A New History of Tudor England

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Essays for Students, Teachers, and Workers

By

Daniel Bender

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements vii

Introduction 1

Chapter One 7
Native Pastoral in the English Renaissance: Kett's Rebellion and the 1549 Petition

Chapter Two 39
'...appertaining to thy young days': The End of the Academe in *Love's Labour's Lost* and a "Curriculum for the Future"

Chapter Three 55
Caught in the War Machine: Students and Workers in the Aftermath of *Macbeth*

Chapter Four 71
The Whip Hand: Elite Class Formation in Ascham's *The Schoolmaster*, Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost,* and the Present Academy

Chapter Five 93
Silence of the Valedictorians: The Legacy of The Merchant Taylors School (1581)

Index 113

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My biggest spiritual debts are closest to home. My father, stationed in the Aleutian Islands during World War II, once shared the emotional ache caused by war-making. My wife Mariko asked me to watch the film, *Elysium*, showing me that the problem of the few and the many is not just in my imagination. Her support while I struggled to recognize and articulate *A New History* was invaluable. I thank my sons, Tom, Winston, and Will for listening to kitchen synopses of this book. May they fight the good fight.

Daniel Bender
Trumbull Connecticut January 2020.

INTRODUCTION

> *"This book conceives of domination as a two way process, a system involving the participation of those who submit to power as well as those who exercise it*."
> —Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Problem of Domination.*

> "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways. The point, however, is to change it."
> —Karl Marx, *Eleven Theses of Feuerbach.*

Having expired more than four centuries ago, Tudor England is said to be fully and completely history. The public is conditioned to link the reign of Tudor monarchs (1485-1603) to historical closure. Books and television productions offer images of dazzling royalty, spectacles of emergent national swagger on a world stage, and a continuous background of servants and artisans hard at work. The Tudor age also offers a high-status educational system covered in the patina of the past. The Elizabethan Latin school turned out graduates trained to focus on the drama of political elites—Caesar came, saw, and conquered—who were expected to support royalist ideology. With his devotion to an elite political class, Shakespeare was a typical product of the Tudor school system. Whatever tragedy visits his high-ranking characters, they are nevertheless high-ranking. Regular working folk may add some local color and realism, but they are not worth dramatizing, given their remoteness as dots in an historical panorama.

The same feeling of historical closure applies to current perceptions of schoolmasters. They were trained to read Latin and perhaps Greek, the languages of the classical empires. Corrective rod in hand, they taught students to support an elite power structure, whereas the current system supports democracy, education for all. The same perception of a definitive past applies to workers. In Tudor England's economic chasm, workers had to satisfy the lord of the manor or the master who supervised their work. They had no civil rights and were seen as entirely dispensable dependents. The terms of their economic lives were dictated to them. Schoolmasters, students, and workers in Tudor England thus seem to bear the features of a bygone historical period, hermetically sealed off from our present. By

contrast, most people believe that workers, teachers and students in the America of 2020 are free to pursue life, liberty and happiness. Let's be thankful, goes the standing reception of Tudor England, that our 21st century is nothing like the 16th century.

The New History presented in this book challenges the basic premise of historical expiration. I argue that our own time period, 21st century America, reproduces many of the values, behaviors, and socioeconomic repressions of the Tudor past. Most people are comfortable with the commonplace that "History repeats itself," as in the numerical sequence of a First World War producing a Second World War. This book will claim that the past has a much longer reach, and that by an eerie forcefulness that cannot be explained rationally, Tudor England's labor economics and educational goals are re-embodied and re-activated in contemporary American society.

To begin with a small example of historical duplication, consider two words: landlord and schoolmaster. These are Tudor era locutions, but they carry hints of transhistorical movement. We may say realtor rather than a landlord; we prefer to say teacher rather than a schoolmaster. But if we recycle the old terms of schoolmaster and landlord in contemporary American society, we arrive at a cultural system defined by structures of dominance. The word "lord" is connected at least associatively to deity, to the Lord, and thus the economic title of a "landlord" suggests a being who has subjects at his command. A similar transhistorical movement occurs with schoolmaster, a male teacher who has mastered a subject and thus teaches in a Tudor Latin school. As Jessica Benjamin argues in her study of dominance, masters imply slaves. The structures of dominance encoded in schoolmaster and landlord were built into Tudor culture, and were used as honorific titles. But these structures may not have disappeared. They can reassemble and thus replicate themselves in an indefinite future. Currently, a small circle of elites determines the working conditions of workers and students and teachers.

This book raises two alarms. The first concerns an educational system that has abandoned or marginalized students in designing curriculum. Something is very wrong when students are told how they will spend twelve years of their lives under a group of educational overseers, working in state and federal officers. One thinks of mass production, of students as objects carried on an assembly line. Teachers, given lesson plans that overrule individual initiative and inspiration, follow the curricular orders from managers who rarely, if ever, enter classrooms. The result is an alienated

study body, seeing in the teacher's programmed efficiency a gloomy projection of their own machinic studies. The second alarm is raised on behalf of wage-dependent workers. Like the peasants who worked the land, sold their products and services without any power to fight monopolies and market-rigging, workers in the United States are scared to protest working conditions, more scared to unionize, and dare not expect profit-sharing from their corporate masters. No wonder that, as candid economists have shown, real wages of American workers have decreased since the 1970s, while compensation for executives has skyrocketed. This income inequality, though much-publicized, is nothing new. Tudor peasants, forced to give up their land due to massive increases in rent, would recognize contemporary workers who live in crowded rental units, cars, and RVs.

The five essays that comprise *A New History* will each sound alarms, some on the subject of deteriorated labor economics and some on the subject of an industrialized, inhumane educational system. Because I worry that the transhistorical connections of the essays will be hard for readers to accept, given the historical gap of 400 years, I wish to sketch further transhistorical junctures in this Introduction. In that way, I might make my readers more receptive to the specific studies that connect Tudor past and American present.

Collective action of commoners—the Tudor version of wage-dependent American workers—was feared and hated by royalist ideology, which assumed the prerogative of ruling over the many, who were barely able to read or write or think for themselves. In Henry VIII's England, ordinary people were shocked to see their churches stripped of sacred ornaments. The monarchy deemed these ostentatious and paganistic. Church lands, stained glass, pewter goblets, and silver candlesticks were sold to the highest bidders. When commoners organized against the dismantling of their churches, Henry VIII beat down their collective desire to be heard: "How presumptuous then are you, the rude commons of one shire…...to find fault with your Prince?" Henry VIII looms large as a cruel despot, forcing people to do religion his way, and punishing them if they prefer familiar forms of religious observance. But contemporary America has its own gargantuan entities possessing the power to impose their will on the acquiescent many.

If "We the People" have the right to elect our representatives, then it follows that the people would fund campaigns of candidates they like. In this way, the "people" are taking part in the selection and installment of candidates who represent their interests. But in a legal concession to corporate power that rivals Henry VIII's claim to be the head of the Church, the Supreme

Court of the United States ruled infamously in a decision known as "Citizens United" that corporations could spend unlimited sums of money to support a candidate. Campaign donations are a promissory note for favors to be granted. In that case, "We the People" have suffered a severe setback to the constitutionally-prescribed power to select candidates to represent us. The Supreme Court's permission to have mega-corporations pouring money into the coffers of candidates they have selected is violent pre-emption, similar to Henry's threat to imprison commoners who argued that their churches and their religious practices were their business.

Compared to thousands or millions of dollars in corporate donations, our nickels don't matter. The result is that an inner circle of corporate executives and their political operatives determine legislation, tax policy, and social welfare programs. Many Americans, wage-dependent and struggling to make ends meet, were outraged that Wall Street companies, having made reckless gambles in the form of wildly speculative investments, were then bailed out by the US Treasury, which had appointed—of course—former investment bankers for executive staff. The protests put down in the rebellious shires of England were also put down in Zuccotti Park, when protestors faced not royal lancers but police squads armed with pepper spray.

The struggles of ordinary Americans in the Occupy Movement should be of profound interest to students, teachers, and workers now. An economic system that is rigged calls for an educational wake up call and for economic reform of policies that affect students, teachers and workers. Right now, teachers cannot dare to ask, "How can a rigged economic system be made fair, responsive to the needs of average people, instead of being tied to the profit motives of banks and corporations?" If workers and students and teachers take an active role in resistance and reform, turning an elite-only subject into their own, then solutions from the people will replace the anti-labor lobbyists and curricular avoidance that currently holds sway. These essays are written with an activist intention in mind. Public education and working class labor are both controlled by elite planners; it is time for students, teachers, and workers to assert their own interests, to take part in policy-making and profits. This book is meant to help the cause of self-determination in three currently powerless groups.

My first essay, "Native Pastoral in the English Renaissance," considers the plight of a nascent Tudor working class that resembles the plight of the working class in America now. Just as families find themselves without housing due to gentrification, so too, small-landholding families in Tudor

England struggled against corporate land-grabs that turned them into day-laborers and vagabonds. I trust that readers will see the implied parallel to current labor struggles—Fight for $15 comes to mind—in this first essay, written when my transhistorical analytic skills were still developing.

The second essay, "*Love's Labour's Lost* and a Curriculum for the Future" centers on an area of public school curriculum that is sorely absent: life skills. If students are to be street wise before being sent into capitalism's school of hard knocks, they need an answerable curriculum. They need to negotiate a banking system that has left many in heavy debt; they need courses in finance, but also in the arts of social interaction and conflict resolution without benefit of cell phones; and they need adult supportiveness to understand their sexuality. "A Curriculum for the Future" shows these skills to be lacking in the over-intellectualized education system that Shakespeare mocked in *Love's Labours' Lost,* a defect that still mars public education.

The third essay takes all three of the book's intended audiences into account. War is never about training camps and battlefields separate from civilian life. It saturates the fabric of social life, including what is considered recreational fun, such as video games that call for shooting, strafing, bombing. Shakespeare knew this and conveyed the radiating effects of war brilliantly. Tudor England—hungering for access to French ports and French lands—knew that war is a profitable, exciting enterprise. "Caught in the War Machine: Students and Workers in the Aftermath of *Macbeth*" argues that Macbeth is the product of a militaristic society that prized domination and submission. Similarly, recent American presidents have favored a line of reasoning that justifies violence and occupation under the banner of self-defense: we must invade other countries to protect ourselves. When Macbeth, a war veteran, unleashes his reign of violence, he forces all around him, including the servants and soldiers of the Scottish working class, to do his awful bidding. Public schools still teach *Macbeth. M*any of those students will be wage-dependent workers living in the civilian aftermath of a militaristic America. Teachers who seek a new moral purpose and critical honesty in teaching the tragedy will find this purpose in my *Macbeth* essay.

My fourth essay, "The Whip Hand: Elite Class Formation in Ascham's *The Schoolmaster* Shakespeare's *Love's Labor's Lost,* and the Current Academy" describes the ideological control of education by two ruling classes. Instead of guiding Latin school students to study ways to enhance the common good—including the good of commoners aggrieved by

corporate acquisition of their family parcels—Tudor education trained elite students to regard commoners as trouble. They were a bothersome people who would not fall in line with capitalist adventurism; they clung to old modes of production. This Tudor bias against the many in favor of the few is carried out in current education. What is most visible to me, a literature teacher, is the ethic of expertism that treats students as novices or apprentices. The teacher knows the inner meanings of the literary text; the student must receive these gifts of insight, suspending her own interests and needs. The whip hand of the schooolmaster is at work in this polarizing division between expert teacher and novice student-reader. To increase student agency in the literature classroom, I recommend an end to expert knowledge as the top priority. What students do with their knowledge—what interventions they make in the marbled halls of official government—is what matters. Civic engagement is a very popular phrase circulating in schools. My essay on "The Whip Hand" explains how to bring students into contact with their civic powers.

The last essay concerns two cultural systems that were co-dependent in Tudor times and are co-dependent today: education and government. Richard Mulcaster was appointed the first headmaster of The Merchant Taylors School. He was also a fanatic supporter of Queen Elizabeth and demanded allegiance to the Queen in his classroom. Those who seemed lukewarm in their monarchic allegiance were turned away. A similar blocking of ideological diversity occurs in public high schools today. Valedictorians are invited to speak on Graduation Day. If they dare to criticize the centralized school authority, their microphones are shut off. "Silence of the Valedictorians: Richard Mulcaster and The Merchant Taylors School*"* carries out the transhistorical analysis that is the basis of my new historiography. It connects Mulcaster's reign of forced allegiance to paralell practices among American school principals and school boards. It then suggests some reforms, so that students, and the workers they will become, learn to have a voice in the valuation of their own labors.

CHAPTER ONE

NATIVE PASTORAL IN THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE: KETT'S REBELLION AND THE 1549 PETITION

In July 1549, a large cross-section of agrarian English society gathered in the meadows outside of Norfolk to protest illegal enclosures and entrepreneurial engrossment of small land holdings.[1] Despite the efforts of Lord Protector Somerset and parliamentarian ally John Hales to remove illegal enclosures, residents of Norfolk and Suffolk despaired of relief (Pollard 231-2; Wood 39). The "good Duke of Somerset ...took all his pains and employed many honest men," explains a Tudor chronicler, but could not prevent the "greedy avarice of the gentry" who defied the proclamations against enclosures (Strype, *Memorials* 2.156). The only remaining authority would have to be constituted by commoners prepared to speak publicly for the aggrieved populace. Taking up pen and paper, they would make a case for economic regulation not to distrusted local magistrates but to King Edward and his councilors.[2]

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[1] Cranmer's English Bible marks an instantiating moment for "native pastoral" as I will discuss throughout. The title page of the second edition (1540) features a heterogeneous gathering of people holding newly issued "Englished" bibles *(n.p.*). With Latin and English inscriptions arranged in interchangeable sequence, the illustration depicts first-time access of literate commoners to the New Testament. For a detailed chronology of the "Commotion time" with special attention to the massing of commoners prior to the rebellion, see Russell. My reference to a "cross-section of agrarian society" is based on Whittle (23-25). Known participants in the rebellion range from "two minor manorial lords" to farmers owning less than 5 acres. In contrast to my reading, Wood suggests that Robert Kett was less than fully committed to the liturgical multitude, becoming a leader to control "angrier" and "poorer" rebels *(1549 Rebellions* 157).

[2] Thirsk discusses legislation that increased commoners' resentment of Parliament, including a proposed sheep tax that would have lightened the tax burden for wealthy landowners. See Thirsk 202-223.

This essay argues that in seeking the moral and political support of the Edwardian Protectorate, the petition writers fashioned a rhetorical strategy from a distinctively English tradition of pastoral polemics whose best known practitioners were the Protestant divines Hugh Latimer and Robert Crowley. In writing a rural plea addressed to an urban audience, the petitioner's approximate themes and conflicts associated with Renaissance pastoral conventions. The shire representatives of East Anglia were rustic and relatively unsophisticated, a group much like the artificial rustic types who populate elite pastoral verse. And, although some of these representatives had significant land holdings, courtly politics in London were as remote and unfamiliar to them as they would have been to the literary shepherds in Theocritus and Virgil and later, in England, those of Spenser and Sidney. Nevertheless, lyric strains of lament and nostalgia for a happier time - staples of classical pastoral - are reiterated in the Petition's pleas for renewed access to land ownership and the economic autonomy it affords.[3] Even the familiar thematic of an Arcadian "golden age" finds a parallel in the Petition's remembrance of King Henry VII, protector and benefactor of English common folk.

The Petition has not been recognized, however, as a plebeian version of Renaissance pastoral, nor has early modem scholarship credited it as an example of that most Renaissance of composition practices, *imitatio,* which reconfigures previous texts in light of contemporary needs. The circumstance of the Petition's composition - thousands of discontented commoners milling in place without communicating their grievances - called for cross-class communication if the messenger was a culturally authoritative or at least politically orthodox person. How would the rural petitioners fashion a written identity that served this occasion? A strategically fashioned persona of rural subjects serving as unofficial pastors would give the petition-writers greater moral authority to negotiate with the royal council, an authority that mere shire representatives lacked. Specifically, the petitioners wrote as protective paternal figures - as clerical pastors - who could defend their flock in the name of Christ, the divinely anointed shepherd who protected the poor and aggrieved. This metamorphosis of rural petition-writers into *de*

[3] Virgil's First and Ni nth *Eclogue* concerns land dispossession, a crucial issue in the 1549 Petition. For a discussion of Virgilian pastoral and issues of land confiscation, see Patterson 73.

facto pastors produced a new version of pastoral which I will call native pastoral.[4]

My effort to define the Petition as plebeian reprise of a major Renaissance genre is the first step in my argument. My main thesis is that the Petition's status as a plebeian pastoral created the conditions for rare event: a cross class exchange in a culture where controversial dialogue was reserved for cultural elites: manorial lords, members of Parliament, royal councilors. With the exception of James Holstun's sympathetic analysis of the "commoning time" that produced the Petition, early modem scholarship has not treated the Petition as a complex representation of a communitarian identity, the commoners of East Anglia.[5] F. R. Russell's *Kett 's Rebellion in Norfolk* (1859) reproduces the manuscript of the Petition, and offers helpful annotations on obscure phrasing and terminology, but he does not consider the literary implications of rural Englishmen speaking in defense of a multitude that was expected to be quiet and obedient." In the twenty first century, the Petition is treated as an archival record rather than a vision of economic and spiritual order composed by a social class usually associated with illiteracy. Andy Wood's *The 1549 Rebellions and the Making of Early Modern,* Diarmaid MacCullough's essay "Kett's Rebellion in Context" and Jane Whittle's "Lords and Tenants in Kett's Rebellion" read the Petition for its documentary value in Tudor social history, and not as a nascent mimesis of plebeian aspirations, historical relationships, and identity themes. A similar bias appears in Zachary Lesser's and Benedict S. Robinson's recent collection of essays, *Textual Conversations in the Renaissance: Ethics, Authors, Technologies.* The collection explores Renaissance dialogue between highly literate groups who negotiate their differences based on similar class affiliations. But when the essays in this collection discuss social groups, authors, and dialogic traditions, these references operate as if in gravitational orbit around cultural elites of the period. For example, the historical subjects of *Textual Conversations* are most often Latin-trained humanists such as Baldassare Castiglione and Stephano Guazzo, not English commoners with sudden access to pen and paper. By contrast, this essay analyzes conversational power coming from the lower end of the

[4] A precedent for the petition's pastoral genesis comes from a previous uprising of 1536, where commoners justified their protest as a defense of religion. The commons should "Awake" for "the Churches sake" (qtd. in MacCullough 74-78).

[5] See Holstun for a compelling case that the requested reforms would protect small landholders against a wave of land dispossession. On pages 50-53, however, he argues that these requests were ultimately utopian, given the rapid capitalist expansionism at the time.

social hierarchy. The plebeian subjects collaborating on The Petition harnessed the sacred doctrine of Christ's ministry as a blueprint for domestic policies of the Tudor Commonwealth.

Historians of the period rarely point out that religious instruction was not always the sole office of professional clergy. More typically, early modem scholarship recognizes the deep learning of Protestant divines in sixteenth century England. Deborah Keller Shuger's *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics and the Dominant Culture,* for example, recounts the intense interest of English theologians in analogizing monarchic power with the Christian body politic. Her study represents the usual trajectory of power relations: highly trained pastors preach to the Tudor multitude who may become followers of Christ. Religious doctrine and the arts of the sermon thus operate by what might be termed trickle down theology. But the flow of instruction and reform can be reversed. The multitude, schooled in Christ's message of cross-class salvation and alert to Christ's ministry to the oppressed, could, if occasion required, edify their political and social superiors in the practical application of Christ's ministry. In taking the stance of pained mediators speaking for a silent social class, the petition-writers sought legitimacy in the eyes of King Edward's Privy Council. The Petition of 1549 is not merely a list of complaints; it represents a strategy of conversational engagement that could bridge the class division between London elites and East Anglian plebeians.

1. Cross-Class Dialogue

A grasp of recent work in conversation theory is crucial to understanding the Petition's efforts to make its demands acceptable to a Tudor government. We are better able to understand why the phrase "We pray" and its variant, "We pray your grace," is repeated in twenty-eight of the twenty-nine entries in light of Lynne Magnusson's study of early modem social dialogue.[6] Through the "elaboration of repetitive social practices," a discourse can contribute to "the construction ...of subject positions, personal identities, relationships and systems of knowledge" *(Social Dialogue* I 0). Because the petition-writers were commoners, and their leader, Kett, was a tanner and local landholder, these anxious defenders of the multitude had to present the rhetorical equivalent of a bended knee; "we pray" linguistically presents the social practice of physical submission. Magnusson's analysis shows that a

[6] Quotations of the *Petition* are from Russell 48-56. For the sake of easier comprehension, I silently modernize spelling. Subsequent quotations of the Petition will be abbreviated as Russell followed by the page number where the entry appears.

discourse is socially acceptable when it duplicates orthodox, and therefore expected, social behavior. The role of deference in dialogue between politically unequal groups receives further confirmation in psychoanalytic theory, where, as Jessica Benjamin has shown in *The Bonds of Love,* the submissive interlocutor must maintain a continuous stance of submission. Assertion and the desire to be recognized, Benjamin writes, "constitute the poles of a delicate balance" (10). When the shire representatives call for an end to clerical absenteeism or ask that corrupt tax assessors be replaced, these proposals are presumably made palatable by a continuous tone of deference. The work of Magnusson and Benjamin allows us to appreciate the Petition's starkly submissive tone as a sensible approach in addressing a royal council.

Similarly, Arthur Kinney's and Jennifer Richards's recent studies have built on the problem of conversational balance. If deference toward a superior is one way to maintain the good will of the superior party, a more calculating strategy involves projection of a self that the listening party would like to hear. As Kinney explains in his essay, *"Art of Conversazioni,"* a successful dialogue may depend on an illusion projected by the speaker. The addressee may prefer an attractive though artificial persona (compassionate shire representatives) and overlook the all-too-familiar identity (restive commoners). Any conversation, Kinney writes, "needs some kind of give-and-take, some kind of willed blindness or ignorance, some tacit compromise of subject and position" (17). Kinney's positive valuation of "willed blindness" is realized in the Petition's extremely pious and deferential language; reverential respect for "Your Majesty" manages to cover up competing emotions of resentment. Another study of courtly rhetoric reiterates how bracketing negative emotion and superimposing a forced, yet more positive one can move a conversation forward. Building on dissimulation as a bridge between unequal conversational partners, Richards's *Rhetoric and Courtliness in Early Modern Literature* asserts that feigned vocalizations of goodwill can serve honest conversation; the projection of benevolence facilitates "negotiation between different and conflicting interests" (2).

These theorizations of early modem social dialogue typically focus on scholars and diplomats, and thus do not quite fit the compositional demographics in the summer of 1549. On the eve of what came to be known as Kett's Rebellion, the petitioners were not reading Castiglione's *JI Cortegiano.* Still, Magnusson's theorization of linguistic practices which reinforce appropriate social practices, Benjamin's theorization of submissiveness as a condition for assertion, Kinney's thesis that dissimulation can generate dialogic good will, and Richards' similar approval of

"feigning" rhetoric inform my analysis of the Petition and offer analogues to the East Anglians' conversational compositional strategies. As I shall demonstrate, the petitioners approximated the voice and ethos of Protestant commonwealth pastors in order to restore a tarnished ideal: a bond of reciprocity between benevolent King and grateful Commons.

2. Pastoral Language of the 1540s: Precedents

The shire representatives, church-goers all, had a number of orally produced discursive precedents to follow. These parishioners-turned writers must have heard licensed pastors in the Church of England offer exegesis of Christ's ministry to the poor and downtrodden; the idea of speaking for the "weakest" was a doctrinal commonplace. Throughout the 1540s, the erosion of the commons as independent land holders with adequate resources of food, housing, clothing, and even firewood had gained the attention of protestant clergy in the Tudor clerical establishment. The commoners, especially the literate landholders, would have known of written sermons on behalf of agrarian England. In his *Instructions to the Parsons and Curates,* Bishop Richard Sampson urges English clergy to take Edwardian legislation as their lead in ministering to ordinary souls. Curates are bound to "obey and execute the kings high commandments" (Strype 1. 374). Advancing the cause of an activist clergy concerned with the "the quietness of Christ's flocke," the Bishop of Chichester insists on a political obligation behind of the pastoral calling; the "care of souls" is not a matter of soothing individual suffering, but of actively supporting the application of the law. Presumably, the Proclamations against illegal enclosure were included in the pastor's duty to see the king's "high commandments" executed.

Another precursor to the absent or embattled pastor image is closer still to the conversational strategies of the Petition. The Petition's concern with royal honor ("We pray your Grace") and indignation at gentry aggression ("commoning on the commons") is a clear reprise of the early protestant pastor Hugh Latimer who spoke with eloquent indignation against offenses committed against the commons. Delivered on 8 March 1549 in the presence of King Edward, Latimer's sermon diagnoses the sickness of the English social body as a breach of pastoral responsibility. The king's honor is damaged because "graziers, inclosers, and rent-rearers" block the monarch's intention to shelter and sustain the lowliest subjects:

> It is the king's honour that the commonwealth be advanced; that the dearth of these foresaid things be provided for, and the commodities of this realm so employed, as it may be to the setting of his subjects on work, and keeping them from idleness. And herein resteth the king's honour and his office. So doing, his account before God shall be allowed and rewarded. Furthermore, if the king's honour, as some men say, standeth in the great multitude of people; then these graziers, inclosers, and rent-rearers, are hinderers of the king's honour. For whereas have been a great many householders and inhabitants, there is now but a shepherd and his dog: so they hinder the king's honour most of all. (99-100)

Latimer singles out "oppressors, ingrossers of tenements of land" whose greed has allowed "the king's liege people" to be famished and decayed *(Sermons* 94). These grievances will resurface in July 1549, when the shire representatives of East Anglia will accuse "lords" of "commoning on the commons." Defense of the commons could be a popular subject of protestant activism, for paralleling Latimer's complaint against "hinderers of the king's honor" is Robert Crowley's pamphlet denouncing economic and spiritual exploitation of the commons. *An information and peticion against the oppressours of the pore commons of this rea/me (1548)* reaches the high notes of Protestant interventionist rhetoric. Specifically, as a Protestant minister, Crowley professes his belief in the Christian doctrine of "distribution" famously figured in Christ's distribution of fish and loaves. Crowley's *Petition* sides with causes dear to the Lord Protector Somerset, citing illegal enclosures as the devices of wealthy men who care only about the "heapes" of treasure to amass. Addressing these wealthy opponents of Christian distribution as if they were present, Crowley writes: "Knowe that your office is to distribute and not to scrape together on heapes" *(Selected Works* 163). A recent study of Crowley's pastoral polemics helpfully explains that "godly exhortation and admonition' were a regular feature of "church dicipline" (Graham 147).[7] Although a Protestant reformer who confronted the rich and powerful was assumed to be a Protestant minister, we discover the same tones of exhortation and admonition in the East Anglian Petition.[8]

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[7] My discussion of land access as an allegory of reciprocity is indebted to Kenneth Graham's essay, "Distributive Measures ." Crowley's thought "corresponds to a God whose justice mirrors the local market in its insistence that all transactions - socioeconomic, judicial, or spiritual - must maintain the principle of reciprocity" (137).

[8] Wood's *1549 Rebellions* identifies Latimer and Crowley as protestant interventionist pastors. Both preachers hope to "prevent future disorders" by urging the gentry to "embrace godly religion" (189). The fact that the Privy Council and the Parliament

Yet another liturgy-inspired defense of the English commons and thus another textual precursor of the Petition comes from the golden reign of a previous Tudor King. Sixty years earlier a Tudor King had defended the lowest social order. Henry VII's legislation in the late fifteenth century, the *Acts Against Enclosers and Engrossers (1489)* will resurface in the *Petition* as a commemoration of land prices in the reign of Henry VII. Sampson and Latimer's sermons on the Christian duty to nurture the commons, Crowley's ministerial tract against the oppressors of the commons, and Henry VII's anti-enclosurelegislation comprise a set of precursor texts that the petitioners of 1549 would fashion into their pleas for gentry containment and relief for the laboring class.

I have organized my reading of the twenty-nine entries by subject matters around which multiple entries tend to cluster. Accordingly, my first section assesses the petition's call for renewed access to land in light of an historic relation between Tudor King and the commoners. I then evaluate the petitioners' strategic representation of a rural collective, a strategy that aligns petitioners with Christ's inclusive ministry. Lastly, I demonstrate that the petitioners came to engage their pastoral function more openly as the writing process unfolded. In those entries where Christ is invoked as the sacred protector, the shepherd of shepherds, the petitioners creatively reproduce Protestant polemics. In each of the three sections, we will discover pastor-centered discourse infusing the collaborative labors of the petitioners.

3. Agrarian Producers: The Allegory of Landownership

For early modem literary scholars, a work of pastoral literature which presents human labor is likely to be seen as violating, not embodying, the genre. As Roze Hentschell has observed, "The erasure of rural work has long been regarded as a necessary component of pastoral literature" *(Culture of Cloth* 2). In *History and Class Consciousness,* George Lukacs describes the conditions under which readers would recognize writing about land as literary; only "as an observer set apart in space" can the artist "relate to nature" (224). Whereas landscape is allegorically rich (spring as hope, winter as despair), land is generally considered a material reality, and thus separate from aesthetic or literary purposes. The petition-writers, however, faced the challenge of showing how land ownership was the material condition for psychological identity. While land use could be restricted to

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did not take seriously the discontent in the rural areas of England is proven by the subsequent disorder of Kett's Rebellion.

purely economic discourse, the petitioners present their royal readers with an equation. Land cultivation represents the habitual actions and values of the "commons" as a class of English subjects, an independent people whose labor provided a steady food supply for their social superiors.[9] When petitioners call for "copyhold land" that is "reasonable rented," as "it was in the first year of King Henry VII" (l4), they remind their readers that land cultivation and psychological well-being of commoners work in tandem.[10]

If the Privy Council is to take the request for renewed access to land seriously, they would be likely to do so if the "commons" writing in July 1549 had its economic autonomy and service to the national economy protected by royal intervention. As I mentioned earlier, the petitioners drew self-consciously on a text held in popular memory, namely Henry VII's celebrated legislation. The "pulling down and wylfull wast" of houses and towns, the legislation contended, had infringed on the commons' right to "lawful labor." Championing low-status commoners, Henry threatened to punish those who create "pasture londes" from fields that had long been "used in tylthe" (qtd. in Pollard, *England* 235). Given his *Act against Enclosures and Engrossers,* Henry VII inhabits the petition writer's imagination as the archetype of the English pastor-King. If Edward VI, grandson of that Tudor monarch, could safeguard the traditional autonomy of small land-holders, then he could protect the psychological underpinnings of his rural subjects.

The entries about land access include references to outright violations of boundaries, most dramatically when gentry landowners fenced in tracts of common land to contain their burgeoning sheep populations. Petition writers reacted angrily to the lawless estate holders and repeat the title "commons" to reiterate the collective identity of small land-holders: "We pray that all freeholders and copyholders may take the profits of all *commons,* and theirs to *common* and the lords not to *common* nor take the profits of the same" (11; my emphasis). This entry cites "commons" three

[9] Anger about exorbitant rents was voiced by Crowley, the Tudor prototype of the pastor speaking for the multitude. Strype took Crowley seriously enough to reprint Crowley's *Peticion,* including the passage concerning "lease mongers" who had "multiplied their rents to the highest" and turned tenants into "slaves" *(Ecclesiastical Memorials* II. 1.221).

[10] Aware that commoners were being displaced from their land, the government (or at least Somerset) may have favored rent reductions. Holstun argues that the gentry who mustered troops against the commoners feared "that class war would *fail* to break out "and favored military conquest instead of easing rent or wool prices" ("Utopia" 33).

times, twice as a verb and once as a noun. According to anthropologist Clifford Geertz, repetition of a group's name confirms group identity, since the repetitions saturate the mind of the hearers with the linguistic sign of the group *(Theatre State* 102). Elite readers in London would have been reminded that the English commons faces not simply economic hard times but the economic aggressions of a more powerful class. Adding to the pathos of this entry on boundary violation is a discussion of earlier peaceful and well-regulated land use, before the gentry intensified their expansionist campaign. Arable land and grazing meadows were systematically "divided into strips ...and thrown open for common pasturing after harvest in fallow seasons" (Thirsk, *Agrarian History* 80). This arrangement ensured land use variations while maintaining the integrity of boundaries. In contrast to the commons' culture of self-regulation, rural entrepreneurs did not want customary boundaries to stand in their way. Large-scale sheep-rearing entrepreneurs were allowed up to 2,400 sheep. They could not graze thousands of sheep in one designated area, but needed more and more land as their herds increased (223).

In these conflicting images of lawful boundaries maintained by the English commons set against the gentry's lawless violations, a latent mimesis of Christian tragedy emerges: the powerful overrun and exploit the weak. The complaint against gentry encroachment carries a clear tone of anger; the shire representatives may have been emboldened by Robert Crowley's allegation that English gentry intend to squeeze "every penny of all grounds" *(Selected Works* 179). Although wealthy men themselves, the Privy Councilors could still take the side of the meek against the strong, in which case the pastoral energies of the petitioners have animated Edward's council.

Other entries on renewed access to land follow a different argument for the mutual interdependence of nobles and commoners. The best illustration of the mutuality argument is the first entry of the twenty-nine, which asks that saffron-growing plots be exempted from anti-enclosure law. The entry has puzzled scholars who think that the first entry would logically call for pulling down of illegal enclosures. The nineteenth century historian of Kett's Rebellion, F.R. Russell, wrote that the entry might be a scribal error since saffron could not be a grievance serious enough to incite rebellion *(Kett 's Rebellion* 158). Confusion continues into the twenty-first century, when a recent historian of early modern agrarian capitalism writes that the request to all enclosures for saffron "dilutes the bold anti-enclosure statement" (Whittle 38). On the contrary, the request for an exception to

illegal enclosures makes the case for pulling down illegal enclosures more, not less, compelling.

The request to exempt enclosed saffron gardens from the anti-enclosure legislation appear, at first glance, to concern practical economics. For those living hand to mouth, the loss of a secondary source of revenue intensifies the economic struggle. The entry's reference to families dependent on saffron production ("greatly chargeable to" them) makes it clear that saffron cultivation is a matter of economic survival: "Where it is enacted for inclosing that it be not hurtful to such as have enclosed saffron grounds for they be gretly chargeable to them" (1). But saffron was not just another agricultural product that, like corn or barley, provided nutrition. Saffron had a mysterious breadth of applications beyond consumption, and the farming communities of East Anglia would have known that this herb served the needs unique to the English upper classes. Saffron was a spice at the table of wealthy, but it was also converted into a yellow dye for the dresses of court ladies, it was an ingredient in perfume, and a medicine sold by apothecaries to treat a range of ailments (Thirsk 175). Saffron even managed to be allegorized as a vestige of the sacred, since the materiality of the dried stamens produced a delicate scent. Hugh Latimer would use "sweet saffron" as a metaphor for the "scent" of Mary's compassion and humility after giving birth to Jesus *(Works* 60). All of these uses made saffron a product with extraordinary class mobility. If nobles and wealthier gentry pulled down enclosures on this rare herb, they would be damaging their access to the finer things of life - perfume, medicine, gorgeous yellow-dyed cloth - that also worked as signs of superior class status. Not to protect these enclosures in other words, would involve self-inflicted damage to the class boundary that allocated elegance to one side of the class divide and dietary utility to the other.

We are now in a position to understand the saffron entry's placement as first in the series of twenty-nine entries. The entry calls to mind a theology of cross-class respect and economic restraint, suggested in pastor Robert Crowley's reminder that English society consists of "one bodie" which includes the "pore creatures of this realme" *(Selected Works* 169). The commoners who composed the Petition did not have the means or education to read Virgil's first *Eclogue* where, the rustic Tityrus, allowed to remain on his land, offers a vision of plenitude that enables generous distribution: "We have ripe apples, mealy chestnuts, and a wealth of pressed cheese" says the hospitable Tityrus (n.p.). But the first entry nevertheless reflects a similar understanding of economic reciprocity. If the gentry and nobles of Edwardian England hoped for ample supply of saffron, they were best to

support the economic well-being of lowly commoners, whose bodily labor produced the wondrous herb that served their various needs.

All of the entries on renewed access to land betray an undercurrent of insecurity; exorbitant new leasing prices could turn farmers into day laborers. Commons land that provided firewood and grazing for the family cow could be fenced off at any time; the animosity of local magnates to the anti-enclosure laws could result in reprisal, where saffron gardens lose their protective fencing. Just as renters today fear non-renewal of a rental contract if they somehow offend the landlord, small landholders in Tudor England who held title through a manorial contract that was not granted in perpetuity. While a freeholder held the property with the legal expectation of lifetime use and transmission of title to the family, a copyholder was in a more ambiguous legal status. Eric Kerridge explains in *Some Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After,* that a copyholder is only theoretically someone who holds the legal document in hand and can present the original document in a manorial court; the title they held in hand might not transfer to the next of kin. According to Kerridge, common law recognized uncodified customary laws in manorial estate; custom may warrant tenure of an estate only for the natural life of the copyholder. Even more insecurity befell the so-called "tenant at will" whose "estate is determined at the will and pleasure of the lessor" (72).

The Privy Councilors, who held large estates themselves, would be unlikely to apply major reforming pressure on large landholders; large estates produced significant tax revenues, and estate holders disciplined by the central government in London might express their displeasure by evasion of tax duties. Complicating the councilors' desire to keep wealthy estate holders on congenial terms, however, were the social problems of displacement and unemployment caused by aggressive land acquisition. The desire to keep commoners employed and to maintain a sensible balance of agriculture and sheep herding had motivated the pro-commons legislation in Henry VII's reign; the petitioners of 1549 were arguing from precedent that protective measures for agrarian laborers was sound economic policy. More significantly for the composing process of Petition was the cultural status of images relating to plowing the soil and feeding the literal body. Both acts of menial labor had been interpreted as a brilliant allegory of the pastor, a religious laborer who plows the soil of the human psyche to produce the fruits of the spirit. Latimer's March 1548 *Sermon of the Plough* had reminded Tudor elites in London that the homely plough was the material sign of a higher form of labor on behalf of the English populace. Building on a Christian humility which links manual and intellectual labor

as serving a common good, Latimer's statement that the "preacher is one of Goddes ploughman" confers cultural status on farmers by allegorical reflection *(Sermons* 60). While the Petition's request for renewed land access did not suit the economic interests of Edward's councilors, this elite audience had recently been instructed in the Christian meaning of farming and food production. This means that seemingly unrealistic requests to reduce leasing prices should be understood as participating in a larger cultural field: Protestant polemics in the 1540s and Tudor legislative benevolence of the late fifteenth-century had taken virtually the same position. Finally, since land reform was tied to Christian duty, royal benevolence, and the gratitude of the poor commons, we are seeing in these entries a demonstration of Magnusson's thesis that early modem conversation drew on underlying social practices to legitimize linguistic exchanges.

The spiritual association of land cultivation by small-scale farmers, however, ran counter to the desire for social prestige, a worldly struggle that required land acquisition for the sake of social pre-eminence. In *What Else Is Pastoral?* Kenneth Hiltner explores an environmental concern for land stewardship in early modem England - a concern we usually associate with the environmental crises of post-industrial Europe. In his last chapter, however, Hiltner concedes that this environmental sensitivity gave way codes that established one's social superiority: land ownership was a powerful indicator of "power, wealth and prestige" (162). Social stature and material comfort - the cultural space of the "gentlemen"- thus infiltrated the neighboring cultural space of the "homely plough" that Latimer and his ecclesiastical populism had tried to protect. To render Latimer's vision of Christian commonwealth more compelling, the petition writers would have to try harder. They would need to dramatize the pastoral doctrine that English class divisions were superseded by a sacred vision of class unity, the mystical body of Christ. This doctrine could be made imaginatively vivid if the petitioners described the teeming multitude on a case-by-case basis: small farmers who suffer crop decimation, manorial bondsmen prevented from free movement, orphaned wards supervised by opportunistic guardians, Yarmouth fishermen hungering to keep a stranded whale for themselves and not for Crown revenue. The petitioners would need to cover geographic and socioeconomic distance, generating the compositional equivalent of Christ's perambulating ministry whereby diverse groups were encountered, recognized, and offered protective, healing care.

4. The Rustic Protectorate

The Petition writers could not hope to win elite intervention if they presented themselves as rival policy makers, a *de facto* agrarian state of England. The twenty-nine entries catalogue a daunting number of problems and make the Petition read like a government policy memorandum. To moderate their audience's suspicion of usurping ambition, the Petitioners couch their proposals as requests for intercession, as pleas for conversational exchange, rather than as demands that might repel their audience and prohibit future engagement. But something more than a humble and tentative phrasing would be needed if the petitioners were to hold the attention and elicit their audience's interest and pathos. While feigned courtesy might "facilitate negotiation" in such conversations (Richards 3), the petition writers needed to present a vision of godly political intervention that would motivate the reluctant and remote Privy Council. In the self-conscious Protestantism of Edward VI's Protectorate, nothing was more sanctified than the image of the good shepherd who protects his flock at all costs. This image of rural protectors would conceivably move their royal protectors in London to take action.

To convey this image of Christian care, the petitioners are careful not to ask for reforms that bring benefit to one specific group in agrarian East Anglia.[11] They write on behalf of the collective well-being of all his Majesty's subjects, including, but not limited to: farmers, bonded servants, fishermen, overtaxed land owners, parents who want their children to read religious primers, young wards who should not be forced into marriage by calculating court-appointed guardians. Aristotle's *Metaphysics* offers an analogue for

[11] Whittle's "Lords and Tenants in Kett's Rebellion" claims that "wealthier tenants ... took over the leadership" once the rebellion was underway. But Whittle also notes the active involvement of groups lower on the social scale, stating that the "impetus for rebellion seems to have come from the poorer group" (41). The problem with this differentiation of social groups (one instigating rebellion, the other penning the case for protest) is that it conceives of the rebellion as a political structure - an alliance - forged by the necessity of the moment. My argument is that the rebellion catalyzed the polemics of Protestant pastors, which had circulated in the margins of normal social division in East Anglia. In this sudden catalyst, class-created individuality gives way to cross-class kinship and shared subjectivity. When Robert Kett, prosperous landowner, became Robert Kett, penitent encloser and leader of the rebellion, he activates a central tenet of pastoral theology: the flock of Christ requires a spiritual leader, rather than a wealthy one. The effort to identify a group in control of Kett's Rebellion runs against the petition writers' liturgically-determined efforts to fuse class difference.

understanding the Petition as a collaborative group effort, and as a humble approximation of the Privy Council's own collaborative efforts at governance.

The *Metaphysics* illuminates a hierarchy of knowledge that bears a close resemblance to the hierarchical class relations operating in 1549. Higher intelligence, Aristotle explains, is capable of logical reasoning and invention. For example, the poet embodies higher order thinking by taking a skeletal hypothesis (action X is better than action Y) and turning this into a satisfying mimesis, where character, dialogue, and action confirm or disprove the hypothesis. Classical pastoral such that Spenser and Sidney would write after Kett's Rebellion reflects the fruit of Aristotelian higher intelligence, since these writers create a complex world of cause and effect; characters act in ways that probability dictates they would act. Thus, artists belong in the company of the political elite and not in the rough and tumble world of agrarian labor. "We assume," Aristotle explains, "that artists are wiser than men of mere experience" *(Metaphysics* 681a).

There is, however, a ray of hope for those with "mere experience." Aristotle explains that logical reasoning has a tentative or promissory value: one knows something only after that abstract principle is qualified by specific cases. Thus, the abstract operations of invention, logic, and inference are reshaped as they move from the minds in London to the realities of life on the ground in East Anglia. Aristotle now explains that experiential knowledge and observation can provide valuable guidance to higher order reasoning:

> It would seem that for practical purposes experience is in no way inferior to art; indeed, we see men of experience succeeding more than those who have theory without experience. The reason of this is that experience is knowledge of particulars, but art of universals; and actions and the effects produced are all concerned with the particular. For it is not man that the physician cures, except incidentally, but Callas or Socrates. So if a man has theory without experience and knows the universal, but does not know the particular contained in it, he will often fail in his treatment, for it is the particular that must be treated. (681a)

The effects of theory-without-experience were painfully familiar to the petition-writers. The Lord Protector's anti-enclosure proclamation was based on a practical need to stop gentry landowners from taking over land meant for common use. It had failed because gentry resistance in the

outlying regions insured its failure. The petitioners could rectify the royal councilors' lack of experiential testing by serving as their "eyes and ears."[12]

The Petitioners' request to standardize the size of a bushel of grain stems directly from marketplace experience. In order for buyers to know how much grain they receive at a given price, the containers holding grain must be consistent. At the time, there were wide variances as to what constituted a bushel, therefore the shire representatives asked that "Bushels within your realm be of one strice, that is to say, to be in measure 8 gallons" (7). While plebeian culture in early modem Europe has often been considered averse to innovation, this entry reflects a progressive tum toward a fair marketplace economy.[13]

Doves - figuratively peaceful creatures - were also a topic of complaint because these birds decimated the farmers' crops: "We pray that no man under the degree of a knight or esquire keep a dove house except if it has been of an old ancient custom" (10). This entry activates a structural analogy to class divisions. Just as doves descend on farmers' crops to feed illegally, the incursion of sheep on common land violates the peace of commoners. In conveying a daily irritation, the shire representatives provide the benefits of everyday observation, something that "Your Majesty" in London could not manage.

Geographical remoteness calls for sympathetic imagination. One has to envision difficulties rather than observe them firsthand. While the rebellion was fueled by issues surrounding farming and sheep grazing, the petition manages such imaginative engagement with the coastal residents of Yarmouth: "We pray that the poor mariners or fisherman may have the whole profits of their fishes" (19). The entry carries a sudden charge of Christian symbolism, for the metaphoric fishers of men, the Apostles, also needed defending and nurturing. These associations may simply be incidental, but the Yarmouth entry resonates with the Christian tenet of food

[12] Wood's study of plebeian protest writing echoes Aristotle's recognition that knowledge of particulars can produce an integrated picture of social and political realities. The "commons were capable of articulating an entirely different vision that that of their rulers" (4).

[13] The image of change-resistant English commoners is presented ironically in Engels's *The Condition of the English Working Class in 1844.* Engels refers to English agrarian commoners who "cultivated their scraps of land quite after the ancient and inefficient fashion of their ancestors" (5), but the autonomy of landownership stands in positive contrast to the industrial slums he goes on to describe in 1844.