

Preface

I started this project many years ago. As a young graduate student, I was attracted by the pastoral tradition in literature because it expressed some of the joys, longings and regrets I shared with my contemporaries. I wanted to write about how pastoral combined a quest for innocence with the disillusionment of experience and issued in a vision of life alternative to that of established society. I wanted to validate and test my own attitudes by matching them with a vital strain of western sensibility.

As it turned out, I was not ready to carry the study beyond its preliminary state without undertaking some field work. After a period of research and full-time teaching in New York, I left the city to go with my wife in search of a real Arcadia. I found it at the end of the road on the coast of British Columbia. There we encountered a community of like-minded emigrants. We bought an old homestead and started raising goats, vegetables, and children. In summer we doffed clothes and played songs on pipe and tabor. In winter we slaughtered animals and gathered round the stove, at times sick or cold or hungry. Together with neighbors, we established a summer camp, a theatre troupe, and a farmer's co-op.

After eight years, the pastoral ideals that had drawn me to the country-ideals of both a soft and a hard life outside of civilization-began to lose their hold. Instead, I felt myself aspiring toward new ideals of involvement, responsibility,

recognition and reward, ideals represented by the image of the city. Leaving the peripheries and going back to the center by affirming my imperial citizenship appeared as the inevitable next step of personal growth. And yet, saying farewell to the stream that tumbles out of the forest and meanders through the pasture, to the nannies and their kids browsing on maple shoots, to the garden fenced against the deer, to the heavy log house, the ancient apple trees and the big rock, I knew that some day, after my children had grown, I would be ready to return there again for good.

While living in the wilderness I had no expectation of continuing my scholarly project, but I never stopped puzzling about the question of innocence and experience. I couldn't reconcile two contrary views of rustic life: how could it be both paradise and purgatory? The answer came to me as I left the pastoral world behind and reentered civilization. Though contraries, innocence and experience were also complementary. Both states involved extremes of refusal to engage the dominant social reality on its own terms. I saw that innocence was like the youth I was leaving behind and experience was like the old age I would some day encounter; they all excluded the middle ground I was entering—the stage of adulthood which maintains the nonpastoral, historical world and passes it on to future generations. When I later went to the texts, the hypothesis was confirmed: I found the conspicuous absence of pastoral herdsmen of middle age and the repeated presence of a dramatic vignette depicting "a young man and an old in solemn talk." (*As You Like It*, 11, iv, 20)

Though the critical approach of this study stems from my own experience, it would never have reached completion without the advice and support of others. I wish to express gratitude to S. K. Heninger, whose close reading and heartening comments about parts of this work encouraged me to offer the whole for publication, to Martin Evans, who criticized my first attempts, to Bliss Carnochan, Anne Mellor and Seth Schein, who read and discussed several chapters with me, to Herbert Lindenberger, who perused the whole manuscript,

and to Ron Rebholz, who scrutinized more than one draft. I am especially indebted to John Bender for many kinds of help, including shepherding my search for theses. I also want to thank Joe Montgomery and Claire-Elise Grace for putting up with an absent-minded father who stole one of their rooms for his dusty books and noisy typewriter. Finally, to Jan Howell Marx, who kept faith in this project during the years I abandoned it, who urged me to take it up again when I was ready, and who made it financially possible for me to carry it through, what can I say but, "it's done!"

Sections of chapter three, "*Fortunate Senex: The Pastoral of Old Age*," have appeared in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1800* 25 (1985). The author wishes to thank the Dean of Humanities and Sciences and the English Department at Stanford University for a joint publication grant.

