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Belongingness with the Supernatural in the Early Modern Poems

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***Abstract** - In this article we wish to consider how speakers in various of the major, Stuart or Interregnum country house poems revisioning the Jonsonian paradigm established in To Penshurst appropriate and attribute the supernatural. We seek to explore the cunning and often complex syncretism with which they do so; at the same time, we hope to clarify the extent to which Jonson's successors attempt to rewrite their Jonsonian pre-text.*

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1. Jonson's To Penshurst opens with a smoothly intertextual compliment that arguably tells more about the poem's speaker than it does about the country house of the Sidney family:

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

The Jonsonian speaker clearly alludes to Horace, Odes 2. 18 in suggesting that Penshurst is not adorned with gold but expressive of the golden mean There may also be, as Ian Donaldson remarks in his notes on the poem (at page 88), disparaging allusion to some other country houses. An "ancient," native Englishness and moderation, Jonson's speaker indicates, make Penshurst not spectacular but, rather, "reverenced." Now such observations will prove important for subsequent display throughout the poem of Penshurst's royalist credentials, its portrayal as an embodiment of monarchist ideology and so its being represented as an epicentre of right thinking, right behaving, right politics in the English countryside. No less important however is the Jonsonian speaker's self-representation through the Horatian allusion. He begins his celebration of Penshurst by assuming a laureate role yet one that intimates his relative independence--that implies him to be a man of auctoritas; to be, in fact, his own man. Jonson begins the poem as he intends to continue, which he does in a way curiously and self-consciously problematic.

2. Having fashioned simultaneously an Horatian compliment to Penshurst and an Horatian guise for himself, Jonson's speaker proceeds to an Horatian, and thus to what can indeed be called a problematic, appropriation and attribution of the supernatural. Further addressing Penshurst, he continues:

Thou joy'st in better marks, of soil, of air, Of wood, of water; therein thou art fair. Thou hast thy walks for health as well as sport: Thy Mount, to which the dryads do resort, Where Pan and Bacchus their high feasts have made, Beneath the broad beech and the chestnut shade; That taller tree, which of a nut was set At his great birth, where all the muses met. There, in the writhed bark, are cut the names of many a sylvan taken with his flames; And thence the ruddy satyrs oft provoke The lighter fauns to reach thy lady's oak. Thy copse, too, named of Gamage, thou hast there, That never fails to serve thee seasoned deer When thou wouldst feast or exercise thy friends. The lower land,that to the river bends, Thy sheep, thy bullocks, kine and calves do feed; The middle grounds thy mares and horses breed. (lines 7-24)

The speaker aligns Penshurst not with money but with nature. The opening couplet of the lines quoted above names three of the four elements and the last is metaphorically invoked in line 16. We do not think that accidental. Jonson's speaker wants to differentiate Penshurst from great houses linked even by mere consumption itself with commerce. Doing so enables him to indicate that the great house of the Sidneys is in harmony with nature and therefore with natural law. Further, it allows him to suggest that there is a distinctive spirit of place at Penshurst. That brings us back to what for the moment we should like to call the speaker's Horatian stance.

3. The allusions to the Roman gods of field and wood are as light as anything in Horace. Those gods are no more credible however, no more credibly invoked, than are the divinities in one of Jonson's court masques. They are elegant decoration; to be specific, they are elegant classicizing. Jonson's speaker embellishes his description of Penshurst with them, through their elegantly incredible evocation, in order to suggest several things. Their graceful and impossible presence, rather than being merely playful fancy (though it is that as well), points simultaneously

to where the divine is and to where it is not in the poem. What we mean is, Jonson's speaker seems to be saying to the reader--Sidneyan and otherwise--that the solidly native, English great house has a tradition to it, a set of values (for example, the golden mean) that link it with the classical, Roman past. Hence the aptness of the un-English, the Roman panoply of gods in his description. More important, Jonson's speaker is not of course suggesting that the Sidney house and household have an aura of the numinous upon them because it is as if the classical gods could be glimpsed in residence on the estate. On the contrary he is suggesting that the Sidney family, with its classically concordant English traditions, is in itself numinous; the playfully evoked gods point, so to speak, away from themselves and towards the Sidney family--especially towards Sir Philip Sidney, that great icon of protestant art and heroic virtue. The Roman mythic decoration is appropriated in order to suggest the numinousness of an old, English aristocratic family. Thus Jonson's speaker plays with myth at once to celebrate the Sidneys and to be seen, through the performance of celebration that is playful and not heavily earnest, as a man of some detachment: an independent, integral commentator and no mere versifying retainer. To put that another way, the Sidneys are indicated to have potestas and auctoritas-but Jonson, through his speaker, implies that he too possesses aucoritas, that he shares it (in the sense of moral authority) with the owners of the estate.

4. Even so, that is merely the beginning of the Jonsonian speaker's problematic appropriation and attribution of the supernatural in the poem. His celebration of the physical landscape of the estate continues:

Each bank doth yield thee conies, and the tops, Fertile of wood, Ashour and Sidney's copse, To crown thy open table, doth provide The purpled pheasant with the speckled side; The painted partridge lies in every field, And for thy mess is willing to be killed. And if the high-swoll'n Medway fail thy dish, Thou hast thy ponds that pay thee tribute fish: Fat, aged carps, that run into thy net; And pikes, now weary their own kind to eat, As loath the second draught or cast to stay, officiously, at first, themselves betray; Bright eels, that emulate them, and leap on land Before the fisher, or into his hand.

Then hath thy orchard fruit, thy garden flowers, Fresh as the air and new as are the hours: The early cherry, with the later plum, Fig, grape and quince, each in his time doth come; The blushing apricot and woolly peach Hang on thy walls, that every child may reach. (lines 25-44)

5. The lines describe an earthly paradise of one kind or another, probably a mix of the myth of the Golden Age with the idea of a perfect moral commonwealth. The figures from Roman myth have done their job: they have served as signifiers of the numinous and now they are absent. They are absent, in fact, for the obvious reason that now the Sidney family is presented as the lords of nature in their own domain. The numinous resides in them; the fauns and satyrs and all the rest are now rendered superfluous. So the Jonsonian speaker appropriates then attributes the supernatural. Yet how he does that remains problematic, as the curiously unstable comedy of his narration bears witness. Spirit of place, introduced by way of the minor Roman divinities, finds embodiment in the Sidneys, and to them local nature-nature as owned on their estate--defers and submits. Donaldson notes (page 89) allusions to Virgil, Martial and Juvenal in this section of the poem; those serve, as we see it, to emphasize notional continuities between a Roman imperial past and an English, monarchist present. For all that, the Sidney's allegedly numinous rule over nature, their actual but also allegedly mythical dominance as the apex of a hierarchy, finds acknowledgment by Jonson's speaker in a celebratory mode that undermines celebration. We are not about to argue that Jonson's dealings with the Sidneys are overtly laudatory but in fact covertly and calculatedly ironic and hence subversive. We should like to suggest, though, that his lauding of the Sidneys seems to be problematic in its extravagance. The ostentatiously insistent hyperbole through which Jonson praises the family of the estate necessarily draws attention to its own ludic extremity (its flouting the mean) and so makes the Jonsonian speaker appear somewhat removed from the Sidneys even as he praises them. We have already remarked that such a distancing accords with the speaker's Horatian stance. In addition, however, the speaker's unrelenting hyperbole draws attention to the incredibility of his praise of the Sidneys. Now of course the whole point of hyperbole is that readers are not expected to take it as literal truth: the spirit is all and the letter is to be undervalued according to rhetorical theorising of that trope. But the representation of the Sidney estate as a Sidney-centric microcosm makes the family appear as minor divinities consuming the little world they rule, a world that sacrifices itself to them and, if it rebel against them, does so in vain ("And if the high-swoll'n Medway fail thy dish, / Thou hast thy ponds that pay thee tribute fish, lines 31-32--where "high-swoll'n" implies recalcitrant pride). They are as little gods (to borrow one of King James's phrases) benevolently ingesting a comically self-sacrificial environment. There is almost a quaintly perverse sacramentalism about the Sidney's rule of the Penshurst estate.

6. When the Jonsonian speaker proceeds from the natural to the socio-political--that is to say, when he openly moves from one to the other--his appropriation and attribution of the supernatural gradually take another but congruent direction:

And though thy walls be of the country stone, They're reared with no man's ruin, no man's groan; There's none that dwell about them wish them down, But all come in, the farmer and the clown, And no one empty-handed, to salute Thy lord and lady, though they have no suit. Some bring a capon, some

a rural cake, Some nuts, some apples; some that think they make.

The better cheeses, bring 'em; or else send By their ripe daughters, whom they would commend This way to husbands; and whose baskets bear
An emblem of themselves, in plum and pear. (lines 45-56)

7. What the accumulation of physical detail in that description indicates can perhaps be described most accurately in two ways. First, there appears to be a continuation of emphasis on the numinous: the numen in fact of the Sidney family. That emphasis has been shifted from the natural order to the socio-political order. There is again demonstration of deference and submission; this time it is more problematic because it is less directly and pervasively comic. The emulous, the oppositional, the rancorous have supposedly and simply been banished by virtue of the Sidney family's sense of community--its sense of civil behaviour, of justice. Concordant with that, and thus second, is harmonising--in effect the merging of degree with equality. In all this Jonson's speaker maintains something of his ludic treatment of his materials. Nevertheless, his treatment of those materials is serio-ludic. The rustic goodwill, the decent sexual display are cunningly connected with a reconciliation of opposites. The Jonsonian speaker represents the Sidney family as effecting a concordia discors in the microcosm of its estate. That is ultimately what the descriptions of activities, the accumulation of physical details, points towards: that is, according to Jonson's speaker, how the Sidneys ultimately express their numen--act as if little gods--in the domain of the socio-political.

8. Jonson's speaker further celebrates the civil accord of life in the great house--for the scene of the poem has been changed from outdoors to in--when he comments on the "hospitality" shown at the Sidney's "liberal board" (lines 60 and 59 respectively). Then he brings the poem to a climax by suddenly bringing onstage, as it were, King James:

There's nothing I can wish, for which I stay. That found King James, when, hunting late this way With his brave son, the Prince, they saw thy fires
Shine bright on every hearth as the desires Of thy Penates had been set on flame.

To entertain them; or the country came With all their zeal to warm their welcome here What (great, I will not say, but) sudden cheer Didst thou then make 'em! And what praise was heaped On thy good lady then! Who therein reaped The just reward of her high housewifery: To have her linen, plate, and all things nigh When she was far; and not a room but dressed As if it had expected such a guest! (lines 75-88)

9. The sudden appearance of the King and of his son resembles self-evidently a kind of Second Coming; and the Sidneys, like the Wise Virgins, are found prepared. The "fires / Shine bright" (lines 77-78) in monarchist enthusiasm like some counterpart to the lamps of the Biblical parable's Virgins. The royal lord, whose judgment could otherwise have been adverse, approves what he finds--just as the divine Bridegroom, on his biblically narrated return, finds the Wise Virgins decorously ready (if not all present). And now, it should be added, the numen of the Sidneys is heightened by and incorporated in the numen of their royal master. Thenumen of one among the principes viri is subsumed in that of the princeps himself. The Sidney estate is thus particularly a concordia discors in microcosm: to be specific, it is a microcosm of the harmonies, the patterned reconciliations, that should supposedly pervade the kingdom as a whole. Jonson's speaker presents the economy of the Sidney household as an image in little of the economy of the ideal, Jacobean state.

10. Therefore in his affirmative conclusion the Jonsonian speaker emphasizes that the Sidneys embody or incarnate a reconciliation of court and city, art and nature, the sacred and the profane, the domestic and the public spheres:

These, Penshurst, are thy praise, and yet not all. Thy lady's noble, fruitful, chaste withal; His children thy great lord may call his own, A fortune in this age but rarely known. They are and have been taught religion; thence
Their gentler spirits have sucked innocence. Each morn and even they are taught to pray With the whole household, and may every day Read in their virtuous parents' noble parts The mysteries of manners, arms and arts.
Now, Penshurst, they that will proportion thee With other edifices, when they see Those proud, ambitious heaps, and nothing else, May say, their lords have built, but thy lord dwells. (lines 89-102)

Elsewhere, Jonson's speaker asserts, lies hubris; at Penshurst can be seen the golden mean, romanitas translated, a manifestation of translatio imperii et studii.

11. That To Penshurst became the paradigm for subsequent country house poems is well attested; yet imitation implies variation, as one discovers especially when considering appropriation and attribution of the supernatural in the mode. Jonson himself interestingly departed from his own model when he penned To Sir Robert Wroth, which immediately follows To Penshurst in The Forest. The poem to Wroth is of course an ode and not a country house poem; even so, much of the account of Wroth concerns his life on his country estate and within his household. Jonson has his speaker make it quite clear to the reader that if the Sidneys radiate numen, Wroth wouldn't know what it is--much less possess or generate it. At one moment early in the poem,

Jonson's speaker develops the beatus ille motif (with which he opens the ode) as follows when saying to Wroth:

[Thou] canst at home in thy securer rest Live with unbought provision blest; Free from proud porches or their gilded roofs, 'Mongst lowing herds and solid hoofs; Alongst the curled woods and painted meads, Through which a serpent river leads To some cool, courteous shade, which he calls his, And makes sleep softer than it is! Or, if thou list the night in watch to break, A-bed canst hear the loud stag speak, In spring oft roused for thy master's sport, Who for it makes thy house his court; Or with thy friends the heart of all the year Divid'st upon the lesser deer [. . . .] (lines 13-26)

There, we would suggest, the reader is shown harmony rather than a reconciliation of opposites. Wroth's indifference to courtly life, to the sphere of the court masques, differentiates him of course from his wife--although we know that Wroth helped finance some masques. In any event, the point in those lines would seem to be that when the court, in the person of the King, comes to Wroth he appears almost embedded in the natural world of his estate. What could be more revealing in those lines quoted above than the absence of the numinous, so comically but so cunningly evoked in the lines about the anthropomorphized landscape, fancifully populated with Roman deities, of Penshurst?

12. Yet Jonson's "sons," too, remodelled the Penshurst paradigm so powerfully fashioned by their "father." A good illustration of that can be seen in Thomas Carew's To Saxham. There can be no doubt, nor does Carew evidently wish for any, that To Saxham derives from but also revisions To Penshurst. Carew's speaker begins:

Though frost and snow locked from mine eyes That beauty which without door lies, Thy gardens, orchards, walks, that so I might not all thy pleasures know, Yet, Saxham, thou within thy gate Art of thyself so delicate, So full of native sweets that bless Thy roof with inward happiness, As neither from nor to thy store Winter takes aught, or spring adds more. The cold and frozen air had starved Much poor, if not by thee preserved, Whose prayers have made thy table blest With plenty, far above the rest. (lines 1-14)

A modulation of tone no less than a shift in focus captures the reader's attention from the poem's very start. That is to say, the reader perceives at once the major differences between Jonson's and Carew's poems--differences that allow Carew to acknowledge but re-imagine the Penshurst paradigm, to appropriate and attribute the supernatural in a way familiarly his own.

13. What signals an immediate and major difference is of course Carew's adopting a playful tetrameter for his speaker's address to Saxham; he does not use the heroic couplet through which the Jonsonian speaker of To Penshurst unfolds his grandly serio-ludic celebration of the Sidneys and of their country house. Carew's speaker seems to imply from the start that he is re-imagining his Jonsonian precedent: re-imagining it in terms of play, of the fantasy set free from gravitas. Thus he assumes the auctoritas of sympathetic irreverence, of levity mingling disenchantment with disingenuous wonder. The result is not a trivial and trivialising counterpart to Jonson's poem, or to Jonson's speaker, although predictably and occasionally that has been suggested. It is instead a poem which reconfigures the elements of the concordia discors implicit in To Penshurst and, hence, its dealings with the numinous. So the initial fourteen verses of To Saxham make plain when one considers them in light of more than metrics.

14. Saxham is portrayed by Carew's speaker as a "pleasant place" but one that is both natively English--like Penshurst--and as it were a box of sweets. It is as if Saxham in that sense were the reverse of Penshurst. The latter is a microcosmic concordia discors. The former is a macrocosmic and harmonious multum et dulce in parvo. Carew's persona celebrates Saxham as a place gathering together "native sweets" (line7), a place "so delicate" (line 6). It is, to borrow another poet's phrase, a very large "box where sweets compacted lie." Comparison and contrast can be registered moreover in terms of the numinous. Both country houses are associated with the supernatural. While Jonson's speaker appropriates and attributes a Roman version of the supernatural, then goes on to complement that with emphasis on Christian religious belief, Carew's speaker links Saxham with Christian piety--a version of the supernatural that seems attributed with a careless, one might say apparently cynical casualness. The last four of the verses quoted above could hardly refer to the poor more cavalierly, so to speak. Carew's persona adds, having celebrated Saxham as a locus amoenus: "The cold and frozen air had starved / Much poor, if not by thee preserved [. . .]" (lines 11-12). The offhanded lumping together of the poor--as in, "large quantities of the impoverished"--is one thing, of course, but then it's followed by this: "Whose prayers have made thy table blest / With plenty, far above the rest" (lines 13-14). The family at Saxham is playfully announced as having been justified by its good works; but in fact the reader sees a kind of facilely devout equation. Saxham gives to the poor; the grateful prayers of the poor bring blessings upon Saxham. The supernatural is appropriated and attributed, in short, merely as the enabling mechanism for a subsequent and elaborately fanciful compliment.

15. Carew's speaker chooses to drain the Christian supernatural of its numen. In doing so he plays both with religious orthodoxy (almost as blasphemously as Donne does in various of his poems) and with the anthropomorphized landscape at Penshurst as described by Jonson's speaker:

The season hardly did afford Coarse cates unto thy neighbours' board, Yet thou hadst dainties as the sky Had only been thy volary; Or else the birds, fearing the snow Might to another Deluge grow, The pheasant, partridge, and the lark Flew to thy house as to the Ark. The willing ox of himself came Home to the slaughter, with the lamb, And every beast did thither bring Himself to be an offering.

The scaly herd more pleasure took, Bathed in thy dish, than in the brook. Water, earth, air, did all conspire To pay their tributes to thy fire, Whose cherishing flames themselves divide Through every room, where they deride The night and cold abroad; whilst they, Like suns within, keep endless day.

Those cheerful beams send forth their light To all that wander in the night, And seem to beckon from aloof The weary pilgrim to thy roof; Where, if refreshed, he will away, He's fairly welcome, or if stay Far more, which he shall hearty find, Both from the master and the hind. (lines 15-42)

16. The references to the Deluge and to the Ark (severally in lines 20 and 22) are not without point, since all around Saxham lies frozen water. They are nevertheless mildly, even genially blasphemous. Less genial or mild a blasphemy appears however in the references to the self-sacrificial ox and lamb (in lines 23-24--cf. line 26, "Himself to be an offering"). The latter's eucharistic associations might be thought to make that reference a rather graceless appropriation and attribution of the Christian supernatural. Nor is it easy for a reader to think otherwise in light of the emphasis on caritas as the great virtue informing the bewintered Saxham (see lines 11-14, 35-58). It is interesting though that the speaker, while identifying caritas in familiar, Christian terms, actually downplays its rich, religious significance. The Christian terms used are few, namely, to the grateful prayers of the poor (lines 13-14) and to "[t]he weary pilgrim" (line 38). The second of those is of course merely a trope, in the obvious sense that Carew's speaker alludes to wayfarers but not to people who are involved in religious quests. Apart from such generalised Christian language, the speaker tells of caritas at Saxham in ways that distinctly echo Jonson's describing the aristocratic liberality of the Sidneys: a compliment at once to Jonson and to the Crofts (who owned Saxham).

17. Something similar can be said of how Carew's speaker describes the landscape--in particular, the fauna in the landscape at Saxham. In Carew's poem as in Jonson's the creatures inhabiting the landscape that surrounds the great house sacrifice themselves for the human good. Yet according to Carew's speaker, in contradiction to Jonson's, on the Crofts' estate it is not the numinous (the numinousness of the owners) but prayer which drives creatures to be prolifically self-sacrificial. To have noted that means noting, of course, another contrast between Jonson's poem and Carew's. In Jonson's, allusion to the numinous serves as a ludic amplification of the Sidneys' aristocratic dignity; in Carew's, the allusion to prayer acts merely as enabling mechanism, a religious trigger, for praise of the Crofts' well-resourced generosity. One could suggest, then, that appropriation and attribution of a downgraded, Christian supernatural co-exists in this part of To Saxham with a more imaginatively engaged focus on the elements at work in the little world of the Crofts. Surely there, rather than in the drab or blasphemous merely Christian allusions, one finds representation of a lively association between the supernatural and Saxham. Around and within the country house, Carew's speaker neatly implies, the natural elements function together supernaturally. In lines 29-34 he says:

Water, earth, air, did all conspire To pay their tributes to thy fire, Whose cherishing flames themselves divide Through every room, where they deride
The night and cold abroad; whilst they, Like suns within, keep endless day.

In Carew's version of an anthropomorphized nature, one acting beneficently within the little world of the Crofts' estate, nature bodies forth--enacts--caritas. The speaker's celebration of the household fires as expressive of a sacred mystery seems to evoke at once the biblical creation myth (the division of light from dark, distinctly alluded to with a blasphemy not so mild as might at first be thought) and the Roman myth of Vesta. Outside Saxham all appears dark and cold; within, according to Carew's speaker, lie warmth and illumination born of a fire that mysteriously multiplies itself as if into so many suns spreading unending daylight. In his account of the household fires Carew's speaker gives some momentary life to what is, in the poem, the otherwise lifeless Christian supernatural by fusing it with Roman myth and by way of focus on the natural world. For a moment in the poem he brings the Christian supernatural to life--in a microcosm of that largesse which flows from the court to those below. The poem makes caritas into an element of the monarchist political organization of England; in that sense, Carew faithfully follows the Penshurst paradigm.

18. One could say the same about caritas but not the same of the supernatural as such in Carew's other country house poem, To My Friend G. N., from Wrest. There his speaker manages to appropriate and, in desanctifying, attribute the supernatural. In the first instance, of course, the poem shows Carew appropriating To Penshurst, as these lines attest:

[P]ure and uncompounded beauties bless This mansion with an useful comeliness Devoid of art, for here the architect Did not with curious skill a pile

erect Of carved marble, touch, or porphyry, But built a house for hospitality; No sumptuous chimney-piece of shining stone Invites the stranger's eye to gaze upon And coldly entertains his sight, but clear
And cheerful flames cherish and warm him here; No Doric nor Corinthian pillars grace With imagery this structure's naked face. The lord and lady of this place delight Rather to be in act than seem in sight: Instead of statues to adorn their wall, They throng with living men their merry hall, Where at large tables filled with wholesome meats The servant, tenant, and kind neighbour eats. (lines 19-36)

Clearly those verses offer the same royalist, political vision: caritas informs the microcosm of monarchist government. Just so, Carew's speaker emphasizes the native moderation of Wrest, the Horatian moderation reborn in the culture of Stuart courtly circles. In those lines the reader sees something much closer to the Romanized vision of To Penshurst than can be found in To Saxham.

19. That being conceded, the issue of the supernatural remains. Roman divinities appear, as one recalls, notionally in the landscape of the Sidney estate. Here is how they appear at Wrest, in the house itself:

Amalthea's horn Of plenty is not in effigy worn Without the gate, but she within the door Empties her free and unexhausted store. Nor, crowned with wheaten wreaths, doth Ceres stand In stone, with a crook'd sickle in her hand; Nor, on a marble tun, his face besmeared With grapes, is curled Bacchus reared. We offer not in emblems to the eyes but to the taste those useful deities: We press the juicy god and quaff his blood, And grind the yellow goddess into food. (lines 57-68)

This is appropriation and attribution with a vengeance. The Roman gods aren't safe in Carew's fictions. On the other hand, as the lines simultaneously indicate, nor is Christian mystery. Amalthea, Carew's speaker suggests, becomes a living presence at Wrest through the liberality of the de Grays. He also suggests that Ceres and Bacchus cease at Wrest to be tropes in stone or paint. What he says they become there, however, seems curiously designed to disconcert. Amalthea's virtual, dispersed incarnation implies the numinousness of the de Grays' hospitality: the caritas that, along with civilitas, informs their country house. She is brought to life and diffused through human agency. Ceres and Bacchus are metamorphosed into what appears to be a mockery of transubstantiation. They are, in effect, seized upon and slaughtered by the humankind which invented them, in order that the flesh of the goddess and the blood of the god may be readied for all to ingest. Transformed from tropes into food, Ceres and Bacchus undergo humiliating change; and thus, at the same time, Ovidian myth is reduced to a brutal materiality not inappropriate to the Lucretian universe from which its maker thought it sprang. In those lines, one could well argue, Carew evokes the Roman and the Christian supernatural only that he might, using them to celebrate the human (and the royalist, in particular) at their own expense, casually supplant or erase them. Carew's appropriation and attribution of the supernatural at that point in his poem have an ingenious, ruthless levitas, a fantastic disenchantment, that distinguish him unmistakably from Jonson.

20. In A Panegyric to Sir Lewis Pemberton, written by the oldest son of Ben, Robert Herrick, can be seen a mingling of Roman allusion with an English sportiveness: in fact, an interplay of romanitas, levitas, andgravitas that expresses imitation rather than rivalry, respect rather than mere competition (not least in the Jonsonian auctoritas recreated but not duplicated by his speaker). Herrick is, in short, much more akin to Jonson than is Carew. Thus his version of the country house poem echoes To Penshurst more closely than does either To Saxham or To My Friend G. N., from Wrest. As can be recognized immediately, A Panegyric opens with that fusion of the Roman and the natively English, that emphasis upon caritas and civilitas--and therefore that juxtaposing of the Roman with the Christian supernatural--which marks the Penshurst paradigm. Here are the poem's initial eighteen verses:

Till I shall come again, let this suffice, I send my salt, my sacrifice, To thee, thy lady, younglings, and as far As to thy Genius and thy Lar; To the worn threshold, porch, hall, parlour, kitchen, The fat-fed smoking temple which in The wholesome savour of thy mighty chines Invites to supper him who dines; Where laden spits, warped with large ribs of beef, Not represent but give relief To the lank stranger and the sour swain;

Where both may feed, and come again, For no black-bearded vigil from thy door. Beats with a buttoned-staff the poor; But from thy warm love-hatching gates each may Take friendly morsels, and there stay To sun his thin-clad members, if he likes, For thou no porter keep'st who strikes.

The elaborate Romanizing of the Pemberton household iterates and extends its counterpart in To Penshurst. Within what might be called the poem's Roman register one sees an emphasis on caritas at first implicitly then later explicitly complemented by an emphasis on civilitas. As regards the first:

But from thy warm love-hatching gates each may Take friendly morsels, and there stay To sun his thin-clad members, if he likes [. . . .] (lines 15-17) And as for the second:

Manners knows distance, and a man unrude Would soon recoil, and not intrude. His stomach to a second meal.' No, no [. . . .] (lines 30-33)

Further, as far as the levitas of the speaker is concerned, one notes the deployment of feminine rhymes, early in the poem ("kitchen," / "which in"--lines 6-7) and thereafter ("devour," / "power"--lines

107-108). More to the point, there is as well the almost unrelenting, comic--but not merely comic--focus on eating. The Pemberton household seems to offer a eutopia of plenty, a golden-age-come-again of food offered within a civilised environment: an ethical counterpart to the land of Cockaigne: a microcosm of the feudal largesse notionally available under Stuart rule.

20. The poem ends with celebration of Pemberton as princeps vir, within his little world and (by implication) under the rule of his prince:

'This is that princely Pemberton, who can Teach man to keep a god in man'; And when wise poets shall search out to see Good men, they find them all in thee. (lines 133-136) According to Herrick's speaker, and in harmony with what was said in the address to Pemberton at the poem's beginning, the lord of the estate embodies an ideal of the supernatural at once Roman and Christian.

21. At this point we wish now to turn to Marvell's Upon Appleton House, in order to examine his representation of Maria, Fairfax's daughter. Prior to the stanzas in which her marriage is at once proleptically and unfortunately celebrated, Marvell's speaker renders Maria's entry into his portrayal of the Appleton House landscape as follows:

See how loose Nature, in respect To her, itself doth recollect; And everything so whisht and fine, Starts forthwith to its bonne mine. The sun himself, of her aware, Seems to descend with greater care; And lest she see him go to bed, In blushing clouds conceals his head. So when the shadows laid asleep From underneath these banks do creep, And on the river as it flows With eben shuts begin to close; The modest halcyon comes in sight, Flying betwixt the day and night; And such an horror calm and dumb, Admiring Nature does benumb. The viscous air, wheres'e'er she fly, Follows and sucks her azure dye; The jellying stream compacts below, If it might fix her shadow so; The stupid fishes hang, as plain As flies in crystal overta'en; And men the silent scene assist, Charmed with the sapphire-winged mist. Maria such, and so doth hush The world, and through the evening rush.

No new-born comet such a train Draws through the sky, nor star new-slain. For straight those giddy rockets fail, Which from the putrid earth exhale, But by her flames, in heaven tried, Nature is wholly vitrified. (lines 657-688)

The opening lines of the passage quoted above portray Maria as virtually an embodiment of grace perfecting nature. In particular, she is represented not as the woman clothed with the sun but as the woman who imposes, by her very presence, decorum on the sun. Thus her presence, notionally like that of the "modest halcyon" (line 669), effects a concordia discors: as the offspring of her regenerate parents, she bringsrenovatio to the fallen natural (and, by implication, human) world. The interplay of emblematic and Calvinist hyperboles produces what seems a fairytale moment but could perhaps be better described as a moment of parodic apotheosis. The Marvellian speaker fashions a supposedly epiphanic episode which, he intimates, is merely genial play--an instance of amiably ludic transformation. Therefore it is play which draws attention to the speaker's sophisticated toying with metamorphosis rather than to the theoretically numinous simplicity of Fairfax's daughter. It indicates his assumption of an auctoritas veering between that modelled by Jonson and that by Carew.

22. A similarly revealing disparity can be observed in the immediately following passage on Maria. The speaker announces:

'Tis she that to these gardens gave That wondrous beauty which they have; She straightness of the woods bestows; To her the meadow sweetness owes; Nothing could make the river be So crystal pure but only she; She yet more pure, sweet, straight, and fair, Than gardens, woods, meads, rivers are. Therefore what first she on them spent, They gratefully again present: The meadow, carpets where to tread; The garden, flow'rs to crown her head; And for a glass, the limpid brook, Where she may all her beauties look; But, since she would not have them seen, The wood about her draws a screen. For she, to higher beauties raised, Disdains to be for lesser praised. She counts her beauty to converse In all the languages as hers; Nor yet in those herself employs But for the wisdom, not the noise; Nor yet that wisdom would affect, But as 'tis heaven's dialect. Blest Nymph! That couldst so soon prevent Those trains by youth against thee meant: Tears (watery shot that pierce the mind); And sighs (Love's cannon charged with wind); True praise (that breaks through all defence); And feigned complying innocence; But knowing where this ambush lay, She 'scaped the safe, but roughest way. (lines 689-720)

The ironic disparity between what Marvell's speaker asserts in those stanzas and his rhetoric of assertion marks the apotheosis of Fairfax's daughter--where apotheosis means portrayal of her as an incarnation ofrenovatio, and thus the fulfilment of her parents' protestant virtue--as a moment of slyly divine comedy. The notion that she re-forms fallen nature is wittily given climactic expression in what seems almost a parody of the Messianic Secret (lines 703-704). Yet surely the emphasis there on Maria's humility implies, first, that her Blessed Virgin-like lowliness is all too obviously born of the very humility which (according to Marvell's speaker) lies close to the heart of her father and of his house. It would be too easy, amidst the speaker's comic attribution of the supernatural, to miss his deft, complimentary

gesture towards his patron. It would be too easy to assume, in other words, that because all his praise is ludic it must therefore not at all be praise.

23. Having implicitly fashioned Maria to be unlike but also like the Virgin Mary, Marvell's speaker concludes his representation of her with a curious mingling of registers. He represents her initially as a protestant type ofSophia: she is associated with a progression in which concept ("wisdom" that is to say) transcends physical language and then is itself transcended by being perceived not as an end but as constitutive of "heaven's dialect"--forming part of the language of beatitude. Thus her espousing the dialect of heaven places her, like some Minerva, beyond the rhetoric of erotic desire (the elaborately caricatured discourse of Petrarchism). According to Marvell's speaker, she has already made the choice of Hercules and taken the hard road of virtue. To witness the speaker's wry, eclectic attribution of the supernatural to Fairfax's daughter is therefore to observe him rather than her: it is to watch him, with calculated effortlessness, pile Pelion on Ossa. It is therefore also to see Marvell remaking a poetic model to which Carew and Herrick could do little more than pay homage, after their very different fashions.

24. To have focused on how the speakers of poems in the country-house genre appropriated and (or) attributed the supernatural is to see, on the one hand, the power and finesse of what we have been calling the Penshurst paradigm and yet to recognise, on the other, something of the extent to which those very qualities challenged writers in the genre after Jonson. The syncretic spirituality of To Penshurst, its ingenious, problematic mingling of the natively English with the Roman, seem to have offered possibilities to Jonson's successors that provoked quite different responses. Carew, for example, attributed a supernatural to Saxham which at once blasphemes Christian orthodoxy, reduces Roman myth to what might be called an idiosyncratically Lucretian materialism, and bypasses both. Herrick submerged the Christian in the Roman, seeming preoccupied with bringing together the idea of caritas and the portrayal of unlimited food (unlimited ingestion) in order to produce almost an image of the land of Cockaigne baptized. Marvell submerged the Roman in the hyperbolically protestant, seeking apparently to create a slyly divine comedy: a ludic epiphany in the fashioning of which he remade the country house poem itself. That being the case, to reflect upon the alternative to the Jonsonian model of the country house poem, Lanyer's version of the form, is to see a powerful and sophisticated female rival to the Penshurst paradigm that evoked social issues its counterpart never had to ponder (and probably didn't want to), spiritual aspects of experience that it chose nearly always to leave unexplored.

NOTES

[1] Reference to Jonson's poems is from Ben Jonson: Poems, ed. Ian Donaldson (London: Oxford University Press, 1975).

[2] Historicist studies of the country house poem are many, as one might expect. Two seminal monographs are: William A. McClung, The Country House in English Renaissance Poetry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); Don E. Wayne, Penshurst: The Semiotics of Place and the Poetics of History (London: Methuen, 1984). See, more recently: Hugh Jenkins, Feigned Commonwealths: The Country House Poem and the Fashioning of Ideal Commonwealths (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998); Kari Boyd McBride, Country House Discourse in Early Modern England: A Cultural Study of Landscape and Legitimacy(Aldershot: Scolar, 2001).

[3] Reference to the poets named above, other of course than Ben Jonson, is from: Cavalier Poets: Selected Poems, ed. Thomas M. Clayton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Andrew Marvell, The Complete Poems, ed. Elizabeth Story Donno (London: Allen Lane, 1974). On the so-called "cavalier world" and on the cavalier poets in general see: Earl Miner's classic study, The Cavalier Mode from Jonson to Cotton(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); Raymond A. Anselment, Loyalist Resolve: Patient Fortitude in the English Civil War (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988); Thomas N. Corns, ed., The Cambridge Companion to English Poetry: Donne to Marvell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), especially at pages 171-182, 200-220.

[4] Interesting discussions of To Penshurst, excluding those offered in the historicist studies of the country house poem which were named above, include: Richard Dutton, Ben Jonson: To the First Folio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pages 81-82, 111-113; Katherine Eisaman Maus, Ben Jonson and the Roman Frame of Mind (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pages 8-9, 58, 87, 101, 144, 157; W. David Kay, Ben Jonson: A Literary Life (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1995), pages 117, 128-129, 186-187; Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart, eds, The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pages 54-56, 129-131.

[5] See Joshua Scodel, Excess and the Mean in Early Modern English Literature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), especially at pages 202-204, 207-213. On Jonson's Roman classicising in general, see Maus's Ben Jonson and the Roman Frame of Mind, cited above.

[6] Cf. R. S. White, Natural Law in English Renaissance Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), especially at pages 1-20.

[7] As is very well known, there has been debate for some years about the portrayals or

invocations of the supernatural in Horace. One side of the argument has maintained that Horace lived in a time when belief in the orthodox gods of the Roman state had declined: contemporary, educated disbelief or at best scepticism is reflected in his verse; there he mentions the gods, in short, because Augustus wanted traditional religious belief to be revived. The other side of the debate maintains that such a view offers an inaccurate perception of religious belief and practice in the time of Augustus and, as a result, if Horace mentions the gods then one cannot assert he does that as a doubter or unbeliever. We present no view on the debate since it lies outside the scope of this study; nevertheless, the debate touches on the issue of how the supernatural is evoked and used by Jonson's Horatian speaker in the lines quoted above.

[8] See Karl Galinsky, Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), especially at page 16. Subsequently that work is cited as Galinsky.

[9] See A. D. Cousins' discussion of Upon Appleton House with reference to the country house poem as bringing those elements together (in The Political Identity of Andrew Marvell, eds idem and Conal Condren [Aldershot: Ashgate, 1990], pages 53-54). Cf. R. C. Davis's Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing 1516-1700 (1981; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), especially at pages 11-40. See also McBride, Country House Discourse, page 160.

[10] The often-made point, following Raymond Williams, is that the poem renders labour invisible. But Jonson's speaker is amplifying the numen of the Sidneys and thus not seeking, as if through a conjurer's illusion, to make the actual disappear; rather, he evidently compels the reader to perceive the Sidneys at the level of myth and thereby he creates--in rhetorical terms--fabula: "a poet's tale, acted for the most part, by gods and men" as Hoskins put it (see Lee A. Sonnino, A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric [London: Routledge, 1968], at page 98). Jonson's speaker plays, in other words, with the "as if" of hyperbole (dementiens)--a familiar tactic in Donne's amatory lyrics.

[11] We mean numen to signify Jonson's blurring the line between the notions of "divine sway" and "the will, might, authority of powerful persons"--to supply relevant glossings offered by Lewis and Short.

[12] Cf. Galinsky: "Similarly, the link between auctoritas and the principes viri, the eminent citizens of the state, is attested frequently and was easily transferable to the princeps Augustus" (ibid.).

[13] One might suggest that Jonson's speaker implies Wroth to have a self-congratulatory, lambent dullness.

[14] On Carew's literary relationship to Jonson, see Scott Nixon, "Carew's Response to Jonson and Donne," SEL, 39 (1999), 89-109. See also, G. A. E. Parfitt, "The Poetry of Thomas Carew," Renaissance and Modern Studies, 12 (1968), 56-67.

[15] "Much in little" was an early modern commonplace; but "much [that is] sweet in little" seems more appropriate here and to be, in effect, Carew's version of the phrase. Hence it forms part of his disrupting notions such as concordia discors (a discordant concord), gravitas (a weighty sobriety of manner), and auctoritas ("might, power, authority, reputation, dignity, influence, weight," as Lewis and Short gloss it).

[16] A "pleasant place," that is to say, an ideal environment.

[17] For an ideologically focused reading of the poem, which is certainly interesting and valuable but does not pay close attention to the rhetorical duplicities of the text, see McBride's Country House Discourse, pages 114-116.

[18] Again. But then, one might ask, what outside royalty--and most of its courtiers--is?

[19] Although what he says might, in fact (and we anticipate a little here), be taken to indicate Carew's spiritual bankruptcy, it does not automatically imply the spiritual bankruptcy of the estate in question and (or) of the country house genre. On the other hand, it would be reasonable to ask how those could be clearly distinguished.

[20] Jenkins, in his Feigned Commonwealths, in fact sees the episode as a "parody of transubstantiation [which] converts Laudian, high Anglican ceremonies into the economic basis of the estate [. . . ,]" (page 79).

[21] Among the more useful discussions of Herrick are the following: A. Leigh Deneef, "This Poetic Liturgie": Robert Herrick's Ceremonial Mode (Durham: Duke University Press, 1974); Leah S. Marcus, The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell, and the Defense of Old Holiday Pastimes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Anne Baynes Coiro, Robert Herrick's "Hesperides" and the Epigram Book Tradition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988). See also Corns, as cited above, at pages 171-182.

[22] As Cousins has observed, Appleton House manifests caritas and civilitas in accord with the Penshurst paradigm.