk festivals of *Renouveau* celebrating the passing of winter and the rebirth of spring." Such songs represent the oscillations of the seasons and other natural polarities as a battle of mythical creatures.

In light of those subsequent developments, however, a crucial generic distinction needs to be drawn between the purely playful and stylistic nature of the amoebic contests and the more serious conceptual and ethical content of true pastoral debate. E.K., the commentator of *The Shepheardes Calender*, makes such a distinction, calling the former "recreative" and the latter "moral" eclogues.<sup>12</sup> Nowhere in classical pastoral can such a real debate be found. Rather the first literary precedent for moral eclogues appears in one of Aesop's fables, a verbal battle of winter and spring. "Winter scorns spring because of its mildness and amiability, while before him people must tremble; Springtime takes this condemnation as praise, since the very characteristics for which he is scorned make him beloved by people, whereas winter is hated."<sup>13</sup> Here we find generic features absent in Theocritus and Vergil: the articulation of systematically matched lists of contraries, the emphasis on abstract qualities rather than individuals, a logical sequence of statement and refutation, and an interest in the relativity of perspectives stemming from descriptions of the same reality from opposite points of view.

Plato's *Phaedrus* also provides a structural model for the pastoral debate. 14 It opens with a panoply of bucolic motifs: a young man and an old come away from the city to a rural landscape, a *locus amoenus* that provides the leisure for both erotic dalliance and detached contemplation. Such a retreat is conducive to the dialectical consideration of abstract issues—in this case conflicting concepts of eros associated with body and soul, passion and reason, rhetoric and philosophy. 15 As Wesley

Trimpi has observed, pastoral retains this function as the setting for exploratory debate throughout the middle ages and the Renaissance:

The part that the *locus amoenus* plays in the discursive activities of the Muses, whether in the *Phaedrus*, the *De Oratore*, or the *Decamerone*, is not primarily as a setting for physical comfort as opposed to discomfort, but for the contemplative as opposed to the active life. 16

Such withdrawal into a green world permits the mind to play with conflicting ideas and values without the necessity of arriving at a conclusion or of finally taking sides. This method of considering and arguing issues impartially from both sides of the question--in *utramque partem*--became, under the influence of the Platonic Academy, a basic principle of the later humanist tradition. 17

The earliest extant medieval eclogue was written at the ninth-century court of Charlemagne by Alcuin, a monk who also produced a seminal treatise on dialectic. 18 But though his *Conflictus Veris et Hiemis* was intended as pastoral--another title is *Vergilis de Hime et Vere*--in tone, structure, atmosphere and characterization, this poem is unlike anything in Vergil or Theocritus. Instead of a slice of rural life and a subtle dramatization of the interaction between rustics, the work presents a systematic discussion of a single subject, in formal symmetrical speeches by allegorical figures. The *Conflictus* is an early example of a new medieval genre, the verse debate, or *Streitgedicht*--a convention that metamorphosed out of the classical eclogue. For the Carolingian poet like Alcuin or the author of *Ecloga Theoduli*, "pastoral" has lost the sense of concrete physical place so strong in classical writers. The "other world" becomes mythical and formulaic, the territory of dream vision and allegory, a rhetorical more than a geographic topos. This change may be partially due to the deurbanization of medieval society, which, during the ninth century was unlikely to

provoke nostalgic yearnings for a less civilized mode of existence. It can also be attributed to the anti-mimetic, formalistic and disputatious tendencies of all medieval culture.

By the high middle ages, the idea of continuity with classical pastoral has been forgotten, and the verse debate comes into its own as a distinct genre. It grows in popularity both as a Latin and a vernacular form, bearing a babel of different names throughout Europe: *Altercatio*, *Conflictus*, *Dialogus*, *Disputatio*, *Certamen*, *Causa*, *Colloquium*, *Comparatio*, *Contentio*, *Judicium*, *Lis Pugna*, *Rixa*, *Controversia*, *Jeu parti*, *Partimen*, *Tenso*, *Serventes*, *Lauda*, *Pastourelle*, *Streitgedicht*, *Streitrag*, *Pregunta*, *Debaat*, *Flyting* and *Ressonyng*.<sup>19</sup> The opposition of youth and age, spring and winter, innocence and experience remain the most popular of themes, but the genre accomodates every possible issue on which two sides can be taken: Judaism vs. Christianity, thrift vs. generosity, wine vs. water, divine vs. human love, heterosexual vs. homosexual love, lentil soup vs. lentil puree.<sup>20</sup> And yet, though the debate's ancestry is forgotten, a trace of its lineage remains. For whether in grand doctrinal disputes like *Winnour and Waystere* or in the brief stark encounter of "The Ressonynge betuix Aige and Yowth," the poet always sets the scene of the verbal battle with a springtime trip into the country.

With few exceptions, modern scholarship has failed to recognize this process of literary evolution and has instead assumed that the pastoral mode and the eclogue form died out during the middle ages, only to be reborn suddenly with the Renaissance revival of the classics.<sup>21</sup> In line with this theory, Petrarch is accurately described as the first modern pastoralist, for his twelve *Aeglogae* recapture some of the spirit and texture of classical bucolic verse in their evocation of particulars of the Italian countryside.<sup>22</sup> But ignoring the continuity between classical eclogue and medieval debate has caused a number of critics to credit-or debit-Petrarch with first introducing satirical moral concerns, a debate structure and a querulous tone into the Arcadian realm.<sup>23</sup> Rather than introducing it, however, Petrarch was in fact drawing back from the argumentative style

which he had inherited from his predecessors; it was this very de-emphasis on argument that made his pastoral innovative. Nevertheless, despite his conscious attempt to revive the classical form of pastoral, six of Petrarch's twelve eclogues retain the form of debate, bearing closer resemblance to the *Theodull* than to Vergil. Here, as elsewhere, Petrarch's combining of classical and medieval uses of genre results in the characteristic synthesis of "Renaissance" style. He is the inventor of true pastoral debate.<sup>24</sup> From Boccaccio and Petrarch to Mantuan; from Mantuan to Barclay, Googe and Spenser; from Spenser to Sidney, Drayton, Milton, Marvell and Blake, that fundamentally medieval structure of debate retains an underlying presence throughout the pastoral tradition, rendering the mode a particularly apt vehicle for exploring abstract and conflicting ideas.

While the union of classical pastoral and medieval debate develops into Renaissance pastoral debate, the genre of *conflictus* itself loses popularity; by the start of the sixteenth century the verbal battle between allegorical creatures has already become a rare and conscious anachronism, as for instance Marvell's "Dialogue of Body and Soul." Even a poem like Lorenzo de Medici's *Altercazione*, which retains the title and tone of medieval debate, is immediately recognizable as an eclogue in which real people discuss issues related to the dichotomy of town and country—in this case the nobleman's idealization of rural life vs. an actual shepherd's account of its hardships.<sup>25</sup> The patterns of this historical development suggest that the classical pastoral conventions revived in the Renaissance reabsorbed the structures and functions of the *conflictus* and thereby denied the medieval genre any niche within the system of literary kinds where it could survive.<sup>26</sup>

As the vestigial presence of earlier evolutionary forms can demarcate the components and define the functions of a later, more complex structure, so the buried presence of the extinct genre of medieval *conflictus* within Renaissance eclogue illuminates the design and strategy of pastoral debate. The remainder

of this essay develops a formal model that the medieval and Renaissance genres have in common. It also highlights the changes that verse debate undergoes in its historical development from one period to another. In order to provide coherent interpretations of complete poems, this discussion focuses on two specific examples: Robert Henrysson's fourteenth century *debaat*, "The Ressonynge betuix Yowth and Aige," and Edmund Spenser's sixteenth century eclogue, "Februarie."

Verse debate has four structural components: elaboration of setting in a pleasant natural landscape; articulation of contrary principles that are to engage in battle; dramatization of the conflict; outcome of the battle, including judge's verdict. In cumulative sequence these components conduct the reader from a simple idealized world and a sensation of relaxed harmony to an increasingly complex and dissonant awareness. This formal structure and its affective strategy is congruent with pastoral's thematic concerns about innocence and experience. Starting in an earthly paradise, the debate poem moves to a fall into division and strife, and ends with a recognition of the failure of human capacities to fulfill human needs.

The introduction to the verse debate frames the later action in a specified dramatic context. It establishes a mode of pleasureable escape to a happier world, of springtime exuberance, of festive entertainment and of protection from the hostile elements and from the dangerous consequences of subversive ideas. The setting is often invoked with lush imagery, such as in the opening of Henrysson's "Rekknyng":

Quhen fair flora, the godes of the flowris,  
Baith firth and feildis freschely had ourfret,  
And perly droppis of the balmy schowris  
Thir widdis grene had with thair water wet,  
Movand allone in morning myld I met  
A mirry man, that all of mirth cowth mene,  
Singand the sang that richt sweetly was sett:  
"O yowth, be glaid in to thy flowris grene."<sup>27</sup>

Or it can be sketched with mere formulaic allusion, as at the beginning of Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender*:

A Shepheardes Boy (no better do him calle)

When Winters wastful spight was almost spent  
All in a sunneshine day, as did befall,  
Led forth his flock, that had been long ypent .28

The second component of verse debate is the articulation of contraries. It introduces the contest to come by disposing the world into a symmetrical system of corresponding dichotomies. This dualistic vision, like the appearance of the snake in Eden, divides the homogeneous unity of the *locus amoenus*, but it maintains a simple and stable picture of the world. Pastoral thrives on simple juxtapositions of opposites: day-night, sunrain, summer-winter, play-work, youth-age. The pastoral muses' love for alternate songs manifests itself in the antithetical pairings of Shakespeare's dialogue of the owl and the cuckoo that concludes *Love's Labour's Lost*, in Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," in Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* .29 In many bucolic lyrics, the articulation of contraries fulfills the primary function of the poem:

Crabbed Age and Youth  
Youth is nimble, Age is lame:  
Cannot live together: Youth is hot and bold,  
Youth is full of pleasance, Age is weak and cold,  
Age is full of care; Youth is wild, and Age is tame,  
Youth like summer morn, Age, I do abhor thee.  
Age like winter weather, Youth, I do adore thee;  
Youth like summer brave, Oh, my Love, my Love is young!  
Age like winter bare Age, I do defy thee  
Youth is full of sport O sweet shepherd, hie thee,  
Age's breath is short. For, methinks thou stays too long.30

In longer, more complex works, like the *The Shepheardes Calender*, an elaborate system of parallel contraries provides the thematic principle by which the poet designs the work and by which the modern critic comes to grips with it:

With youth, Spenser associates susceptibility to love, freedom from care, delight in song, ambitious striving. With maturity and age come



pain and disillusionment in love, a profound sense of responsibility, rejection of pleasure, disappointment in life's harvest. From eclogue to eclogue these subsidiary contraries receive greater or less emphasis, yet each recurs often enough to give unity to the whole.<sup>31</sup>

This binary schema of opposition is an obvious feature of the medieval debate. It makes its presence felt not only in the title and the verse form of the genre, but in a component of structure. The anonymous author of "The Parlement of the Thre Ages" gives the articulation of contraries a local habitation and a name:

Now hafe I rekkende yow theire araye, redely the sothe

And also named you thaire names naytly there-aftaire,  
And now thaire carpynge I sall kythe, knowe it if yowe liste.<sup>32</sup>

He differentiates the actual argumentative content-the "carpynge" in which the characters speak for themselves from his own presentation of the contestants and their allegorical qualities-his "rekkenyng."

Robert Henrysson introduces the principals of his "Ressonyng" with another such descriptive "reckkenyng" of contraries:

Movand allone in morning myld I met A mirry man, that all of mirth  
cowth mene, Singand the sang that richt sweetly was sett: "O yowth, be  
glaid in to thy flowris grene."

Aige

I lukit furth a litill me befoir And saw a catve on ane club cumand, With  
cheikis clene and lyart lokis hoir; His eine was how, his voce was hess  
hostand, Wallowit richt wan, and waik as ony wand, Ane bill he beure  
upoun his breist abone, In Letteris Leill but lysis, with this legand, "O  
yowth, thy flowris fedis fellone sone."<sup>33</sup>

Reminiscent of the figure of the old crone emerging from Hansel and Gretel's candy house or Vergil's "cold snake hiding in the grass," this emotionally chilling juxtaposition of extremes gratifies the reader's desire for symmetry and correspondence. As the poem proceeds, he enjoys matching the names and physical descriptions with the opposing styles of speech, behavior and attitude that emerge through the later dramatic characterization of the contestants. Yowth is brawny as a boar; his breast is burly and broad; the old man has bare cheeks and a stringy chin-beard. The young man boasts of health-clean lineaments and complexion, robust heart, liver and spleen. Aige, the stern reeve, or reckoner, admits he is a loathly presence and lists his diseases and disabilities: fevers and failing strength, drooping muscles, atrophy of the senses. Their manners reflect the contrast. Yowth is noisy, petulant, exuberant and full of braggodocio. He dresses and swaggers like a dandy when he goes to court to impress the ladies. Aige is bitter, self-critical, and crabby. Though closed-mouthed at the opening, when antagonized by Yowth, he strikes back with a merciless, acerbic wit. He carries a sign upon which is permanently engraved the emblematic statement of his philosophy of life: "O youth, your flowers fade full soon." Yowth sings a transitory melody whose refrain expresses the outlook of his state: "O youth enjoy your flowers green."

The disposition of reality into a system of polarities is an essential function of the genre of pastoral debate--a function conspicuously absent from the classical eclogue. In addition to reflecting the medieval proclivity for dualism and allegory, the articulation of contraries in the verse debate exemplifies a more basic cognitive process: "most human things go in pairs."<sup>34</sup> According to Aristotle, this statement by Alcmaeon summarizes the outlook of all the Presocratic philosophers: "They identify all the principles with the contraries, although they give no reasons for doing so, but are, as it were, *compelled by truth itself*."<sup>35</sup> Modern historians have identified the polarity thinking that patterns the debate's articulation of contraries as an early stage in the evolution of philosophy--a stage interme

diary between myth and scientific reasoning. As such, it is particularly appropriate to the natural landscape and the primitivistic world of Arcadia. In his own investigations, Aristotle himself usually reasons by contraries, isolating extremes to arrive at a mean. For example, in his study of applied psychology in *The Rhetoric* "the various types of human character in relation to the emotions and the moral qualities"--he proceeds by articulating the polarity of youth and age:

Young men look at the good side rather than the bad, not having yet witnessed many instances of wickedness. They trust others readily, because they have not yet often been cheated. They are sanguine; nature warms their blood as though with excess of wine; and besides that they have as yet met with few disappointments .... They disobey Chilon's precept (nothing in excess) by overdoing everything ... They think they know everything and are always quite sure about it ... They are fond of fun and therefore witty, wit being well-bred insolence.

The character of Elderly Men ... may be said to be formed for the most part of elements that are the contrary of all these. They have lived many years; they have often been taken in, and often made mistakes; and life on the whole is a bad business. They 'think' but they never 'know' and because of their hesitation they always add a 'possibly' or a 'perhaps,' putting everything this way and nothing positively. They are cynical ... their experience makes them distrustful and therefore suspicious of evil ... their temperament is chilly; old age has paved the way for cowardice; fear is, in fact, a form of chill ... Their fits of anger are sudden but feeble. Their sensual passions have either altogether gone or have lost their vigour; consequently, they do not feel their passions much, and their actions are inspired less by what they do than by the love of gain. Hence, man at this time of life is supposed to have a self-controlled character; the fact is that their passions have slackened, and they are slaves to the love of gain ... They are querulous, and not disposed to jesting or laughter-the love of laughter being the very opposite of querulousness.<sup>36</sup>

The third component of verse debate is the dramatized conflict of the contestants or "carpynge." It unfolds as a game whose rules are determined by the principles of competitive oratory. Appealing to the reader's enjoyment of any spectator

sport, this argumentative section also tests the validity of philosophical arguments and reveals the interaction of logical, emotional and circumstantial factors as they affect human perception and discourse.<sup>37</sup> The effect of this third section on the reader is to further disrupt the order previously established. Its bickering tumult unveils two irreconcilable but equally true views of the reality so neatly disposed by the articulation of contraries.

Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, the root text of the rhetorical tradition, provides a schematic guide by which to analyze the "carpynge."<sup>38</sup> Discussing the epideictic "ceremonial oration of display,"<sup>39</sup> whose purpose is to convince the audience that the subject under consideration merits either praise or blame, Aristotle distinguishes the orator's three modes of appeal: logical (*logos*), emotional (*pathos*), and ethical (*ethos*).<sup>40</sup> The first persuades by means of "lines of argument," also known as "chains of enthymemes" or "topoi." The second persuades by "stirring the emotions of the reader" with "rhetorical" devices. The third persuades by means of "evincing a personal character which will make his speech credible,"--by dramatizing the speaker as a reliable authority. This schema outlines the ensuing structural analysis of the verse debate's argument.

Henrysson's *Youth and Aige* follow typical "lines of argument" or chains of enthymemes as they proceed to spar:

This yungman lap upoun the land full licht, And mervellit mekle of his makdome maid; "Waddin I am," quod he, "and woundir wicht, with bran as bair, and breist burly and braid; na growme on ground my gairdone may degraid, nor of my pith may pair of wirth a prene; My face is fair, my fegour will not faid; 0 yowith, be glaid in to thy flowris grene."

This senyeour sang bot with a sobir stevin; schakand his berd, he said, "my bairne, lat be; I was within thir sextie yeiris and sevin Ane freik on fold, als forss and als fre, als glaid, als gay, als ying, als yaip as yie;

Bot now tha dayis ourdrevin ar & done;  
Luke thow my laikly lukiŋ gif I lie:  
O yowth, thy flowris fadis fellone sone."<sup>41</sup>

Like many proponents of the pastoral of youth, Henrysson's Yowth asserts the praiseworthiness of his state with the "innocent" reasoning of the bucolic inventory. Essentially descriptive, his encomium appeals to the logic of the senses. Here, he says, in the beauty of these concrete details lies my virtue; to respond to my poetry is to assent to my proposition. Even after a challenge to the validity of those sensations, youth reaffirms the same abstract principle simply by adducing more details. When he exhausts the fund of fresh examples, the encomium's line of argument terminates.

Aige's rebuttal, as familiar and obvious as the medieval cliché of *ubi sunt*, conceals a philosophical distinction that merits closer attention. Aige points out that his antagonist has committed what Aristotle calls "the eristical fallacy"--has asserted "the spurious enthymeme of confusing what is absolute [or universal] with what is particular."<sup>42</sup> Conceding that the qualities of the universal condition of youth are indeed praiseworthy, Aige insists that in any particular person, the value of those youthful qualities is vitiated by their transience. Yowth's praise of youth--the particular's praise of the absolute--depends on the assumption that the absolute will remain in the particular. But Aige's own experience of the metamorphosis from youth to age proves that assumption false. This disposes of Yowth's encomium of himself. Aige disposes of youth, the universal with an implication. Since the universal quality confers benefits that are perishable in any particular, it is no more praiseworthy than any particular in which it temporarily resides.

The same line of argument is taken by Old Age in *The Parlement of the Three Ages*. The fact that it is addressed by one allegorical figure to another in these medieval debates gives the argument a special involuted richness, for the speakers themselves are both universals and particulars. When the argument

reappears in Renaissance pastoral debates by Drayton and Sidney, the allegory is deemphasized, but the metaphysical resonance remains. Thus Geron (or old man) to young Phillisides, who has just delivered a vituperation against old age:

But fondlings fonde, know not your owne desire  
Loth to die yong, and then you must be olde,  
Fondly blame that to which yourselves aspire.<sup>43</sup>

The paradox is not merely verbal; it is ontological, like the riddle of the sphinx. Youth confronting age confronts itself.

In the *debat* of Spenser's "February" eclogue, age defends itself and attacks youth with another revealing line of argument--a refutation of childish wishful thinking. Typical of the pastoral of age's assertion of the "reality principle" over the pleasure principle, Thenot's second speech begins with the topos of "Reply," a parody of the encomium of youth:

So loytring live you little heardgroomes, Keeping your beastes in the  
budded broomes; And when the shining sunne laugheth once, You  
deemen, the Spring is come attonce. Tho gynne you, fond flyes, the cold  
to scorne, And crowing in pypes made of greene corne You thinken to  
be Lords of the yeare.

(35-41)

The encomium is false, asserts Thenot, because it rests on an infantile, self-oriented, subjective apprehension. "You demen . . . You thinken..." Confusing your own desires with actuality, you think you are beautiful and powerful because you want to be, or because you appear that way in your own eyes. But thinking doesn't make it so. Thenot sums up childish vanity with the word, "Surquedrie"--blind arrogance and presumption, the hybris that old age perennially deplures.

Thenot supports his contention with the observable fact that, time and again, the real world intrudes upon youth's dream world and destroys it:

But eft, when ye count you freed from feare  
Comes the breme winter with chamfred browes,  
Full of wrinkles and frostie furrows:  
Drerily shooting his stormy darte,  
Which cruddles the blood and prickes the harte.  
(42-6)

When reality disproves their naive, rosy assumptions, the young must suffer; that suffering is both testimony and punishment for youth's failure to face facts--a sign of its blameworthiness.

Then is your careless corage accoied, Your carefull heards with cold  
bene annoied. Then paye you the price of your surquedrie With  
weeping and wayling and miserie.

(47-50)

The extended personification of Winter and old age functions as a rhetorical scare tactic to frighten Cuddie into submission. But it also argues that youth's folly is easily unmasked. The "breme Winter" is a fierce old man who can defeat youth's lordly aspirations and destroy his fatuous illusions. Having lost his innocence through this encounter, Cuddie himself will grow up; by virtue of the forced confrontation with the reality that is old age, Cuddie himself will pass out of youth and into maturity.

Spenser then allows youth a counter-rebuttal of equal length and symmetrical structure--a reply to the reply, which turns Thenot's argument on its head by pointing out the same logical fallacy in the critical reasoning of age. In the self-protective pessimism of its self-proclaimed realism, Cuddie finds an equally distorting application of wishful thinking. Thenot's argument, he declares, suffers from the very faults it condemns. Age's perceptions are the ones distorted by deficiencies of vision, by a refusal to face reality--in this case, the reality of pleasure, beauty and springtime. Cuddie supports his claim with two lines of argument that mirror Thenot's. First, the old

man's views are distorted by a combination of senility and envy:

Ali foolish old man, I scorne thy skill, That wouldest me, my springing  
youngh to spil, I deeme, thy braine emperished bee Through rusty  
elde, that hath rotted thee Or sicker thy head veray tottie is, So on thy  
corbe shoulder it leanes amisse. Now thy selfe hast lost both lopp and  
topp, Als my budding branch thou wouldest cropp:

(50-59)

Rather than accepting the old man's precautionary advice against hybris as a February pruning of excess growth, Cuddie takes it as a Saturnian threat of castration.

His second line of attack argues that the old man's views are fallacious because they too are liable to reversal, given a change of circumstance. Like Thenot's earlier argument, it postulates a hypothetical encounter with a figure representing the opposed principle:

But were thy yeares grene, as now bene myne, To other delights they  
would incline. Tho wouldest thou learn to caroll of Love, And hery  
with hymnes thy lasses glove.

(59-62)

Now Cuddie teasingly evokes his own youthful pleasures to lure his opponent away from the defenses of age's limited world-view. He destroys the protection of Thenot's comfortable pessimism and stings him with the memory of joy he can no longer possess:

Tho wouldest thou pype of Phyllis prayse: But Phyllis is mine for many  
dayes: I wonne her with a gyrdle of gelt, Embossed with buegle about  
the belt. (63-66)

The old man's resulting pain proves the reality and value of

youthful delights and shows the fallacy of their repudiation. Cuddie rests his case with a projection that mirrors Thenot's

earlier one: his opponent metamorphosed into an opposite state:

Such an one shepherds woulde make full faine: Such an one would  
make thee younge againe. (67-68)

After this exchange, Thenot essentially gives up on logic, for he has discovered that the boy debates with a skill well in advance of his years. Instead, the old man follows Aristotle's advice to the orator who cannot proceed successfully using chains of enthymemes: he stops arguing logically and introduces a fable. In so doing he shifts ground from the dialectical to the rhetorical level of persuasion.<sup>45</sup>

Though rational and emotional methods of persuasion usually accompany one another, Aristotle clearly distinguishes them and advises the orator to practice the two skills separately.<sup>46</sup> Authors of verse debate use rhetorical devices in two ways: to reinforce the lines of argument with ornamentation of style, and to replace the lines of argument with other forms of verbal competition: lyrical outbursts, vituperation, fable. Cuddie and Thenot both clinch their arguments with traditional rhetorical figures: old man Winter and the young shepherdess are introduced to produce fright or envy, to decorate the poem, and also to display the poet's ability to work with the familiar literary models that make up his stock and trade.<sup>47</sup>

Rhetorical power is often exhibited through unrestrained excesses of praise and abuse in the verse debate, such as this passage from *The Owl and the Nightingale*:

"A loathsome creature, base and foul"  
Monster," she said, "away, take flight;  
I sicken at your very sight;  
When you your croaking noises make  
I faint and must my song forsake;  
My heart is weak, my voice distressed

When you are close beside me pressed  
Twere better vomit than to sing  
Because of your vile muttering."48

But it also operates in more subtle maneuverings of tone that can affect both opponent and spectator as strongly as the most incisive argumentation. In Henrysson's "Ressonyng" for instance, the speaker demonstrates the strength of old age by recounting his own history with a marvelous mixture of alliteration, rhythmic fracturing of the line, and parallelism.

I was within thir sextie yeiris and sevin  
Ane freik on fold, als forss and als fre,  
Als glaid, als gay, als ying, als yaip as yie.  
(27-32)

Fable is the most common substitute for dialectic. When his argument flounders in "February," Thenot reverts to the fable of the Oak and the Briar to rescue his persuasive purpose, the praise of age and dispraise of youth. What E.K. calls this "Icon or Hypotyposis of disdainfull Younkers" succeeds in drawing attention away from the logical contest and enlisting the audience's sympathy on the side of old age.

Thenot achieves his intent largely through the pose of disingenuousness: the indictment of rhetoric by rhetoric. Throughout the tale, the old oak doesn't say a word; he is a benign and yielding victim of youth's malevolent jealousy. The voluble, honey-tongued Briar proliferates "Painted words ... as usen most Ambitious folke:/ His colowred crime with craft to cloke." (11. 160-162) The Briar's success at hoodwinking the husbandman into destroying the oak evokes an indignation in the reader that is intensified by the account of the slow, agonizing death of the tree:

The Axes edge did oft turne againe,  
As halfe unwilling to cutte the graine:  
Semed, the sencelesse yron dyd feare,  
Or to wrong holy eld did forbear...

... fiercely the good man at him dyd laye  
The blocke oft goned under the blow,  
And sighed to see his neare overthrow.  
In fine the steele had pierced his pith,  
Then downe to the earth he fell forthwith:  
His wondrous weight made the grounde to quake,  
Thearth shronke under him, and seemed to shake.  
There lyeth the Oake, pitied of none. (195-220)

And that sympathy leads to the reader's satisfaction in the Briar's eventual self-inflicted punishment. Once the oak is gone, the proud and now unshadowed young Briar has to face Winter without protection. Bowed down by the weight of snow on his foliage, he is trodden into the dirt by indifferent cattle. Cuddie's advantage at the logical level of the argument gives way to the vindication of old age at the level of the audience's emotional response.

Aristotle's orator achieves the most compelling force of persuasion by establishing his own credibility as a person. Success ultimately depends on his ability to control the audience's natural tendency to move from what he says and the way he says it to the speaker himself:

Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others ... This kind of persuasion, like the other, should be achieved by what the speaker says, not by what people think of his character before he begins to speak.<sup>49</sup>

Only by creating the impression of himself as a believable character can he finally gain their trust and respect; and that impression, though separate from his speech, nevertheless arises out of it.

In the genre of verse debate-the fictional imitation of a real verbal contest-the audience's interest in the orator extends beyond a concern with the credibility of what he says. The reader looks for character per se, for a sense of immediacy and veracity apart from the truth value or the persuasiveness of his

statements. Indeed, the most exciting aspects of character may be those which undermine the speaker's reliability and show more of him than he wishes to expose.<sup>50</sup>

In Henrysson's "Ressonyng," the individual characters of Yowth and Aige reveal themselves through shifts of subject and mood. Yowth, for instance, jumps from extolling his bodily health to his prospect of dalliance at the court, after Aige's warning about corporeal decay. Frightened by the threat, he seeks to comfort himself with the prospect of secretive sexual play; and at the same time he tries to prick the old man with envy:

Ane uthir verss yit this yungman cowth sing:  
"At luvis law a quhle I think to leit,  
In court to cramp clenely in my clething,  
And luke amangis thir lusty ladis sweat;  
Of mariage to mell with mowthis meit,  
In secreit place, quhair we ma not be sene,  
And so with birdis, blythly my bailis beit:  
O yowth, be glad in to thy flowris grene."<sup>51</sup>

The barb takes hold. Aige's dramatic response is stated explicitly by the author's stage direction, but it comes across more intensely in his change of tone from warning to curse:

This awsterne grief anssuerit angirly:  
"For the cramping thow salt baith cruke & cowre;  
The fleschly lust thow salt also defy,  
And pane the sall put fra paramour;  
Than will no bird be blyth of the in bouir;  
Quhen the manheid sall wendin as the mone,  
Thow sall assay gif that my song be sour  
O yowth, thy flowris fedis fellone sone."<sup>52</sup>

As the contest proceeds, the antagonism between the characters deepens, manifested in the way each goes for the other's soft spots. The young man rubs in the elder's suffering by flaunting his own vitality; the old man brandishes his experi

ence to terrify the youth. Each gains compensation for his own inadequacy by attacking the opposite inadequacy of his antagonist:

This mirry man of mirth yet movit moir: "My corps is clene withowt corruption My self is sound, but seiknes or but soir, My wittis fyve in dew proportioun, My Curage is of clene complexioun, My hairt is haill, my levar, and my splene; Thairfoir to reid this roll I haiv no ressoun: 0 yowth, be glaid in to thy flowris grene."

The bevar hoir said to this berly berne:  
"This breif thow sall obey, sone be thow bald;  
Thy stait, thy strenth, Thocht it be stark and sterne,  
The feveris fell and eild sall gar the fald;  
Thy corps sall clyng, the curage sall wax cald,  
Thy helth sall hynk, and tak a hurt but hone,  
Thy wittis fyve sall vaneis, Thocht thow not wald:  
0 yowth, thy flowris fadis fellone sone."<sup>54</sup>

The reader's attention moves from the competition of ideas and stylistic virtuosity to the dramatic display of frightful human hostility.

Yet though the conflict of character makes the genre an incipient form of theatre, in medieval verse debate this level of the argument remains clearly subordinate to the dialectical and rhetorical levels of meaning.<sup>55</sup> In the evolution from medieval conflictus to Renaissance pastoral debate, this emphasis changes. The primacy of "thought" or theme recedes before the ascendance of character and situation; the rigid stanzaic structure gives way to a pattern of verse paragraphs. The "not obvious" features of the speakers-their inner reactions and motives-take control of the plot. And as character becomes thus "interiorized," it frees itself from the abstraction that identifies it; it develops the ability to change.<sup>56</sup> This historical shift of generic emphasis toward dramatic conflict clearly presents itself in Spenser's "February," despite the author's

attempts to give the poem an archaic medieval flavor. its overall movement is psychological rather than logical. The switch from dialectical to rhetorical contest results from unstated dramatic interactions of character. Cuddie's pounding rebuttal softens Thenot's tone, and leads to the old man's show of appeasing the boy with the offer of a story "cond of Tityrus in my youth." In their mutual admiration of this figure from the past (who represents Chaucer) there seems to be a basis of reconciliation. The old man concedes: "Many meete Tales of Youth did he make, and some of love and some of chevalrie," The boy accepts: "They been so well thewed, and so wise, whatever that good old man bespake." (90-100)57

But, as mentioned earlier, the tale in fact doesn't end the conflict; it is Thenot's gambit to regain the initiative. Breaking the argument with a gesture that seems friendly, he deviously steals victory from Cuddie, who has naively put down his guard. At the moment the sword strikes home in the moral of the fable, Cuddie interrupts with irritation but without realizing that he has lost the battle. The words of his final outburst identify him with the exposed and punished Briar:

Now I pray thee shepheard, tel it not forth: Here is a long tale, and  
little worth. So longe haue I listened to thy speche, That graffed to the  
ground is my breche: My hartblood is welnigh frone I feele, And my  
galage growne fast to my heele: But little ease of thy lewd tale I tasted.  
Hye thee home shepheard, the day is nigh wasted.

The movement away from medieval allegory toward greater emphasis on the realistic conflict of individuals continues with Drayton's treatment of the convention of the pastoral debate of youth and age. His "Eclogue Two"--which imitates and alludes to Spenser's second month--has a similar plot outline: a proud young man lords it over an old one, whose pessimistic wisdom succeeds by stratagem in destroying youth's innocence. But the structure of debate, the antagonism of adversar

ies, and the thematic implications are disguised here by the amiable aesthetic competition of the singing contest. At the opening, young Motto tries to "raise up" old Wynken from his melancholy brooding with joyful song. But mirth is no match for saturnine gloom, and by the end of his first speech, Motto is forced to concede the limitations of his state by recognizing the strength of the opposing one:

Might my youths mirth delight thy aged yeeres,...

Now would I tune my miskins on this Greene...  
But melancholie grafted in thy Braine  
My rimes seems harsh, to thy unrelisht taste... (1-10)57a

Wynken replies with a woeful complaint about this decline from Youth; Motto responds with a commiserating "reflection" in which he takes pains to thoroughly dissociate himself from any such concerns:

Even so I weene, for thy old ages fever,  
Deemes sweetst potions bitter as the gall,  
And thy colde Pallat having lost her savour,  
Receives no comfort in a Cordiall. (33-37)

Wynken's reply recapitulates Henrysson's "eristical argument" about particular and universal. In a lovely extended version of the old age elegy he tries to erode youth's optimism:

As thou art now, was I a gamesome boy, Though starv'd with  
wintred eld as thou do'st see, And well I know thy swallow-winged  
joy, Shalbe forgotten as it is in me.

When on the Arche of thine eclipsed eies,  
Time hath ingrav'd deepe characters of death,  
And sun-burnt age thy kindlie moisture dries,  
Thy wearied lungs be niggards of the breath...

Remember then my boy, what once I said to thee.

To give more evidence of the inevitable fall of youth, Wynken quotes an idealistic encomium written by Rowland, Wynken's hero, before that cynosure of pastoral poets lost his innocence. But in doing so, Wynken knows that he is once again luring his naive antagonist into exposing his vulnerable optimism. The rhetoric of the encomium intoxicates Motto; he ignores the *memento mori* context and responds with his own panegyric:

O divine love, which so aloft canst raise,  
And lift the minde out of this earthly mire,  
And do'st inspire the pen with so hie prayse,  
As with the heavens doth equal man's desire...

He has taken the second bait. "O foolish boy," Wynken replies as soon as Motto finishes. Rowland himself was trapped by the sentiments in that poem of youthful flight, but his actual experience of life, of the inevitable disappointments of love and the failures of ambition taught him to repent, to break his pipe, to retire to a cave in solitude, becoming like Desportes' speaker or Moliere's *Alceste*, a typical *senex puer*. Hearing Wynken recite Rowland's "dolefull elegy" as proof of the hero's fall, Motto renounces his youthful innocence and accepts the experience of age:

Woes me for him that pineth so in payne,  
Alas poore Rowland, how it pities me  
So faire a baite should breed so foule a bayne,  
Or humble shewes should cover crueltie. (131-4)

Age's favored line of argument surfaces here—the one refuting wishful thinking and asserting "the reality principle." But it has not been explicitly stated; instead it emerges through the dramatic interaction by way of Wynken's trick.<sup>58</sup> By retaining the medieval debate's argumentative structure and thus reversing its subordination of character to principle, Drayton and other Renaissance pastoralists subject the reasoning process itself to the most sceptical kind of scrutiny.

Sidney was particularly interested in the way pastoral debate's structural conventions lent themselves to that scrutiny. In the second book of the *Arcadia*, he grouped a series of six pastoral debates under the thematic rubric of "Reason vs. Passion," and subsumed the conflict of youth and age within it. In Eclogue 9, "Phillisides and Geron," the very standard of dialectical debate is at issue; the rules of the game become the subject of the contest. Although Geron, the old man, can retort to every line of Philisides' argument with a rationally convincing reply, the value of his objectivity and rationality is never accepted by his opponent. The old man, the man of reason, as Pascal later avers, can never convince by reason the youth, the man of the heart. The man of passion, no matter how intense and abusive his onslaught, will never succeed in showing the man of reason the reality of the force that has him in its grip.

As the exchange in Eclogue #9 proceeds, each opponent becomes more and more absorbed in his own mode of thinking. By the end, Geron's astute critique of Philisides' self-indulgent and delusion-generated passion degenerates into a series of irrelevant old saws advising Georgic pursuits to cool the young man's ardor. Philisides' expression of idealism and intensity in the meantime deteriorates into sordid abuse. Each character only hears himself and has ceased to apprehend the intended meaning of the other's words:

Hath any man heard what this old man hath said?  
Truly not I who did my thoughts engage  
Where all my paines one look of hers hath paid. 99

Both logical and rhetorical debate have given over to pure dramatic confrontation. Philisides, like Spenser's Cuddie, interrupts his opponent's speech just before it concludes. But his rude departure while Geron is talking neither claims victory nor concedes defeat. It silences the old man and confounds the reader.

The indeterminate ending of "Geron and Philisides" typifies the fourth and final structural component of verse debate.

Rather than leading to the declaration of winner and loser-the goal of most competitive games-the poem usually closes with a stalemate. 60Such an outcome thwarts the epideictic purposes of both orators: neither achieves his intended allocation of praise and blame. And though the readers are pressed to make a judgment by the speaker's tactics, by the end of the poem their awareness of those tactics and the evenness of the match have removed rather than supplied grounds for decision. To confirm this lack of logical, emotional and dramatic closure, a debate convention provides a commentator or a motto. Thus the last four lines of Sidney's "Geron and Philisides" are spoken by a bystander:

Thus may you see, howe youthe esteemeth aige  
And never hathe therof arightly deemede  
While hote desyres do Raigne in fancie's rage  
Till aige it self do make it self esteemde.

The same kind of inconclusiveness necessitates the intervention of judge, referee or observer to terminate the allegorical conflictus, usually with a similar Solomonic verdict.<sup>61</sup> Henrysson's "Ressonyng" clearly displays the tension between the expected ending of a contest and the verse debate's characteristically "suspended" conclusion. Aige takes the last word in the exchange, and Yowthe, finally affected by his dire warnings, leaves the scene thoroughly chastized.

This gowand grathit with sic gret greif,  
He on his wayis wrethly went but wene  
This lene awld man luche Not, but tuk his leif. . . 62

The old man takes neither glory nor solace in his victory. Then the narrator reenters the scene and addresses the reader with a moral:

And I abaid under the levis grene:  
Of the sedullis the suthe quhen I had sene,

Of trewth, me thocht, thay triumphit in thair tone:  
"O yowth, be glad in to thy flowres grene!"  
"O yowth, thy flowris faidis fellone sone!"<sup>63</sup>

The dispute he just witnessed has raised a deadly serious issue and left it hanging. Persuaded by both opposing orators, he can choose neither, and therefore concludes with a logical impossibility: the assertion of two contrary statements.

Such a disturbing assertion of paradox as outcome prevents the reader from putting down the poem with a feeling of satisfaction and completion. Instead, the poem stays with him as an open question. Henrysson develops this affective strategy with two devices. First, he emphasizes the riddling effect on the narrator by making him meditate on the dilemma in the contemplative shade of the green tree. There the speaker awaits the solace and wisdom that nature provides those who suffer from mortal limitations. Second, Henrysson expresses the logical, rhetorical and dramatic contradiction by suggesting a shift out of the discursive medium of language into another mode of perception that can better accommodate contradiction in this case the polyphonic harmony of two melodies.<sup>64</sup> Spenser also ends his debates with a demonstration of the limitations of all discursive thought and language. The failure of both dialectic and rhetoric to reach their goals in debate leads to a conclusion consisting of paired "Emblemes"--contradictory maxims that can be absorbed by the mind only as a visual experience to which the law of contradiction does not apply:

#### Thenot's Embleme

*Iddio perche e vecchio,  
Fa suoi al su esempio.*

#### Cuddie's Embleme.

*Niuno vecchio  
Spaventa Iddio. 64a*

The ambivalent moral of the verse debate's final structural element recapitulates the binary symmetry of the introductory

articulation of contraries. But here, at the end of the poem, the reader no longer perceives the dualistic system of dichotomies as a way of sorting the world into neat categories and correspondences. Instead, that dualism has become a source of scepticism and self-doubt.

This change has occurred in the course of the argument proper, the "carpynge." In this middle section of the poem, the author has blurred the simple order of opposition by articulating two contrary articulations of contraries. By changing the metaphysical status of his characters from objects to subjects, he has disclosed alternate visions of the same world from the two perspectives generated by the opposites. These perspectives have taken on more reality than anything objective in the reader's field of vision. And the two perspectives of the characters are themselves occupied not by objects, so much as by the comparison of perspectives. Using the debate technique of rebuttal-stating, discrediting and parodying the opposite point of view-youth defines his own position by criticizing age's view of him, and age does likewise. Such use of interlocking rebuttals subjects the reader to the kind of disorientation that results from standing between two mirrors.

Moving the reader in this way from the simple clarity of thinking by polarity to the mind's reflexive confrontation with its own subjectivity constitutes the verse debate's overall affective strategy. The reader's progression through the structural components of the genre, from garden setting to primitive articulation of contraries to sophisticated relativity of perspective--from a condition "without debate or stryfe" to a constant tension between opposing points of view-is a kind of mental fall from Eden. It corresponds to the typical emotional trajectory of pastoral: the search for innocence that ends in experience. 65

This overall generic form of pastoral debate has a number of analogies. Stanley Fish has traced back to the *Phaedrus* itself a convention of "Self-Consuming Artifacts," in which literary structure works to make the reader's sensation of movement through the text from beginning to end feel illusory: "The

reader passes through doors only to find himself in rooms he just left." 66 In dialogue, essay, sermon or poem, the writer first to seduce and engage the reader and then to confound him with a demonstration of their fallaciousness. Thus the reader is brought by the work's own reflexive invalidation from a state of understanding and enjoyment to a condition of confusion and discomfort. Fish maintains that the purpose of such a destructive strategy is to open the reader to religious illumination-some intuitive insight that can arrive only following this convention uses the instruments of logic and rhetoric when the rational discursive mind has relinquished its grip on consciousness. This technique of evoking epiphanies similar to that of the Zen koan or the Sufi parable-is used by devotional poets like Donne and Herbert and preachers like Andrewes and Thomas Browne as well as by philosophers like Pascal, who argue the reader to the verge of all argument and then invite him to take the leap of faith.

But though the critique of reason embodied in such structures often leads to conversion, just as often it can lead to a kind of phenomenological self-questioning and suspension of judgment that remains in the service of the intellect. As a method of empirical inquiry, the sceptical exploratory stance cultivated by the strategy of the verse debate was associated with the rhetorical tradition back to Cicero. His use of the dialogue form, unlike Plato's, ended not with the leap to a higher form of cognition but with a question mark or an open mind. During the middle ages, the technique of looking at the question from both sides without arriving at a determination was the habit of mind of orators, lawyers and scholastic theologians as well as of writers of the *Streitgedicht*. During the Renaissance, the endless questioning implied in the relativity of perspectives characterized both the method and the conclusions of much humanist thought. Montaigne's escutcheon displayed a pair of balanced scales under the motto, "Que sais-je". In this passage from his lengthy defense of the

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Sceptics (Pyrrhonians) in the *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, Montaigne describes inconclusive debate as the closest approach to truth:

The profession of the Pyrronians is to waver, doubt and inquire, to be sure of nothing, to answer for nothing . . . Their expressions are "I establish nothing; it is no more thus than thus, or than neither way; I do not understand it; the appearances are equal on all sides; it is equally legitimate to speak for and against ... Their effect is a pure, complete and very perfect postponement of judgement. They use their reason to inquire and debate, but not to conclude and choose.<sup>67</sup>

Whether one sees it as reason's dead-end or as the beginning of the experimental method, whether as a source of *angst* or a source of *sprezzatura*, the relativity of perspectives is a major preoccupation of Renaissance thought. Claudio Guillen has demonstrated the connection between the practise of Quattrocento painters, who discovered in the study of optical perspective a means to create the appearance of truth to nature, and theories of Descartes and Leibnitz, who saw reality itself as a function of the point of view .<sup>68</sup> This concern was most emphatically strengthened by the period's repeated discovery of hitherto unknown points of view-whether those of heliocentric universe or of new world natives-points of view that stood in debate-like relation to traditional attitudes they could deny but not replace.

This epistemological concern with point of view often becomes explicit within the art of the period:

... in works where the metaphor of perspective appears... there is ultimately an important concentration not on the content of a given theme but on how it can be known ... The artist in such cases is fundamentally concerned with how human experience can be perceived or known, and this in turn affects or enters the structure of the work of art.<sup>69</sup>

In the Elizabethan sonnet, as well as in other Petrarchan forms of poetry, the interest in perspective manifests itself in the

shifting moods of the narrator-his persistent bewilderment at how he and his mistress can maintain identity and yet go through radical and discontinuous change:

The Petrarchan speaker's rhetorical strategy of alternating and suspending contrarities within his own ethos in fact generates structural transformation in each poem. His expression of joy and lament, hope and despair, certitude and doubt, characteristically balance thesis against antithesis, statement against counterstatement, and reversal against counterreversal, allowing a dialectical unity to evolve out of multiplicity through patterns of shading and contrast, challenge and fulfillment, assertion and negation.<sup>70</sup>

In the structure of poetic debate, these same oscillations are projected as two opposing voices. The absence of a central consciousness in the poem draws the reader himself into the structure as the monitor of the shifting points of view and makes him the subject rather than the observer of epistemological relativity. In Drayton's "Eclogue 7," for example, perspective becomes the literal subject of debate, as the author shifts the topic from the ethical values of youth and age to their competing judgments of the aesthetic value of two poems included within the eclogue. That shift pushes the genre's affective strategy to its limits by inducing a controlled sequence of oscillations of perspective within the reader and then making him aware of his own inconsistent responses.

The relativity emerges at the outset in the overlapping articulations of contraries. What appears to Borrill as a contented Sheepcoate protected from the wind, for Batte is a "loathsome Cave." What Batte describes as "shepheardes frolicke" Borrill experiences as "Golden Slavery." The *carpynge* then proceeds with paired, overlapping rebuttals--refutations of defensive pessimism and of wishful thinking--each of which adopts and then mocks the opposing perspective:

(Batte)

Like to the curre, with anger well neere woode, who makes his kennel  
in the Oxes stall,

And snarleth when he seeth him take his foode, and yet his chaps can  
chew no hay at all.

Borrill, even so it fareth now with thee,  
And with these wisards of thy mysterie

(Borrill)... Ah foolish elfe, I inly pittie thee, misgoverned by thy lewd  
brainsick will:

The hidden baytes, ah fond thou do'st not see, nor find'st the cause  
which breedeth all thy ill:

Thou thinks't all golde, that hath a golden shew,  
And art deceiv'd, for it is nothing soe. (55-72)

The dialectical contest then shifts to the purely rhetorical level as Borrill offers a fable of the fly and the flame, illustrating the dangers and silliness of youthful love. Batte counters with an ornamental descriptio of an elaborate scene he plans to carve on his staff, illustrating the grandeur of love and the nobility of its "canonized" saints. Borrill counterthrusts with a formal vituperatio of Love--"Oh spiteful wayward wretched love..."; and is then answered by Batte's confirmatio--"Love is the heaven's faire aspect."<sup>71</sup>

But Drayton goes beyond the decorative embellishments of the typical "delectable controversie" when he extends the singing contest by interlacing the poems with reviews-critiques of substance and style by the opposing speaker:

Borrill, sing on I pray thee let us heare,  
That I may laugh to see thee shake thy beard  
But take heede Borrill that thy voyce be cleare,  
Or by my hood thou'lt make us all afeard,  
Or els I doubt that thou wilt fright our flockes,  
When they shall heare thee barke so like a foxe. (121-126)

Batte's derisive preface skews the reader's response to the song itself. After such an introduction it is hard to regard the crude alliteration and the alternating masculine and feminine endings of Borrill's lines as anything but ridiculous:

O spightfull wayward wretched love,  
Woe to Venus which did nurse thee  
Heavens and earth thy plagues do prove,  
Gods, and men have cause to curse thee.  
(127-130)

And the youth's sarcastic comment at the close of the old man's song reinforces the reader's suspicion that the author intends it as a burlesque:

Ah worthy Borrill, here's a goodly song, Now by my belt I never heard  
a worse: (151-2)

But instead of dismissing it with a laugh, Batta rails on, revealing that in fact it has affected him more seriously:

Olde doting foole, for shame hold thou thy tongue, I would thy clap  
were shut up in my purse. It is thy life, if thou mayst scolde and braule:  
Yet in thy words there is no wit at all. (153-6)

Now the reader is prompted to reconsider his contemptuous response and to regard the poem from a different perspective. He may discover that as a ritualized curse in the spondaic style of Barnabe Googe, it does possess a measure of saturnine power and eloquence:

Thoughts grieffe, hearts woe,  
Hopes paine, bodies languish,  
Envies rage, sleepes foe,  
Fancies fraud, soules anguish,  
Desires dread, mindes madnes,  
Secrets bewrayer, natures error,  
Sights deceit, sullen sadness...  
(131-8)

Batte's song receives similar treatment. From the perspective created by Borrill's caustic introduction, Batte's "Love is the Heaven's Faire Aspect" appears a laughable bit of fluff, especially in its last stanza:

Love is my life, life is my love  
Love is my whole felicity,  
Love is my sweete, sweete is my love,  
I am in love, and love in me. (189-192)

Borrill's hostile reaction at the poem's conclusion elicits the reader's guffaw:

Is love in thee? alas poore sillie lad,  
Thou never couldst have lodg'ed a worser guest... (193-4)

However, if the reader rejects the antagonistic critique and changes his point of view to share the one from which the poem is uttered—that of a young man intoxicated with Petrarchan rhetoric, neo-Platonic philosophy, the smells of earth on a May morning and the eyes of a remote "shepherdess"—his response and aesthetic judgment will alter dramatically. Appreciating its childlike simplicity of thought and its elvish tinkle of sound, he will enjoy the pastoral charm of a *chanson innocente*.

By manipulating these shifting reactions to his text, Drayton thoroughly mobilizes the resources of the genre. Not only does he demonstrate the relativity of perspectives in the conflict of his characters, he steers the reader into switching positions himself, and hence into observing his own reversals of judgment. Such use of the pastoral debate of youth and age yields compelling proof of the indeterminacy of knowledge that Montaigne argued with the evidence of a similar example: "Do you think the verses of Catullus or Sappho smile to an avaricious and crabbed old man as they do to a vigorous and ardent youth?"<sup>72</sup>

This opposition of youth and age traditionally serves to illustrate the inconsistency and contingency of human knowledge--from the passage in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* cited early in this essay to Mutability's epideictic carpyge against Jove on Arlo Hill:

And men themselves do change continually  
From youth to eld, from  
wealth to poverty  
From good to bad, from bad to worst of all  
Ne doe  
their bodies only flit and fly  
But eeke their minds (which they immortal  
call) Still change and vary thoughts, as new occasions fall.

As such an embodiment of the relativity of perspectives, youth-and-age makes a particularly apt subject for the formal convention of verse debate. Youth-and-age also constitutes an essential theme of the pastoral mode, since idealized and negative conceptions of these peripheral stages of the life cycle correspond to pastoral's vision of an "other" world on the peripheries of civilization. Thus, the topos of youth-and-age itself emerges as a node of convergence between content and form, between theme and structure, between pastoral and debate. From this node sprouts the pastoral debate of youth and age--a "minor poetic genre" with the richness and vitality that flows from a great root system.

*As You Like It*, Shakespeare's most fully realized pastoral work, is also the one that devotes most attention to the theme of youth-and-age. As the title hints, it is also the most debatelike and debate-ridden in structure. When Touchstone, Rosalind and Celia arrive in Arcadia, their first discovery locates them at the crossroads of thematic mode and formal genre:

Well, this is the Forest of Arden... Look you who comes here: A young man and an old in solemn talk.

After this ceremonial introduction, the reader joins them as a spectator at the *conflictus* of two local natives:

Corin: That is the way to make her scorn you still. Silvius: 0 Corin, that thou know'st how I do love her! Cor: I partly guess; for I have lov'd ere now. Sil: No. Corin, being old, thou canst not guess, Though in thy youth thou wast as true a lover As ever sigh'd upon a midnight pillow. But if thy love were ever like to mine, As sure I think did never man love so How many actions most ridiculous Hast thou been drawn to by thy fantasy? Cor: Into a thousand that I have forgotten. Sil: 0, thou didst then n'er love so heartily! If thou rememb'rest not the slightest folly That ever love did make thee run into, Thou hast not lov'd; Or if thou hast not sat as I do now, Wearing thy hearer in thy mistress' praise, Thou hast not lov'd Or if thou hast not broke from company Abruptly, as my passion now makes me, Thou hast not lov'd. 0 Phebe, Phebe, Phebe!

(11, iv, 21-42)

This is an obvious parody of a set-piece: the debate between Corydon and Montanus which occurs in Shakespeare's chief source, Lodge's *Rosalynde*, and which itself closely imitates Sidney's "Philisides and Geron."<sup>73</sup> A seizure of passion drives the young man to break off the discussion and exit suddenly, as it did Philisides and Montanus in the earlier versions. But Silvius won't go without first drawing attention to the demonstrative significance of the gesture:

Or if thou hast not broke from company Abruptly, as my passion now makes me, Thou hast not lov'd.

The elder shepherd Corin, like his predecessors, tries to help his companion by offering remedies. Instead of Geron's or Corydon's abstract maxims he offers the young man the benefit

of his worldly experience by giving practical advice about tactics in courtship: "That is the way to make her scorn you still."

But more important than parody is the way Shakespeare focuses his treatment of the genre on the central issue of ways of knowing, the issue of relativity of perspective. Instead of simply asserting the respective claims of passion and reason, youth and age both make the more sophisticated claim of relativity itself. They compete for a point of view that includes both their own and their opponents' perspective. In response to Silvius' remark that he doesn't know what love is, the old man states he can "partly guess," since he has loved in the past so often that he has been drawn into a thousand follies. But the deliberate rendering of his experience as no longer present-as safely behind him and forgotten-implies a claim of superior authority for his distant detached "perspective" on both youth and love. The long view of his many years has granted him the typical wise old shepherd's ability to sift reality from illusion and sense from foolishness, to forget those things he judges not worth remembering. Covertly though it is stated, this claim is not lost on Silvius. His reply, having predictably reverted to the topic of love, still deals with the real issue of innocent vs. experienced ways of knowing. Silvius counters that Corin's paradoxically forgotten memory of love is no knowledge at all. He implies that the experience which puts love into perspective destroys real understanding, which is available only in the present "proof."

Here Shakespeare gives the argument some new twists. To demonstrate that his present-oriented point of view has as much depth as age's binocular vision, Silvius shows that he too can see things from both sides of the question:

Or if thou hast not sat as I do now  
Wearing thy hearer in thy mistress'  
praise, Thou hast not lov'd.

He can see himself-and his own tiresome behavior-from Corin's point of view. Knowing that Corin was once young, he also knows that he himself will some day be old. And yet he retains his passion. A kind of adolescent romantic irony makes innocence less ignorant than age would like to think it. Like Rosalind and all the young lovers in *As You Like It*, *Silvius* affirms the logical absurdity of his feelings and conduct; the more foolish love makes him look, the stronger it manifests its springtime force. The old man's wisdom can teach him nothing; their opposed positions can never be reconciled in language for they are functions of the natural aging process itself.

By thus revealing the limitations of rhetoric-taking the word in its very broadest sense as the deliberate control of language-even the most sophisticated version of pastoral debate displays its own primitive origins in folk festivals and seasonal rituals. In the setting of tree, field and stream, it subordinates the argumentative, logical conflict of ideas to the larger oscillations of the life cycle. Like Sidney, Shakespeare demonstrates the dominion of nature over discourse by breaking the conversation rather than bringing it to closure. But in place of Sidney's instance of rude inclivity, the dramatist ends his pastoral debate of youth and age with an utterance of bird song: "O Phebe, Phebe, Phebe."

## NOTES

*The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition*, ed. Edwin Greenlaw et al., (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1938) VI, 106 (Book VI, ix, 18).

2 See, for instance, Renato Poggioli, *The Oaten Flute* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975); Thomas Rosenmeyer, *The Green Cabinet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); Bruno Snell, "Arcadia: The Discovery of a Spiritual Landscape," in *The Discovery of the Mind* trans. J. G. Rosenmeyer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953), pp. 282-308. This view of pastoral as essentially and exclusively idyllic was widely maintained in the 18th century, as shown by J. E. Conleton in *Theories of Pastoral Poetry in England, 1684-1798* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1952).

3 Patrick Cullen, *Spenser, Marvell and Renaissance Pastoral* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 1-2. See also Edward W. Tayler, *Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964); Harold Tolliver, *Pastoral Forms and Attitudes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Eleanor Winston Leach, *Vergil's Eclogues: Landscapes of Experience* (Ithaca and London: Cornell

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University Press, 1974); Donald Friedman, *Marvell's Pastoral Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970); Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Idea in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964); Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), especially chapter 2: "Pastoral and Counter Pastoral."

4 Patrick Cullen, pp. 29-31.

1 Donald Friedman sees the debate as an underlying principle of all Marvell's poems. In his excellent second chapter, "Forms of Debate," however, he dismisses any significance of the connection between pastoral and *debat*: "Marvell's recurrent choice of the *debat* form for pastoral poems, both plain and philosophical, needs no comment." (p. 31). This undocumented assertion seems to assume that some study like the present one had already been completed. Cullen, whose reading of Spenser has enriched my own, makes no mention of medieval *debat* at all, and instead sees Spenser's use of debate as an innovative combining of two diverse pastoral traditions, which he calls "the Arcadian" and "Mantuanesque." It seems to me this is proliferating entities. The opposed perspectives in Spenser's debates are juxtaposed in all pastorals as the conflicting visions of youth and age. The opposition itself is that of the medieval *conflictus*.

6 The effect of traditional rhetorical practices of disputation on the structures of various Renaissance genres has been thoroughly explored in a number of full-length studies. Madeleine Doran's *Endeavors in Art: A Study of Form in Elizabethan Drama* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1954) and more recently, Joel Altman's *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) apply it to drama. C. J. Kennedy *Rhetorical Norms in Renaissance Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978) and Rosalie Colie in *Paradoxia Epidemica* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966) show its effect on the lyric. In "The Quality of Fiction: The Rhetorical Transmission of Literary Theory," *Traditio* XXX (1974), Wesley Trimpi shows how it affects the development of all genres of fiction. Only Trimpi and Doran mention the *debat*, which distills and demonstrates this influence, but they do so merely in passing.

7 B. H. Bronson observes that the majority of texts in the Playford song collections are pastoral dialogues and debates. "The Dialog Song or Proteus Observed," *PQ*, 54: 117-136.

Pastoral is usually defined by reference to theme and motif, and is thereby referred to as a *mode*. In this essay I consider pastoral as a structural convention. Following Frye, I refer to structural convention or "analogue of form" as *genre*, and here use "pastoral" to signify a cluster of genres as well as a mode. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), pp. 95 ff.

9 Sing, while we sit here on the soft grass

Now all the fields and all the trees are blossoming;

Now the woods are greening; now the year has reached its

height of beauty

Begin Damoetas, then you follow, Menalcas

You will sing in turn; the Muses love alternating songs.

111, 55-9. trans. Michael Putnam, *Vergil's Pastoral Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 126. All later citations of Vergil in this chapter are to this translation.

10 *Poetics*, trans. F. M. Padelford (New York: 1905), pp. 21-22, cited by Hallett Smith in *Elisabethan Poetry* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 14. Singing

contests of this nature remain an important feature of many present day cultures. Salient examples are the *cantraversias* sung by Puerto Rican farmers and the "rapping" sessions popular among Afro-Americans. See Roger Abrahams, *Deep Down in the Jungle* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1970).

11 These speculations are mentioned by Hans Walther in *Das Streitgedicht in der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (Muenchen: C. H. Becksche Verlag, 1920), p. 34. This book remains the standard treatment of the medieval *debat*.

11 Charles Grosvenor Osgood and Henry Gibbons Lotspeich, *The Minor Poems*, vol. 1 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1943), p. 12. All later citations of *The Shepherdes Calendar* are to this volume.

13 Hans Walther, p. 5 (my translation).

14 The form he used to explore and dramatize the clash of philosophical ideas most probably influenced Theocritus and Vergil. (Adam Perry, "Landscape in Greek Poetry," *Yale Classical Studies XV* (1957), 29.) The *Phaedrus* in particular inspired the imitation of the many Renaissance platonists who considered themselves pastoralists. Pico della Mirandola thought of this dialogue as a version of pastoral because of its particular combination of setting and theme. (Richard Cody, *The Landscape of the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 4-6.) On pastoral and platonism, see also Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967).

11 Phaedrus and Socrates present contending ideas on the two intertwined subjects of rhetoric and love. Phaedrus maintains Lysias' position that both love and rhetoric are most effective in achieving their goals when played as a game, when separated from their subjects' true feelings and desires. Socrates sees both love and rhetoric as a means of aspiration and of realizing the subjects' highest goals. Eventually the discussion moves to the topic of the opposition of body and soul. The contention between them is reflected in the dramatic struggle of the two speakers. Below the surface of the discussion, Phaedrus tries to use the attraction of his youthful body to seduce Socrates physically, while Socrates tries to use the attraction of his mind to seduce Phaedrus into the appreciation of higher things. (This reading is borne out by the analogous encounter between Alicibiades and Socrates in the *Symposium* and by passages like this:

Phaedrus: There's shade there and a bit of a breeze and grass to sit on, or, if we like, even to lie in ... isn't it from somewhere around here, from the Ilissus, that Boreas is said to have carried off Oreithyia?)

Within the terms of this struggle, the pastoral setting plays a correspondingly ambivalent role. In connection with the erotic theme, its natural beauty is either a stimulus to the young man's dalliance or an emblematic foretaste of the philosopher's paradise. In connection with the rhetorical theme, the green pleasance represents both a spontaneous appeal to the innocent simplicity of a natural retreat, and a sophisticated attempt to manipulate the listener with what by this time had already become a conventional topic for the bravura display of eloquence. (See Adam Perry, pp. 15-17 and Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature in the Latin Middle Ages* [New York: Pantheon Books, 1953], p. 187.

16 Wesley Trimpi, p. 82.

17 According to Cicero, most of the questions people face cannot be determined by absolutes, but exist in the realm of probability. "Since true sensations are associated

with false ones closely resembling them- they contain no infallible mark to guide our judgment and assent. Thus the "sole object of our discussion is by arguing both sides to draw out and give shape to some result that may be the nearest possible approximation to the truth." Cited by Trimpi, p. 45 and by Joel Altman, p. 69.

The method of debate, arguing both sides of the question, was used by medieval and Renaissance educators to sharpen their students' skills of inquiry and oratory. Such a method, which by its own nature questioned orthodoxy and authority, would be safe to pursue only in an environment at once detached and protected:

So long as the Senecan exercises were merely preparatory for the actual encounters of the forum, they could remain in the cool and shaded protection of the declamatory halls and gardens. The young *declamator* might there enjoy the leisure of the *umbrosi loci* until, as an *orator*, he must face the dust, heat, and noise in the full sun before a real judge instead of an appreciative audience.

Trimpi, p. 82.

Trimpi notes that the pastoral introduction to medieval debate works as an analogous shelter:

The engagement in fictional debate, where umbratical *quaestiones* offer their shaded amenities to the excursions of wit, corresponds to an entrance into a walled garden or a dream vision, or even to the departure on a quest or pilgrimage. All offer a period of artistic immunity before demanding a return to the moral reality of the listener's world. This moral suspension is the most characteristic license of medieval fictions, its freedom from historical and philosophical proscriptions as Sidney was later to describe them.

Trimpi here (p. 82) alludes to the passage in Sidney's *Defense* describing poetry itself as a golden pastoral world, removed from the actual. Throughout the middle ages and the Renaissance this removal makes the shepherd's world a natural setting of fictional debate. The notion of the "Poem as Pastoral Enclosure" is developed by Tolliver, pp. 11 ff. and by Harry Berger Jr. in "The Renaissance Imagination: Second World and Green World," *Centennial Review* 9 (1965), pp. 36-79.

18 My account of the evolution of debate from the eclogue follows James Holly Hanford's "Classical Eclogue and Medieval Debate," *Romantic Review* 2 (1911) pp. 16-31, 129-143. His theory was attacked by Betty Nye Hedberg in "The Bucolics and the Medieval Poetical Debate," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, vol. 75 (1944), pp. 47 ff. But her point that there were other classical forerunners of verse debate in addition to the eclogue doesn't affect my use of Hanford's hypothesis.

19 "Poetic Contests," in *Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. A. Preminger (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 626 ff.

20 Walther, pp. 35 ff.

21 W. W. Greg, *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama* (London: 1906; rep. New York: Russell and Russell, 1959). "During the middle ages the stream of pastoral production though it nowhere disappears is reduced to the merest trickle." p. 18.

22 W. Leonard Grant, *Neo-Latin Literature and the Pastoral* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), p. 76 ff.

"The allegorical pastoral turns the praise of pastoral life to an indictment of bad shepherds of the church . . . Petrarch and Mantuan develop this "negative analogy" out of all proportion, turning it to a genre of its own." Poggioli, pp. 94-5.

14 Many of the poets who follow Petrarch exhibit similar mixtures of purpose and style in their uses of genre. In the thirteenth of his series of sixteen *Bucolium Carmen*, Petrarch's friend Boccaccio sets out to present an amoebic singing contest modelled after Vergil's third eclogue. But the habits of thought of the rhetorical tradition of debate are so entrenched that partway through the poem he strays from his amoebic model and reverts to systematic allegorical argument, contrasting the virtues and vices of poetry with those of wealth. (Grant, pp. 97-100) As in the medieval *debat*, philosophical theme returns to dominate idyllic setting and dramatic character. In medieval poetry, formal organization appears on the surface of the work, containing content rather than being contained within it. Renaissance literature shows the opposite tendency: substance contains and even hides structure; mimesis supplants abstraction. A similar historical contrast applies to affective strategy. In keeping with the highly rhetorical nature of most medieval literature-its persuasive, instrumental approach to audience-the author's intentions and reader's expected response are often evident, or supposed to be evident to the informed critic. (D.W. Robertson's *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962) represents such "rhetorical" criticism. See Curtius, p. 148, on the domination of poetry by rhetoric during the middle ages.) Renaissance literature on the other hand, because of its more realistic and expressive tendencies, rarely prompts such confident assertions about intention and response. These two elements of a poem-formal structure and affective strategy-define and are defined by genre; by the time of the Renaissance, the concept of genre of "kinde," which had organized literary theory and practice during the middle ages, was itself losing some of its ruling force, as writers experimented with new mixtures and with using old forms in unconventional ways. (Rosalie Colie, *The Resources of Kind: Genre Theory in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 8. Claudio Guillen, *Literature as System: Essays Toward the Theory of Literary History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

This greater clarity in notions of genre may partly explain why there have been numerous critical studies of the medieval *Streitgedicht*, while Renaissance pastoral debate has escaped consideration as a genre altogether, despite critics' frequent use of implicitly generic notions of debate in discussions of Renaissance pastoral. Writers on medieval debate agree that the convention has a number of distinct structural features and rhetorical effects, but there has been no agreement on what these features are, nor has anyone offered a hypothesis explaining how the parts of the structure combine to generate a unified overall effect. (M. R. Bossy, "The Prowess of Debate," unpub. diss., Yale, 1970, discusses four "traits" of the *debat*: "1) the respectful acceptance of verbal skill as an honorable endowment; 2) the confrontation of antagonists evenly matched at the outset of the discussion; 3) the concern for polarities of value... 4) the awareness of the semiotic ambivalence of language." p. 8. D. E. Lampe, "Middle English Debate Poems," diss. Minnesota, 1969, somewhat tentatively mentions "the three or four essential elements of the debate genre." (p. 1) The first is pastoral setting, the second is "the establishment of the allegorical identities of the participants," third is the "plait or pleading," i.e., the actual argument, and fourth is the presence of the narrator.)

2-1 Lorenzo de Medici, *Tutti le Opere* (Milan, 1958) 111, 11. 12, 15. Cited and partly translated by Judy Zahler Kronenfeld, "The Treatment of Pastoral Ideals in As You Like It: A Study in Convention and Traditional Renaissance Dichotomies," Stanford diss. 1970. p. 126.

26 Another parallel but separate evolution of pastoral and debate conventions from classical through medieval to Renaissance periods deserves brief mention here. Spread by the troubadours of Provence throughout Europe between the year one thousand and fourteen hundred, the genre of *pastourelle* most likely is a courtly refinement of a

peasant folk-song genre. Governed by a strict formal pattern, the *pastourelle* begins with a knight's account of his "outriding" to the country, where he comes upon an attractive

young shepherdess. It continues as a dramatic dialogue between the two, hinging upon his attempts and her graceful, witty or abusive refusal. Though not specifically allegorical, the *pastourelle* explores the contrast of noble and peasant, male and female, carpe-diem/anti-carpe them outlooks analogous to the debate of youth and age. Robert Henrysson's "Robin and Makeyne" is a familiar Middle English version. "The Passionate Sheepheard" and "The Nymph's Reply" combine the conventions of *pastourelle* with those of the *conflictus*. See W. P. Jones, *The Pastourelle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931) and W. D. Paden, "The Medieval Pastourelle--A Critical and Textual Reevaluation," Diss. Yale, 1971.

27 (When fair Flora, the goddess of the flowers Both groves and fields all freshly had  
bespread And the pearly drops of balmy showers The trees so green had with their water  
wet Walking alone one morning mild I met

A merry young man there, of mirthful mien Singing a song that was right sweetly set: "O  
youth enjoy yourself in flowering green.")

My translation. Text is from *The Poems and Fables of Robert Henrysson*, ed. H. Harvey Wood (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1933), p. 179. All later references are this edition, except where noted.

28 Admittedly, "February" begins with young Cuddie's protest against the harshness of his landscape and against Spring's late arrival. But this very complaint implies the expected norm of the idyllic pastoral setting, a norm established at the opening of January, throughout the other eclogues of SC, and later in "Februarie" itself.

29 "The magic of 'When daisies pied. and of 'When icicles. (the *debat* which concludes *Love's Labor's Lost*) is partly that they seem to be merely lists ... and yet each song says, in a marvelously economical way where people are in the cycle of the year, the people who live entirely in the turning seasons. The only syntax that matters is

'When Then .....not folk songs, consciously pastoral, sophisticated enjoyment

of simplicity." C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and*

*its Relation to Social Cutom* (New York: Meridian, 1959), p. 117.

"The Passionate Pilgrim" 11. 157-68 in *The Complete Poems and Plays of William*

*Shakespeare*, Ed. William Allan Neilson and Charles Jarvis (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1942). This poem, though included in a collection attributed to Shakespeare, was, according to most editors, not written by him.

31 William Nelson, *The Poetry of Edmund Spenser* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 39.



11 edited by M. Y. Offord (London: Early English Text Society, Oxford University Press, 1959), vol. ii, lines 166-168.

33 (1 looked beyond him but a little way, And saw a shape approaching with a cane His cheeks were bare, his hoary locks were gray His eye hollow, his hoarse voice coughed with pain Withered he was and weak as a twig under strain Upon his breast he bore a message of doom Which said in letters small that did not feign "O youth your flowers will fade now precious soon.") *Poems and Fables of Robert Henrysson*, p. 179.

34 G. E. R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argument in Early Greek Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 65.

31 cited by Lloyd, p. 15.

36 Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (New York: Modern Library, 1954), pp. 121-5.

11 The term "debate" stems from Latin *battuere* or "battle." The heat of this battle is the source of the convention's vigor, assimilating to poetry the attractions of competitive sport. As Castiglione observed:

And forsomuch as our mindes are very apte to love and to hate: as in the sights of combats and games ... it is seene that the lookers-on many times beare affection without any manifest cause why, into one of the two parties, with a greedy desire to have him get the victorie, and the other to have the overthrow.

(Castiglione, *The Courtier*, trans. Sir Thomas Hoby (1561) in *Three Renaissance Classics*, ed. Burton Milligan (New York: Scribners, 1953), p. 273.) Verse debate survives widely as a form of verbal folk art—in the *flytings* hurled during Celtic folk festivals, in the "dozens" and "raps" exchanged in ghetto streets, and in the improvised *contraversia* sung by Puerto Rican peasants. But the form of poetic contest I am concerned with here is the product of literary culture. It has more significant analogues in the late Roman *controversia*, the fictional trial that pitted two orators in hypothetical litigation for the entertainment of a theatrical audience.

38 For a full study of Renaissance applications of these three levels of discourse, see C. J. Kennedy, *Rhetorical Norms in Renaissance Literature*. How much direct influence Aristotle's *Rhetoric* had on later writers is open to question. But the rhetorical tradition carried forward by Cicero, Quintilian and Aphthonius, who supplied the actual texts in the schools, was heavily enough based in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* to make his treatment an appropriate paradigm for this study.

39 *Rhetoric* 1358b, p. 32.

40 *Rhetoric* 1356a, pp. 24-5.

41 (As this young man leapt lightly on the land I marvelled much to mark his mighty zest. "Superb I am," said he, "a superman With boar's brawn, broad and burly breast Who'd dare deny the boon with which I'm blessed Or of my doughtiness a dot demean. My face is fair, my form can stand time's test O youth, enjoy yourself in flowering green.")

This old man sang with sober voice and slow  
Shaking his chin beard, "Boy," he said, "let be  
I was, but sixty seven years ago  
A champion on the earth, as strong and free  
As glad, as gay, as green, as glib as ye  
But now those days o'erdriven are and done  
Look at my loathly shape and there truth see

O youth, your flowers will fade now precious soon.")

42 *Rhetoric* 1402a, p. 159.

43 *The Poems of Sir Phillip Sidney*, ed. William A. Ringler, Jr. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 24, lines 102-4. All later references are to this edition.

44 *Rhetoric*, 1394a, p. 134.

41 Rhetorical interpolations sometimes take up more space in the verse debate than the argument itself. In the *Parlement of Thre Ages*, Youth embarks on a long formulaic digression on the joys of falconry, while Old Age devotes more than half of the poem to a series of exempla illustrating the fall of pride.

*Rhetoric*, 1354a, p. 19. In order to succeed in this, the orator must have knowledge of human character—as it is manifested not only in the *persona* of the speaker he creates but in the audience to whom he wishes to appeal. Such knowledge includes an understanding of the emotions, their separate natures, relationships and causes. Of the many emotions displayed in the drama of *conflictus*, anger is the most prevalent. And since anger is one of the strongest emotions that the orator stimulates, Aristotle provides a lengthy analysis of its forms and causes that guides the orator as dramatist:

Anger may be defined as an impulse, accompanied by a pain, to a conspicuous revenge for a conspicuous *slight* directed without justification towards what concerns oneself or one's friends ... It must always be attended by a certain pleasure—that which arises from the expectation of revenge ... There are three kinds of slighting-contempt, spite and insolence ... you feel contempt for what you consider unimportant ... Spite ... is a thwarting another man's wishes, not to get something yourself but to prevent his getting it ... Insolence is also a form of slighting, since it consists in doing and saying things that shame the victim simply for the pleasure involved ... The cause of the pleasure thus enjoyed by the insolent man is that he thinks himself greatly superior to others when ill-treating them. That is why youths and rich men are insolent ... (*Rhet.* 1378b) People afflicted by sickness or poverty or love or thirst or any other unsatisfied desires are prone to anger and easily roused: especially against those who slight their present distress ... thus a lover is angered by disregard of his love ... (*Rhet.* 1379a)

This passage describes the forms and causes of anger discoverable in the pastoral debates of Age and Youth.

47 Their use also provides employment for literary critics like E. K.:

But eft when) A verve excellent and lively description of Winter so as may bee indifferently taken, eyther for old Age, or for Winter season ... Phyllis) The name of some unknowen, whom Cuddie, whose person is secrete, loves. The name is usuall in Theocritus, Vergile and Mantuane.

(*Minor Poems*, 1, 27)



48 Translated by Braydon Eggers (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1955) 11. 32 ff. H. Haesler provides an exhaustive list of such rhetorical devices in "The Owl and the Nightingale und die literarischen Bestrebungen des 12. und 13. Jhts," (Frankfurt-am-Mein, 1942).

41 *Rhetoric*, p. 52.

50 In this connection, it is relevant to look at Aristotle's definition of character in the *Poetics*:

Character in a play is that which reveals the moral purpose of the agents, i.e., the sort of thing they seek or avoid, *where that is not obvious ...* (italics mine). Thought, on the other hand, is shown in all they say when proving or disproving some particular point or enunciating some universal proposition. (Translated by Ingram Bywater (New York: Modern Library, 1954), 1450b, p. 232)

In this passage, which illuminates the overlap between the disciplines of poetry and rhetoric, character is again distinguished from the content of speech and located somewhere behind the words: "the sort of thing they seek or avoid, where that is not obvious." Character must be inferred by the reader; or, in those cases when drama is staged-the *Streitgedicht* was often performed by jongleurs and minstrels-it must be *interpreted* by the actor.

11 Another stanza this young swain did sing "Now's time, I think, to partake of love's treat At court, of course. I'll swagger, strut and swing And look for one amongst the ladies sweet Whose mouth with mine will mix in marriage meet In secret places where we wont be seen And there that bird will love to cool my heat 0 youth enjoy yourself in flowers green."

52 Then angrily replied the austere Reeve "For your swagger you shall croak and cower Your fleshly lust will some day make you grieve And pain will pull you from your paramour And then will no bird love you in the bower When lo, your manhood's waned just like the moon And then you'll learn if this my song's too sour: 0 youth, your flowers wither precious soon."

54 The merry man of mirth still argued more My body's clean without trace of corruption My spirit's sound-it's neither sick nor sore My senses five maintain their due proportion My mind is in a perfect clear condition My heart is hale, and so's my liver and spleen Therefore I will not need your admonition 0 youth enjoy yourslef in flowers green."

The greybeard answered thus the burly boy  
"You'll serve this sentence; soon you'll lose your hair  
The stature and the strength you now enjoy

Old age and fevers foul away will bear  
 Your heat will cool, your body will outwear  
 With failing health you'll surely come to ruin  
 Despite your wish, time won't your senses spare

"O Youth your flowers wither precious soon."

5 -5 Following the usual pattern of characterization in medieval literature, the particular is secondary, descended from the universal, while the reader's view of the characters' subjective existence-their interior reality-remains subordinate to his sense of them as objective embodiments of the contraries. Like the physical setting of the debate, the psychological reactions of the principals appear only as ornaments or *colores* to enliven the demands of theme, plot and a priori structural pattern.

(Trimpi, p. 27) 16 "The Renaissance and Reformation were crucial stages in the process of 'interiorization' of European culture." Claudio Guillen, p. 307.

57 Their choice is ironically appropriate. Chaucer's Miller the one who observes that "Youthe and Elde are often at debaat." Not only his Prologue and Tale, but that of the Reeve, the Merchant, the Pardoner, the Wife of Bath and the Clerk all have as a central theme the conflict of youth and age.

57a *The Shepherd's Garland in The Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. J. W. Hebei, vol. V, ed. Kathleen Tillotson and B. H. Newdigate (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 50. All later references to this volume.

58 The Drayton's tactics are suggested by Quintillian: "Ethos includes the skillful exercise of feigned emotion or the employment of irony and sometimes even a feigned submission to our opponents." Cited by W. J. Kennedy, pp. 10-11.

-59 *The Poems of Sir Phillip Sidney*, p. 26, 11. 135-7.

This generalization needs qualifying. Though most debates end as stalemates, a considerable number do conclude with one side's triumph. Examples of these are the early "Ecloga Theoduli," the debate between Wine and Water (won by Wine), Drayton's second eclog, Milton's debate between the lady and Comus, and Marvell's debate between the resolved soul and created pleasure. Such "didactic" works have a different affective strategy from the "exploratory" poems that end in stalemate, (This pair of categories is proposed by Altman, p. 7 ff.) They expose both sides of the question in order to refute error and lay it to rest, in order to confirm a single homiletic message and support one side in a controversy. Renaissance Puritan satires took the form of such debate dialogues. See L. H. Smith, "The Elizabethan Debate Dialogue," diss. University of Minnesota, 1974. However, in some cases the intended or at least stated effect is lost, and the reader sides with the wrong contestant-as did Blake with Milton's Satan.

In some of the debates considered here, the question of the nature of the outcome of the argument has itself become a vexed *altercatio*. Scholars like Lampe (*Middle English Debate Poems*), and Douglas Peterson ("O and N and

Christian Dialectic") insist for instance that the Owl and the Nightingale, the Owl and the Cuckoo and other *debats* that seem to be exploratory, in fact are didactic, since contemporary "rules" of disputation or of Christian Doctrine would force the reader to side with one side and see the fallacy

of the other. Other scholars, like Bossy (*The Prowess of Debate*) and Speirs (*Middle English Poetry*) insist that poems like "*Parl. of Thre Ages*" that seem to have a didactic outcome, in fact are open, in that their 'holy' speakers partially discredit themselves on the dramatic level.

61 In the Carolingian "Conflictus Hyemis et Estatis," after Winter tries a trick similar to Thenot's in "February," Dame Theology enters from above, counsels Summer and Winter to cease their quarrelling, and advises that continuation will lead to their mutual destruction while reconciliation will take them both to heaven. (Walther, p. 209) In "The Owl and the Nightingale," the royal wren convinces the two birds to stop squabbling, not by adjudicating their claims, but by referring them to another judge. And in the allegorical *debat* in the *locus amoenus* on Arlo Hill between Change and Constancy that concludes Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Dame Nature validates and criticizes the arguments of both parties, predicting the moment when all debate shall finally cease.

61 This gallant groaned with a grievous heave

And soon departed sadly from the scene;

The old man didn't laugh, but took his leave...

13 And I remained under the leaves so green

Until the worth of each one's words I'd seen  
And knew that truth wove through their crossing tune

"O Youth take hold of joy in flowers green!"

"O Youth your flowers will wither precious soon."

In one of the Ms. editions of Henrysson's poems published by the Early Scottish Text Society, the word "triumphit," for which no suitable definition has been found, is replaced by the word "trevist"--i.e., "traversed" or "kept intersecting." I have used this variant in my translation.

Sidney creates an analogous conclusion of musical harmony out of mental contradictions at the end of a pastoral debate that introduces his first series of eclogues in Arcadia:

[The dance of the Arcadian shepherds]

[A] We love, and have our loves rewarded.

[B] We love, and are no whit regarded.

[A] We finde most sweete affection's snare,

[B] That sweete, but sower despairfull care.

[A] Who can despaire, whom hope doth beare?

[B] And who can hope, who feeles despaire? [A] As without breath, no pipe cloth move,  
No musike kindly without love.

(*The Poems of Sir Phillip Sidney*, p. 14)

"Februarie" (translation: God, because he is aged, makes those he loves like himself ... No old man fears God.)

65 In *Dialectical Criticism and Renaissance Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), Michael McCanless draws a contrast between an "either-or" and a "both-and" picture of reality that corresponds to my opposition between the articulation of contraries and the relativity of perspective. His definition of "dialectic" provides an involuted but accurate description of what happens to the reader of pastoral debate:

Dialectic occurs when men attempt to force on a "both-and" reality an "either-or" reading of it  
... Agents attempt to resolve conflicts and contradictions between antinomial concepts,  
ideological positions and doctrines by reducing

these antinomies to one conflicting side and ignoring or denying the other. In so doing, they only invite back on themselves the attacks of other men (or concepts or ideologies) ... A discourse that commits itself to antinomial categories as its key terms is ... a verbal action the end of which is to extricate itself from the dialectical logic implicit in these categories. This dialectical logic asserts itself in proportion to the argumentative force directed at escape from it . . . dialectic becomes inevitable to the exact degree that dialectic is denied. (p. 11)

66 Stanley Fish, *Self Consuming Artifacts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 51. see also his *The Living Temple: George Herbert and Catechizing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

67 *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), p. 372.

68 The word "perspective" originates with Latin, "Perspicere," meaning "to see clearly," "examine," "regard mentally," The term first gained currency when used by quattrocento painters to refer to the technique of creating the illusion of three dimensional space on a two dimensional surface. This was done by the painter's organizing the canvas as a pyramid of coordinates whose base was the point of view of the observer and whose apex was a calculated "vanishing point." (Claudio Guillen, *Literature as System*, p. 291). At the same time as supplying an instrument for the representation of truth, however, perspective was regarded as a mode of trickery and deception, and was both treasured and distrusted as such. It was a sign of the virtue and the danger of an expertly rendered scene in perspective that the beholder might not be able to distinguish between it and actually looking out the window. The word "perspective" thus also referred to illusionary devices like "anamorphic" paintings.

Like perspectives, which rightly gazed upon Show nothing but confusion-eyed awry  
Distinguish form.

(Shakespeare, *Richard II*, II,ii, 14-16, cited by Guillen, p. 309)

The very accuracy of the perspective representation depended on the fact that it was produced from a single, frozen location of the perceiver. But this rigid viewpoint also called into question the "truth" of the painting's representation. For the sizes and relationships of objects portrayed would appear wholly different from another vantage, raising serious doubts in the viewer's mind about the ability of the sense of sight-the noblest of the senses-to determine what was really there. In Guillen's words, "the concept and metaphor of perspective can readily be associated with growing epistemological dualism, the rigorous split between subject and object, as in the Cartesian distinction between mind and *res extensa*". (p. 292) This Cartesian epistemology is made explicit in Marvell's famous *conflictus*, "The Dialog of the Body and Soul," but the questioning that leads to it is implicit in the Relativity of Perspectives that characterizes the genre as far back as Marvell's medieval sources. (see H. Walther, 63 ff.) In Leibnitz' philosophy of the Monad, developed late in the 17th century, this notion of the relativity of perspectives, which permeates the Tudor *Weltanschauung* and which is generically implicit in the verse debate, is articulated into a full-blown epistemology and metaphysics. Starting with the premise that different perceptions of reality contradict each other and yet have their own validity i.e., "That the relations between perceiving units and perceived objects are at once different and 'truthful'," Leibnitz took the outrageous leap of postulating the point of view itself as the only true reality:

a non-material substance that he compared to a center of a sphere and called a monad. Leibnitz defined "perspective" as "the order imposed by the mind on the representations it receives" and drew the conclusion that there is no truth apart from the perceiver at all; and as a corollary that all the contradictions that we experience in "debate" are simply expressions of the different perspectives of the monads. According to Leibnitz, all the perspectives are collectively harmonized in the totality of viewpoints which is God.

69 Guillen, p. 310.

70 Kennedy, p. 21.

71 See Altman, p. 45, for a compendium of these rhetorical devices.

72 Montaigne, p. 424.

73 Thomas Lodge, *Rosalynde, or Euphues' Golden Legacy* ed. Edward Chauncey Baldwin (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1910), pp. 41 ff. The set piece extends back to Theocritus' Idyll X, in which an old and young laborer briefly discuss love.