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**Rhetoric and Renaissance Pastoral:
Eloquence Outside the City Walls**

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Dedicated to Henry.

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Rhetoric and Renaissance Pastoral: Eloquence Outside the City Walls

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This dissertation considers the Renaissance literary pastoral landscape as a site for theorizing and imagining conversation in horizontally-oriented discursive communities. My project is modeled on Susan Jarratt's *Rereading the Sophists* in that I locate a historical rhetorical practice as a model for feminist rhetoric. I argue that these pastoral conversations share the feminist concern of creating a space for the marginalized to speak that does not exclude the body, emotion and affect. These spaces also bridge the private and public spheres by creating protected discursive communities that simultaneously fashion public personae.

While the post-Romantic pastoral landscape is a solitary space, in classical and Renaissance literature, the literary pastoral is communal. Ciceronian dialogues and pastoral eclogues overlap as the two Renaissance genres that employ the pastoral setting as a space for imagining conversation and dialogue at a remove from stratified society. I argue that Ciceronian dialogue and pastoral

eclogues share an interest in theorizing about discursive spaces at a remove from the socio-political stratifications of the city. I coin the term “pastoral dialogue” to consider, not a unified discursive space, but a patchwork of related theoretical spaces. Next, I look at the myth of society’s origins in Nicholas Grimald’s sixteenth century translation of *De Officiis* to help locate a theory of rhetoric that emphasizes conversation over oratory. Finally, I turn to Edmund Spenser’s *The Shepheardes Calender* and Moderata Fonte’s *Il Merito Delle Donne* as examples of pastoral dialogues that borrow features from both pastoral eclogues and Ciceronian dialogues to create a horizontally-oriented discursive space that allows those marginalized by class or gender to develop their positions and identities through a personal conversation that also fashions their public personae.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iv
Introduction	1
Chapter 1. Pastoral Dialogue: The Shared History of Conversation in the Literary Pastoral	29
Chapter 2. “Common Talk”: <i>De Officiis</i> and the Theory of Conversation in the Renaissance	76
Chapter 3. Discursive Space in <i>The Shepheardes Calender</i>	123
Chapter 4. The Worth of Men in Moderata Fonte’s <i>Il merito delle donne</i>	164
Conclusion	210
Bibliography	214

Introduction

“Do you really believe,” Cornelia replied, “that everything historians tell us about men – or about women – is actually true? You ought to consider the fact that these histories have been written by men, who never tell the truth except by accident.” —Moderata Fonte, *Il merito delle donne*¹

In her late sixteenth century dialogue, *Il merito delle donne*, or *The Worth of Women*, Moderata Fonte predicts feminist standpoint theory when one of her interlocutors argues that women cannot trust histories written exclusively from men’s perspectives. In order to even make this argument, Fonte must create a context and an audience that is sympathetic to this perspective. The setting of her dialogue is described in detail, as a garden designed by a woman who never married. In my dissertation I investigate this fictitious setting and others like it as related theoretical spaces that Renaissance authors used for theorizing egalitarian relationships and communities. These spaces are intentionally described as at a remove from the pressures of their society’s social and political hierarchies, but they never completely cut those ties either. Instead, these spaces, which are always versions of the literary pastoral, retain an attenuated connection to the city, and the hierarchies and systems of

¹Whenever possible, I use titles in the original language. My reasoning is that original language titles make it easier to distinguish between many similarly titled pastoral eclogues. I have used Virginia Cox’s translation of Fonte throughout.

power it represents.² Because these spaces appear in poetry and in prose, in texts classified as literary and those read as rhetorical, the pastoral landscapes they depict have not been considered closely related. In this dissertation, I consider all of these pastoral landscapes to be imagined spaces used for theorizing about community and communication away from the city's institutions of power. They imagine eloquence outside the city walls.

My overarching project is to examine a group of Renaissance texts that I define as "pastoral dialogue" from a perspective informed by feminist rhetorical practices. The definition, history and theoretical implications of this term are the subjects of my first chapter, but, for the time being, let us simply define the term as any polyphonic text set in a pastoral landscape.³ This is a cross-disciplinary project that explores the commonalities between forms that are otherwise separated by discipline or even particular veins of scholarship within a discipline. My project is an example of feminist rhetorical history both because some of the texts I consider were written by women and because I hold up pastoral dialogue as a model for feminist rhetoric. The term "pastoral dialogue" disrupts the usual way scholarship is compartmentalized along the lines of poetry and rhetoric on the one hand and texts written by women and the canonical texts by men on the other. Even though "pastoral dialogue" is a term I have coined, these texts, from disparate genres, are united by a common

²The city or the town in pastoral fictions synecdochically stands in for the institutions of complex civilization, which are defined in contrast to the simple pastoral life.

³I borrow the term "polyphonic" as a way of describing these texts from Janet Levarie Smarr's *Joining the Conversation*. She divides dialogues into those with two voices, the "diphonic," and those with more than two voices, the "polyphonic" (27).

Classical history as well as common epistemological assumptions. “Pastoral dialogue” has two obvious criteria for inclusion: first, the setting must be pastoral, and, secondly, the work must be explicitly dialogical, with multiple voices speaking directly in the text. In the Renaissance, the two genres that meet these criteria are collections of pastoral eclogues, which are collections of poems that all contain poetry in dialogue on the one hand, and the subset of Ciceronian dialogues set in the pastoral landscape on the other. The pastoral in both these genres has a connection to the pastoral of Plato’s *Phaedrus*, and therefore pastoral dialogues are set in the same literary, rather than literal, pastoral landscape.

The pastoral is literally on the margins, outside the city walls yet still a cultivated, human space. While physically set on the margins, pastoral dialogue is also on the margins of traditional rhetorical canonicity, as it takes place outside the institutions of politics and law, privileges dialogue and conversation over public oratory, and often emphasizes the communal aspects of rhetoric equally with the agonistic. Ciceronian dialogues are already central to accounts of Renaissance rhetoric; however, pairing them with pastoral eclogues expands our field of rhetorical expressions in this marginalized space. The genre of pastoral eclogue is more often subversive than Ciceronian dialogue, expanding the potential of the pastoral as a space for politically and socially marginalized ideas.⁴ The affinity between dialogue and pastoral has

⁴Graff wryly observes that “subversive” “has become little more than a plus-mark, a gold star awarded to whatever a critic happens to approve of, rather the way an earlier generation

classical origins and modern-day examples, but it is particularly strong in the 15th and 16th centuries. From the 17th century onward, pastoral poetry is increasingly a genre of individual poems that descend from pastoral eclogues but do not depict community and dialogue.

Why redraw the generic boundaries of pastoral poetry and Ciceroian dialogue to emphasize this area of overlap? This newly defined category contains a collection of horizontally-oriented imagined discursive spaces.⁵ As imagined settings for dialogue, these pastoral landscapes are, even if not explicitly, examples of Renaissance theories of discursive space. Because of the pastoral's relationship to the city, and the power it represents, pastoral dialogues imagine and theorize about Renaissance versions of egalitarian communities of discourse. We think of the court as the primary rhetorical space of the Renaissance, where relationships are hierarchical and revolve around central figures of power. However, the Renaissance was also invested in horizontal relationships, away from the organizing powers of the court. As Michelle O'Callaghan observes, "Early modern culture was not synonymous with the court, but heterogeneous and multi-centred. Such hierarchical, stratified societies could accommodate a range of differentially empowered publics" (6-7). Pastoral dialogue is sometimes a depiction of existing publics, but it is always a

of critics used words like 'beautiful' and 'noble'" (173-4). However, I hope to work against that dilution of the word and define it as challenging institutions or systems in a way that puts the subversive actor in danger of physical violence or social ostracism.

⁵I borrow the term "horizontal" from Patrick Collinson, who argues that a focus on community can "disclose the horizontal connections of political life at those lower levels as coexistent with the vertical connections which depended upon monarchy and lordship and which have been the ordinary concerns of political history" (qtd. in Richards 19).

tool for imagining how more egalitarian discursive spaces might work. That is, the pastoral landscape allows its authors, who range from courtiers to gentlewomen, to imagine a rhetorical space where relationships are not hierarchical, but horizontal.

While I have crossed disciplinary boundaries in order to map out my area of study, my relationship to my approach, feminist rhetorical studies, is also complex. One might ask how a project that mainly examines the writing of men is an example of feminist rhetorical studies. To answer that question, I want to step back and briefly look at some of the objectives and methods of this approach. Feminist rhetorical studies asks us to redefine rhetoric and its criteria of evaluation. In 1992, both Barbara Biesecker and Michelle Ballif argued that for feminist rhetorical studies to only produce a history of exceptional female orators would be too limited a project for the discipline. Ballif warns that “efforts to make women legitimate by situating them in patronymic narratives does nothing to enfranchise them – because it does nothing to the phallogocentric economy which disenfranchised them” (Ballif 95).⁶

If adding women to the rhetorical canon is not the ultimate goal, how do feminist rhetorical practices shape rhetoric? To begin to answer that, I want to turn to Susan Jarratt’s often quoted definition of feminist rhetorical historiography. She defines two approaches to the field as first, the “recovery

⁶Since the 1992 publication of these essays, there has been an enormous scholarly response to these objectives. For an overview of this research, see Royster and Kirsch 31-39, Miller and Bridwell-Bowles (3-7)

of female rhetors” and secondly, the “gendered analysis of both traditional and newly discovered sources” (2002, 11). K. J. Rawson gives an account that puts the two approaches identified by Jarratt into relational terms:

I understand these two methodologies in terms of movement. For feminist rhetorical recovery scholarship, the movement is often from individual figures or particular groups to theorizing about the contribution of those figures or groups . . . This work often begins with a single individual . . . or a specific category of individuals . . . to then create broader theories about how women use rhetoric. Feminist rhetorical theory, on the other hand, moves from broader rhetorical theorizing to focus on individuals by engaging a single, though complex, topic or conceptual category . . . and applying it to specific examples of rhetorical practices.

According to Rawson, the “recovery of female orators” begins with specific women or groups of women and leads out to theory, while “gendered analysis” begins with the theory and then moves to the specific. I find Jarratt’s succinct articulation of the methods coupled with the relationship that Rawson puts them into a useful starting point for exploring the terrain of feminist rhetorical practices. What both Rawson and Jarratt point to is that feminist rhetorical practices have both a common subject area and shared methodologies. I want to add that the two branches are not separate, but an iterative process, each defining the other. That is, when a study begins with texts by women as its starting point, it broadens our understanding of how women have used rhetoric, and thereby rhetoric itself. However, if a study starts with a definition of rhetoric that has been broadened by the study of women rhetors, it casts a new net for what can be included as rhetoric.

In order for this definition to be broad enough to encompass the approaches of feminist rhetorical practices, we must look carefully at the term “gendered analysis.” While Jarratt does not elaborate on the term, the practice of feminist rhetorical scholarship has shown the definition of the term to not only include analysis that is primarily concerned with gender, but also analysis that has been discovered and developed in order to better include women. This is the iterative process of subject matter and methodology. One of the consequences of studying the rhetoric of women has been that we have had to consider the rhetorical functions of certain acts that were historically invisible or marginalized in the study of rhetoric. These acts include silence, listening and conversation.⁷

I suggest that attention to these acts as gendered elements of rhetoric is part of the larger feminist rhetorical project regardless of whether the texts studied were written by women or not. When we uncouple the two halves of this feminist rhetorical engine and apply gendered analysis to texts that are not written by women, it is both part of feminist rhetoric, and it is also one way that feminist rhetoric redefines the whole field of rhetoric. That is, feminist rhetoric not only discovers women’s rhetorical acts, in the process, it also invents new definitions and methods of evaluation for rhetoric. This uncoupling of subject and method is necessary because, without it, we end up with insulated subfields of rhetoric whose research is in danger of never

⁷See Cheryl Glenn’s *Unspoken*, Krista Ratcliffe’s *Rhetorical Listening* and Glenn and Ratcliffe’s anthology, *Silence and Listening*.

intersecting. My uneasiness with insulated subfields is that it becomes very difficult to distinguish differences in methodologies from differences between texts.

In “Disciplinary Landscaping; or, Contemporary Challenges in the History of Rhetoric,” Jacqueline Jones Royster looks at how the inclusion of women, as well as the inclusion of people who are non-white or not from elite classes, as practitioners of rhetoric shapes our conception of the landscape, drawing attention to elements that had previously been invisible. Royster argues that

if we shift perspectives to anchor our views of rhetorical terrain in counter discourses instead of always anchoring them in the discourses of power and prestige, we might notice, perhaps for the first time, features of the landscape that we just have not noticed before, or have not perceived to be meaningful, useful, or instructive. (160).

In other words, the inclusion of rhetors and rhetoricians who had been excluded because they were not white, male and elite changes the whole landscape, not just by adding new features, but by changing how we perceive the elements that have traditionally been studied.

In “Conversational Rhetoric: The Rise and Fall of a Women’s Tradition, 1600–1900,” Jane Donawerth describes conversation as a rhetorical strategy historically available to women. She examines women’s texts from 1600 to 1900 for explicit theorizing of conversation, as well as for evidence of a general

conversational approach to writing and speaking. Many of the authors she considers have knowledge of Classical depictions of conversation and dialogue, particularly Cicero's. These women, like Madeleine de Scudéry, take the traditions of classical rhetoric and rewrite them to make room for women to speak. My examination of Moderata Fonte's *Il merito delle donne* in my last chapter employs an approach that is very similar to Donawerth's, but to a text that was written slightly before the period she considers.

While Donawerth's study of women's conversational rhetoric serves as a model for my project in my approach to women's texts, most of the dialogues I consider were written by men. My approach to these texts begins with the same assumption that Susan Jarratt makes in *Rereading the Sophists* and Joy Connolly makes in *The State of Speech*: both of these projects hold up particular classical rhetorical moments and texts as instances that resonate with post-structuralist feminism and serve as models for feminist rhetoric. Jarratt and Connolly point to instances of classical rhetoric as being aligned with present-day feminism, partly because these moments offer a theory of communication in which the body and emotions are included. However, classical rhetoric has been very, very good at keeping out slaves, minorities, people with disabilities and women. We all know that. Scholars like Jarratt and Connolly make sure we know they know that. So why am I bringing it up again? Because, if certain forms of rhetoric are arguably allies of feminism I wonder if we can see any evidence of that historically. The question that interests me most and motivates this chapter is, "If feminism and Ciceronian rhetoric line

up so well, are there moments in the Renaissance, a period when rhetoric was respected and taught and a dominant way of thinking, when people on the margins of power could use its tools to imagine a world that might better include them?" Let me be clear about two aspects of this question. What I am looking for is both more and less than what might be called tokenism. It is less than tokenism because I'm not interested in the marginalized actually gaining positions of power in the Renaissance. A few did, of course, for exceptional reasons, but that is not the question I'm putting forward. It is more than tokenism, however, because I'm interested in finding instances when people on the margins of power imagined a discursive space that better included people like themselves.

Susan Jarratt's *Rereading the Sophists* participates in rhetoric's rehabilitation of the often maligned group of rhetors and teachers. Her perspective, however, is that the Sophists, along with women and others, are part of the excluded group that coheres and legitimizes the traditional canon. According to Jarratt, sophists and women share a relativistic perspective in contrast to the universalism of philosophy and logos. Jarratt recovers a past that predates the explicit binaries of poetry and rhetoric on the one hand and rhetoric and philosophy on the other. She also draws attention to the sophistic understanding that history itself is a literary process. In order to draw out similarities, Jarratt puts the sophists in conversation with post-structuralist feminism. According to Jarratt, the model of the sophists does not suggest any profoundly different avenues for post-structuralist feminism. Instead, the sophists are a

point of similarity that gives history to recent feminist approaches, and a point of contact with a sympathetic perspective that can be used to further develop new feminist concepts of history and rhetoric.

Joy Connolly turns to Roman rhetoric, specifically Ciceronian rhetoric, as a model for feminist politics. Connolly argues that Cicero, particularly in *De Oratore*, describes a politics that does not exclude the body, but relies on the orator's body and, the audience's perception of the orator's body, as a test of virtue. She also argues that Cicero's politics depend on an awareness of the situated self that develops through a process with culture. According to Connolly, Cicero's dialogues demonstrate a refusal to divide public from private or compartmentalize knowledge, as they are wide-ranging, and simultaneously private acts, but on display. While she acknowledges that the body that is so central in Roman politics is figured male and privileged, she argues that these preferences can be altered, and that this Ciceronian politics is an ally of a movement that makes room for women, their bodies, and explodes the private/public split.

Because Joy Connolly and I share an interest in Cicero, particularly in Cicero's *De Oratore*, I want to take a closer look at the differences between our projects. One difference is that her attention is not usually on *De Oratore* as a performance, but on its subject matter, the perfect orator and the theory of statehood that accompanies it. Therefore, her claim that it is feminist is a claim about how politics could and should be restructured. My investigation is concerned with the generic conventions and performance of Ciceronian

dialogue and how marginalized interlocutors can imitate those aspects in the context of a society in which they remain marginalized. My concern is not with public oratory, but with the rhetoric of dialogue and conversation. This smaller, more circumscribed rhetoric might have been the temporary resting place of those with the power to speak publicly, but it was often historically the only opportunity for women and the lower classes to speak at all. Their access to this space depends on it being circumscribed, but, when these works are published, the space becomes both private and public. So, while these authors depict the circumscribed performance of their interlocutors, the publication of this performance gives them a public voice as well.

My project begins with an approach that is similar to that taken by Jarratt and Connolly, as I consider two Renaissance genres that imitate classical texts. Part of my argument, therefore, is that there are aspects of texts like Cicero's *De Oratore* and Virgil's *Bucolica* that resonate with feminism and women's writing. However, unlike Jarratt and Connolly, I can also point to Renaissance pastoral dialogues as moments when writers have employed these potentially feminist elements of the texts to create a space for marginalized voices to speak. That is, when I say that classical pastoral dialogues could be models for feminism, I can point to historic examples when they were models, not explicitly for feminism, but for creating a space for women and other silenced marginalized people to speak. There are reasons why Jarratt and Connolly cannot make similar claims. For Jarratt, there is not a historical moment when women turned to sophistic rhetoric as a tool and the sophists as

allies. In fact, Jarratt seeks to create that moment. For Connolly, she argues that Cicero's theory of politics and statehood is a "historical ally" of feminist political theory (149). Her ambitions, therefore, are not demonstrable on the small scale.

Like many feminists and rhetoricians, authors of pastoral dialogues are interested in theorizing about discursive space. Unlike scholars who push the inception of the public sphere back into the Renaissance, I will look at how Renaissance authors of pastoral dialogue create their own theories of the way dialogue would function in a space on the cusp of private and public that is aware of, but not limited by, social and political hierarchies.⁸ As a space that purports to loosen or free its inhabitants from the strictures of politics and society, the pastoral is a double-edged sword, with the potential to subversively question the given hierarchies, but also with the potential to naturalize differences by showing they persist outside stratified society. I am particularly interested in the pastoral dialogues that challenge the status quo, but those same dialogues usually naturalize other aspects of social and political hierarchies.

I suggest that taking a literary space as my subject already has particular affinities with feminism. In part, this is because by taking a space as my subject matter there is an implicit assumption that context radically shapes what is said and how it can be said. When Biesecker argues that feminists

⁸ For early modern examples of the public sphere, see Zaret as well as the special *When is a public sphere?* of *Criticism*, particularly Coldiron and McDowell.

must restructure rhetoric, she observes that “it becomes possible to forge a storying that shifts the focus of historical inquiry from the question ‘who is speaking,’ a question that confuses the subjects of history with the agents for history, to the question ‘what play of forces made it possible for a particular speaking subject to emerge’” (148). When authors use the pastoral landscape, they are experimenting with the “play of forces” that allow their “speaking subject to emerge.” This is particularly true in subversive pastoral eclogues and in pastoral Ciceronian dialogues written by women, because authors of these texts must create a space for their interlocutors to speak. If they were to speak these ideas publicly themselves, they would either be punished or ignored.

While my project does not seek to locate the public sphere in the Renaissance, it is still useful to look at feminist critiques of configurations of public space, in order to develop tools for better analyzing Renaissance pastoral landscapes. People like Iris Marion Young and Sela Benhabib have shown that some traditions, such as the liberal tradition, may give lip service to the inclusion of women and of minorities and of people with disabilities, but that the very system itself depends on oppositions that demand their exclusion.

In “Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition and Jürgen Habermas,” Sela Benhabib examines competing models of public space from a feminist perspective. Benhabib argues that many normative ideas of public space exclude women because of a public and private divide which excludes women’s issues of the body and the emotions. Because women,

minorities and people with disabilities are so closely identified with the body and emotions, they are structurally excluded from the system. After comparing normative notions of the agonistic public space, the liberal model of public space and Habermas' discursive model of public space, all from a feminist position, Benhabib settles on the discursive model as the most in keeping with feminism. According to Benhabib, Arendt's agonistic public space is problematic because it limits the types of action allowed in the public sphere, denying that work and labor can be political. Essentially, this is a criticism about the public/private split. Her criticism of the liberal model is that it limits discussions in the public sphere to those that concern the moral life, rather than the good life. This pre-existing dichotomy means that the system's supposed neutrality depends on these external categorizations. And yet, as groups enter the public space that were previously excluded, the very evidence of their new inclusion is that issues that had been considered private and not of public concern become political. The liberal model does not have a mechanism for this transformation. In her assessment of Habermas' discursive model, Benhabib criticizes the model for not taking differences of gender into account, but holds it up as the best model for feminism because Habermas' concept of normative dialogue removes the predetermined topics of public life and creates a space where any topic may be brought to the table. Let's take a closer look at Benhabib's characterization of practical discourse:

It views normative dialogue as a conversation of justification taking place under the constraints of an "ideal speech situation." The

procedural constraints of the ideal speech situation are that each participant must have an equal chance to initiate and to continue communication; each must have an equal chance to make assertions, recommendations, and explanations; all must have equal chances to express their wishes, desires, and feelings; and finally, within dialogue, speakers must be free to thematize those power relations that in ordinary contexts would constrain the wholly free articulation of opinions and positions (89).

Benhabib refers to normative dialogue as “radical proceduralism” (89). She argues that this procedure makes space for an honest discussion of power that breaks down the barriers that the agonistic and liberal models insist on.

In “Impartiality and the Civic Public,” Iris Marion Young argues that women cannot participate in the liberal public sphere because they are identified with the very things the liberal public sphere depends on excluding, namely the body, affect and desire. Not only that, many issues that apply to women are lumped under the private in a pre-existing public/private split and therefore are excluded from the concerns of the liberal public sphere. Young’s critique of the liberal public sphere also depends on her rejection of a stable, *a priori* identity: the model not only excludes women but supposes there is a neutral place to stand. As Young explains, “the ideal of impartiality requires constructing the ideal of a self abstracted from the context of any real persons: the deontological self is not committed to any particular ends, has no particular history, is a member of no communities, has no body” (95). It is a system that depends on people who have an unattainable degree of objectivity and universality and a community that is impossibly homogenous. Young

points to Habermas's theory of communicative action as a better model for public discourse because he uses an expanded definition of the rational that includes the normative as well as the factual and makes room for the aesthetic and the expressive. Despite these inclusions, Young critiques Habermas for ignoring the rhetorical aspects of language, which is a return to the dichotomy of essence and accident and a belief that there is an underlying message that can be separated from its means of expression.

In "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," Nancy Fraser assumes that public spheres are necessary for the function of democracy, but finds several flaws with Habermas' model of the bourgeois. Many of her observations are helpful for our understanding of the pastoral landscape. The first of these is her challenge to Habermas' support for the practice of bracketing differences, that is, treating everyone as equal, regardless of difference. According to Fraser, this practice privileges those who already have advantages, rather than the marginalized. Rather she questions the wisdom of a single public sphere, and asserts that subordinated groups benefit from what she calls subaltern counterpublics. This is relevant to our analysis of pastoral dialogue because we can divide pastoral landscapes into those that are inclusive discursive spaces where differences are bracketed and those that are subaltern counterpublics. As we will see in the next chapter, Jacopo Sannazaro's *Arcadia* and Philip Sidney's pastoral, also called *Arcadia*, both function as discursive spaces where differences are bracketed and thereby naturalized, whereas the texts that feature in chapters

three and four, Moderata Fonte's *Il merito delle donne* and Edmund Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender* function as subaltern counterpublics. Fraser's distinction between weak publics and strong publics is also useful for us. Weak publics allow for discourse, but not decision making, while strong publics encompass both. While Fraser argues that strong publics are ultimately more useful for democracies, pastoral dialogues are all examples of weak publics. While Fraser says that weak publics are preferred by the bourgeois conception because they maintain autonomy and can critique the state, in the Renaissance strong publics would not have been tolerated, even in fiction. The imagined counterpublics of the pastoral are horizontal communities that exist apart from state control, but their safety, or rather, the safety of their authors, rests in their constant displays of powerlessness.

In both genres, arguments are products of subject positions, not abstractions. That is, virtues or vices never speak in the pastoral. Speech and argument are always human. And both genres take into account the materiality of language. While Ciceronian dialogue is a place where emotion and style are integral components of argumentation, in pastoral eclogues they often eclipse any other standards.

In literature, Renaissance scholarship is still dominated by the narratives of new historicism. What I mean by this is not so much that new historicism is the current paradigm that governs contemporary research, but that new approaches still define themselves against new historicism. As someone whose approach is informed by and against new historicism, I also want

to articulate the points of contact and departure between the approach and mine.

New historicists, feminists and rhetoricians share many methodological assumptions. In “New Historicism and Social Rhetoric: From the Bard to the Boardroom,” Elizabeth A. McCord explores the overlap between new historicism and social rhetoric. She finds the approaches are so similar “their interlacing connections overpower their opposition” (300). McCord demonstrates that the approaches of social rhetoric and new historicism share substantial overlap, as both emphasize that the subject is embedded in culture, and that writing is always collectively produced and produces, as well as is produced by, culture. The application of this observation comes when she takes a new historicist approach to self-fashioning and applies it to the public communications of corporations. She argues that this “illustrates the commonality between rhetoric and literary theory” (316). I agree with that conclusion, but I think the commonality deserves further investigation. Her reading borrows a tool from new historicism and applies it in a new context, which demonstrates that there is significant overlap between the approaches of social rhetoric and new historicism, but not necessarily their objectives.

In the prefatory remarks to the section of essays that includes McCord’s own, Davida Charney and Wilma A. Ebbitt give a practical criterion for their definition of “discourse communities:” “only if we can define discourse communities rigorously can we describe, predict, evaluate and, ultimately, improve the writing practices of any group” (296). That is, the impetus for defining

discourse communities is ultimately to improve writing. This practical application of scholarship is common in rhetorical studies, but is very rare in literary studies, and is antithetical to the new historicist approach. While McCord borrows a tool from new historicism and applies it in a context that is otherwise unfettered from new historicist criticism, modern day rhetoricians and new historicists overlap more fully on the subject of Renaissance rhetoric. Here, the differences between the two approaches is better illustrated.

The discipline of rhetoric generally, but particularly in specific approaches such as feminist rhetorical practices, has a practical and activist dimension that is missing from new historicism. As Charney and Ebbitt illustrate above, one of the goals of the discipline is pedagogical, with the practical, assessable objective of improving practices such as writing. In its feminist and other revisionist subdisciplines, rhetoric aims to understand how power functions, not as an end in itself, but to challenge and change the system.

New historicists, with their emphasis on subversion and containment, often deny the possibility of change. From some vantage points, activism is arguably a bias, shaping the contours of the discipline and the histories it produces. However, as Steven Mailloux remarks, “Rhetoric is not necessarily disreputable because it is constantly deployed ideologically *if* there is no ahistorical, neutral space outside all ideologies” (40). Oddly, the critique from the perspective of new historicism is not that it is objective and activism is suspect. New historicism acknowledges the impossibility of objectivity; in fact, one of its core methodological assumptions is that the subject is always deeply

embedded and shaped by her culture. Rather, the objection is that the matrices of power are so totalizing as to not leave room for activism. Paul A. Cantor argues that “The hermeneutical dexterity of the New Historicists is constantly exercised in the form of showing that any attempt to think independently of one’s times is governed precisely by some deeper thought pattern of one’s time” (30). That is, in new historicism, the subject is so situated as to be so deeply embedded, that she or he loses the ability to act in any way against the system. So far, we have articulated two ways that new historicism is different from the discipline of rhetoric. First, while pedagogy must be a concern of new historicists, most of whom teach in some capacity, it is not an explicit objective of the approach, unlike many formulations of rhetoric. Second, while the discipline of rhetoric, if not always activist, is accommodating of activism, new historicism famously questions whether any real challenge to existing power structures can ever be effective.

Another difference between new historicism and the discipline of rhetoric is how they imagine their connection to historical people. According to Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, new historicism

carries the core hermeneutical presumption that one can occupy a position from which one can discover meanings that those who left traces themselves could not have articulated. Explication and paraphrase are not enough; we seek something more, something that the authors we study would not have had sufficient distance upon themselves and their own era to grasp. (8)

That is, for new historicists, modern day scholars have the advantage of dis-

tance, and also a superior understanding of power relations, which allows them to see the past more clearly than its denizens. It is important to point out that this is an unfalsifiable assumption. Greenblatt and Gallagher do not refer to the texts that remain, but the historical figures who wrote them. One cannot think of a study that would test new historicist knowledge against theirs in any meaningful way.

Jennifer Richards answers this particular tenet of new historicism by reminding us that “this distance also means that there will be some things which *we* cannot grasp and . . . we might easily mistake or misunderstand their strategies of critique” (8). Implicit in her criticism is that scholars must acknowledge the limitations of their position, and while that doesn’t mean not employing the tools that have been developed, it reminds us that scholars have an ethical responsibility to seriously consider the claims, concerns and understanding of their subjects. Rhetoric as a discipline often goes one step further than Richards and finds past understandings and pedagogies of rhetoric relevant as tools for its modern day practice. For example, in *On the Contrary: The Protocol of Traditional Rhetoric*, Thomas Sloane states his main objective is to “search the past for what is missing in our modern revival of rhetoric” (2). Similarly, in *Rereading the Sophists* Jarratt argues that the sophists “provide for us a desirable model for emulation in deciding questions about the relation of theory to practice and the relation of school to politics” (116). Both of these projects look back at the past not only to gain an understanding of it, but as a corrective to modern day practices in the discipline of rhetoric.

So, while new historicism and rhetoric share many methodological assumptions, from the situated subject to the collective practices of text creation and the importance of texts as both creators and artifacts of culture, it is also important to acknowledge their points of departure. While the discipline of rhetoric is accommodating of activism, deeply invested in pedagogy, and assumes a dialogical relationship with the past, new historicism questions the possibility of activism, has no declared or interrogated investment in pedagogy and assumes a position of superiority in its relations with the past.

As well as its common ground with rhetoric, the similarities between new historicism and feminism also often receive attention. For example, Judith Lowder Newton observes that *Sisterhood is Powerful*, a text that precedes new historicism by a decade, “. . . reads like a compendium of the ‘post-modernist’ assumptions currently attributed to ‘new historicism’ – no universal humanity, subjectivity culturally constructed, readings of literature and history biased and political” (153). Gallagher and Greenblatt also note the similarities between new historicism and feminism:

Women’s studies, and the feminism that motivated its formation, has served as an important, if little acknowledged, model for new historicism in that it has inspired its adherents to identify new objects for study, bring those objects into the light of critical attention, and insist upon their legitimate place in the curriculum. It has also served to politicize explicitly an academic discourse that had often attempted to avoid or conceal partisan or polemical commitments, and it unsettles familiar aesthetic hierarchies that had been manipulated, consciously or unconsciously, to limit the cultural significance of women. (11)

Both of the above quotations draw attention to the similarities between feminism and new historicism, many of which apply to the field of rhetoric as well. Both quotations also point out that while new historicism borrows from feminism, that debt is not always acknowledged. As we see in the above quotations, new historicism and feminist rhetorical approaches share a concern for the particular and the contextualized over the universal. New historicism, like feminism, upends the canon, not only bringing new texts to bear on the landscape, but also insisting on their equality with those that have been elevated in the past.

One point of departure is that new historicism has a tendency to view erotic desire in literature as a metaphor for hierarchical power relations, to the exclusion of the explicit, stated desire in the text. The effect of this is to render women, who are often the objects of the desire, even more invisible than they have been, replacing a relationship that at least implicates them, with one that excludes them completely.⁹ In my view, these instances of “gendered analysis” in which gender is read solely as a power differential may borrow gendered analysis from feminism, but are not feminist.

To generalize, new historicism, feminism and the discipline of rhetoric share many core methodological features, as all three stress the importance of historical context over the universal and culturally constructed subjects over a belief in an *a priori* self, as well as sharing a commitment to overturning tra-

⁹For example, see Fairweather 278-9 for a discussion of Montrose’s ironic perspective on pastoral love and his own correction to that perspective.

ditional canonicity and the principles that establish it. But whereas feminism and rhetoric share a commitment to applying the fruits of their historical investigations in the present, new historicism throws into question even the possibility of change. What, then, should be the relationship between feminist rhetorical studies and new historicism? Unlike McCord, I do not think that relationship is one in which “their interlacing connections overpower their opposition” (300). However, it would be a mistake to dismiss new historicism. The common ground of the two approaches means that conversation is possible, and the points of departure can be productive rather than merely divisive. New historicism is invested in uncovering the hidden power structures of Renaissance culture. To that end, new historicists are often skeptical of both the ability of the individual to change the system as well as the motivations the individual espouses. New historicist readings often uncover a power structure, which might have been invisible, or at least inarticulable, to its author and contemporary audience. These readings can serve as a test for the approaches of more activist and revisionist accounts of rhetoric.

For example, one of the uneasy but necessary alliances at the heart of rhetoric is the marriage of virtue and eloquence. Anxiety about this relationship goes back at least as far as Plato’s *Phaedrus*, although Socrates casts it as the relationship between truth and eloquence. New historicists often cast virtue and truth aside, claiming that they are part of the rhetorical spectacle, rather than genuine motivations, and that individuals are most invested in their own self-advancement. These cynical readings of rhetoric and motiva-

tion are part of the truth. Rhetorical skill can and has been used as a cynical tool to gain power. Feminist rhetorical readings of rhetoric are stronger when they entertain these possibilities, and consider the ways the texts participate in accommodation.

Even though I claim feminist rhetorical scholarship as my approach, the other approaches are not straw men or only perspectives to argue against, but part of what informs my perspective. Looking at the same text through contrasting perspectives helps to locate the paradoxes at the center of Renaissance literature and rhetoric. It also points to the aspects of our readings that are not based in the absolute, the provable, or even the arguable, but that arise directly from value judgments we make as scholars.

My first chapter defines pastoral dialogue and then explores the common history and the common epistemological assumptions of its two component genres, pastoral eclogues and Ciceronian dialogues in pastoral settings. As a history, my concern is primarily with pastoral eclogues as imagining different versions of discursive space. Ciceronian dialogue is part of my focus, but also a model for teasing out the aspects of public space in pastoral eclogues. I focus on pastoral eclogues because they have not previously been considered as space for rhetorical conversation and *in utramque partem*.

My second chapter is a response to new historicist characterizations of Renaissance rhetoric as ultimately about self-advancement and gaining power over one's audience. The purpose of this chapter is to add to a history of Renaissance rhetoric that values both the agonistic and the cooperative aspects

of rhetoric, as well as its twinned but opposing directions of self-advancement and communal benefit. This is a necessary recuperation if we intend to find models for (or examples of) feminist rhetoric in the Renaissance. In a search for co-operation and consensus in Renaissance rhetoric, my chapter offers a reading of other versions of the same story, particularly, the original Isocratean version and the retelling in *De Officiis*, and then examines the popularity of these stories in the Renaissance.

My third chapter looks at *The Shepheardes Calender* as the first work to explicitly re-connect the pastoral eclogue with Ciceronian dialogue, after the two genres divided at least 1600 years earlier. I argue that Spenser creates a horizontally-oriented discursive space by capitalizing on the features of both genres. First, I offer a review of recent scholarship about the Ciceronian influence on the poem. Much of this scholarship argues that Spenser creates a dialogic space where those of different backgrounds and social statuses can converse as equals. I couple that with the features of pastoral eclogues he uses to create a more egalitarian space.

Finally, my fourth chapter reads Moderata Fonte's *Il merito delle donne* as a response to Cicero's *De Oratore*, examining what it means to consider the dialogue a woman's appropriation and use of Ciceronian dialogue but also as a woman's unique contribution to a theory of rhetoric and communication. I examine how Fonte aims to redefine virtue for men as well as for women in order to authorize women's speech. At the crux of her argument sits the anxiety about rhetoric, dating back at least as far as Plato, that the audience controls

the speakers. I argue that through a performance of Ciceronian dialogue, the women demonstrate that they are men's equals, and that the women argue men are not fully human because they refuse to recognize women's equality and to listen to women's persuasive speech.

Chapter 1

Pastoral Dialogue: The Shared History of Conversation in the Literary Pastoral

By Hera, it is a charming resting place. For this plane tree is very spreading and lofty, and the tall and shady willow is very beautiful, and it is in full bloom, so as to make the place most fragrant; then, too, the spring is very pretty as it flows under the plane tree, and its water is very cool, to judge by my foot. —Plato, *Phaedrus* 230B¹

One day . . . Daphnis the cowherd and Damoetas
Gathered their herd into one place. Damoetas' chin
Was red with down, while the other's beard was just coming.
It was noon in summer, and the two sat down by a spring.
This was their song. Daphnis had made the challenge, so he began.
—Theocritus, *Idyll 6*, 1-5²

Say, Crassus, why don't we follow the example of Socrates as he appears in Plato's *Phaedrus*? For your plane tree here suggests this to me, by spreading its broad boughs to shade this place exactly like that other plane tree whose shade Socrates sought. —Scaevola, in Cicero's *De Oratore* 1.28³

¹All quotations from *Phaedrus* are from the Loeb edition, translated by Harold North Fowler.

²All quotations from *Idylls* are translated by Anthony Verity.

³All quotations from *De Oratore* are taken from the Loeb edition and translated by E.W. Sutton.

O Tityrus thou lieng under shade of spreading beech,
Doost play a countrie song upon a slender oten pipe
—Meliobeus in Virgil's *Bucolica*, Eclogue 1, translated by Abraham
Fleming, 1575⁴

The simple ayre, the gentle warbling wynde, So calme, so coole, as no where
else I fynde: The grassye ground with daintye Daysies dight The Bramble
bush, where Byrds of every kynde To the waters fall their tunes attemper
right. —Hobbinoll, *The Shepheades Calender, June* (4-8)

The quotations above span centuries, and the countrysides they describe range from the Grecian Arcadia to the countryside just outside of Rome to pastoral England. Despite their differences, each of the above passages takes place in the pastoral landscape and is written in dialogue. The moments are so similar, we can almost collapse the temporal and physical distances that separate them to imagine that they share a hot day, shade and a cool stream. We might stand next to the stream and hear the overlapping sounds of cicadas, shepherds' songs, and voices raised in speech and debate. In western tradition, the pastoral landscape occupies a particular place in literature. Outside the city walls, the pastoral is not completely disconnected from city life, but it provides stasis, a moment away from responsibilities, or, in literary terms, a break from plot. In our contemporary imaginations, we may picture the scene as solitary, and a moment of unmediated connection with nature, but the Classical and Renaissance pastoral is populated by groups of people, mainly men,

⁴Although this quotation uses the first translation in English, unless noted, all subsequent references to *Bucolica* will be translated by C. Day Lewis

who relate to each other as equals, rather than along the lines of vertical social and political hierarchies associated with the city or the court. The pastoral is a reprieve from society, but not from being social. It also occupies a position outside the city walls, but not in the wilderness. The literary wilderness is a very different place in the western literary tradition, where there is no time for *otium*, and the landscape precipitates unexpected events that move the plot along. Instead of stasis, the wilderness is the backdrop for adventures like epic journeys on the sea and the magical amorous reversals of a night spent in the forest. So, pastoral is wedged between the city and the wilderness, and a break from the the driving forces of each. In neither genre is the pastoral a space to radically turn away from the city, but a place to develop a community that happens not to center around a monarch or a court. In this chapter, I argue that pastoral dialogue models a discursive space that is often closely related to normative feminist theories of public space in a way that includes women. In order to make this argument, I define pastoral dialogue as the intersection of Ciceronian dialogues and pastoral eclogues.

Rhetoric in the Renaissance is often in the domain of the classroom or the court. In the court, rhetoric is primarily a tool for the courtier who seeks to influence the prince. Rhetoric in the Renaissance classroom is described in various conflicting ways, but it is the domain of the schoolboy, rather than the adult. The pastoral dialogue is not a literal alternative, but an imaginary space for Renaissance rhetoric where adults engage in persuasive speech with equals, rather than in the vertical, hierarchical realm of court rhetoric. The pastoral

often criticizes the court, but it never directly promotes a specific course of political action. In the case of Ciceronian dialogue, the pastoral landscape is a temporary stopping point for a conversation or debate, usually among noted interlocutors, who range from courtiers to gentlewomen to politicians. In pastoral eclogues, the debate happens between herdsmen. Across genres, the Renaissance literary pastoral is a space where rhetoric and style matter, and where arguments are made through personality and character, rather than in spite of them. In the pastoral, poets and orators are challenged by their very best opponents or, to borrow a term from Jennifer Richards, their friendly rivals.⁵ For Classical and Renaissance examples in which the pastoral is not solitary, the landscape is the backdrop for what amounts to a form of conversation. The pastoral landscape comes to represent a particular remove from the city and the broader political and social networks it represents. Its participants enjoy relative freedom to express opinions that may be subversive, dangerous, or just irrelevant back in the city, and there is more parity between its interlocutors, as the socially constructed differences of class and social rank either do not exist, or are bracketed.⁶ Even though the pastoral landscape comes to represent a certain degree of remove from the city, each pastoral landscape has its own unique relationship to the broader political and social of stratified society. Pastoral dialogues weave a complex web of relationships between the fictitious city and the interlocutors, as well as between

⁵I borrow the term from Jennifer Richards. See *Rhetoric and Courtliness* 142.

⁶This does not mean that all interlocutors in the pastoral are equal. Differences such as age, expertise and gender can continue to structure relationships even in the pastoral.

the author and the broader social and political climate she writes in and from.

The intersection of dialogue and the pastoral yields a subset of both Ciceronian dialogue and pastoral poetry. While Renaissance Ciceronian dialogues are set at dinner tables more often than in the pastoral landscape, I am only concerned with the subset that takes place in the literary pastoral. The form of pastoral poetry changes over the course of the Renaissance, from a genre in which most examples are polyphonic to a preference for shorter, monologic pastoral poems. My interest is in the polyphonic pastoral poems, a subgenre called pastoral eclogues. Our two categories overlap in that they are set in the pastoral and they are dialogic, but they have been separated by genres and, subsequently, by critical traditions for centuries. In order to better see not only the similarities, but the full range of possibilities for dialogic Renaissance texts set in the pastoral, I coin a third term, “pastoral dialogue.” Even though this category is my own, the texts have a shared Classical literary tradition, and often, I will argue, shared assumptions about speech and epistemology.

One obvious objection to my project is that one of the genres is poetic and the other is rhetorical. However, there is a long tradition of considering poetry and rhetoric together. In *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*, Jeffrey Walker makes the case that poetry was the first rhetorical form and must be defined as a persuasive form of speech. To do otherwise is to either reduce poetry to revealing what everyone knows already, like Platonic “unforgetting,” or to a rallying cry of identity politics, and can only be understood by those

who already agree with the poet's message (169). Rejecting both of these options, Walker argues that poetry persuades by the rhetorical device of the enthymeme, which has both a technical definition as the "differing sister" of the syllogism, but also a more informal usage as "a heartfelt, . . . emotively significant piece of reasoning *as presented to and felt by an audience*" (180). Walker looks specifically at lyric poetry, which he operationally defines as "in effect, a versified or sung oration, a variety of epideictic discourse" (155). Pastoral eclogues are essentially lyric poetry put into conversation, with the audience's responses available in a way that develops a community of poets and listeners. That is, in pastoral eclogues, the poetry contains and substantiates a community.

The work of this chapter is to first assemble a collection of tools for looking for the overlap between pastoral dialogue and feminist theories of discursive space, and then to build a history of the category. My main focus in this dissertation is pastoral eclogues and Ciceronian dialogues written by women. Canonical Ciceronian dialogue serves as a bridge and an analytic rather than a subject in itself. It would seem odd to form a term that encompassed only Ciceronian dialogues written by women and pastoral eclogues, but each of these categories are dialogues in which the interlocutors lack the authority and influence traditionally associated with Ciceronian interlocutors. I shift the emphasis when examining these texts, moving the margin to the center by arguing that pastoral dialogue, and its component parts, Ciceronian dialogue and pastoral eclogues, have been sites for subversive speech, and for imagining

and theorizing about discursive communities where the disenfranchised can speak.

Because the pastoral landscape is related across traditional boundaries, I argue that the differences between genres are variations of degree, rather than absolute. For example, pastoral eclogues are written in verse, while Ciceronian dialogues are in prose. Rather than conceiving of those difference as categorical, I put them on a continuum of stylistic formality. And on the one hand, one may conclude that the interlocutors of the eclogues are shepherds while the interlocutors of Ciceronian dialogues have social standing in the city. A more useful way to think of this difference, however, is the relative power the interlocutors have in relationship to the city. This disrupts the binary stereotypes of powerful Ciceronian interlocutors and powerless shepherds because there are examples of Ciceronian interlocutors who have little power and examples of pastoral shepherds who return to a world where they have influence. Another difference between the two genres is the investment in community. Generally, the shepherds are more invested in establishing and maintaining community because they are permanent residents of the pastoral, rather than visitors. However, attention to community varies across both genres. Despite these differences, there are important and unexplored areas of overlap. For example, both genres contain a version of *in utramque partem*. Generally, argument is more formal and an agreement is more likely to be reached in Ciceronian dialogue, but the openness of the conversation in pastoral eclogues also creates room for the expression of subversive thought. However, some Cicero-

nian dialogues set in the pastoral, particularly the two examples by women, reinvent these features of pastoral eclogues because, while the women authors have some power because of their social class, they are limited in what they can do and say by their gender.

Although many of the rhetorical and even feminist features of Cicero-
nian dialogue have already been drawn out, the landscape of pastoral poetry
has not been received the same attention. This landscape is the setting for
pastoral eclogues – short poems that are traditionally composed and pub-
lished as part of a collection. Virgil’s *Bucolica*, for instance, is a collection of
ten eclogues. Most eclogues look like dialogues, and are usually written in a
format where the speaker’s name precedes the line spoken by that shepherd.
The effect is that the eclogues are instantaneously recognizable as both po-
etry and dialogue. The OED defines “eclogue” as “a short poem of any kind,
especially a pastoral dialogue, such as Virgil’s *Bucolics*.” However, the OED
gives a second definition of “eclogue” as “Conversation, discourse.” Although
this definition is marked as erroneous, its inclusion means that while techni-
cally an eclogue can be any short poem, in practice, the dialogic nature of the
poems is such a distinguishing feature that many have mistakenly used the
word “eclogue” to refer to dialogue or conversation rather than to poetry at
all. The mistaken definition also indicates that eclogues were not read just as
poetry that happened to be a dialogue format, but were often interpreted as
dialogue that happened to be in verse.

Even though my topic is the narrow Virgilian eclogue, broader defi-

nitions of pastoral are useful because, in their quest to unite a more varied field of literature, they develop approaches that help us understand what is happening in the pastoral. A glance at some of the best known titles of literary criticism on pastoral as mode or a genre reveals that the definition is not straightforward. These include William Empson's *Some Versions of the Pastoral*, Paul Alpers' *What is Pastoral?* and Ken Hiltner's more recent addition, *What Else is Pastoral?*⁷ As these titles make apparent, the definition of pastoral is contested, and one of the staples of criticism is to offer a new definition of the term.

I propose three concentric circles of terms: the smallest, pastoral eclogues, is the most specific and the ring. The next could be called pastoral poetry, or what Alpers refers to as the pastoral mode. This circle shares Virgilian origins in common with pastoral eclogues, but also consists of poems that do not adhere to all of the strict generic conventions of the eclogues. Alpers even suggests that these poems need not be descendants of Virgil, but it would be difficult to find an example of his that isn't. One might think that literary pastoral, which may be defined as any text, poetry, prose or drama, that happens in a literary pastoral landscape, would be the broadest definition of the term.⁸ However, Empson offers a definition of the literary pastoral that is not defined by landscape at all, but by the powerlessness of the inhabitants. According to

⁷Chaudhuri further complicates the issue in *Renaissance Pastoral and its English Developments* by breaking the genre into art-pastoral and its more allegorical versions, and Fairweather divides it into inclusive and exclusive.

⁸See Greg, *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama* for an account of pastoral that includes drama and prose.

Empson, the pastoral poetry is anti-heroic in that the characters cannot hope to change the environment or their circumstances.

Despite being at the root of the broadest and most eclectic category of the literary pastoral, Empson's definition hits on a crucial variable for our purposes in pastoral dialogue generally. In Empson's *Some Versions of the Pastoral*, the category of pastoral is detached from any historical tradition and becomes what he calls "proletariat literature."⁹ In one sense, he casts a very broad net and returns a varied collection of texts from *Alice in Wonderland* to Shakespeare's sonnets as instances of the pastoral. In another sense, he stays quite close to the waters of the traditional English canon, when his term might be used with unrelated, non-European traditions as well. However, Empson makes two arguments about the pastoral that are useful for examining our more narrowly delineated version. First, he defines the pastoral as the genre of the powerless. For our project, this is not a necessary definitional criterion, but it is one extreme of an important variable in pastoral dialogue: while Ciceronian dialogue is the domain of those with at least a moderate amount of power and prestige, characters in the pastoral eclogue have none, and while on the one hand the pastoral is a space where they have a voice, it also leaves them by definition ineffectual. Empson also argues that the pastoral is overdetermined, allowing for multiple meanings between which there is no clear, correct interpretation.¹⁰ Alpers often very productively applies Emp-

⁹cite this.

¹⁰Cite this!

son's definition of the pastoral to a more narrowly and traditionally defined category of pastoral poetry. In "The Pastoral and the Domain of Lyric," he shows how the shepherds' powerlessness creates the space for somewhat subversive ideas in the text itself, despite its public presence through publication. Briefly, by having the interlocutors adopt a position of powerlessness, it makes them unthreatening, expressing opinions but not suggesting a course of action. Alpers comes to this conclusion specifically for Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender*, but the same principle applies from Virgil onward. Empson's definition of the pastoral helps to bring to light some of the constraints of the genre, as well as how those constraints are often paradoxically freeing.

On the surface, Platonic and Ciceronian dialogue appear to be the polar opposite of Empson's definition of the pastoral. After all, the characters of both genres of dialogue are often named, eminent historical figures. However, when we turn to the dialogues to pinpoint their interlocutors' power in relation to the external world, the result is muddled. After all, Plato's Socrates eschews political power in order to pursue truth, rendering himself powerless by some standards. In *De Oratore*, Cicero's interlocutors think that they will leave their holiday to return to their positions of political power in Rome, but in the interstices of the dialogue Cicero explains to his brother that their historical Rome was on the brink of bloody civil war and the collapse of their world. In the case of *De Oratore*, this foreknowledge also casts the dialogue in a nostalgic light, another feature it shares in common with pastoral eclogues.

Now that I have given definitions of the two genres and have begun to

explore the areas of overlap and difference between them, I want to turn to the historical basis for bringing the genres together. In this historical account of “pastoral dialogue,” my primary concern in this history is the poetic genre of pastoral eclogues. The reason for this is that plenty of research has been done on rhetoric and Ciceronian dialogue, as it is an acknowledged rhetorical genre. My purpose is to determine much of what has been said about Ciceronian dialogue applies to pastoral eclogues, particularly the relationship between the individual, speech and the community. Briefly, the history of the genre of pastoral dialogue either begins with Plato’s *Phaedrus* or back even farther, in the Greek tradition of mimes or perhaps in the poetry written about rituals set in the pastoral landscape.¹¹ While there may be a pre-history of the form in mimes and poetry, we will begin with *Phaedrus* as the first example of pastoral dialogue. Next, we will consider Theocritus’ *Idylls*. If this were a history of the pastoral eclogue or Ciceronian dialogue, Plato’s *Phaedrus* and Theocritus’ *Idylls* would be the pre-history of either form. Both works, however, are set in the pastoral and written, at least partly, in dialogue. By our definition, then, they are not precursors, but examples of pastoral dialogue. However, later examples of the form have a sense of community and develop a relationship between politics and the pastoral that is absent here. After these Greek pastoral dialogues, we will turn to the first century B.C.E., to the founding works of both Ciceronian dialogue and pastoral eclogues. Although one of many dialogues written by Cicero, *De Oratore* was often imitated in the

¹¹See Walker, “Mime” for an account of how mime may have influenced Socratic dialogue.

Renaissance and will be our primary focus. Virgil wrote *Bucolica* only a decade after Cicero wrote *De Oratore*, but the political environment changed quickly in that period, moving further from Roman Republic toward Roman Empire. Virgil's eclogues are the basis for the Renaissance genre of pastoral eclogues. Even though Virgil is usually accepted as the originator of the genre, his work is a distillation and refinement of Theocritus' *Idylls*.¹² Next, we will jump from Classical Rome to Renaissance Europe; although there are medieval examples of pastoral poetry and dialogues, in the Renaissance there was a return to the Classical forms as the basis for imitation and innovation.

The known lineage of the pastoral dialogue begins when Socrates leaves the city with the young Phaedrus in order to hear a speech about the non-lover as superior to the lover. The philosopher and his young friend find an idyllic spot in the countryside, under a plane tree. Giovanni Ferrari remarks that, "In short, what is particularly striking about this dialogue is that the background will not stay where it belongs" (3). Despite his praise for the landscape and his apparent knowledge of his surroundings, Socrates claims to be unfamiliar with it, telling his friend that, "Now the country places and the trees won't teach me anything, and the people in the city do" (230D). At this point, early in the dialogue, the landscape has already run the gamut from mythic to religious to natural only to be dismissed as irrelevant. Socrates shrugs off responsibility for finding himself in the pastoral, and yet Plato cannot do the same. The

¹²The exception to this is Thomas Rosenmeyer, who sets Theocritus up as the primary source of the genre in *The Green Cabinet* 11.

dialogue is about an intimate persuasion, rather than a public one.

The center of the dialogue is taken up with three speeches, all concerning whether it is better to be loved by a lover or a non-lover. In the first, Phaedrus reads the speech Lysias had given early, which argues that it is better to be involved with the non-lover, who will therefore not be mad or jealous, than with the lover. Immediately after he finishes reading the speech, Phaedrus asks, “What do you think of the discourse, Socrates? Is it not wonderful, especially in diction?” (234D). This question is indicative of Phaedrus’ concerns throughout: he is more interested in the materiality of a speech, from its structure to its diction, than in its content. Socrates, however, answers in kind,

I was attending only to the rhetorical manner, and I thought even Lysias himself would not think that satisfactory. It seemed to me, Phaedrus, unless you disagree, that he said the same thing two or three times, as if he did not find it easy to say many things about one subject, or perhaps he did not care about such a detail; and he appeared to me in youthful fashion to be exhibiting his ability to say the same thing in two different ways and in both ways excellently. (235A)

Phaedrus’ preoccupation with style is a feature of pastoral eclogues as well. As a community the shepherds often offer criticism of singing contests, or point out what the best singers do well. Jacopo Sannazarro is the first author of pastoral eclogues to include interstitial prose between the poetry, and his shepherds often offer a kind of postmortem of how the eclogue went technically.

In these instances, however, there is no implicit criticism of their attention to style.

Next, Socrates gives two speeches. His first makes the same case as Lysias', but improves on it. Embarrassed to be arguing a case he doesn't believe, Socrates wraps up his head and does not look at Phaedrus. As this speech does not differ from the first in content, the two are distinguished by rhetoric. His final speech, however, reverses his earlier argument. This speech, he says, he makes for the gods. Phaedrus' immediate response is stylistic, of course, "But all along I have been wondering at your discourse, you made it so much more beautiful than the first; so that I am afraid Lysias will make a poor showing, if he consents to compete with it" (257C). Not only is this another instance of Phaedrus' concern for style, but it also demonstrates that Phaedrus, at least, views these speeches as volleys in a competition, just like a pastoral singing competition.

The triad of speeches are essential for connecting *Phaedrus* to the pastoral. After all, it is the topic of these speeches, coupled with the flirtation between Socrates and Phaedrus, that are the first examples of love as a topic of the pastoral. Second, while a conversation about rhetoric follows, the speeches are a rhetorical performance. Plato through Socrates holds the last speech up as a model for speeches because it relates the truth, is well-formed and is written for the gods, not a particular audience, but the speeches taken as a whole have a sophistic playfulness, whether Socrates admits it or not. Although Socrates does not have an equal in this dialogue, he does argue against

himself. Socrates may be demonstrating that he can beat sophists at their own game, and he spends the remainder of the dialogue attacking them and their rhetoric, but his performance becomes a touchstone for this kind of pro-contra argument, and the model for Ciceronian dialogue and pastoral eclogues.¹³ The rest of the conversation is a discussion of rhetoric in which Socrates eventually concludes that rhetoric is not an independent discipline, but is only worthwhile when it takes philosophy as its starting point. Cicero's *De Oratore* responds directly to the concerns of Plato's *Phaedrus*, not only in content, but in performance. In content, while Crassus argues that the orator must have extensive knowledge of all things, he also argues that truth is best found through arguing both sides of an issue, not through dialectic. Socrates claims that the orator must first learn the truth through dialectic and then give a speech to the perfect audience, the gods, rather than shaping it to the imperfect audience of men. That is, Socrates insists there is an external truth, and a perfect audience, whereas Cicero takes up the perspective that truth is best discovered through arguing both sides, and that messages should be shaped to appeal to their audiences. Rather than a sage and his student, Cicero pits two powerful orators against each other, the one arguing that skill in rhetoric is a knack picked up from practice and the other that rhetoric is a discipline that requires training and knowledge.

An odd thing about *Phaedrus* is that while it provides a starting point,

¹³While Protagoras is first credited with the practice of arguing both sides (antilogy), in *De Oratore*, Cicero sets his scene in a location that deliberately mimics *Phaedrus*.

and a shared history for the two genres that concern us, it posits very different understandings of truth, community, and the self from either genre. Both genres inherit significant elements from this Platonic dialogue, however, the common features are more often elements of the performance than of the content: although the dialogue concludes with Socrates offering a very limited role to rhetoric, the dialogue as a whole, with its flirtatious beginnings, its speech given by a cloaked Socrates, its palinode, and its odd praise of Isocrates, performs a very different kind of rhetoric.

Through the three speeches, the performance of *Phaedrus* closely predicts Ciceronian dialogue, except that the first two are retracted. Visually the *Phaedrus* follows the two men from the city walls, into the pastoral. The young man and the older man flirtatiously lounge in the shade of a plane tree, taking turns giving speeches to one another. There is a playfulness to these performances, as Socrates takes on different positions, and makes conflicting arguments, not only in the main speeches, but in small moments as well. For example, he feigns ignorance of the landscape when first says there is nothing to learn from these settings, and then later that the rocks and trees can be teachers. He tells Phaedrus that one should not mould one's argument for a specific human audience, and yet teaches Phaedrus through just such an audience-specific game. All the elements of rhetoric are in this text, but they are all eventually retracted by Socrates. There is a tension here between performance and what is said explicitly. That tension is one of the features of pastoral dialogue.

An overly-simplified version of what pastoral eclogues and Ciceronian dialogue inherit from *Phaedrus* may divide the spoils into the subject of love in the pastoral for pastoral eclogues and a modified and more sincere version of arguing both sides of an issue in the pastoral for Ciceronian dialogue. What does the *Phaedrus* have in common with both genres? Obviously, both genres inherit a modified version of the dialogic format, and a concern for having competitive speech or poetry contests. Oddly, while the dialogue itself may dismiss *Phaedrus* as a very weak counterpart for Socrates, both pastoral eclogues and Ciceronian dialogue pick up his concern for style. Both genres also inherit what may be characterized as a playful attitude toward the speeches, whether it comes from *Phaedrus*' insistence to see them as competitions, or from Socrates' willingness to give two opposing speeches. Both genres are untethered from the philosophical demand to use dialectic to reach truth, and instead occupy the playful space of the first part of the dialogue. In both pastoral eclogue and Ciceronian dialogue, the best case is the most persuasive case. And where Socrates is interested in getting to know his a priori self, these two genres are more interested in community formation and how the community develops the individual.

Phaedrus is often mentioned as a source for the pastoral tradition in passing, but the relationship has enjoyed few sustained investigations. Critics often mention the connection in passing, such as when Thomas Rosenmeyer sets off to discuss the affinities between *Phaedrus* and pastoral, but then widens his lens and comments, "Socratic dialogue, or better, the disputations of the

Sophists, may have had their share in fertilizing the amoebian technique with its symmetries and mock symmetries, its formulations that go beyond plottable argument, and its frequent semblance of pleading a case at the bar” (42). In his account, Rosenmeyer almost looks past *Phaedrus* and implies that behind Platonic dialogue is sophistic argument, which has even more affinities with pastoral eclogues. Rosenmeyer somehow turns attention from *Phaedrus* immediately to the sophists, and the more sustained accounts of the connection are also reluctant to read *Phaedrus* as a generator of pastoral eclogues. Instead, they seem to offer readings of *Phaedrus* as pastoral eclogues. Clyde Murley best portrays this type of reading when he describes *Phaedrus* as a pastoral singing competition.

The contestants are Lysias and Socrates, with Phaedrus as judge. Only Socrates eventually again goes beyond the form adopted and offers a palinode to love which lifts the reader out of the rhetorical banalities of the first two speeches into the realm of the ideas. The prize is to be an *objet d'art*, like the chased cup of the first *Idyll*, being a life-size golden statue at Delphi, twice playfully promised (235D, 236B).” (286)

Murley is not sympathetic to rhetoric, and looks instead for the moments when the dialogue transcends its rhetorical subject matter. He suggests that, “One could speculate as to whether Plato ironically implied that at the noon-hour when the gods are asleep, while serious philosophy is in abeyance, the theme of rhetoric may be played with” (288). Murley looks only at the relationship between Theocritus’ *Idylls* and Plato’s *Phaedrus*. Marguerite Schenck, on the

other hand, looks to find every feature of the literary pastoral, from Theocritus through to short poems by Robert Frost, in *Phaedrus*. In particular, she finds the pastoral features of a symbolic landscape, elegy, attention to love, playfulness and a scene of initiation in *Phaedrus*. Reading all the features of a 2,500 year old literary mode back onto one text takes a few sleights of hand, but Schenck does produce a thoughtful meditation on *Phaedrus* as the progenitor of the form. Schenck also notes that the pastoral that develops from *Phaedrus* is often at direct odds with the explicit messages of Socrates about rhetoric:

Pastoral poetry too knows this convergence of eros and ambition, for erotic conflict (lament, contest, serenade), general unseriousness (games, singing duels, wagering), and literary ambition are mainstays of the pastoral mode. The pastoralist has always known himself to be no less than a player with words: from the outset the pastoral fiction rested upon the notion of pastime. The irony, of course, is that Alexandrian poets would perfect a literary art that was just the sort of writing Plato feared and condemned. They viewed themselves as literary professionals, reveled in the freedom of their art from the classical injunction to instruct, and indulged the tendency of literary language to ape, to distort, to parody itself by direct contest with rival forms (28).

That is, the performance of *Phaedrus* influenced pastoral poetry, rather than the explicit arguments of Socrates. One wonders whether the divide between the two is an expression of Plato's own ambivalence (as Crassus intimates), or if the form of dialogue, born out of mime and sophistic antilogy, cannot quite be reigned in, and the playfulness of the genre asserts itself over Plato's

foundationalist, universalizing perspective. The latter is a tempting option, but Socrates winks at us too much for it to be the whole truth.

About one hundred years after *Phaedrus* was written, Theocritus composed his *Idylls*. This collection of poetry is not solely bucolic; the poems run the gamut from urban mimes to mythic accounts of Heracles or Polyphemus to pastoral singing contests. While all elements of the pastoral exist in the *Idylls*, it is Virgil who selects a much narrower genre from the diverse poems of Theocritus. Before turning to Virgil, however, let's examine the contributions that Theocritus makes to the genre, and how he functions as a bridge between Plato and Virgil.

Despite having a cast of characters that ranges from mythic heroes to Alexandrian housewives to herdsmen, the *Idylls* are united by their attention to the details of simple, everyday life, rather than having a heroic scope. For example, in Idyll 11 Polyphemus serenades an absent Galatea and tries to tempt her by saying that while he's ugly, he is a successful shepherd. He ends by counseling himself:

O Cyclops, Cyclops, where have your wits flown away?
Show some sense, go and weave some baskets, collect
Green shoots for your lambs. Milk the ewe
At hand; why chase the one who runs away . . . (72-75).

Even though Polyphemus is the son of Zeus and an enemy of Odysseus in the *The Odyssey*, Theocritus pays attention to the quotidian aspects of his life. Although certainly not all of the mythic or urban poetic tropes are pastoralized

in Theocritus, some are, and the effect, in this Idyll as well as the others, is humanizing.

Despite his attention to the everyday, Theocritus writes in iambic hexameter, the meter of epic and other formal genres of ancient Greek poetry. This juxtaposition of elevated form and everyday details and language remains a feature of pastoral eclogues through to Edmund Spenser. As Hunter notes,

In using in his hexameters words drawn not from the inherited poetic language, but the pastoral world of herdsmen or the chatter of Alexandrian housewives, Theocritus issued a challenge to received notions of poetic appropriateness . . . elevated meter was supposed to be accompanied by elevated style and subject matter. (Hunter 1999, 18)

Theocritus' contribution to pastoral eclogues is threefold: he makes herdsmen central to poetry, he turns the rhetorical contest in *Phaedrus* into a more aesthetic and literary one, and he marries elevated meter with quotidian detail and characters of low status. While it is Virgil who creates a more structured, tighter genre of pastoral poetry from Theocritus' more diffuse collection, Theocritus captures the beauty of the ordinary in a way that his successors imitate, but never do as well.

Idyll 7 illustrates how Theocritus' poetry serves as the bridge between *Phaedrus* and *Bucolica*. Hunter argues that Theocritus structures many of the Idylls in imitation of *Phaedrus*, while in Idyll 7 he varies the structure by having a narrator, but then he reworks the relationship between master

and student that is central to the Platonic dialogue. The poem begins with the narrator, Simichidas, describing his walk from the town into the countryside for a harvest festival. He and his friends meet Lycidas on the road, a goatherd known for his skill in music. Simichidas brags to Lycidas about his own singing and challenges Lycidas to a competition. Lycidas laughs at Simichidas' bravado, and agrees to a singing competition, offering his walking stick as the prize. Both men sing about love between men, and Lycidas awards the stick to Simichidas, and then takes a different path. In Hunter's reading, Lycidas is the stand-in for Socrates. The master is not a city-dweller who has come to visit the country for an afternoon, but a herdsman with hints of divinity. Kathryn Gutzweller argues that Socrates chooses to identify with the metaphoric shepherd who is a divine knower, not with the more realistic version of a shepherd as a powerless, menial laborer. For Lycidas, however, there is no dichotomy: he is both. Simichidas' description casts him clearly in both roles:

... He was a goatherd, as you would
Guess as soon as you saw him – unmistakably goatherd:
The tawny skin of a thick-haired shaggy goat
Hung from his shoulders, smelling of new-made rennet.
Under that was an ancient shirt, tied in with a
Wide belt. In his right hand he carried a curved stick
Of wild olive wood. Quietly he grinned at me, his eye
Twinkled, and laughter touched his lip as he spoke (13-20)

Lycidas is clearly a poet and perhaps a god, but also believably a goatherd who smells like rennet. Theocritus has changed Socrates, the master who is

out of place in the pastoral, for one whose distance comes from his laughter and his knowingness. As Schenk notes, “Plato gives us in the *Phaedrus*, then, more than stock pastoral motifs, a *locus amoenus*, a pastoral attitude. He provides the model for an initiatory scenario: a younger aspirant by an older seduced, a place and time in literary terms prescribed, initiation by means of amoebean argument ritually established” (28). Yet, the relationship between Socrates and *Phaedrus* is very different from the encounter between Lycidas and Simichidas. While Plato’s dialogue is a model for pastoral initiation, oddly, the amoebean conversation of *Phaedrus* is not between aspirant and mentor, but between Socrates and himself. Socrates employs many strategies to teach *Phaedrus*, but an amoebean argument between assumed equals is not one of them. One reason for this difference is that across the genre, these literary shepherds are concerned with cultivating great poets and singers. In Edmund Spenser’s *The Shepheardes Calender* for instance, a central theme of the eclogues is the community’s sense of loss because Colin Clout has broken his pipes and is no longer composing and singing poetry. While Socrates seeks to teach *Phaedrus* about what he views as rhetoric’s proper place, Lycidas’ approach is in keeping with the pastoral tradition that succeeds Theocritus, in which the community seeks to cultivate more and better poets who will bring new voices and new perspectives to the community. By handing on his staff, Lycidas initiates the younger poet, and thereby introduces the trope of master and student into the pastoral, but the two poets compete as near equals.

Richard L. Hunter’s reading of Idyll 7 gets to the heart of another

matter that shapes the pastoral genre. Just like Tityrus is often read as a stand-in for Virgil, Silvius for Petrarch, Sincero for Sannazaro, and even as Crassus is for Cicero, Simichidas is often read as Theocritus transposed into the pastoral. Hunter addresses this assumption, by arguing that this “is and is not” the reality of the poem.

If, therefore 'Simichidas' was a name specially created for Idyll 7, then 'Simichidas both is and is not Theocritus.' (Bowie 1985 68); similarly, the setting of the poem both is and is not Cos, i.e. there is *both* a reconstructable and 'real' geography *and* a geography of the mind and the mythic and literary tradition, just as there are real people (Theocritus' patrons in whose honour the poem is written) and the fictitious creations of song. 'Bucolic' poetry too claims to reproduce the 'real' singing of herdsmen, but is only too conscious of its difference" (Hunter 1999 146).

This quality of “is and is not” makes the pastoral an environment where the shepherds can debate subversive ideas. While Theocritus' *Idylls* are not read as political, from Virgil onward, the genre becomes a space for expressing dangerously subversive opinions. After all, although Virgil praises Augustus in *Bucolica*, he also criticizes the treatment of those whose land was taken away to be given to soldiers. I would like to make a distinction between “is and is not” and purely allegorical readings of pastoral. The genre has to be more than simply allegorical to create a space where shepherds (and their authors) can express themselves. It has to maintain Theocritus' attention to the quotidian details of pastoral life, and it must inspire and maintain an interest in the poetry of language.

Phaedrus and *Idylls* are the Classical Greek forerunners of pastoral dialogue, but in the first century B.C.E., the form solidifies into the genres that are imitated in the Renaissance, in the texts of Cicero's *De Oratore* and Virgil's *Bucolica*. The two were written less than two decades apart, but the political climate of Rome changed drastically between the writing of the two texts and that goes some way to explaining the drastic difference between the two pastoral worlds. Of course, another difference is that Cicero was a statesman and Virgil a poet. While Plato argued that politics was not the place for the virtuous man, and Theocritus has no known political message in his eclogues, Cicero especially, but also Virgil, bring politics into the pastoral. Cicero sets his dialogue 40 years earlier, in 91 B.C.E., in order to show the Roman republic at its height (but on the verge of collapse) and Roman orators in possession of great power. Cicero's interlocutors assume they will have a direct, straightforward and sanctioned effect on the government. Virgil, on the other hand, wrote shortly after the assassination of Julius Caesar, in the midst of the turbulent end of the Roman republic. In his eclogues, the shepherds of the pastoral are subjected to the power of the state for the first time. Virgil's criticism of the state is so faint that some scholars have read it out of existence, but nevertheless, his *Bucolica* becomes a model for smuggling subversive political opinions into publication in the Renaissance. Both of these iconic Roman pastoral dialogues are concerned with political power, but from very different perspectives. Cicero's interlocutors are visitors to the pastoral and they intend to return to the city where they have political power. Virgil's

interlocutors are the denizens of the pastoral, who have no place to go and are powerless in any context.

Despite the differences between these two pastoral dialogues, there remains crucial common ground. The key similarity between pastoral eclogues and Ciceronian dialogues is that in both genres, speech is the thing that makes us human, and that leads to a conception of community as growing out of the interaction between its members, and a conception of the self that is also continually developed through its interactions with others. While this is a straightforward reading of *De Oratore*, it may be a less common view of *Bucolica*. My readings of Eclogue 1 and Eclogue 9 will highlight these features.

Oddly, both dialogues have arrived at a place that resembles the other, but is different from *Phaedrus*, their common ancestor. For the tradition of pastoral eclogues, that comes about because pastoral poetry borrows the verbal contests, the landscape and the topic of love, but leaves out the criticism of rhetoric, and the discussion of dialectic as a method for reaching truth. In other words, pastoral poetry does not directly counter Platonic ideals of truth, it just doesn't pick them up. *De Oratore*, on the other hand, is a defense of rhetoric against interpretations of Plato that have downplayed the importance of public life and speaking well. Cicero aims to reunite philosophy and rhetoric. So, while Cicero offers a theoretical model of the republic and the orators who maintain it, there is nothing so blatantly theoretical in pastoral poetry.

In *De Oratore*, Crassus begins the discussion of the ideal orator with praise for eloquence, because of the immense power it has:

I think nothing is more admirable than being able, through speech, to have a hold on human minds, to win over their inclinations, to drive them at will in one direction, and to draw them at will from another. It is this ability, more than anything else, that has ever flourished, ever reigned supreme in every free nation and especially in quiet and peaceful communities. (1.30-31)

This quote illustrates the Ciceronian notion that eloquence leads to personal power but also to public benefit. Crassus directs our attention first to the power the orator has over human minds and to the admiration someone so skilled deserves, but then argues that skill is necessary for both freedom and peace. Cicero, like Crassus, wants to leave no space to separate the personal ambition of the orator from his public benefit to society. Crassus elaborates, arguing that speech is what makes us human: “Who, then, would not rightly admire this ability, and would not think that he should take the greatest pains in order to surpass other human beings in the very thing which especially makes humans themselves superior to beasts?” (1.33). Naming speech as the quality that makes us human is very different from the alternatives. For Cicero, it is not that speech gives access to dialectic and therefore to truth, but that eloquence is instrumental in the discovery of truth. Joy Connolly describes Cicero’s concept of eloquence as

a more vast and all-encompassing enterprise than is commonly realized (de Orat. 1.16). Criticizing the “completely ridiculous” scholars who eviscerate rhetoric with ever-proliferating rules and categorizations . . . he builds on the more ambitious view that Isocrates explored in the speeches *Against the Sophists*, *Helen*, *Antidosis*,

and Nicocles: that to study the art of speech is to study all things human, ethical and political. (126)

Connolly concentrates on the theoretical model of the republic and its relationship to the orator's eloquence as well as his body. However, the dialogue itself is set in the garden of Crassus' country villa, away from the Roman forum. Crassus addresses the appropriateness of this way of spending their time away from Rome, arguing, "If we consider our leisure time, what can be more pleasant or more properly human than to be able to engage in elegant conversation and show oneself a stranger to no subject?" (1.32) This reasoning applies to pastoral eclogues as well as to Ciceronian dialogues: when speech is the most human of qualities, then engaging in verbal debate or oratory or poetry are the most "properly human" activities.

In the Renaissance, both *Bucolica* and *De Oratore* were models for new creations, often, in a way characteristic of the period, blurring the distinction between translation and imitation. This blurring of imitation and translation is especially true for pastoral poetry. So, when we turn to a late sixteenth century English translation of Virgil's *Bucolica*, a page from the text brings us right into the world of Renaissance reading, and shows us an Anglicized and Renaissance-ized Virgil. On the page, two features of this eclogue, and pastoral eclogues generally, are readily apparent. The dialogic and conversational nature is apparent immediately because the eclogue is laid out like a play. That is, the speakers are named at the start, and then who is speaking is demarcated by an abbreviation of their name. Let's add one more detail to our understanding

of the genre that distinguishes it from drama, which is that no action ever takes place in a pastoral eclogue. The pastoral eclogue is static and a place only for reflecting on what has happened, rather than an arena for new events. The second physical feature of the text is that neither shepherd speaks for very long, and the eclogue itself is very short. While the dialogic nature of the eclogue is a point of commonality between the genre and Ciceronian dialogue, the brevity of the speeches as well as the shortness of the eclogue itself run counter to Ciceronian dialogue which is composed of long speeches and sustained discussions of its main topics. Yet, despite their brevity, the speakers in Eclogue 1 quickly establish the difference in their perspectives and become two different poles of response to the state, which Annabel Patterson calls “the poetics of accommodation and the poetics of dissent” (23). These poles of pastoral eclogue were known and exploited in the Renaissance. In his *Apology for Poetry*, Sidney divides also divides pastoral poetry between Tityrus and Meliboeus:

Is it then the Pastoral Poem which is misliked? . . . Is the poore pype disdained, which sometimes out of *Melbue* mouth can shewe the miserie of people under hard Lords or ravening Souldiours? and again, by *Tityrus*, what blessednes is derived to them that lye lowest from the goodnesse of them that sit highest? (120).

While both pastoral eclogue and Ciceronian dialogue show multiple sides of an issue from a human perspective, Ciceronian dialogue ultimately aims at a reasoned argument, while pastoral eclogue elicits an emotional response. In

walking the line between accommodation and dissent, pastoral eclogues leave more questions unanswered, and leave more decisions to the readers.

Virgil's Eclogue 1 is only about a hundred lines long, and it consists of a conversation between two shepherds, Tityrus, who is closely identified with Virgil, and Meliboeus. Meliboeus has been evicted from his land, so that it could be given to soldiers for their service in war. In the eclogue's opening lines, Meliboeus quickly communicates the difference between his circumstance and Tityrus':

Tityrus, here you loll, your slim reed-pipe serenading
The woodland spirit beneath a spread of sheltering beech,
While I must leave my home place, the fields so dear to me.
I'm driven from my home place: but you can take it easy
In shade and teach the woods to repeat 'Fair Amaryllis' (I-5)¹⁴

Tityrus does not have to leave his home like everyone else, because he went to Rome and a god, probably Augustus, has granted him permission to stay. Although eclogues often feature shepherds or goatherds that are hostile to one another, Meliboeus and Tityrus are friendly with each other, despite their differences in circumstances. The two shepherds in the eclogue, however, express very different sentiments. Meliboeus is mourning his forced exile from the land that he describes as part of himself, and Tityrus is praising Augustus for granting him permission to stay. This is the quintessential moment in pastoral

¹⁴Although the quotations are from the Day Lewis translation, I have read it side-by-side with the Fairclough translation. The line numbers are from the Fairclough.

poetry: two shepherds with different fates, neither of which is their own doing, who have no power to change their futures, but can come together briefly, in companionship. This companionship is particularly clear in the final lines of the eclogues when Tityrus encourages Meliboeus to stay one final night:

Yet surely you could rest with me tonight and sleep
On a bed of green leaves here? You're welcome to taste my mellow
Apples, my floury chestnuts, my ample stock of cheese.
Look over there – smoke rises already from the rooftops
And longer fall the shadows cast by the mountain heights. (79-83)

This eclogue does not do the work of Ciceronian dialogue in that the interlocutors do not argue the relative merits of their positions or come to any conclusion. Instead, there is a temporary, physical coming together as the two shepherds share an evening and a rustic meal. As Paul Alpers points out, the eclogue's "suspension of issues is reflected in the historical division of opinion about whether Tityrus' gratitude to Octavian or Meliboeus' bitterness at being dispossessed represents the poet's view of Rome in the aftermath of civil war" (170). One can imagine how different such a topic would be handled in Ciceronian dialogue. We would expect the interlocutors to have the power to change the course of action, and to debate the topic and arrive at a consensus. Of course, none of this happens in the pastoral.

And yet, there are similarities between the genres. This pastoral eclogue has much more in common with humanist dialogue than with scholastic dialogue. Virgil gives us two perspectives on the same event, one of gratitude and

one of desolation. One that praises the powers that be and another that feels bitter toward them. One point of commonality, then, is that the interlocutors of humanist dialogue and pastoral eclogues are fully human. Both portray human, rather than abstract positions. Virgil has introduced the political to the pastoral, but has not given the shepherds any power in the political realm. Pastoral itself, however, does have some political efficacy. Regardless of whether this eclogue praises more or blames more, the criticism of politics is successfully voiced here, and while it is not unanimous, it is in no way trampled underfoot. While Virgil's position may be open to debate, Renaissance imitators like Petrarch explicitly exploit these elements of the pastoral.

The commonalities we've seen so far between pastoral eclogues and humanist dialogue are that both engage in the political realm and both present human positions that incorporate the body, emotion and aesthetics. Next, let us look at how pastoral poetry is conscious of the community created through the exchange of poetry. In *De Oratore*, Cicero ascribes the foundation of civilization to a mythical orator's persuasive eloquence.

Just as *De Oratore* casts orators and their eloquence as the maintainers of a peaceful and free society, pastoral eclogues elevate the best poets to a similar position. As we've seen, Cicero moves very quickly from the importance of eloquence to the importance of the orator. Crassus praises speech as the quality that makes us human, but, in the same breath, praises those who speak best. Because Theocritus' *Idylls* are a more diffuse collection, it is not until Virgil's *Eclogues* that the shepherds first discuss the importance of the best

poets in their community. In Eclogue 9, the shepherd Moeris points out the limitations of poetry, but the eclogue is also a celebration of its value within the community. The eclogue begins when two shepherds, Moeris and Lycidas, meet on the road. When Lycidas asks where Moeris is going, Moeris answers that he never thought he would see the day when a stranger could tell him to leave his farm. Lycidas is surprised by this answer, because he had heard that “Menalcas with his songs saved all” (10). Moeris answers,

So you heard. That rumour did get about
But poems Stand no more chance, where the claims of soldiers are involved,
Than do the prophetic doves if an eagle swoops upon them. Indeed, but for
a raven which croaked from a hollow ilex
On my left hand, and waned me to stop this last dispute
Whatever it cost, neither I nor
Menalcas would be alive now (11–16).

This is a reversal of the stay Tityrus wins with his poetry in the first eclogue. Moeris makes the limitations of poetry clear when he describes poetry as completely powerless in the face of violence - a dove confronted by an eagle. Violence, which is what rhetoric is meant to replace, replaces poetry and leaves no room for public space. The rest of the eclogue is a test of this claim, and while poetry is altered by violence, it is not silenced. Moeris also relates that he and Menalcas almost lost their lives. Lycidas never reacts to the possibility of Moeris’ death, but instead he begins to grieve even the near loss of Menalcas as a poet, “So we might have lost Menalcas himself and the heartening pleasure his poetry gives us!” (17–18). These tasks are allegorical, but Lycidas uses them to express the deep personal grief he would feel if Menalcas had died and

his poetry had been lost, and beyond that, to give a sense of the communal loss. After being confronted by the failure of poetry to protect the shepherds from losing their homes, and also by nearly losing one of the community's most eloquent poets, this eclogue breaks down.

In Eclogue 1, Virgil establishes the boundaries of the effectiveness of poetry, as Tityrus could save his own land, but no one else's, through his poetry. We know from the beginning that the shepherd has no political power of his own, but Eclogue 9 strips the superpowers the pastoral conventions does give to the shepherds. This counterexample that throws into relief the normal, relative invulnerability of the literary shepherd, who lives in a world where the sun only sets when the singing is done, and where the body only dies from the grief of unrequited love. Unlike Phaedrus struggling to recall Lycias' speech, shepherds in the literary pastoral are usually able not only compose complex poetry extemporaneously, but most are equipped with perfect memories, and able to recite another's poem after hearing it once. In Eclogue 9, however, the poetry is fragmented and half finished. Both Lycidas and Moeris begin to sing fragments of Menalcas' poetry to each other. Moeris quotes lines from an unfinished song, and Lycidas sings a fragment of a song Moeris wrote, saying that "I heard you singing it all alone / One clear night. I remember its rhythm: how did the words go?" (44–45). The effect of their failed recollections is beautiful, as the conventions of Virgil's eclogues fall to the realities of the frailties of bodies and flawed memories. Moeris tells us that, "Time bears all away, even memory" (51).

However, the effect counterintuitively makes poetry even more powerful. When viewed through the lens of pastoral convention, this eclogue is a failed introduction to a singing competition. Lycidas, like Phaedrus, finds a spot to stop and converse, and says to Moeris,

. . . So here let us stop and sing,
Moeris – here where labourers are thinning out the leaves. Give
your goats a rest: we shall reach town, don't worry; Or if there's a
fear the night may turn rainy, we can press on, Singing as we go:
a song lighten a long road. (60–64)

This is an echo of Phaedrus finding a spot by the plane tree and asking Socrates to join him, of Theocritus' shepherds inviting one another to sing, and of invitations to earlier Virgilian singing contests. But, for once, the invitation is refused. Lycidas responds that he will not stop and he asks Moeris to “No, we have done enough, lad . . . Songs will sound better still when he's home to hear us sing them” (66–67). By threatening the body of the poet, violence threatens poetry and community. But while the poetry contest does not happen, this eclogue, which is some of the most beautiful poetry in *Bucolica*, has just finished. And so, as always in poetic pastoral dialogue, we are left with the answer, “it is and is not.” Virgil has said that violence leaves no time for poetry, but he has said that in poetry. The dove can't confront the eagle, but it also doesn't surrender.

It may seem as if Moeris and Lycidas demonstrate that they are powerless in the face of state power and violence. This posture of powerlessness

within the world internal to the literary pastoral is what makes the genre a vehicle, from Virgil on, for political subversiveness. The shepherds adopt a position of powerlessness, and by doing so, keep their voices when others, who are more akin to Ciceronian interlocutors, lose theirs. In first eclogue, Melibeus can lament the loss of his land at the hands of the state, because he doesn't propose any action against the government to recover the land or protest its loss. He merely tells his neighbor, who comforts him with homely food and company before he leaves. Despite the powerlessness of poetry in the face of violence and the state, Virgil's *Bucolica* registered that the fledgling empire had unjustly hurt its denizens.

My subsequent chapters are devoted to Renaissance pastoral dialogue. Briefly, however, Ciceronian dialogue became very popular in Renaissance Italy, and imitations of the genre proliferated, with Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* as the most popular example. However, many, if not most of these dialogues were not set in a garden or pastoral landscape, but in dining rooms or other house interiors. The genre then spread through the continent and eventually to England, although the most popular Ciceronian works there have a significantly altered form and are no longer the documentary-like dialogues of Cicero and Renaissance Italy.¹⁵

Pastoral eclogues also proliferated in the Renaissance, as Virgil's *Bucolica*, particularly his first eclogue, was known by all and imitated by many. For

¹⁵As I discuss in a later chapter, Cox attributes the appeal of Ciceronian dialogue in Renaissance Italy to its documentary-like qualities. "Renaissance Dialogue" (12–14).

instance, Boccaccio and Petrarch both wrote eclogue collections. Briefly, in the Renaissance, the shepherd came to represent two very different positions. One way to view the pastoral's singing shepherds are as nobleman in weeds, but another is as literal poor men who herd sheep. Both of these perspectives were available in the Renaissance. In fact, two of the most influential Renaissance authors of pastoral eclogues take opposing positions - Baptista Mantuan's *Adulescentia* accentuates the poverty and difficulties of the pastoral life, while Jacopo Sannazaro's *Arcadia* describes an ideal landscape, inhabited by disguised noblemen. While Sannazaro's shepherds are literally noblemen dressed in weeds, Mantuan's shepherds are exactly the opposite: poor, rural herdsmen who live in a harsh, unkind world. These extremes of pastoral eclogues are the least likely to create a horizontal discursive space. In the case of Mantuan, his eclogues have quite a didactic religious message that does not allow for a discussion that includes many differing opinions. While Sannazaro's *Arcadia* is not didactic, the supposed equality of the shepherds is undermined halfway through the eclogues, when one of the shepherds, Sincero, is revealed to be a nobleman. Sincero is praised as the superior poet and singer. Sannazaro's innovation of smuggling class into the pastoral is picked up by other pastoral poets, most notably Philip Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. As Alpers observes, Sidney introduces the external hierarchy of class into the pastoral in order to provide motivation for the poetry and explanation for its superior quality (91). This kind of sleight-of-hand in the pastoral is reminiscent of Nancy Fraser's claim that a public space that brackets peo-

ple's differences is usually unfairly weighted toward those who already have advantages in stratified society (115). On the one hand, the pastoral implicitly claims to be a level playing field, and yet in eclogues like Sannazaro's *Arcadia* and *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, nobles disguised as shepherds outperform the other herdsman.

Fraser refers to an actual phenomenon, but what these pastoral poets do is to naturalize social and political hierarchies. An odd, unintuitive consequence of the egalitarian, horizontal claims of pastoral dialogue is that it has just as much potential to uphold the existing social hierarchies as it does to challenge, undermine and subvert them. Every dialogue engages in reinforcing existing social hierarchies in some way and to some extent. The way this works is that if the egalitarian world promises to remove the structures that hold up and maintain the hierarchy, but somehow the nobles are still better spoken or the women are still voiceless, then the difference is implicitly natural, rather than cultural.

To illustrate this dichotomy, I want to turn from ancient and Renaissance pastoral dialogues to 20th century science fiction. In "Virtual Reality Consumption and the Construction of Gender" Nicola Green argues that in virtual realities gender differences are often exaggerated rather than diminished. She illustrates this point through her description of a scene from the movie *Lawnmower Man*:

The two central characters enter virtual reality. As they do so, the central male character tells his (heterosexual) lover that in virtual

worlds, ‘we can be whatever we want to be’ The virtual bodies assume shape and contour which exaggerate the morphological sexual differences between women and men. Moreover, ‘his’ virtual body is represented in blue, whereas ‘her’ virtual body is colored pink.” (154)

The prospect of virtual reality raises the expectation that anything is possible, but instead of exploring other possibilities and constructions, the participants choose exaggerated versions of their physical selves, in respect to gender. In pastoral dialogue, relationships that are nominally horizontal in the pastoral often reinforce the city’s hierarchies. I bring up this description of virtual reality as a space with the potential to re-inscribe and exaggerate existing differences because, as an imagined and imaginary world, the pastoral landscape also has the contrasting but twinned potentials to challenge social relationships or to reaffirm and strengthen existing matrices of political and social determination. Lacking a vision of radical inclusiveness, at best the pastoral landscape is an admixture of subversion and re-inscription. Yet, many Renaissance pastoral dialogues take the possibility of equality seriously, and, while they don’t create or even imagine a radically inclusive society, they do imagine a more inclusive discursive space than exists in the cultures from which they were written and produced.

Although their generic conventions are very different, there are similarities between pastoral eclogues and Ciceronian dialogues: the two genres both put tremendous emphasis on speech as a humanizing quality and also as the foundation of community. In both genres, the materiality of language is

important, and messages cannot be separated from the modes and methods of their communication. Both genres also take place in worlds where neither the self nor the community exists a priori, but both are formed through interaction. The body, desire and emotion have a place in both. There is also a playfulness in the *in utramque partem* of both genres. These are the features that define the pastoral dialogue. Many are also features of feminist theories of public space. For example, pastoral dialogue and theories of feminist public space insist on argument that is rooted in a subject position, rather than from an abstract or universal perspective. Both also reject the division of public and private.

K.J. Wilson defines Ciceronian dialogue vis-a-vis its Platonic counterpart, as the two were the dominant models for humanist dialogue in the Renaissance. According to Wilson, while Platonic dialogue describes characters in detail, the interlocutors eventually overcome the specificities of personality to reach a universal position (27). Ciceronian dialogue, in contrast, develops positions that are rooted in personality (28-29). Wilson's definition of the genre, then, depends on rejecting a universal position in favor of a specific vantage point, rooted in a subject. We have seen that carry through to pastoral eclogues as well. Feminist theories of public space also reject the idea of a universal participant, because that ideal, imaginary participant is configured in opposition to the body, emotion and desire which are all associated with women.¹⁶

¹⁶See Young 93-94.

Like feminist theories of public space, pastoral dialogue refuses to engage in a public/private split. Connolly observes this in *De Oratore*:

Beginning with Crassus's opening speech in book 1, rhetoric stands for discursive interconnection between subjects. Correspondingly, the spaces in which the self may withdraw into itself – where it may take part in the reflection that nourishes and shapes itself – are exposed to the readerly (public) gaze . . . His representation of republican ethos rests rather on the collapse of the public and private sphere in a republic constituted through discourse itself – ideally, the speech of bodies in the public eye, but also other, less formal types of intercourse among citizens. (151)¹⁷

While Connolly points out this phenomenon in *De Oratore*, pastoral eclogues and Ciceronian dialogues by women especially depend on the ambiguity of public and private in the pastoral. Without it, they could not construct a public voice that is capable of critique. Likewise, feminist theories of public space reject a predetermined, nonnegotiable public/private divide. This rejection is because issues that concern women, like domestic violence, childcare and work, are often defined as private, to the detriment of women.

In closing, I offer an example of Renaissance Ciceronian dialogue that is set in the pastoral to illustrate how the pastoral can be a space where the marginalized are freer to speak. Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron* is unusual in that the dialogue itself is interstitial prose, wedged in between stories. The premise of the *Heptameron* is that five noblemen and five noblewomen,

¹⁷As we will observe in the next chapter, in *De Officiis*, Cicero places the emphasis on conversation over public oratory.

trapped at an abbey in the Pyrenees by a torrential downpour and subsequent flooding, entertain themselves by taking turns telling stories. They decide on this game as an imitation of the *Decameron*, but the form differs from that of its predecessor in two significant ways. First, the interstitial dialogue plays a vital role in the *Heptameron*. Although the dialogue takes up a minor proportion of the text, the arguments and relationships developed within these conversations motivate the stories. Rather than merely a collection of entertaining tales, the stories told in the *Heptameron* are offered by the characters as evidence for their positions. Second, all the stories are allegedly true and sufficiently distant from the teller's own experience, so that every audience member has the freedom to interpret the story differently from the teller: while the story's narrator can relate the events, the motives and emotions of his or her characters are not completely knowable. The narrator may have some additional insight, but ultimately, as the stories are supposedly true, everyone can offer a theory. Because these stories allow for multiple interpretations, they serve as occasions to debate issues from multiple positions. In addition, the view that even true stories have multiple interpretations reveals the sophistication of Marguerite's understanding of the complexity of truth and what one knows for certain.¹⁸

Of any of the pastoral dialogues we will examine, the *Heptameron* has the most complicated introduction to the pastoral landscape. This can partly be explained by the importance of narrative throughout. The long prefatory

¹⁸"de Navarre" is a place name, not a family name. Marguerite is therefore referred to by her first name throughout.

adventure, however, also serves to separate the interlocutors from their ordinary circumstances and to set the rules for the dialogue. Only after the interlocutors have risked their lives to reach safety, and have determined a plan to avoid boredom do we first glimpse the pastoral:

At midday they all went back as arranged to the meadow, which was looking so beautiful and fair that it would take a Boccaccio to describe it as it really was. Enough for us to say that a more beautiful meadow there never was seen. When they were all seated on the grass, so green and soft that there was no need for carpets or cushions, Simautat said: 'Which of us shall be the one in charge? (69-70).

Despite the usual ways that gender and class would determine how these characters relate to one another, they decide to forego those conventions. As one of the noblemen, Hircan, declares, "Where games are concerned everybody is equal" (70). In terms of social class, there is no Renaissance pastoral author of higher rank than Marguerite. She was Queen of Navarre and sister to François I, the king of France. Her privilege and position are imprinted on the text, as her interlocutors are nobility whose main goal is to avoid boredom. And yet, Marguerite risked her reputation and even her life defending reformers and protestants in sixteenth century France, making enemies in both the Parliament of Paris and the University of Paris. The university went as far as banning her own published religious text, *Le miroir de l'âme pêcheresse*. Only Marguerite's close relationship with her brother, François I, king of France, protected her from the risk of execution that threatened other

reformers. Marguerite was instrumental in the establishment of the Collège de France whose initial remit was to teach Hebrew and ancient Greek to anyone and at no cost in order to offer an alternative education to the University of Paris for religious study. Marguerite strove to make study and discussion of scripture widely available, rather than leaving it in the sole custody of priests. Marguerite's predominantly secular text, the *Heptameron*, is a Ciceronian dialogue that exemplifies the kind of discourse she worked to create – one where many people would have access to important knowledge, as well as the freedom to disagree on the most fundamental issues.

The stories the interlocutors tell are often framed as arguments or ripostes to other tales. For example, the young widow Longarine explicitly tells her story as evidence for her argument. She begins, “I’ll tell you a story, which . . . show[s] that there are women who are just as courageous, just as intelligent and just as shrewd as men” (188). Although some of the stories feature exemplary women, Longarine’s story is of a beautiful, wealthy wife who is driven to infidelity by her husband’s own transgressions and indifference. The wife directly confronts her husband and his role in her misery and subsequent infidelity:¹⁹ “Now, Monsieur, do you intend, after being the sole cause of all my misery, to take revenge on me for the very kind of thing of which you yourself have been guilty for years – with the difference that the example you set was completely devoid of any scruple of honour or conscience?” (196)

¹⁹As a historical point of interest, Marguerite’s second husband, Henri de Navarre, was known to have had extramarital affairs.

In order for this story to demonstrate the strength and bravery of women, the audience must interpret the wife sympathetically, believing that the husband is indeed culpable for her transgressions. In the conversation following the story, the nobles debate the morality of the wife and husband, and offer several different readings of the wife's actions. One nobleman, Hircan, describes the wife as "resentful, bitter, vindictive and stubborn," and Ennasuite, a noblewoman, retorts that Hircan does not understand because he has never loved without having love returned (202). Within their afternoon game of storytelling, all the characters have the right to speak, and are all heard as equals. In fact, the structure of the storytelling is controlled by women: the stories are written down by Parlamente, and Oisille serves as arbiter, laying down the ground rules for how stories can be used as evidence. For example, early on the first day, Oisille reminds participants that a story about one "wretched woman" cannot condemn all women (78). This gender equality is, of course, not the norm for 16th century France, or even the norm among the characters who lay aside their differences for the course of the game. Within the interstitial dialogue, the interlocutors debate not only the morality of the stories' characters, but also the nature of the differences between men and women. In the end, Parlamente and Hircan, the husband and wife who lead the conversation from very different perspectives, agree that the differences between men and women are socially constructed, rather than natural. As Janet Levarie Smarr surmises,

The important contribution of the *Heptameron*, however, is not

so much the offering a specific programs for social change as the recognition that change is possible; that the categories invented by the human mind are not natural distinctions but can all be reconceived. The many voices of the text ... are used continually to reopen the possibilities for a healthy confusion. (200)

This contribution is in keeping with the limited power of the pastoral dialogue in the Renaissance. While the pastoral gives rise to a discursive space where the normal stratifications of gender and class are attenuated, any subversive or controversial conclusions remain theoretical, and do not lead to action. These pastoral scenes always have one foot in accommodation and another in protest. One dimension of the dialogue is the private space it creates for conversations that could not otherwise happen, but another dimension is that of the public peering in at that scene. While partial, censored versions of the *Heptameron* did not appear in print until 1558 and 1559, (The full version was not discovered until the nineteenth century.) many manuscript versions circulated in Marguerite's lifetime. One possibility is that these pastoral dialogues are idealized versions of conversations that actually took place, on the one hand, and dialogues that model conversation and community on the other.

Chapter 2

“Common Talk”: *De Officiis* and the Theory of Conversation in the Renaissance

And the said nature, thorough the power of reason, winneth man to man, to a felowshippe bothe in talke, and also of life: and engendereth a certein speciall favour chieflie to themward, that are of them begotten: and stirreth up the companies of men, that they bee willing both to bee assembled together, and also to bee servisable one to an other. —Cicero, *De Officiis*, translated by Nicholas Grimald, 1556 (1.11)

To come . . . to the highest achievements of eloquence, what other power could have been strong enough either to gather scattered humanity into one place, or to lead it out of its brutish existence in the wilderness up to our present condition of civilization as men and as citizens, or, after the establishment of social communities, to give shape to laws, tribunals, and civic rights? -Crassus in *De Oratore*, (I.ix.33-34).

The origin story of the creation of civilization is a central component of Renaissance conceptions of eloquence and rhetoric. The Renaissance version of the story is inherited from theand other Classical rhetorical sources: Cicero himself tells the story at least four times, each version differing from the others in subtle but important ways. The moment is sometimes explicitly pastoral,

but always implicitly so, as it is also a social gathering on the cusp of (the creation of the) city. In every account, civilization develops from speech. People gather, not physically outside the city walls, but immediately before the creation of civilization, and speech civilizes them. This origin story may be read as representative of Renaissance rhetoric. Like other pastoral moments, it seeks to recover a relationship between people that is less affected by the institutions of society: as the moment that creates civilized society, it is always outside of the complex institutions of politics and culture. While other accounts of the pastoral are often tinged with nostalgia, the origin story looks forward to the positive advancements of culture and society. The purpose of this pastoral moment is to pair society down, to discover its first and most basic building block. Unsurprisingly, according to rhetoric, that first building block is always speech. That speech is most iconically the voice of a single orator, but other accounts focus on conversation, and speech between people. As we will see, in the Renaissance, any schoolboy would be familiar with both versions. My purpose in this chapter is to trace a complementary understanding of rhetoric as conversational, as well as the domain of the orator.

In *The Emperor of Men's Minds*, Wayne Rebhorn argues that, while in Classical rhetoric, there is a class of statesmen and orators in the Renaissance the orator is identified with the ruler. He assembles many of the Renaissance variations on the story of the orator as civilizer and points out their potential for control and manipulation:

The myth of the orator-civilizer is . . . ideological in the sense

that it is a mystification of the real power relations that obtain in society. If it defines human beings as possessing a defective nature, it does so in order that their wildness will both require and justify their taming at the orator's hands. The assumed inadequacies of human beings render the orator indispensable and make his activities appear unmitigated blessings. Note how the myth presents the orator as the master of language and depicts the people, by contrast, as essentially mute. It does not dramatize a conflict between his voice and theirs but rather seeks to celebrate the magical power of his words . . . What such a reading of the myth ignores, of course, is that the orator's behavior as coercion and denomination, as a matter of his serving his own interests rather than those of the people he tames. (26)

According to Rebhorn, this mystification of power lies at the heart of the origin story of eloquence. By his account, the purpose of the myth is to obfuscate the oppressive dimension of eloquence. And while mystification of power is inherent in the classical versions, Rebhorn argues it is compounded in the Renaissance, partly because the Christian doctrine of original sin resonates so well with the "defective nature" of human beings that is central to the myth, but also because, in the Renaissance, orator and ruler were equated (26-28). Rebhorn goes on to chart a course through the Renaissance, showing how often the orator was depicted as coercing his audience. All of these versions are retellings of the account in *De Oratore*.

In the face of the evidence Rebhorn assembles, it would be impossible to argue that rhetoric in the Renaissance did not have a coercive dimension. However, *De Oratore* was not only the source of this origin story; it was also a model for the Ciceronian dialogues that proliferated in the Renaissance and a

source for the method of *in utramque partem*, or arguing both sides of an issue, that informed a Renaissance method of thinking. Neither of these strains of influence concern an orator speaking to an audience. Instead, both depend on a more personal rhetoric of conversation.

Cicero's *De Officiis*, a letter he wrote to his son as a young man, is central to the narrative of conversation as rhetoric that we will follow in the Renaissance. Throughout this chapter, I will refer primarily to Nicholas Grimald's sixteenth century translation of the text into English. In his tome of Renaissance school boys' education, T.W. Baldwin explains that Renaissance English school boys would have known the text in Latin and in this English translation (vol.2, 585). Grimald's Englished version was the second English translation to be published in the 16th century, and by far the best and most successful. The first translation by Robert Whittington was a noted failure, as he was "a prisoner of the word-order of the original" (Jones 140). Grimald, by contrast, was a marked success. His version was likely read in addition to the Latin text by prominent Elizabethan authors, from Sidney to Shakespeare (Baldwin vol 2, 585-586). Grimald's translation makes up seven of the eight 16th century English editions of *De Officiis*. We will be primarily concerned with this version, rather than the Latin original because it offers two advantages. Not only was it widely available and widely read by both those who knew Latin and those who did not, but as a respected translation into early modern English, it in itself offers clues as to how *De Officiis* was read by its early modern audience. The text was published by Sir Richard Tottel, who is

known today predominantly for his publication of *Songes and Sonnettes*, now referred to as Tottel's *Miscellany*. Grimald's translation was an institution for half a century; published first in 1556, Grimald's translation was printed six more times in the 16th century and once more in 1605.

Cicero wrote *De Officiis* during a forced hiatus from politics near the end of his life, before he was recalled to political life by the assassination of Julius Caesar. Other than his *Philippics*, the collection of speeches he penned against Antony, *De Officiis* is the last work he wrote. The work is written as a letter to his son, the younger Marcus Tullius Cicero, who was studying abroad in Athens. The younger Cicero had never been a serious scholar, and reports from Cicero's friend Atticus indicated that was still true. Even his rhetoric tutor was "enticing the younger Cicero to pleasures and to drink" (Dyck 12). Cicero had planned to visit his son, but couldn't for political reasons, so he wrote a moral treatise instead. According to Andrew Dyck, "De Officiis" was never part of Cicero's earlier philosophical project, and its dedication is not merely an interchangeable literary formality. This work, from the very outset conceived with young Marcus and his needs in mind, is deeply embedded in the father-son relationship (12-13). Despite its genuine personal audience, the work discusses a broader range of situations than those pertinent to Cicero's son, and then goes on to ponder the potential political efficacy of personal letters made public. Furthermore, Cicero explicitly states that the letter's topic is not his son's "personal history, but the general theme" (II.xiii.45). Therefore, we can safely conclude that Cicero's intended audience numbered

more than one.

The stated purpose of the letter is to provide moral direction to his son, or more broadly, to young men seeking to live public and moral lives. In fact, for Cicero the two sorts of lives are inseparable, as any moral life must be lived in community, and any successful public life must be lived morally. *De Officiis* is modeled on a no longer extant moral treatise on duties by the Greek stoic Panaetius. Cicero's letter consists of three books, and while Panaetius also intended on writing a three-book treatise, he never got around to the third one, leaving Cicero on his own for describing the relationship between honesty and expediency. According to Cicero, each book addresses a separate issue: the first distinguishes the moral from the immoral, the second the expedient from the inexpedient, and finally, the third book addresses how to resolve seeming conflicts between the moral and the expedient (III.ii.7). For our purposes, it may also be worth noting that in the first book Cicero outlines the four cardinal virtues, paying particular attention to decorum, while the second book focuses on the public attainment of glory and influence. The third seeks to address discrepancies between the first two. In order to mine another perspective on Ciceronian dialogue, I will follow two of the main threads that run throughout the text, the formation of community and the nature of the individual. *De Officiis* is concerned with balancing personal gain with public benefit, and while *De Oratore* must perform the same balancing act, the two texts do so by emphasizing different aspects of the community and its members. Ultimately, the preservation of the community in *De Oratore* rests on the morality of

extraordinary men, namely those who seek to be the perfect orator. *De Officiis* underscores the fallibility of the members of the community it describes, and does not promote a select few to act as protectors of the public good, but emphasizes the role any enfranchised member plays in ensuring the health of the community. These two approaches may seem to be in conflict, and given Cicero's adherence to *in utramque partem*, or arguing both sides of an issue, it would not be surprising if they were, but the two do not conflict so much as emphasize different compatible strategies for protecting the community and gaining personal glory. Perhaps the biggest difference, and certainly the most important one for our purposes, is that the community in *De Oratore* is borne and maintained primarily through oratory, while *De Officiis* insists on the primacy of conversation.

To return to Grimald's translation, in his introduction he compares his own achievement of translation to Cicero's composition of the text:

These riches, and treasures of witt, and wisdom, as Cicero transported oute of Greece into Italie: so have I fetched from thence, and conveyed them into England: and have caused also Marcus Tullius (more, than he could do, when he was alive) to speake English. Marvailous is the matter, flowing the eloquence, ryche the store of stuff, and full artificiall the ending: . . . I in our maner of speche, have expressed the same . . . (48)¹

That is, Grimald aim to not only reproduce the content of *De Officiis*, but

¹I have not modernized the spelling with the exception of switching "u" and "v" when it helps to make reading easier, as well as turning "i" to "j" when appropriate.

also the eloquence, waggishly claiming to make Cicero speak English. He also elevates his own position from translator to a second Cicero, casting this as its own work rather than a just translation. After all, Cicero himself based his moral treatise on the Greek one by Panaetius. Grimald goes on to articulate a theory of translation: “what rule the Rhetorician giues in precept, to bee obserued of an Oratour, in telling of his tale: . . . the same rule should be vused in examining, and judging of translation” (48). Here he compares his translation with the speech of an orator, once again insisting that we not see his effort as an accomplishment on par with that of an original author. Markku Peltonen accepts the translation of classical texts as evidence that the ideas discussed circulated in England, and I make the same proposition:² to read Grimald’s translation of *De Officiis* rather than the original Latin or a modern translation means that we have a better understanding of its sixteenth century reception. Here we have Cicero speaking English, a sixteenth century English that eschews borrowing Latin words in favor of finding “native” equivalents. Grimald turns Cicero’s highly praised Latin prose into his own carefully wrought English text. Given its popularity, this isn’t one man’s understanding of Cicero’s *De Officiis*, but the basis of later Elizabethan and Jacobean readings.

Before we turn to the text itself, I want to offer a rationale behind

²“Since reading is not a passive process, we cannot draw a clear distinction between the production of an original text and the translation of a foreign or classical one. It follows that translations should be understood as political and ethical comments on the contemporary world” (Peltonen 19).

seeking a theory of dialogue between *De Oratore* and *De Officiis*. After all, *De Oratore* is renowned for its prevalence and importance in the Renaissance as well as its relevance to the dialogue form. On the other hand, *De Officiis* is rarely considered in questions of Ciceronian dialogue. features much less often in current day scholarship of Renaissance rhetoric. When we look for *De Officiis* in current day scholarship on the Renaissance, its absence is jarring. When scholars make the case for the importance of *De Oratore*, the case for the importance of *De Officiis* is suppressed. For instance, in “Learning to Curse,” Stephen Greenblatt argues that European colonizers and explorers viewed the New World through a kind of Ciceronian typology, as he asserts with no evidence other than the popularity of *De Oratore* that these men expected to find populations of people who did not have a fully developed language. He claims that “Renaissance humanists knew that such men existed, rather as modern scientists knew from the periodic table of the necessary existence of elements yet undiscovered” because “virtually every Renaissance schoolboy read in Cicero’s *De Oratore* that the first orator civilized the far-flung, inarticulate, and unreasonable masses through his eloquence” (27-28). Yet, he does not mention that in *De Officiis* Cicero offers a competing myth of the origins of civilization. Another example of the noticeable absence of *De Officiis* comes from Thomas Sloane, who offers an accurate account of *De Oratore* in the early modern period, when he reminds us that it “became the first book printed in Italy, and later English humanists such as Roger Ascham hailed it as ‘the best book that ever Tully . . . wrote’” (32-33). Yet, while

it was the first book published in Italy, its popularity fell far behind that of *De Officiis*, and Ascham, ever the trumpeter of Cicero, may have proclaimed that *De Oratore* was Cicero's best book, but he ranked *De Officiis* second only after the gospel of Christ as a guide to morality (Baldwin vol. 2, 586).

In terms of popularity in the Renaissance, both on the continent and in the British Isles, *De Officiis* far outstripped *De Oratore* by the measure of publication. I would like to review some of the pertinent information before turning to another set of questions about the relevance of *De Officiis* in a conversation about dialogue. Crucial to our understanding of the relative popularity of these two texts is that in the incunabula period and the 16th century, Cicero was the most published classical author. In the 15th century, Cicero outstripped all other Latin authors (and Greek authors were rarely published) – his 324 editions just double the number of editions of the runner-up, Virgil (Jones 118). Although Sloane is correct in his assertion that the first Italian book was an edition of *De Oratore*, Cicero's familiar letters and *De Officiis* were the most frequently published by early Italian printing presses (Jones 123). Cicero's popularity continued into the 16th century, which saw 3000 editions of his works published in Europe (Jones 127). The familiar letters and *De Officiis* remained the most published texts (Jones 128). Although 16th century England lagged far behind the continent in publishing Latin authors, among the sixty-seven editions of Cicero from this period (all but nine were Elizabethan), "*De Officiis* receives by far the most printings – eleven with Latin text only, eight with Latin text and translation, and one in English only"

(Jones 131). The twenty editions of *De Officiis* account for more than one in every four editions of Cicero. *De Oratore*, by contrast, was only published twice in 16th century England, and the first edition was published until 1573. Furthermore, *De Oratore* was not published in an English translation until the 17th century. Of course, continental publications of these texts were also available in England, but we would do well to remember that there, too, *De Officiis* far outstripped *De Oratore* in publication. In summary, publications and translations of *De Officiis* demonstrate that it was more popular than *De Oratore* in the early modern period. In addition, accounts of early modern education in England show that both were taught, usually in upper grammar school. However, *De Oratore* was taught in the subject of rhetoric, whereas *De Officiis* was taught as moral philosophy.

We have established that *De Officiis* was more widely available than *De Oratore*, but since the former was considered moral philosophy and the latter rhetoric, we must ask whether the Renaissance reader would have considered the two texts together. This question launches us into an ongoing debate about how people read and taught reading in the Renaissance. On the one side are scholars, such as Frank Whigham, who argue that early modern readers approached their texts in search of nuggets for their commonplace books, “treating one’s reading as raw material – matter and tools to build with according to need” (Whigham 29), rather than as works that could be synthesized. Any early modern denizen for whom reading was “particulate consumption” (28) would be driven by their own repurposing of the text, and

would not consider the implications that one passage of *De Officiis* would have on another, let alone its contradictions with *De Oratore*. Jeff Dolven argues that humanist teaching created such particulate readers because the atomization of texts was an essential component of their education: in order that the early modern student could demonstrate his learning, drills, repetition, memorization and recitation ruled the classroom, and these practices necessitated dividing texts into segments devoid of context, temporality, and therefore, narrative (27-64). Thomas Blundeville clearly advocates for this kind of reading practice in *True Order and Methode of Wryting and Reading Hystorie*. He advises his reader to order examples “according to the matters & purposes whereto they serue” so that “by considering vnder what title euery example is to be placed (for the ready finding thereof) we shall greatlye helpe our memorie” (qtd. in Whigham 29). Clearly, “particulate consumption” was advocated both by educators and some authors of Renaissance courtesy books alike. This method was widely practiced in the classroom and beyond in the early modern period, and I would go further to say that I believe we still practice such methods of reading today, perhaps most notably in scholarship. There is a certain similarity between a commonplace book that has collected a series of quotations about a particular virtue and a literature review giving definitions of that same virtue. Yet, while both early modern readers and modern day scholars hunt down and excise relevant quotations to reuse in their own work, in other moments these same readers are capable of reflecting on a text as a whole, and, what’s more, comparing text to text.

Jennifer Richards directly counters Whigham's claims in order to suggest another way of reading courtesy manuals, specifically the ones written in dialogue (13-14). A more holistic method of reading also had proponents in Tudor England. Grimald is often cited from the introduction for *De Officiis* because of his detailed plan for reading.

I dare well saye, if this worke happe into a good students hand: hee will not think it ynough to runne over it once: as we fare with trifles, and toyes: but advisedly, and with good leasure, thre, or foure, or five times, he will reade it, and reade it, and reade it againe: first, by the principall points, by the definitions, and the diuisions: to see, what is treated, how farre forthe, in what order, and with what varietie: then, to mark the precepts, reasons, conclusions and common places: after, vnto the sayd places to referre all the stories, with the verses poetically: finally, as well in the english, as the latine, to weygh well properties of wordes, fashions of phrases, and the ornaments of bothe. (49-50)

Grimald's method of reading is highly prescriptive, but he advises the reader to understand the structure and the breadth of the argument before turning to the extractable features of the text. T.W. Baldwin confirms the popularity of this method of reading: "If the reader will refer to the training of Edward VI upon *De Officiis* and other works of Cicero, he will see that Grimald has pretty well described the operations performed" (vol. 2, 584). The popularity of writing early modern versions of Ciceronian dialogue demonstrates that these readers knew how to put differing opinions into conversation, and to work toward a resolution of contradictions.

While *De Officiis* has long been read as moral philosophy rather than a rhetoric of conversation, recent scholarship has begun to extract a theory of conversation from the moral treatise. Michele Kennerly argues that *De Officiis*, written in a moment of political turmoil that cut Cicero off from his previous political career, refashions the notion of political speech, so that, unlike in Cicero's earlier works, it includes personal conversation and philosophical discussion. Gary Remer, on the other hand, relies heavily on *De Officiis* in his reconstruction of Cicero's model of political communication, particularly dialogue. Remer argues that Cicero offers an alternative model to those proposed by current day deliberative democracy. He is specifically interested in the inclusion of emotion and the need for speech that leads to action.

As we have seen, scholars of the Renaissance agree on the importance of *De Oratore*. What they disagree on is its significance. On the one hand, scholars such as Thomas Sloane and Joel Altman (69-70) point to the protocol of skepticism the dialogue develops, which they argue is imitated throughout the Renaissance, especially its focus on *utramque partem*, or arguing both sides of an issue. On the other hand, scholars such as Wayne Rebhorn and Stephen Greenblatt treat the story of the creation of civilization in Crassus' opening sally as a touchstone for the Renaissance and its focus on rhetoric as a tool for self-advancement rather than a more even-handed skepticism. *De Officiis* offers another perspective: Although within the text Cicero reiterates his commitment to the skeptical search for truth, *De Officiis* is more concerned with conversation as a means for developing and maintaining the fellowship

that is necessary for community. The letter also offers another creation of civilization story that counters and balances the version from *De Oratore*. Although much is made of the popularity and repetition of the version in *De Oratore*, it is worth remembering that *De Officiis* is translated into English twice in the sixteenth century and the origin story is also repeated in Richard Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*.

While it is widely known that the creation of society story in *De Oratore* descends from the version told by the sophist Isocrates, the differences between these two versions are striking. What's more, *De Officiis* has few known extant antecedents, but resonates with the Isocratean myth in some key ways. By looking at the myths in *De Officiis* and *De Oratore*, first together, and then as each relates to the Isocratean story, we develop a more complex version of the creation of civilization story as it would have been known in the Renaissance. *De Officiis* offers a more cooperative origin story, that originates in each member of the community. The comparison of *De Officiis* to the Isocratean myth highlights the moments of resonance between the two texts, and the importance of rhetoric in the account that is otherwise assumed to be stoic. Because the similarities are expected between *De Oratore* and the version in Isocrates, the deviation between the texts is most noticeable.

Of course, *De Officiis* and *De Oratore* both argue that the development of community is a beneficial and an important advance in human history. Classical and early modern audiences would have recognized Cicero's "since the dawn of civilization," stories as part of a larger, ongoing debate about the

nature of humanity and civilization, and, in Cicero's case, the roles of speech and eloquence. In the larger debate, there are two extremes. On the one hand, primitivism describes a perfect golden world, where humans had no need for civilization or the codification of laws because they were unfettered even by the concerns of hunger and of safety. According to these stories, the world has steadily declined since this Golden Age. Cicero writes on the other extreme of this debate, in which civilization is the great achievement of a previously scattered people who were not even fully human until they came together and formed society. Cicero is always unabashedly pro-civilization, and yet, some of his accounts differ in surprising ways. In *De Inventione* and *De Oratore*, Cicero tells stories of the creation of civilization that depend on a strong orator converting the masses from barbarity to civilization. On the other hand, in *De Officiis* and *De Finibus*, he offers more stoically influenced accounts that rely on an instinctive need for fellowship in all people rather than an original orator.

The myth of the creation of civilization in *De Officiis* gives individual members of a community, their relationships and their talk, primacy over the power of an orator. In *De Officiis*, oratory is secondary, not necessary in the formation of society, and only important in society at all because men may hurt one another as well as help one another. It is the threat of violence that, according to Cicero, makes persuasion necessary. Civilization develops because of the instincts of all its members, rather than the heroic eloquence of one man. It grows from the generalization of the first love, that between a parent and a child, into a love for all of one's community, and perhaps for all

mankind. And this love remains central throughout *De Officiis*. According to Cicero, the love that binds families and friends is the most successful way to bind people to a ruler.

The creation of civilization stories in *De Oratore* and *De Officiis* not only offer a theory for how community was created and set in motion, but also a method for maintaining fellowship. In *De Officiis* the story of the creation of civilization is preceded by a cogitation on the nature of men, who, Cicero explains, are superior to all other animals because they can reason, or see “sequels” and “semblances,” meaning that rather than living only in the present, as animals do, men can look to the future and remember the past, and can see the similarities and relationships between events (56).³ Through this intelligence, along with instinct, men are led to create a community,

And the said nature, thorough the power of reason, winneth man to man, to a felowshippe bothe in talke, and also of life: and engendreth a certein speciall favour chieflie to themward, that are of them begotten: and stirreth up the companies of men, that they bee willing bothe to bee assembled together, and also to bee servisable one to an other: and for those causes, that they studie to purveie such thinges, as maie furnish them for their apparaile, and for sustinaunce: not onelie for themselves, but for their wives, children, and other[s], whom they holde dere, and ought to defende. Which care sturreth up also mennes sprites, and makes them of more corage to doo their bysinesse. (56, I.iv.12)

³ I use the word “men” or “man” rather than a more inclusive term like “human” throughout because I follow Grimald.

In this account of the origin of civilization, nature and inchoate reason lead all men to form communities. Civilization, which Cicero sees as the highest achievement of men, begins with the first love and from there it develops outward, until men are won “to a felowshippe bothe in talke, and also of life.” According to Cicero, oratory does not form community, but community develops side-by-side with one of its sweetest rewards, conversation.

Another important point here, and one that I will return to later, is that needs, which are in a sense the weaknesses of men, do not weaken community, but make it stronger. Together, people can better provide for themselves and their loved ones. This is a bottom-up model of sociability, one that begins with familial love and works up to civilization. If any kind of speech is responsible for the founding of civilization, it is conversation, rather than oratory. Cicero repeats this sentiment later in *De Officiis* when he names “the felowship of al mankinde” as the first commitment of men, which is bonded by “reason, and speche: which by teaching, learning, conferring, reasoning, and judging, winneth one man to an other, and joneth them in a certein naturall felowship” (70). Here, he makes explicit the types of interaction that create and maintain society.

The creation of civilization story in *De Officiis* is considered stoic, and scholars assume that it is derived from Panaetius, whose no longer extant book on duties served as the model for Cicero’s moral treatise. Yet, Cicero does not follow Panaetius blindly, but uses his text as a guide. Although many scholars have been concerned with the relationship between Cicero and

his source text, Marcia Colish points out that, lacking the Greek original, nothing can be said about the connection for certain (86-9). Andrew Dyck points to Polybius's *Histories* as a source for Cicero's own (89). In both these accounts the relationship between parent and child spurs on fellowship. Yet, while fellowship in *De Officiis* grows from the instinctive love a parent feels for a child, in Polybius's *Histories* people gain an awareness of natural duties because of the first moment of disobedience, when that first child dishonors his or her parents by not showing respect: it is only in the lack of obedience that the need for obedience is first realized. And while Polybius's cyclical account of human civilization ultimately leads to democracy, subsequent generations of unappreciative offspring allow society to decline back into barbarity, only to begin the cycle again. According to Polybius, the consequences of disobedient and ungrateful children extend even farther, as the failure of each type of governance, from kingship to aristocracy to democracy, begins in ungrateful offspring who want to inherit the benefits of their parents' labors without understanding the responsibilities that come with them.

Not content with the cyclical version laid out by Polybius, Cicero takes the role of responsibilities of maintaining society seriously, and *De Officiis* serves as a guide for avoiding the issues that Polybius argues keep society cycling. In *De Officiis*, a text which is aimed to correct the wayward behavior of his own son, Cicero is searching for a stable solution, one in which civilization does not dissolve into savagery, but is buoyed indefinitely by the virtue of its private citizens and leaders. Rather than let the children who inherit their

high-ranking positions forget their duties as they do in the *Histories*, Cicero argues that personal benefit and public good may often look like separate goals in conflict, but in reality, they are one in the same and inseparable.

I want to compare this origin of civilization story to the one in *De Oratore*. An irony of *De Oratore* is that while it became a model of Ciceronian dialogue, the power of speech Crassus describes in its creation of civilization story is that of the orator, and the power of one man to persuade the many, rather than the conversation that Cicero privileges in *De Officiis*. In his opening encomium of eloquence, Crassus first praises the power of the orator:

. . . there is to my mind no more excellent thing than the power, by means of oratory, to get a hold on assemblies of men, win their good will, direct their inclinations wherever the speaker wishes, or divert them from whatever he wishes . . . For what is so marvelous as that, out of the innumerable company of mankind, a single being should arise, who either alone or with a few others can make effective a faculty bestowed by nature upon every man? . . . Or what achievement so mighty and glorious as that the impulses of the crowd, the consciences of the judges, the austerity of the Senate, should suffer transformation through the eloquence of one man? (I.viii.30-32)

In Crassus's opening sally, a large part of the beauty of eloquence is that a single man can change the minds of the many, whether his audience is the masses, the senate or judges. Crassus also describes eloquence as "kingly" and the orator as "godlike" (I.viii.32). These descriptors are especially apt of the orator he praises above, who rules either alone or with few others,

and can transform the “impulses,” the “consciences” or the “austerity” of his audience. Crassus emphasizes the power of the orator, and these words do little to distinguish his authority from a king or a dictator, as the consent of his audience does not appear to be given rationally, but because of the orator’s inexorable persuasiveness. It verges on violence, as the possession of a few who twist and take from the many. Crassus briefly adds the caveat of wisdom, but he dwells on no qualification of the orator, other than the ability to get what he wants from others. The focus here is on the power of one man to control the masses as he wishes. The humanity described here is not exactly rhetorically savvy. These are the untrained and the unwashed, whose well being depends on being found by a benevolent orator, rather than an eloquent power-hungry madman. Crassus’s description of the orator lets us feel the power he wields. The young men he addresses are left with the option of becoming orators who can persuade any crowd at whim, or the imminently pliable masses. Also highlighted in the above passage is the singularity of the great orator. The text itself is written as a dialogue in which arguments are not only juxtaposed, but interlocutors also learn from others and adjust their arguments, and yet here we do not see the orator described as someone who looks for consensus or who listens, but instead he forcefully moves his audience to his perspective.

According to Crassus, the power of oratory does not stop here. Not only can it sway any audience, but, as is described in quotation at the beginning of the chapter, eloquence is responsible for the founding of civilization. Crassus depicts the beginning of civilization almost antithetically to the version in *De*

Officiis. He turns his attention from the community to the civilizing power of the exceptional individual, highlighting the power of oratory. The instinct, reason and love of every person does not feature, but the people are instead wrenched from their “brutish existence” and molded into law-abiding citizens by eloquence. Eloquence not only “gather[s] scattered humanity,” but it also “give[s] shape to laws, tribunals, and civic rights:” That is, it not only unites people, but it also gives communal life a rational structure. Crassus describes the origins of civilization as eloquence, and makes his argument here by inspiring an emotional response in his audience. And in this speech, what remains ringing in our ears is the power of the orator, and the glory and admiration he wins with his eloquence.

However, Crassus does not offer this depiction of the orator in isolation, but as part of a dialogue whose positions can only be teased out through the consideration of many voices. In this same speech, Crassus also holds eloquence up as a necessary condition for a “free nation” and particularly for “communities which have attained the enjoyment of peace and tranquility” (I.vii.30). Within the dialogue, the immediate response is from a minor character, Scaevola, who offers a harsh critique of rhetoric which Crassus answers with a more thorough definition of oratory, and a description of some of the responsibilities that accompany oratorical power. Scaevola declares that scattered humanity “were not so much convinced by the reasoning of the wise as snared by the speeches of the eloquent” (I.viii.35). Scaevola’s account immediately leaves the foggy mythology of the unknown orator for the legends of

Rome's founders. He goes on to claim that the eloquent have, on balance, done more harm than good, and that Crassus has discounted the importance of ordinances, customs, augury, and religious rites, in the founding and maintenance of Rome. Rather than countering Scaevola's arguments, Crassus lumps them in with those of Plato's in the *Gorgias*. Crassus does not deny the importance of what Scaevola has said, but instead rolls knowledge and the invention of arguments into eloquence, while Scaevola limits the term to style. As is characteristic in *De Oratore*, the praise of eloquence and the orator doubles as a list of responsibilities, but it is only after Scaevola's counterargument that Cicero pairs the power of the orator with his duties, specifically, to know his subject matter thoroughly.

As is well known, Isocrates is Cicero's source for the creation of civilization story in *De Oratore*. On the other hand, in his exhaustive commentary on *De Officiis*, Dyck does not consider the Isocratean account as a possible source for the version in *De Officiis*.⁴ And yet, the Isocratean version of the origin story resonates with both of these Ciceronian versions. Let us consider it in full:

In other respects, we do not differ from other living beings, and we are inferior to many in speed, strength, and other resources. But since we have the ability to persuade one another and to make clear to ourselves what we want, not only do we avoid living like animals, but we have come together, built cities, made laws, and

⁴That is, in his commentary to the section, he never raises Isocrates as a possible source (83-89).

invented arts (technē). Speech (logos) is responsible for nearly all our inventions. It legislated in matters of justice and injustice, and beauty and baseness, and without these laws, we could not live with one another. By it we refute the bad and praise the good; through it we educate the ignorant and recognize the intelligent. We regard speaking well to be the clearest sign of a good mind, which it requires, and truthful, lawful, and just speech we consider the image (eidolon) of a good and faithful soul. With speech we fight over contentious matters, and we investigate the unknown. We use the same arguments by which we persuade others in our own deliberations; we call those able to speak in a crowd “rhetorical” (rhētorikoi); we regard as sound advisers those who debate with themselves most skillfully about public affairs. If one must summarize the power of discourse, we will discover that nothing done prudently occurs without speech (logos), that speech is the leader of all thoughts and actions, and that the most intelligent people use it most of all. (Nicocles 3.5-9)

This myth includes a more detailed account of the speech that created and maintains civilization than either of the two Ciceronian versions, and the perspective is different from both those versions as well. Surprisingly, Isocrates uses “we” throughout, and only mentions ‘rhetorical’ people briefly. Like the version in *De Officiis*, he draws attention to the collective power of speech rather than to the exclusive ability of a few. It is speech generally, not oratory specifically that is responsible for the creation and maintenance of civilization. In fact, Isocrates describes three moments of speech: our personal silent deliberation, debate among experts, and orations. It is the first of these that is most surprising – Isocrates claims that the speech within our heads is the same as that which we use to persuade others. Antonius makes a similar claim

later in *De Oratore* (2.102), and yet, here Isocrates includes it in his account of how speech is responsible for civilization. It is not just, as in *De Officiis*, that speech and community develop hand-in-hand, but that without speech and community, we would not have our own thoughts. Like Cicero in *De Officiis*, Isocrates begins with a description that differentiates humans from animals, rather than the savage from the civilized. Both these versions lack the clear beginning of the myth in *De Oratore*, where eloquence transforms people from the bestial. But unlike the account in *De Officiis*, the Isocratean myth and the *De Oratore* version both credit speech alone in the development of civilization, foregoing any references to instinct. However, the myth in *De Oratore* is clearly not a simple retelling of its Isocratean predecessor. In particular, Cicero does not draw on Isocrates when Crassus praises the orator, or when he stresses the personal benefits of oratory.

Cicero gives another version of the creation of civilization story in his earlier treatise on rhetoric, *De Inventione*. Here, he reports on an internal version of the debate that is dramatized between Crassus and Scaevola. Before recounting the creation story, Cicero, in the role he later gives to Scaevola, questions the efficacy of rhetoric and its benefit to society:

I have often seriously debated with myself whether men and communities have received more good or evil from oratory and a consuming devotion to eloquence. For when I ponder the troubles in our commonwealth, and run over in my mind the ancient misfortunes of mighty cities, I see that no little part of the disasters was brought about by men of eloquence. (I.i.1).

After more thoroughly investigating the advantages of eloquence, Cicero finds that oratory has led to the founding of cities, the ceasing of wars, the development of important alliances, and the greatest friendships. Emphasizing the time, the research and the thought that have gone into his decision, Cicero proclaims that both philosophy and eloquence must be studied for the advantage of the individual and the good of the community.

Only after coming to this decision does Cicero tell the story of the beginning of civilization, before which men “did nothing by the guidance of reason, but relied chiefly on physical strength” (I.i.2). The orator-founder, whom Cicero insists was “great and wise” then “became aware of the power latent in man and the wide field offered by his mind for great achievements if one could develop this power and improve it by instruction” (I.i.2). The men rebel against the orator at first, but then “through reason and eloquence they had listened with greater attention” and the orator “transformed them from wild savages into a kind and gentle folk” (I.i.2). Reason alone, according to Cicero, could not have persuaded these savages, because it would have been “mute and voiceless” without eloquence (I.i.3). And moreover, later, when laws were developed, only eloquence could bloodlessly convince the powerful to be just. Despite ultimately relating almost identical stories about the origins of society, I want to stress the difference between these two versions. While *De Oratore* emphasizes the power of the orator and the admiration he deserves, in *De Inventione*, we first hear the author question whether oratory is more beneficial or detrimental to society, and decide in favor of it because of the good

oratory does for the community. The savages in *De Inventione* are converted, by eloquence, yes, but also by reason, into reasonable creatures themselves: this step is implied in *De Oratore*, rather than said explicitly.

In *De Oratore* it is eloquence that brings civilization together. In *De Officiis*, it is love. While rhetoric is there at the founding of civilization in both versions, it is differently weighted and differently figured. It may seem that the account in *De Oratore* privileges rhetoric while the one in *De Officiis* turns from speech to focus on the duties of the private citizen, but rhetoric and responsibility are important to both. Because the creation story in *De Officiis* relies on what Kennerly refers to as social *oikeiosis*, or the natural human instinct for companionship, and then builds outward, conversation between family members and then friends naturally happens before oratory. Given that Cicero explicitly refers to conversation as rhetorical in *De Officiis*, and that he also describes conversation as the only necessary motivation and the greatest reward for civilization, it is clear that language and rhetoric are very much present at the founding of civilization. On the other hand, *De Oratore* is not only concerned with eloquence and rhetoric, but also explores the duties of the orator. The godlike power of the orator is not only balanced by his responsibility, but is a product of it. The strength of both accounts is in that neither end in the past, but both put forward theories for how civilization should be maintained. In *De Oratore*, humans are not led by instinct, but convinced by the discovered powers of language, persuasion and teaching. Their fellowship is not inevitable, but a demonstration of the power of persuasion to

create a wholly new reality. This is the version that gives the most creative power to humanity. In *De Officiis*, human beings are led by instinct to a fellowship, in life and in speech. The strength of this version is that everyone plays an equal part in the founding of society, rather than being convinced by a founder-orator. Again, the most pertinent point here is not in guessing at the founding of civilization, but in telling a story that encourages a particular type of ongoing action.

Although the letter itself is not a dialogue, in it Cicero returns again and again to the importance of conversation. Cicero divides speech into two types: “vehement speech” or oratory and “common talk” or conversation:

And because the power of speeche is greate, and the same is in two sortes: the one of vehement speche, the other of common talk: let the vehement speche serve for pleadings in judgements, orations in assemblies, and debating in the Senatehouse: let talke be used in companies, in disputations, in meetings of familiars: and let it also be at feastinges. Of vehement speche the Rhetoricians have rules, of talke none at all: notwithstanding I wotte not, wheter such also may be. Howbeit for their studies, that wil lerne, ther be teachers founde: but none ther be, that studie this: with the route of Rhetoricians all places be replenished. Neverthelesse the same preceptes which be of wordes, and sentences, shall appertein to talk. (100, 1.37.132)⁵

He differentiates between the two by physical location and occasion: the domain of oratory is the assemblies and the Senate house, while the domain of

⁵For longer quotations from Grimald’s translation of *De Officiis*, I have also included the standard citation from the Miller translation as well.

conversation is disputations, meetings of familiars and feasts. According to Cicero, there is no source for rules on conversation, but he scatters his own throughout the text. This preoccupation with conversation is vital to our understanding of early modern dialogue, because in Europe, *De Officiis* was one of the most popular classical texts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In fact, Cicero refers claims that “the Socratians moste excell” at “familiar talke” (102). Michele Kennerly notes that by calling Socratic dialogues talk, Cicero “endows philosopher talk with casual . . . connotations and steers clear of specialist associations” (127). By connecting familiar talk and Socratic dialogue, Cicero also implies a connection between conversation and his own dialogues. It may bring a casual quality to dialogue, but it also implies that conversation be more formal. Although Cicero admits that there are no rules for conversation, he claims that the rules of oratory also apply to conversation: “Neverthelesse the same preceptes, which be of wordes, and sentences, shall appertein to talk” (100). Cicero lays out rules for conversation, focusing first on the physical sound of the voice, “clere and sweet”(100), then the tone of the conversation, “gentle.” He insists that “nor let a man keepe out other, as though he wer entered into his own possession” (101). That is, one cannot shut another out of conversation. Notably, Cicero gives specific topics for conversation: “Householde maters, or of the commonweale, or of lerning, and teaching artes” (101). He gives these rules, but does not identify a purpose for conversation. Later, he suggests that conversation may persuade many if it is made public, but in this passage, he does not suggest a public dimension. The

section falls under the virtue of decorum, and many of these rules address a person's conduct and persona. For Cicero, there is an element of performance to every aspect of life, and yet conversation is more than that. He suggests throughout the letter that it is one of life's sweetest pleasures, and one of the motivations for developing and maintaining society. For Cicero, conversation is complex nexus of purposes: it provides an opportunity for decorum and the display of one's persona, it brings pleasure, it is an opportunity to learn and it may also have a public dimension. In *De Officiis*, it is the first and the primary kind of speech.

In *De Officiis*, conversation is part of the creation of community, but where does oratory enter? Not only is the civilizing force of *De Oratore* buried in *De Officiis*, when it is mentioned, eloquence is not a grand thing, not a creative force, but a tool to keep people in check. Crassus credits eloquence with two crucial moments in the foundation of civilization: it gathers scattered humanity, and is responsible for the development of laws. As we've seen, in *De Officiis*, reason and talk are both responsible for the formation of communities. In Book II, Cicero credits "the assemble of men," not eloquence with developing "ordinaunces," "customs," "an indifferent setting oute of law" and "a sure rule to live after" (117). Yet, even here eloquence and oratory have yet to be mentioned. Persuasion is introduced long before oratory. Because men both hurt and help one another, Cicero says a particular "propertie of vertue" is "to winne mennes heartes to her, and binde them to her use" (118). Essentially, virtue is persuasive. It is "the wisdom, and vertue of excellente

menne . . . who can stir mennes good wills,” to “bee preste, and readie to the aduancement of our estate” (118). In this passage, Cicero gives no mechanism other than virtue itself for persuasion.

In *De Officiis* Cicero stresses that the most important moments of speech are with personal friends, for the orator as well as any other man. He begins by stressing the importance of friendship: “Let us therefore be certain: as the thing, which is bothe principall, and most necessarie: to haue faithfull familiarities of frendes, louing vs, and hyelie esteeming our vertues” (123). For “euerie trade, and order of life requireth the aydes of men: and chieffie that ye haue somme, with whom you may debate in familiar talk” (126). Every man requires friends and conversation while “not all perchaunce do stande in like neede of honour, and glorie, and citiezens good will” (123). We are again reminded that the intimacies of friendship, with conversation first among them, outrank the ability to win public respect. In *De Oratore*, Crassus sets up a hierarchy with the orator at the top because he outdoes other men in the most human of skills – speaking. For the public man, however, honor and glory are necessary, and they depend on winning favor, trust, and admiration. Yet, “if we must speake it plainlie . . . as these be gotten at the handes of euerie sere man, by the same meanes in a maner they be obtained of the multitude” (123). Honor and glory are, if not an extension of friendship, obtained in the same ways.

Unlike in *De Oratore*, glory and personal gain are not central motivating forces in *De Officiis*. There are several possible reasons for this: Cicero may

follow Panaetius on this; he may not think an emphasis on glory and power would be relevant or productive for his son; or perhaps Cicero felt they were less central to a treatise on morality. A.A. Long gives a historical explanation for this shift in emphasis:

The tensions in [*De Officiis*] at its theoretical level (especially on the value to be assigned to glory) reflect contentious issues of which Cicero was acutely aware for several reasons. As the ambitious Roman that he was, he could not discount the value of glory to himself and the dominant role of glory in Roman ideology. Yet, at the same time, he had come to believe that glory, instead of being earned by actions benefitting the state, was the fair-sounding pretext for the self-aggrandizement of those who were destroying the Republic. He also saw that passion for power manifested by glory, was frequently linked to acquisitiveness for resources which could put people's property rights at risk. (215)

Cicero set *De Oratore* in the halcyon days of the Roman republic. *De Officiis* has no such remove from the time in which it was written. It was also written ten years later, and Cicero was in exile. It is possible these historical features also play in the differences in the status of glory and personal gain in the two texts.

As Long observes, "Glory now enters the discussion, as a tail-piece to the universal need for friends. Cicero presents it as a subordinate value, not essential or useful per se, as friends are, but instrumentally useful in two ways. First, it is helpful as a means of acquiring friends; secondly, it is enormously helpful in conducting affairs of state" (229). Eloquence is only mentioned when

Cicero turns to discuss not how to be virtuous, but how to seem so: “But to the ende that soone we may seem such maner men, as we be: although the greatest effect is even in this pointe, that wee be such, as we wolde be counted” (128). Cicero acknowledges the gap between being and seeming, and insists that those who want to win honor and glory must first and foremost work to be virtuous, but must also take care to seem virtuous. However, eloquence is only one of four paths a man could take to seem virtuous. He could also have a successful military career, demonstrate wit and reason, or be associated with an honorable man.

So, eloquence does not form society, and does not feature in the discussion of how a man can persuade others to do his will. Cicero only discusses eloquence when he raises the topic of what a man can do to appear glorious. No mention of eloquence is made in the discussion of how communities form, or even of how laws and civic rights developed. When Cicero discusses the importance of persuasion in communities, it is a life of virtue, rather than the skill of eloquence, that first persuades men. It is only when Cicero addresses what he admits as a minor point of how to seem to be the virtuous man one is, that eloquence and oratory enter at all. And even here, the stage must be shared with conversation. For while

it is no doute, but the vehemence of speche may do moste, and hathe the greater furderance to glorie. For that is the thing, which we do call eloquence: but yet it is hard to tell, how much a gentelnes, and familiarnes of speche winneth menes mindes. Ther be letters abrode . . . in which thei giue rules: that with gentle

speche they allure the hertes of the multitude, to owe theyr good will: and that they please their soldiers by speaking to them with faire wordes.(129; 2.14.48)

Even here, when Cicero finally turns to oratory's purpose, he can't help but ponder whether personal communication made public may also win the "hertes of the multitude." Surprisingly, Cicero prefers private conversation over public speech in *De Officiis*. There may be the odd passage or two that defends the nobility of oratory, but it has no sustained moment. Oratory in *De Officiis* never rises above a tool for gaining glory.

As we have seen, *De Oratore* begins by heralding the achievements of the extraordinary man, the perfect orator on whom all of society depends. Daniel Javitch argues that "the ideal of the eloquent man fashioned in Cicero's book came close to representing the exemplary citizen that humanist education sought to produce" (23). But Cicero himself questions this perfection. In *De Oratore*, Antonius argues for a more practical and limited conception of the orator, and Crassus gives a little, admitting his standards are unattainable. *De Officiis* moves further away from the standard of perfection and, at several moments in the text, stresses the imperfection of the community's members. But the imperfection of *De Officiis* is not an exact opposite of the perfection of *De Oratore*. In *De Officiis*, Cicero emphasizes the natural limits of human beings, while the perfection in *De Oratore* is not natural, but achieved through learning and practice. So they are not opposites, or even really contradictory, but again, the two texts emphasize different mechanisms for maintaining and

developing society. The perfect man is sought after in *De Oratore* and dismissed as irrelevant in *De Officiis*. Instead, in *De Officiis* the community approaches perfection, rather than its individual members. In fact, while the virtue of those in fellowship is important, their ability as statesmen does not feature in Cicero's initial description. In *De Officiis*, it is often people's weaknesses that bring them together, and deepen the bonds of community. In *De Oratore*, the power and perfection of the exceptional man leads the masses into civilized society.

In *De Officiis* Cicero conjures images of the perfect man only to reject him as impossible or superfluous. Cicero's retelling of the myth of Hercules emphasizes the impossibility of obtaining perfection. There is no direct parallel of this myth in *De Oratore*, but while Cicero in *De Officiis* stresses the incomplete knowledge of the individual and his very circumscribed abilities, Crassus in *De Oratore* refers to the almost infinite knowledge and power of the perfect orator. The myth is often misread, and Hercules is mistaken for a stand-in for young men faced with difficult decisions that will effect the course of their lives. But Cicero offers this tale to show that ordinary men lack the Herculean power to see an objective truth, and must instead depend on the potentially fallible knowledge of others. In his retelling, Cicero establishes a complex relationship between an objective, external truth, and the probable truths that people can (temporarily) agree upon through public deliberation. He never quite dismisses the idea of objective truth, but he denies that human beings have access to it, and instead offers public deliberation as the best way

of arriving at probabilities.

Although Cicero says that he bases the story of Hercules at the Crossroads on the Prodicus version recorded by Xenophon, he diverges in important ways that are necessary for Cicero's rejection of Hercules. Let's look at Xenophon's account of Prodicus first. Virtue and vice are personified as women who begin making their arguments before they open their mouths. The two dress and move in ways that we still today recognize as depictions of the two opposites. When they speak, vice offers Heracles every sensual pleasure, and virtue offers him honor, but stresses that such a road requires discipline, hard work, and sacrifice. When vice pipes up to point out that her road is easy and pleasurable, virtue turns on her and calls Vice a "hussy" and then proceeds to say that vice's pleasures are hollow because they precede desire. Xenophon leaves Heracles here, between the personifications of virtue and vice, poised, we may believe, on the brink of decision (Sprague 89-90). Xenophon's Socrates tells us that Prodicus delivered the Choice of Heracles to large audiences, and so we find in it nested rhetorical situations with Heracles the arbiter and the oratorical female personifications at its heart. It is so oratorical, in fact that, David Sansone argues that the version in Xenophon is an almost verbatim duplicate of a speech Prodicus intended as "an advertisement for [his] more advanced and extensive teaching, displaying Prodicus' command of language but withholding detailed explanations" (140). This is a rhetorically significant exchange: these personifications are endowed with the bodies of women and the persuasive skills of Prodicus, a consummate orator perhaps explicitly ad-

vertising his abilities. On the face of it, we may expect Cicero to embrace this display of oratorical feats, and the attention to the moment of judgment, but instead Cicero offers a very different account of Hercules at the Crossroads, despite his acknowledgement of Xenophon's version of Prodicus as a source.

According to Cicero, "that Hercules . . . as soone as he waxed wheyberded, which time is graunted of nature, to chose, what waie of liuing eche man will enter: went for the into desert: and there sitting, much, and a longe while douted with himself, when he behelde twoo waies, the one of pleasure, the other of vertue: whether of them it wer better to enter" (95). Cicero's version, however, removes oratory and persuasion from Hercules' choice. One might think this is a matter of expediency. After all, as H.V. Canter tells us, Cicero only offers brief accounts of myths in his writing, to illustrate rather than to embellish (41). There are no women, no speeches, no personifications at all. Instead, Hercules sits down alone and two ways appear before him, the virtuous and the pleasurable. Dialogues of personification continue from Greek times through the Renaissance, but Cicero makes a deliberate break from them – for Cicero only people, who are fallible and have motivations rooted in context, ever get to speak. Cicero dismisses Hercules because there is no unmediated access to truth for any person. Virtue and pleasure do not speak because argument, conversation and oratory are the domain of human beings. After concluding his brief story about Hercules, Cicero reminds us that "this might perauenture happen to Hercules, that was borne of Iupiters seede: but not so to vs" (95). Strikingly, Cicero sets the lone thinker up as the

image of vice in *De Officiis*. The version in Xenophon is too close to what all young men must do, that is, weigh the merits of contradictory arguments others have made persuasively. Rather than repeating this version, Cicero offers us the opposite. Any conversation between abstractions claims an access to an objective truth that Cicero does not believe human beings have. Hercules has access to this direct truth, but, for Cicero, that is not because he is a superior judge over a debate between abstractions allegorized as women.

In the discussion that follows the tale of Hercules, Cicero stresses how important it is that young men consider the advice of those around them. It is in this personal moment that Cicero offers a version of arguing both sides of an issue:

But as other, who do say, somme things be certein, somme uncertain: so we, dissenting from them, do saie again, somme things be provable, some unprouable. What is ther then, that should let me to folow those thins which to me doo seeme provable? . . . But by our men ther is disputing against all things: bicause thissame thing, that is provable, can not shine forthe: except ther should bee a conference of reasons expressed upon bothe sides.(114; 2.2.8).

This is the crux of *disputatio de utramque partem*: alone, one cannot find truth, and it is unwise to unquestioningly accept another's conclusions as truth, but as a community, through constant questioning, people may achieve the best approximation of probable truth.

The story of Hercules illustrates not only that truth can only be accessed through language and debate, but that people, particularly young peo-

ple, must depend on the guidance of others, especially parents and public opinion. As Theodore Reff points out, “Cicero cites the example of Hercules in a discussion of the ways one chooses a career – a discourse in which the alternatives of parental influence and natural ability are clearly contrasted” (36) Hercules is held up as an unachievable model of the lone thinker, separate from the voices of others. It ultimately a story about inherent human fallibility and inability of people to know for certain. The inherent fallibility necessitates not only dependence on others, but that the decisions we make remain contingent. However, Cicero insists that community is not merely a product of people’s needs, but also of the joy they take in talking with one another. In a sense, Cicero transforms this personal weakness into a communal strength.

Cicero raises another version of the perfect man in order to argue that perfection would change nothing.

Neither is it true, which is sayd of somme: that this common knott, and felouship is hadde emong men, even for necessite of life: bicause withoute other, we might not gett, and bring to passe those thinges, that nature dooth desire: and that, if all thinges wer fownde vs, even by the grace of god (as they saie) which appertein to food, and furniture of life: then would everie one of a good witt, all bysinesse laide aside, settle himself holly in knowledge, and science. But that is not so. For he woulde both flee solitarinesse, and choose a companion of studie: bothe teache, and lerne: bothe heare, and speake. Wherefore all dutie, which availeth to mainteine neybourhod, and felouship of men, is to be preferred above that dutie, which consisteth in knowledge, and science. (109-110; 1.44.158)

We know from the *De Officiis* creation of civilization story that community helps men meet their basic needs, for themselves and their families, but here we learn that even if people were perfect and society didn't need to fulfill basic needs, they would still gather together, because the desire for fellowship does not come only from weakness, but from the desire to be in conversation. This elevates conversation as the component of civilization that even a world of perfect people would desire. Fellowship has at its core an aspect that is already perfect, and that needs no refinement. In contrast, in *De Officiis*, glory, along with its tools, including oratory, are only necessary because society is flawed and men may harm one another. By this logic, if speech is the most human quality, conversation is its pinnacle.

In Cicero's brief description of a society of people without need, there is no place for the orator. Unlike in *De Oratore*, the moral man here, the *vir perfectus*, is not necessarily the *vir orator*. Cicero speaks first to the private citizen who is intimately involved in his community, without having the glory of an orator or a commander. In fact, Cicero stresses that the most important qualities of a great man are the ones he shares with every man, and that all men need friendship and conversation, regardless of their careers. In both *De Oratore* and *De Officiis*, a good reputation is equated with being a moral person, but in *De Oratore*, glory is equated with being a better person, whereas in *De Officiis* glory serves a function, but does not raise the public man above the private.

Unlike the first two books of *De Officiis*, Cicero does not translate and

modify the third book from Panaetius's original text, but he writes it himself. In his introduction to the third book, Cicero tells us that although Panaetius lays out a plan for the third book in which he will explain how to handle the seeming conflict between the expedient and the honest, he never completes the task, despite living for 30 years after the first two books are finished. Although Cicero rejects the explanation that the treatise was finished after the first two books, he does raise the question of whether Panaetius should have included the relationship between the expedient and the honest in his original plan, given that stoics see the two as inseparable. Cicero agrees that the two are ultimately inseparable, but adds that this is only apparent to the wise man. For everyone else, it is difficult to distinguish expediency and the appearance of expediency.

The Stoicks then say, that these duties, wherupon in these booke we treat, be (as who saith) certain second sorts of honestie: not proper onelie to the wise, but common also to all maner of men. Therefore all be allured with these in whome ther is a forwardnesse of vertue. And when the two Decii, or the two Scipioes be vouched for manlie men: or els when Fabritius, or Aristides be alledged as just: neither of them for manlinesse, nor of these for justice the example is brought, as of perfite wisemen. For none of these in such sort is wise, as in this place we will have a wisemanne taken. (151-152; III.iv.15-16).

That is, the whole discussion of moral philosophy contained in Cicero's letter is not about the perfect honesty of the wise, but about "semblaunces of honestie" and "meane duties . . . which manie attein both by goodnesse of witte, and

by going forward in learning” (151). Given that Cicero has already told us that only the children of gods have direct access to truth, the honesty of the wiseman appears to be equally unattainable. The “semblances of honestie” are not tricks or failures, but the best approximations that anyone who is fully human can make. Cicero goes on to say that even the exemplary men fall short of perfect virtue. Having already dismissed Herculean perfection as unobtainable, he argues that imperfect honesty is the only option for human beings.

Up until now, we have looked at moments of discrepancy between *De Officiis* and *De Oratore*. First, *De Oratore* privileges oratory over conversation, while in *De Officiis* conversation begins and maintains civilization. And second, unlike *De Oratore*, *De Officiis* never holds up a perfect man as a model for virtue, but instead almost makes a virtue of men’s faults. Next, though, we will turn to an area of overlap – decorum. In English translations of *De Officiis*, the word is variously translated, from “propriety” (Miller) to “comeliness” (Grimald). While obviously a rhetorical principle with a public dimension, in *De Officiis*, Cicero emphasizes its private function: “Let our standing, going, sitting, lyeng, chere, yies, and mouing of handes keepe that-same comlynesse? (98). In *De Oratore*, Cicero first brings an actor’s awareness of performance to the stage of an orator, and in *De Officiis* he takes it one step further, bringing the skills of an actor to everyday interactions. He asks “Shal a player then see this in the stage, that a wiseman shall not see in his life?” (93). It is this description of people as always performing that makes

John Dugan declare *De Officiis* “the earliest etiquette primer in the European tradition” (5). While this is a moment of overlap between the two texts rather than difference, in *De Officiis*, Cicero has once again applied the standards of oratory to the everyday. So much so that he compares one’s life to a speech: “as in an oration well buylded, so in mannes life all things be accordaunt, and agreeeable together” (104). There is a certain beauty to the notion that the art an orator creates in a speech, every man creates in his life, but this implies an immense amount of self-control, and Cicero very clearly links the two in his description of decorum.

In his description of the last branch of virtue, Cicero puts forward a theory of personhood that argues each individual is four people: the person everyone shares in common, the individual character, the person given by fortune, and the person each man makes himself. Dugan argues that this “schematic model of personhood . . . parallels the assumption within rhetorical theory and oratorical practice that one could deliberately fashion a self” (5). And very explicitly, from his comparisons of life to speeches and the wise man to the actor, Cicero says exactly that: people may, to a certain extent and with the help of their community, fashion themselves. Cicero argues that virtuous action differs from person to person, not only because it must fit one’s character, but also because it must fit one’s stage of life and one’s position. By this standard, actions are not always right or wrong, but the appropriate action is contingent upon context. Here, Cicero fits in a section on choosing one’s career, which may have had special relevance to his son. He continues

on to discuss decorum, both in “moouings of the bodies” and “motions of the minde” (88). Cicero begins by discreetly touching on bodily functions, then moving on to the intelligence and appetites of minds, at which point he turns to the rules of talk, to which we will return, but Cicero does not stop here. Instead, he continues with a guide to finding the appropriate house, “for a mannes honour must be set out by his howse” (103). Finally, he concludes his whirlwind tour of the offices of self-control and propriety with a return to finding the appropriate career. Lest we think that Cicero has taken a few wrong turns, and sent us into the blind corners of house-buying and bodily functions to no avail, he reminds us that

As in instrumentes sounding by strings, or blast, though never so litle they jarre, yet that of a conning man is wonte to be fownde: so must we live in this life that nothing chaunce to jarre: yea and so much the more, as the concorde of deedes is greater, and better, than of tunes. Wherfor as in instrumentes musicians eares doo feele even the leste discord: so, if we wil be sharp, and quick judges, and markers of faultes: we shall understand oftentimes greate thinges by small. (105; 1.40.145)

According to Cicero, even the small matters of decorum are important, because they reveal larger issues. He offers a theory of morality that can be rewritten in terms of self-control and appearance. This simile, however, compares the perception of moral judgment to a musician hearing an untuned string. The musician does not know the string is untuned because of rules, but because it jars. Judging another person’s propriety is likewise just as instinctive.

Throughout Book I of *De Officiis*, Cicero returns again and again to the rewards of true friendship, which he describes as

the necessarie aides of life bee due to them chieflie, whome I spake of before: but conversation, and commonnesse of table, counselinges, communications, exhortations, commefortinges, yea and chydinges otherwhile amonge frendes bee moste used: and that is the pleasauntest frendship, which likenesse of conditions hath yoked in one. (73; 1.17.58)

One imagines that these equally yoked friends do not need a set of rules for conversation, but rather that the rules of conversation are devised to mimic true friendship as much as possible. Remember, Cicero reveals in his description of oratory that conversation, when observed by others, may persuade the multitude. Cicero has moved from the common table of friendship to its imitation in conversation and finally to an act that may be public.

In the fifteenth century, the complete *De Oratore* was rediscovered, and it became a central model for Renaissance humanism. *De Officiis*, on the other hand, remained popular throughout the Middle Ages, and it does not usually receive fanfare for its role in the Renaissance. Despite this, the text remained a cornerstone in the early modern period. Like *De Oratore*, it was taught in the classroom, and it outstripped the dialogue in publication and translation. *De Officiis* does not capture the zeitgeist of the age in the same way as the Ciceronian dialogue, but we ignore it to our detriment. Although not a dialogue itself, it elevates dialogue to the same status as oratory, if not above it, and it recasts aspects of oratory, from speechmaking to decorum, into

tools for virtuously living a less public life. It emphasizes the contributions of the ordinary citizen over that of the orator, and stresses that it is personal conversation that not only makes communal life possible, but life worth living.

Like *De Oratore*, *De Officiis* begins with a creation of civilization story, but it features no orator to persuade the masses. Instead, all men are drawn together, by reason and by instinct. Although we are often reminded that the story in *De Oratore* is a retelling of the Isocratean myth, it differs from the original in striking ways, and *De Officiis* includes a discussion of some of the kinds of speech the dialogue ignores. These myths are important because they are implicitly arguments about the nature of humanity and civilization. In *De Oratore*, it is the extraordinary man who maintains society, in *De Officiis* it is the ordinary one.

More than that, *De Oratore* centers on a description of the perfect orator, while *De Officiis* eschews perfection and again elevates the ordinary man. We see this several times in the text, but perhaps most clearly in Cicero's retelling of the story of Hercules at the Crossroads. Cicero argues that only the son of a god could have the paths of virtue and vice appear before him. Ordinary young men, says Cicero, must rely on their own judgment and the wisdom of their parents and of people generally.

Cicero describes *in utramque partem* in both *De Oratore* and *De Officiis*, but while we see it practiced among elite orators in *De Oratore*, in *De Officiis* the case is made that every member of society, no matter what occupation or status, should participate. *De Officiis* does not only elevate the

average citizen, it also elevates everyday conversation and actions. According to Cicero's letter, these all create and maintain society.

While some Renaissance accounts characterize the founding orator as a powerful and coercive ruler, these versions depend on particulate reading and take Crassus' origin story out of the context of the dialogue. In the era when Ciceronian dialogue and *in utramque partem* both flourished, there is also significant evidence that many Renaissance readers had a more holistic understanding of *De Oratore*. Not only does the dialogue conceptualize a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between orator and audience, it also offers the performance of *in utramque partem* and conversation. We can add to that the explicit discussion of conversation in *De Officiis*. This discussion holds conversation up as one of the reasons for civilization, and therefore, a reward for the individual, but one of the primary cohesive powers of society. It opens conversation up to every man, and makes it the site of rhetoric that is available to everyone. The two texts taken together make the case for a different category of rhetoric – the rhetoric of common talk.

Chapter 3

Discursive Space in *The Shepheardes Calender*

In the last chapter, I re-examined the Renaissance reception of the mythic Ciceronian and Isocratean pastoral origins of rhetoric and society. While previous accounts have looked to oratory as the primary form of rhetoric, I reconstruct a narrative of rhetoric, present in the Renaissance, that emphasizes conversation as a central component of rhetoric. In this chapter, I look at a specific Renaissance collection of pastoral eclogues, Edmund Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender*. Recent scholarship on Spenser's eclogues has foregrounded the importance of Ciceronian dialogue in the formation of a horizontally-oriented discursive space within the *Calender*. This scholarship counters previous characterizations of Spenser's work that emphasize self-advancement or his Platonic influences.¹ In this chapter, I build on the advances of the scholarship that locates Ciceronian influence in the *Calender*, but I also argue that the generic features of pastoral eclogues are integral compo-

¹Louis Montrose is central to the depiction of self-advancement in the *Calender* specifically and pastoral poetry generally. See for example, *Of Gentlemen and Shepherds* and *Spenser and the Elizabethan Political Imaginary*. For evidence of Spenser's association with neoplatonism, see Boris, Quitslund and Kaske's introduction to the special Issue of *Spenser Studies* on Neoplatonism.

nents of the new space Spenser creates. As I will explore below, there is often an implicit narrative that Spenser brings Ciceronian dialogue to the pastoral eclogue to create a more egalitarian discursive space. However, Spenser's discursive space also depends on the features of the pastoral eclogue to move the focus of Elizabethan poetry from the court to the country, and to create a space where shepherds can explicitly criticize the queen. The discursive space of the *Calender* also allows for a broad range of arguments, from those that appeal to reason, to those that appeal almost exclusively to emotion. This space is a product of combining the features of pastoral eclogues and Ciceronian dialogue. Spenser's eclogues take advantage not only on the overlap of the two genres, but also on the broader space they create when combined. Essentially, scholars who locate Ciceronian aspects in Spenser's pastoral eclogues tell us what Ciceronian dialogue brings to the pastoral eclogue. The inverse of that observation seems absurd: the *Calender* is a collection of eclogues, so attention is rarely paid to how the text deploys the features of that genre. However, if we do ask what contribution pastoral eclogues make to the dialogue of the *Calender*, the two questions together map out a relationship between pastoral eclogues and Ciceronian dialogue.

The Shepheardes Calender was one of the most popular volumes of sixteenth century poetry, and the most read (or at least, most published) of Spenser's influential oeuvre. The *Calender* is pastoral dialogue, of course, and the first text to explicitly connect pastoral eclogues and Ciceronian dialogues since the two forms diverged in the first century B.C.E. Edmund Spenser pub-

lished *The Shepheardes Calender* anonymously in 1579, signing himself only as Immeritô, a moniker that means “he who is unworthy.” It is a collection of twelve eclogues, and, unlike other eclogue collections, whose order is often unknown or incidental, this collection has an eclogue for each month of the year, beginning with January.² Only about half the *Calender* is poetry, though, due to the substantial contributions of its commentator, E.K. Unlike other commentaries that are added to a work later, E.K.’s was published in the first edition of the *Calender*, and has always been considered integral to the text. Each month is laid out in the same way, beginning with a small woodcut scene related to the eclogue, then a short prose narrative written by E.K. Next is the poem itself, followed by an “Embleme” or saying for each of the shepherds in the eclogue. After the emblem there are glosses by E.K. These glosses are roughly as long as the poetry itself. While the poetry is typeset in black letter, the commentary is in roman typeface, so the two look very distinct.³ Although the authorship of E.K. is unknown, it has become increasingly common to assume that Spenser himself wrote the commentary.

Before we turn to the poetry itself, I want to trace a new vein in the scholarship of *The Shepheardes Calender* that rejects the emphasis on self-advancement and the power relations of the court and instead examines the *Calender* as a text that promotes balances self-advancement with concern for the community. Often, the practitioners of these approaches have defined

²Syrithé Pugh argues that this calendrical structure is Ovidian.

³See LaBreche for a discussion of the significance of how the *Calender* is typeset.

themselves against new historicism, rather than as a new and developing perspective that overlaps with other research. Yet, one can find many similarities between their scholarship. For example, Cicero is central to this re-conception for E. Armstrong, Rebecca Helfer, Jennifer Richards and Ben LaBreche. None of the authors are concerned primarily with the court, but instead focus on relationships that, although there may be a degree of vertical, hierarchical orientation, are primarily concerned with reciprocal, horizontal relationships. Although there are only a handful of scholars to consider, I want to divide them based on whether they primarily consider the relationships internal to the poetry, such as Richards, Helfer and LaBreche on the one hand or, on the other, they consider relationships between the poetry itself and its external reception, from its simultaneous commentator, E.K., to the Spenserian poets who wrote decades later. Critics who focus on the relationship between poetry and reception include Armstrong, James Kearney, Richard McCabe and Michelle O'Callaghan.

In *In Rhetoric and Courtliness in Early Modern Literature*, Richards takes seriously the altruistic claims of characters and their authors to do what is best for the community. She positions herself against new historicists who have read texts as only about power relations in the court. However, she also argues that Spenser and his contemporaries did not advocate naive altruism, but a kind of friendly rivalry that accepts self-interest as a necessary component. She argues that, in the *Calender*, Spenser follows the friendship model from Cicero's *De Amicitia*. According to Richards, Spenser replaces hierarchi-

cal relationships, such as that between teacher and student, elder and youth, or patron and poet, with the reciprocity of a model based on *amicitia*. She points to moments in the eclogues when vertical hierarchical expectations are overturned, and the shepherd of lower rank contradicts or disagrees with his (by some measure) superior. Richards also reminds us of how famously hard it is to find the voice of authority in the *Calender*. She argues that Spenser means for the work to appear to be a collaboration that allows for productive rivalry and criticism, even when they subvert the social hierarchies. According to Richards, Spenser bases this more egalitarian model of interaction on Ciceronian *amicitia*.

Like Richards, in “Patronage, Friendship, and Sincerity in Bacon and Spenser,” LaBreche also finds a Ciceronian model of friendship in the relationships of the *Calender*. He argues that scholarship since the 1980s has focused too exclusively on the self-advancement and competition in patron-client relationships, to the detriment of noticing the cooperation necessary for these relationships to be successful. LaBreche re-examines the nature of clients’ praise, which, although sometimes fitting its description as dissembling and ambiguous, also needed to be convincingly sincere. Especially important, as the title suggests, is the role that friendship, particularly between equals, played for early modern gentlemen. LaBreche suggests that while it is necessary to avoid a naive reading of such friendships, it is equally detrimental to dismiss them as solely self-serving. LaBreche details the uses of friendship, particularly in obtaining patronage, and reads moments of its representation in the *Calender*,

giving the poem a surprising new focus. Friends can reflect one's inner state, recommend one for patronage, and show that they trust one's sincerity. All of this is demonstrated by friendships in the *Calender*, whether it is Hobbinol and Colin Clout, or Harvey and Spenser, or E.K. and Immeritô. LaBreche reads Thenot's tale in Februarie as a demonstration of what evils befall when a gentleman allies himself with the master, rather than another gentleman. LaBreche points out that while Colin alone breaks his pipe in Januarye, in November he calls for all to follow suit, making the action collective. Finally, LaBreche rereads the final scene in December, not as failure and death, but as a pose of prostration, and a renewed dedication to the pursuit of patronage through friendship. Also important to the argument is that LaBreche reads the idealized style of courtly love found within the poem as a display of praise that can be read and evaluated by potential patrons and are therefore objects of praise, one step removed because they are not addressed directly. LaBreche points out Spenser directly addresses the concern of insincerity in both court love poetry *Amoretti* 18 and a client's praise of his patron (*Mother Hubbard's Tale*). LaBreche sees the indirectness, playfulness and satire of the poem as both raising and answering questions of insincerity.

While Richards and LaBreche examine models of friendship in the *Calender*, Rebecca Helfer begins her argument by locating two conflicting models of authorship at the heart of the *Calender* - Virgil's and Cicero's. She immediately complicates that picture, by showing that Immeritô and E.K. have differing versions of both models of authorship, and so the two models be-

come four and multiply even further in the eyes of the shepherds. According to Helfer, E.K. and the shepherds offer a version of Virgil as a single voice, and claim that Immeritô will imitate his career. However, Spenser, by putting multiple voices with conflicting opinions into conversation, offers a more complex and varied version of Virgil. According to Helfer, Spenser offers an image of the poet that runs counter to the criticism, from E.K. onwards, that has claimed that Spenser successfully imitated the Virgilian career, installing himself as the English Virgil. And while E.K. stresses Cicero's perfect pattern of the orator and poet, Helfer argues that Spenser, rather than finding and imitating a single perfect pattern for the poet, re-enacts the multiplicity of differing opinions offered in *De Oratore* as to what makes the perfect orator. She argues that while in *October*, the shepherds Cuddie and Piers look for the perfect poet and the ideal place for poetry, the woodcut for the month depicts a shepherd, probably Colin, walking toward a crowd of people, drawing attention to the collaborative aspects of the art. Instead, she argues, Spenser looks for immortality in the community's collective remembering, which is the act of having to remember and invent history among the ruins. Helfer contrasts Virgilian permanence with Ciceronian process. She turns to *De Oratore*, to remind us the story of Simonides and the importance Cicero places on memory, and then she retells the account of how Cicero wrote *De Oratore* after being told only the topics of the original conversation, blurring the lines between memory and invention.

In *Ciceronian Sunburn*, Armstrong argues that the *Calender* puts two

opposing approaches to poetry in conversation with each other, through the voices of Immeritô, the poet, and E.K., the commentator. According to Armstrong, E.K. argues that poetry requires learned exegesis to have value. Armstrong establishes that throughout the text, E.K. sets up questionable standards by which he claims Immeritô's poetry should be evaluated, chief among these being the comparison of Spenser to previous poets. According to Armstrong, Immeritô finds the significance of poetry in the act of creating poetic knowledge through the what he calls the "rhetorico-poetic" metaphor. He contrasts this with the poetic metaphor, which relies on a common knowledge between author and reader. Instead, the rhetorico-poetic metaphor turns sensory experience into language. That is, while E.K. argues that the value of poetry is mediated through learned discourse, and must be measured against existing standards, Immeritô presents knowledge creation as the core act of poetry.

Like Armstrong, James Kearney focuses on the interaction of E.K. and Immeritô. In "Reformed Ventriloquism: The Shepheardes Calender and the Craft of Commentary," he contextualizes E.K.'s commentary, not in the usual tradition of commentary on literature, but in early modern debates over the nature of biblical commentary and annotations. Kearney demonstrates Spenser's interest in protestant debates of interpretation by reading the May eclogue as a debate between accommodating elements of the church, and those pushing for reform. In his reading, the May eclogue emphasizes the tensions between different protestant approaches to reading and interpretation. This tension

is also the basis of the July eclogue and is dramatized by E.K.'s claim to authority, while he continually undermines that authority through his commentary. Protestants battled with the paradoxical goals of clearing away the Catholic traditions in order to unearth the bible's true meaning, while also establishing their own glosses and traditions, in order to unite the protestant community in contradistinction to Catholicism. If, as the Protestants believed, the Catholics were wrong for augmenting the word of God, then one way to sidestep the issue of adding layers of interpretation was to claim that the interpretation only clarifies the original text. According to Kearney, the Geneva bible's translator, Tomson, views his and Beza's annotations as translucent, illuminating the text exactly as it was meant to be. In contrast, Erasmus's paraphrases embrace the complex and polysemous nature of any text, particularly the bible, and he provides tools for interpretation rather than interpretation itself. While E.K.'s commentary is not a direct response to this ongoing battle, it does take a stand in this battle of interpretation, leading its readers to a method of reading that is complex and polysemous, where the right answers do not come from any gloss. As Kearney says, "By reducing the 'authorized' gloss from the final word to just another voice in the ongoing process of elucidation and revelation, Spenser creates a pastoral forum in which the many voices, the learned and the rustic, the radical and the traditional, of the Elizabethan Settlement can speak" (141). Lest one think that Spenser has trumpeted the cooperative voice of the shepherds over the academic, authoritative voice of E.K., Kearney reminds us that the shep-

herds are also fallible and often wrong. According to Kearney, Spenser poses the problem of interpretation, from any perspective, rather than offering a solution.

Like Kearney, Richard McCabe finds that the authority of E.K. is deliberately deflated, so that the commentary can be one voice among many, rather than sitting in a position of authority. In “Annotating Anonymity, or Putting a Gloss on *The Shepheardes Calender*,” Richard McCabe situates the criticism of E.K. amongst pastoral literary criticism, beginning with Servius’s commentary on Virgil and continuing to its most recent Renaissance antecedents. He draws attention to the typography of the *Calender*, which uses black letter for the poetry and roman typeface for the commentary. According to McCabe, the choice to display the glosses as endnotes rather than footnotes means that visually, the text alternates between black-letter verse and roman typeface prose, but it is not apparent which is the more central material. This alternating, paratactic relationship puts the two halves of the text visually in conversation, rather than subordinating the gloss to the poetry. Yet, by comparing E.K. to Servius, McCabe often demonstrates that his role is not that different from a traditional commentator, writing long after the publication of the work. Ultimately, according to McCabe, E.K. draws attention to the dangerously political messages in the *Calender*, often through vehement denial of their existence. McCabe argues that “The relationship between verse and gloss is often less exegetical than dialogical and there are times (as in *Maye*) when the verse ‘glosses’ the annotation. Very often the effect is not so much

to disclose secrets as to impel the quest for disclosure by arousing the reader's sense of suspicion" (51).

As this short literature review demonstrates, a new reading of the *Calender* is being discovered from multiple perspectives. Collectively, these accounts emphasize the leveling of voices in the *Calender*, from shepherd to commentator, as well as the reciprocity of friendship that is central to the relationships depicted in the text.

Many of these readings take Spenser's authorship of E.K. as a given. I want to consider the broader implications of this kind of reading, and what it means about how we read Ciceronian dialogue generally. The relationship between E.K. and Immeritô is important for our discussion of the formation of discursive space in the *Calender* because scholars like Armstrong and Helfer point to *diputatio in utramque partem* between Immeritô and E.K. as a central model of Ciceronianism in the text. Yet, is this an actual conversation in print, or is Spenser writing both halves? This question is about more than the *Calender*. How we answer it reveals something about our interpretations of Ciceronian dialogue. There is an irony about these readings that emphasize collaboration in the *Calender* and Spenser's creation of a community that challenges hierarchy and puts voices, regardless of education, age or social rank, on an even plateau: these readings depend on and strengthen the depiction of Spenser as in control of every aspect of the *Calender*, from the wood cuts to the glosses. Kearney, for example, gives Spenser credit for making E.K. a voice among many, and yet it is E.K. himself who undermines his own authority. And

although Armstrong never takes on the issue of who wrote E.K.'s commentary, he argues that, "by representing, or exemplifying, current trends in learning, Spenser shows by means of E.K.'s deeply flawed evaluation of Immeritô's verse how the principles on which E.K.'s conception of learning is founded may themselves fail" (41). Here, Armstrong implies that Spenser wrote E.K.'s commentary. The difficulty is that if Spenser is not E.K., then our reading of the commentary changes: it becomes secondary, rather than concomitant and equal. For centuries, however, there was no record of anyone arguing that Spenser wrote the commentary as well as the poetry. While the possibility that E.K. was not written by Spenser creates serious complexities of interpretation, assuming that he authored both the poetry and the commentary also has its problems. For example, does that mean modern-day scholarship has recovered a "truer" reading than was available for centuries? I want to pause to consider the problem of who wrote E.K. and whether or not it needs to be solved. Critics have put E.K.'s authorship at the crux of how we read the *Calender*, and it may also reveal a difference in emphasis between modern readings of Ciceronian dialogue and how Renaissance readers may have encountered the text. One way to sidestep the issues of E.K.'s authorship is to shift our own focus from imagining authorial intent to imagining the text's reception by its contemporary audience.

I argue that if we must assume that Spenser wrote E.K., then we always conceptualize Ciceronian dialogue as happening internally, rather than externally. In contrast, Virginia Cox attributes the popularity of Ciceronian

dialogue in Renaissance Italy to its documentary quality. She argues that the documentary style of dialogue has a “preoccupation with the individual, the concrete, the historically verifiable” (“Renaissance Dialogue” 12). Renaissance Italians, according to Cox, were status-conscious, and wanted to read dialogues between the known and powerful. Cox, of course, brings the concept of a documentary back to the Renaissance, but I want to dwell on the comparison for a moment. A documentary displays the images and voices of people who are presumably unscripted. These images are cut and edited by a director, but, often, the audience ignores the director’s role, and the people on the screen become the presumed authors of the content. Cox places dialogues on a continuum between documentary and fictional, but I want to contrast documentary with the internal dialogue of thought.

There are two ways to imagine Ciceronian dialogue: either as an internal thought process, or as a literal dialogue. In *De Oratore*, Antonius describes the former when he outlines his method for preparing a court case: ‘when [the client] has departed, in my own person and with perfect impartiality I play three characters, myself, my opponent and the arbitrator’ (2.102). That is, in order to prepare for the court case, Antonius imagines the event, playing each part himself. This is an example of *in utramque partem* as a protocol, rather than as a literal conversation. The method of *in utramque partem* is circularly internal and external: Antonius first imagines the court case and next attends the court case, and then imagines his next court case. One assumes that each iteration informs the next. The question then, is whether Ciceronian dialogue

is always an example of the imagined, internal version.

Renaissance texts often encourage a method of reading that is analogous to the documentary, either seriously, or tongue-in-cheek. In the preface of the *Heptameron*, for instance, Parlamente suggests to a group of nobles that they each tell one story a day for ten days. She proposes to collect the stories and make “a present of them when we get back” (69) While many scholars presume this is a fiction, P.A. Chilton, a translator and editor of the text, takes the claims seriously. He argues that “the *Heptameron* was a collective enterprise” and defends this in part by observing the text “represents itself as produced by a group of individuals” (10). In *Arcadia*, Philip Sidney begins the first eclogue with a description of how the shepherds would gather together and compete in singing contests, and then someone would write them down: “then was it their manner ever to have one who should write up the substance of that they said; whose pen, having more leisure than their tongues, might perchance polish a little of the rudeness of an unthought-on song” (“Old Arcadia” 50). Sidney undercuts the documentary quality of his eclogues, casting doubt on whether the high quality of the poems come from the shepherds who sang them, or the scribe who edited them. Of course, no one takes seriously the possibility that the eclogues are a record of shepherds’ songs, but these accounts of how texts were composed, either collaboratively, or as written records of actual events, were popular in the Renaissance. I suggest that they introduce ambiguity, if not to the question of authorship, then to the question of whether the reader encounters an imagined, internal dialogue, or the record

of a historic occasion.

The Ciceronian “dialogue” between E.K. and Immeritô is rare in that it does not claim to be the record of a conversation, but a text authored by two people, seemingly in conversation. This may be as close as the Renaissance gets to a documentary text – E.K. and Immeritô may each write out their part of a dialogue. Penny McCarthy argues that Spenser “likes to deceive in precisely the way that is necessary to prompt us into a belief that he and the literary E.K. are separate people, while leaving an uneasy suspicion that we have just been shown that they are not” (30). McCarthy argues that Spenser was E.K., but also that Spenser’s readers are usually uncertain about the authorship. Renaissance readers were accustomed to texts that claimed to be found, or written by multiple hands, or records of events. It might be, as McCarthy suggests, that they could entertain both possibilities of authorship at the same time, without quite pinpointing who spoke through E.K.

The evidence that Spenser wrote E.K. is internal to the text. It is not decisive, but rests largely on the impossibility of anyone seriously expressing E.K.’s contradictory, wideranging gamut of opinions. In addition, E.K. makes a few mistakes that Spenser repeats in later texts.⁴ Personally, I do not believe that Spenser wrote E.K. beyond a reasonable doubt, but I think it’s the most likely scenario. However, the reception of the *Calender*

⁴Schleiner offers a concise history of the debate on E.K., and is the standard reference. See (405-407 for a summary that includes the mistakes E.K. and Spenser make in common. See McCanles for the first consideration of E.K. as part of the work’s fiction.

and E.K. is much more important, because the poem and its commentary became a model for a collaborative print community. In *The 'shepherds nation'*, Michelle O'Callaghan investigates a print community of the 17th century that was inspired by Spenser. These writers published eclogues that built on the horizontal relationships that Spenser develops in *The Calender* as a means of political expression against the crown. O'Callaghan pinpoints the importance of the perception that the *Calender* was written by multiple hands: "it was Spenser who provided these writers with a model for a print community. E.K.'s notes to the *The Shepherdes Calender* emphasized the communal contexts of literary production . . . E.K.'s commentary on Spenser's eclogues sets up a model of dialogue between author and reader and between fellow writers in which meaning is produced collectively through such acts of collaboration" (11). The advantage of reading the commentary and poetry as the work of two separate hands is that it becomes a model for the collaborative creation of texts. This advantage is more productive than the unification of vision that reading both E.K. and Immeritô as Spenser provides.

My final comment on E.K. is that he is a necessary apparatus for reading the *Calender*. Authors like Armstrong, Kearney and McCabe are correct in their characterization of him as an unreliable commentator, who, through his own commentary, undermines his authority, making him one voice among many in the text. However, Spenser aimed to expand the audience of poetry: he unapologetically publishes his book, rather than seeking patronage first. E.K.'s commentary is necessary in order to make the *Calender* accessible. He

contextualizes the *Calender* in the highly allusive genre of pastoral poetry. Although many of his comments are misleading or unnecessary, most are quite straightforward glosses on the text. The editors of *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, set up a very complicated system of footnotes and footnotes on footnotes for the poem and the commentary: “there are those glosses by E.K. that are accurate and still clear, most of them of single words. In these cases the editor has avoided double annotation by letting the original glosses do the job” (11). The upshot of this is that, by and large, the modern reader still depends on E.K. for much of the necessary explanation.

As we have seen, Spenser deliberately deploys Ciceronian dialogue in pastoral eclogue. When this is pointed out, it is not often viewed in conjunction with how pastoral eclogues figure conversation. Instead, Ciceronian dialogue is seen as rewriting or offering a corrective to the conversations of pastoral eclogues. For example, Jennifer Richards pits Spenser against his immediate pastoral English antecedents, and shows how he rewrites their hierarchy-preserving dialogues in a way that challenges hierarchy, and replaces obedience with a more egalitarian, Ciceronian-inflected friendship. This reading illuminates how Spenser transforms some of his inherited English assumptions about the pastoral, but it leaves unexplored the dialogic or conversational connections between the *Calender* and its English pastoral antecedents. I want to emphasize the central role the pastoral eclogue plays in Spenser’s conception of dialogue. First, Spenser uses the pastoral as a way to make poetry accessible to a broader audience by removing it from a vertical relationship with the

court, in order to create a more horizontally-oriented dialogue. Next, central to the *Calender* is a desire to preserve this community that is built on the exchange of poetry. This attention to sustaining a poetic community a feature of pastoral eclogues. Ciceronian dialogue, in contrast, faces outward: Crassus and Antonius are concerned with how the orator maintains the republic, not how the interlocutor preserves their small community. Finally, Spenser is able to blatantly criticize the queen and the nobility because of the insularity and powerlessness of the shepherds.

In order to better understand how Spenser creates a poetic community that does not center on the court, let us first explore how Richard Tottel publishes poetry for a wide audience, but maintains the court's privileged position. The comparison between Spenser and Tottel is apt because while the publication of Tottel's *Miscellany* in 1557 heralds the beginning of the English literary Renaissance, *The Shepheardes Calender* issues in the English Renaissance's most prolific period of the late 16th century. Tottel's *Miscellany* is a collection of poetry written primarily by courtiers, most famously, Sir Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt. It is the first publication of English poets composing in the continental forms of Renaissance poetry. Tottel publishes the anthology without the permission of the authors, but justifies his actions by arguing, in his playful prefatory remarks to the reader, that it is unfair to hoard examples of English eloquence. He also asks that the learned guide its reception:

If parhapes some mislike the statelnesse of stile remoued from the

rude skil of common earee: I aske help of the learned to defende their learned frendes, the authors of this woork. And I exhort the vnlearned, by reding to learne to bee more skilfull, and to purge that swinelike grossenesse, that maketh the swete maierome not to smell to their delight.

In his preface, Tottel reminds the reader that these poems are imitations of European eloquence that have been written by courtiers. He acknowledges that their style might not readily be appreciated by the “common earee,” but asks the educated to cultivate their appreciation, and blames any ill reception on the readers’ “swinelike grossenesse.” Eloquence is therefore a foreign import that has been anglicized by the court and may be disseminated from that vantage point. The poems’ titles highlight their occasional nature, and further tie them to experiences at court. For example, one is titled, “Complaint that his ladie after she knew of his loue kept her face alway hidden from him” or “Prisoned in windsor, he recounteth his pleasure there passed.” These titles make clear to the reader that the poems relate the experiences of courtiers. So while the poems reveal the activities of the court to a more diverse print audience, they also depict poetry as a uniquely courtly expression, and Tottel argues that the readers must be taught to appreciate it.

While Tottel contrasts the newly anglicized European eloquence of the court with “swinelike grossenesse,” Spenser conjoins these two seeming opposites. This binary pairing privileges foreign over native and educated over untrained. Spenser, on the other hand, melds Virgil and Chaucer under the name

of Tityrus. In his introductory epistle, E.K. gives two reasons for Spenser's archaic language.

And firste of the words to speake, I graunt they be something hard, and of most men unused, yet both English, and also used of most excellent Authors and most famous Poetes. In whom whenas this our Poet hath bene much traveiled and throughly redd, how could it be, (as that worthy Oratour sayde) but that walking in the sonne although for other cause he walked, yet needes he mought be sunburnt; and having the sound of those auncient Poetes still ringing in his eares, he mought needes in singing hit out some of theyr tunes. But whether he useth them by such casualtye and custome, or of set purpose and choyse, as thinking them fittest for such rustically rudenesse of shepherds, eyther for that theyr rough sounde would make his rymes more ragged and rustical, or els because such olde and obsolete wordes are most used of country folke (14).

While Tottel dismissed native and rustic as "swinelike," E.K. argues that archaic language decorously combines learning and rusticity, showing the poet's knowledge of great English poets, but also being the most fitting language for shepherds. In *June*, Colin also defends the use of this language for poetry, "I wote my rymes bene rough, and rudely drest: / The fyttter they, my carefull case to frame" (*June* 77-78). Tottel and Spenser come head-to-head on the meaning of English eloquence. Tottel's eloquence turns away from older English poets and contrasts the court with the people. Spenser's poetry and E.K.'s commentary both define English eloquence as borrowing from continental traditions, but also looking back to English models, and what is authentically English is defined as sounding rustic.

Just like Wyatt and Surrey, Edmund Spenser draws on the poetic forms and genres of continental Europe's Renaissance poetry. However, by publishing in print, without apology, and depicting the lives of shepherds, rather than nobility, he deliberately centers the creation and reception of poetry away from the court, thereby creating a discursive community that is connected to the court but not authorized by it, and a space where subversive speech is permitted. In "Pastoral and the Domain of Lyric in Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*," Paul Alpers argues that Spenser creates this relatively autonomous sphere whole cloth. It is true that Spenser locates English poetry away from the court and in a domestic tradition as well as a European one. However, pastoral eclogues paved the way for his creation of a de-centered discursive community in several important ways. First, poets like Virgil and Mantuan depict poetry as a natural expression of shepherds, rather than as a court-centered form. Second, Virgil sets the precedent for shepherds to discuss political matters. Third, pastoral poetry is always poetry that contains its own audience. This is important because it means the poet can determine how poetry forms and sustains communities that are often not centered on the court.

The features of the pastoral eclogue not only create a space that is at a distance from the court, they also allow for a kind of argument that is based primarily on emotion, rather than reason. To demonstrate this, I will consider the influence of Barnabe Googe's *Eglogs Epytaphes, and Sonettes* on the *Calendar*. Googe's eclogues are the immediate pastoral predecessor of *The Calendar*

and while Richards argues that Spenser overturns its claims of altruism and its model of older shepherds teaching younger ones, Spenser's eclogues draw on Googe's methods of argument, and his weak pastoral narrative to create a space where time and emotion factor into argument.

Googe's poetry lacks the strong structure and complexity of Spenser's and while Spenser interrogates each element of the pastoral, from the poet, to the community, to the structure of the poem, Googe accepts most of the generic conventions without innovation. Often, though, in quiet cases of proficiency like Googe's *Eglogs*, the power of the generic form is most visible. Spenser's Ciceronian and horizontal relational models are held up as his own innovations on the pastoral, in distinction from other pastoral eclogues, particularly English pastoral eclogues. However, arguing on both sides of the issue is a feature of pastoral eclogues, as well as Ciceronian dialogue. Googe's innovation in the eclogue tradition is to unite the poems through a weak narrative structure (Pincombe 236). This is different from his predecessors in that while characters often appear in more than one eclogue, narrative knowledge about interlocutors does not follow them. It is important to distinguish this narrative continuity from plot. The eclogues do not follow a single character or retain interest in that character in order to find out what happens next, but to make an argument. In Googe's case, that argument is about the detrimental effects of unrequited romantic love. The eclogues do not explore themes in the same way as plot-driven literary genres like drama, romance or the novel do. Instead, the narrative surfaces a few times in a genre that is otherwise static.

It is not the primary focus, but a means of making an argument about unrequited love. This narrative continuity between eclogues concerns the forlorn lover, Dametas, who kills himself after expressing his great grief. In the next eclogue, we are briefly told that Tityrus has inherited Dametas' sheep, but in the fourth eclogue, Melibeus tells Palemon of his encounter with Dametas' ghost, who has returned from hell. It is because of this narrative continuity between eclogues that Googe can devote an eclogue to Dametas' unrequited love and suicide, but later question Dametas' decision.

In keeping with the genre of pastoral eclogue, the poet presents emotionally believable cases on both sides of the argument. Googe argues that one has the moral obligation to resist unrequited love. This in itself is exceptional for mid-Tudor literature, but I want to turn the attention to the way he makes the argument. Of the pastoral dialogues I have touched on, Googe's method of argumentation most closely resembles Socrates' method in *Phaedrus*. That is, he makes a case and then retracts it.

In the second eclogue, Dametas, grieving from unrequited love, drowns himself because of his broken heart. The poetry of the eclogue is a monologue he gives to his flock of sheep. This eclogue stands out as one of the two most poetic moments in the text. It stands out as a particularly poetic moment partly because of the refrain, "Dametas nowe must dye" which is repeated throughout the poem until the last line, in which it becomes "Dametas here doth dye."⁵ The poem is an imported set piece on unrequited love, a topic that

⁵My sources for Googe's *Eglogs* were a 16th century edition of the poetry and the scanned

permeates both the pastoral genre and 16th century courtly poems. Inside this eclogue, there is nothing to suggest that Dametas' song not be read as sincere. In the following passage, Dametas argues that he has no other alternatives to death.

What meanst thou thus to linger on? thy life wolde fayne departe,
Alas: the wounde doth fester styll, of cursed Cupids darte.
No salve but this, can helpe thy sore, no thyng can moue her
minde
She hath decreed, that thou shalt dye, no helpe there is to finde.
Nowe syth there is, no other helpe, nor ought but this to trye,
Thou seest her mind: why fearste thou than? Dametas for to dye.
Long hast thou served, & served true, but all alas, in vayne,
For she thy seruyce, nought estemes, but deales the grieve for gayne.

Dametas' insistence that the proper response to unrequited love is death is the usual logic of pastoral poetry. In his introduction to Theocritus' *Idylls* Hunter writes, "The sufferings of Daphnis, who apparently rejected desire and died for it, is the founding myth of bucolic poetry: all Theocritus' bucolic characters seek to match Daphnis' 'heroism', and all fall short, because such rejection (perfection) can indeed only exist in the thought-experiment world of myth? (xv-xvi)." In ordinary pastoral poetry, Dametas would be mourned and praised for his decision. The pastoral world's response would also be internal to the eclogue, as the poetry would either be part of a poetic dialogue, or recited after his death, and the other shepherds would praise his actions immediately.

pages of the book found on EEBO. Because the eclogues are quite short, I have not introduced another system of notation.

However, by isolating Dametas in this monologic eclogue, Googe creates a space between Dametas' death and the response.

Egloga secunda itself does not include the pastoral community's response to the poem, but *Egloga prima* prepares the audience for Googe's idiosyncratic approach to love in the pastoral. In the eclogue, the older Amintas warns the young shepherd Daphnes about love: "Nowe Loue therfore I wyll defyne and what it is declare, which way poore souls it doth entrap and howe it them doth snare." In the eclogue, Amintas pathologizes love, describing it as a contagion. Amyntas explains, "A seruent Humour, (some do iudge) within the Head doth lye, / Whiche yssuyng forth with poysoned beames doth [run] from eye to eye." This is another innovation of Googe's, as shepherds, even the most noble ones, have not until this point possessed scientific knowledge. This scientific perspective on love complicates its usual pastoral perception in two important ways. The first consequence is that love is no longer a noble affliction to be borne heroically, but a disease to be cured. This has a profound effect on the reception of the forlorn shepherd, Dametas. The second consequence is that women may be a little less culpable as the instigators of love. As a genre that had depictions both of men's love for women and love between men at its inception, pastoral eclogues take a variety of stances on the culpability of the beloved, with some texts characterizing them as mutual victims of love, but others depicting women as knowing perpetrators of broken hearts. Following in the footsteps of his Renaissance model, Mantuan's *Adolescentia*, Googe primarily

blames women for men's unrequited love. It is only in this instance, and a surprising turn in *Egloga septima*, when a woman has the opportunity to respond to men's accusations, that this assumption is even questioned.

Between the first and second eclogues, Googe pits the poetry of pastoral love against a scientific explanation of love as a disease. In a sense, he is using the pastoral setting as a space to have a debate between otherwise incommensurable arguments. The only sense in which the arguments are commensurable is rhetorically, in a setting where both arguments are given and then weighed. In the face of a two thousand year old literary tradition of pastoral shepherds who inevitably side with the best presented case, Googe's shepherds eventually decide to that love is destructive and avoidable.

In the third eclogue, Menalcas and Coridon turn to the familiar pastoral *topos* of the city and the country and debate their relative merits. Dametas is only mentioned once, in passing. Coridon tells Menalcas, "A lustie flocke hath Titirus, that him Dametas gave, / Dametas he, that Martir died, whose soule the heauens have." Coridon's response is in line with how the pastoral community would usually respond to a death from unrequited love: he pities Dametas and characterizes him as a martyr. In fact, pastoral elegies about shepherds who died from broken hearts often end in apotheosis. Googe's *Egloga quarta* reverses the usual pastoral assumptions about unrequited lovers in what is one of the most sensationalist eclogues written. In the eclogue, Melibeus recounts how he was visited by the ghost of Dametas and warned of the consequences of dying for unrequited love. Dametas tells Melibeus that "I thought that Deth

shuld me release from paynes and dolefull woe, / But nowe (alas) the trothe is tryed, I fynde it nothyng soe / For looke what Payne & gryefe I felt when I lyved heare afore: / With those I nowe tormented art, and with ten thousand more.” Dametas not only warns against his actions by the display of his suffering, he also cries, “Why had I Reason delt to me? and coulde not Reason use. / Why gave I, Brydle to my wyll? when I myght well refuse.” Unlike the usual depiction of pastoral love as irresistible, Dametas returns from hell knowing that he had the power to resist love. As the eclogue closes, Melibeus reflects on this odd reversal of expectations,

For sure I thought Dametas had, ben placed lyke a Saynte.
 I thought that cruel Charons Boate, had myste of hym her frayght,
 And through his deth, he mounted had to starres and Heauens strayght.
 Howe valiantly dyd he despyse, his lyfe in Bondage ledde?
 And sekyng Deth with courage hye, from Loue and Ladye fledde.

Melibeus reminds the reader within the fiction of pastoral eclogues, Dametas’ death would be seen as courageous, like Daphnis’ death. Melibeus uses almost the same formulation that Hunter does when he describes Daphnis as the shepherd all others wish to be. Googe reverses these expectations, reformulating the love that lies at the heart of pastoral and refiguring it as sinful and cowardly. This, of course, is a protestant Christian argument against suicide. In his first four eclogues, Googe presents three arguments about the nature of pastoral love. The first is that love is a disease that must be cured. The second is a poem that takes the perspective of the pastoral lover who cannot resist his

unrequited love and so dies. Finally, the third is a Christian response to the distinctively classical version of death and apotheosis because of unrequited love. While Dametas' return from the dead is an incontrovertible argument on the side of the Christian consequences of suicide, the eclogues do present varied positions on the topic of the nature of love. Although his message is ultimately that reason should triumph over the will, he makes a very emotional, visceral and sensationalist argument in the favor of reason.

This problematization of desire in the pastoral is, if not an English invention, then an English revival. It echoes the debate between Socrates and Lysias (via Phaedrus) over desire and the lover, and it complicates the unquestioned relationship between desire, eloquence and community that began with Theocritus. While Googe problematizes this relationship, for him it is an internal struggle, whose solution is as isolating as the love itself. In *Egloga sexta*, Googe follows up what is probably the most exciting and dramatic pastoral eclogue ever written with what amounts to a list of ways to resist love. Felix, a wiser and older shepherd, offers a besotted Faustus tactics for distracting himself:

Each letter that I had receyvd from her, I cast away,
And tokens all, I threw them down, to my no small dysmay.
Then busyed I my selfe in thyngs that myght me moste delyght,
And sought the chiefst means I could, to helpe my weryed spryght.
And whan with labour all the daye, my weryed Lyms were soore.
Tha rest & slepe I straightway sought no Dreames dyd me afraye:
Tormented nought with care, I past the lyngrynge nyght awaye.

And thus I cleane forgot: in tyme, the dotyng Dayes I sawe,
And freed my self, to my great Ioye, from Yoke of Louers Lawe.

The most remarkable feature of Felix's techniques for resisting love is that they are all solitary. The prescription is to burn the letters and tokens and then engage in physical activity until one can sleep all night, without dreams. While Googe argues that the individual shepherd suffers from unrequited love, his community of shepherds suffer from the solution, as it isolates the shepherd.

Before we leave Googe, I want to consider another way he includes arguing on multiple sides of an issue – this time over the relative merits of men and women. The tradition of pastoral eclogues silenced women for centuries. While women spoke and sang in Theocritus, Virgil includes no women, as do many of his Renaissance imitators.⁶ Googe's model, Mantuan, not only excludes women, but his fourth eclogue is a catalog of sinful classical women. It is such a vehement invective against women that other Renaissance authors often apologize for Mantuan's cruelty toward women. Googe's shepherds blame women for most of men's problems. The text is overtly misogynist, and yet, in his *Egloga Septima*, Googe gives a woman the opportunity to answer back against the crimes of which her sex has been accused and she levels her own at men.

⁶Spenser includes no women, but the object of Colin's desire, Rosalind, is adopted by other Renaissance authors, and, though intertextual development, eventually becomes the Rosalind in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. For an account of her development, see Clare Kinney's "Feigning Female Fainting and Katharine Wilson's "From Arden to America."

In Eclogue Seven, two shepherds, Sirenus and Silvanus, reconcile after an argument over the same woman, because she has left both shepherds behind to marry a wealthy man. The two shepherds describe Diana, their mutual love, as vengeful and after money, while they characterize themselves as having responded to disappointment without malice. Silvanus generalizes from Diana to all women, when he cries, “O stedfastnes and Constancy, how seldome are you founde: / In womens harts to have your seats, Or long abiding ground?” Googe’s eclogues are rife with misogyny, but in this eclogue, Selvagia, a shepherdess, approaches and has the opportunity to defend women against their insults. While the three begin their conversation with mutual commiseration, the eclogue soon turns to whether men or women are more to blame for the others’ broken hearts. After Silvanus describes women as easily distracted and blames their “unconstancye” and lack of reason on their “symple wyts”, Selvagia defends women against these attacks. First, she argues that women’s wits are equal to men’s and that “know as well as you, whats what in every case.” Then, she argues that life is worse for women than men in every respect,

For yf they show but gentle words you thynke for love they dye.
And yf they speake not whan you list, than strayght you say, they
are hye.
And that they ar, disdainfull Dames, and yf they chaunce to talke.
Than cownt your them for chatring Pies whose tongs must alwayes
walke.
And yf perhaps they do forebeare, and Sylence chaunce to keepe,
Than tush, she is not for company, she is but a symple sheepe.

Selvagia highlights and then counters the misogyny that permeates Googe's eclogues. Her speech is not contested and her position stands at the eclogue's end. There is no precedent in pastoral eclogues for this brief dialogic defense of women. T.P. Harrison points out that the eclogue is mostly "bold plagiarism" of Jorge Montemayor's Spanish pastoral prose romance, *Diana* (72). While Harrison is unimpressed by the adaptation, Googe does move the defense from the plot-driven genre of romance, which always includes women, to the static, reflective homosocial genre of the eclogue. This move draws attention to the defense and separates it from narrative, elevating it from a quick aside to a central issue, at least in the context of *Egloga septima*. In a text which problematizes the concept of the unrequited love that lies at the heart of pastoral eclogues, this is another challenge to the way love is often depicted in the pastoral landscape. While Googe's eclogues are compelling, they are not generally regarded as the best that mid-Tudor poetry has to offer. Yet, even this slapdash, partly plagiarized attempt at the genre includes fleshed-out, supported multiple sides of an argument rooted in the identities of the shepherds who make them.

In Googe's eclogues, the shephardic community debates issues such as the best response to unrequited love and the relative responsibilities of men and women, but Googe does not pit solitary and selfish romantic love against the communal good. Instead, it is an issue for the individual, and, ultimately, the individual's Christian salvation. Spenser, however, modifies Googe's assessment of unrequited love. His community maintains it is destructive, but

to the community as much as to the individual.

In the *Calender*, Spenser, like Googe before him, problematizes the unrequited love that often motivates pastoral eclogues. For Googe, the pastoral community suffers when a shepherd turns away from unrequited love, as the recovery is personal and solitary. In the *Calender*, however, Spenser pits the shepherds' community against unrequited love: the pastoral world suffers when Colin Clout breaks his pipes because of the frustration of loving the girl from the town, Rosalind. In *Aprill*, Thenot finds Hobbinol weeping because Colin has turned away from him and from the community. Hobbinol laments,

Shepherd's delights he dooth them all foreweare,
Hys pleasaunt Pipe, whych made us meriment,
He wylfully hath broke, and doth forbear
His wonted songs, wherein he all outwent (13-16)

Hobbinol describes personal grief, but also public loss, as Colin has rejected all shepherds' pastimes, and no longer entertains his pastoral friends with music. Hobbinol laments that Colin no longer plays his usual songs, in which he surpassed all others. In the *Calender*, Colin's unrequited love for Rosalind is a disruptive emotion that disturbs the homosocial pastoral. In contrast, Hobbinol's love for Colin is not disruptive. E.K. offers a gloss on Hobbinol's passion, insisting first that it is not "disorderly love," and then that "paederastice [is] much to be praeferr'd before gynerastice, that is the love whiche enflameth men with lust toward woman kind" (34). That is, in keeping with

Renaissance concepts of friendship, E.K. explicitly values homosocial love over heterosexual eroticism.

It is in *June*, that Colin Clout tells Hobbinol, the shepherd who loves him, that he can no longer remain in the pastoral. Hobbinol is a central figure in the eclogues, and E.K. himself identifies the shepherd as Gabriel Harvey, Spenser's close friend and mentor at university. Others have also speculated that E.K. may have been partly written by, or perhaps a parody of, Harvey.⁷ The eclogue begins with Hobbinol's attempt to persuade Colin to stay. Hobbinol describes the pastoral landscape as a paradise, first in natural terms, and then populated by mythic figures. Colin, however, argues that he has outgrown the landscape and cannot remain. Although his stated reason for leaving is his love of Rosalind, the eclogue also includes hints of Colin's poetic ambition. For example, Colin says he cannot remain because "... I unhappy man, whom cruel fate, / And angry Gods pursue from coste to coste, / Can nowhere fynd, to shroude my lucklesse pate" (14-16). Here Spenser, through an unwitting Colin, compares himself to Aeneas. Because Spenser casts himself in the Virgillian career that begins in pastoral and culminates in epic, they hint at Colin/Spenser's future as a national poet.

Spenser blends Colin's sexual desire and poetic ambition into a joint motivation for leaving the pastoral in a way that renders the pastoral an adolescent landscape. The lines between sexual maturity and poetic ambition

⁷See for example Hadfield 123 or Schleiner 406-407.

are blurred even further, as Hobbinol imagines a scene of nymphs and muses:

But frendly Faeries, met with many Graces,
And lightfote Nymphes can chace the lingring night,
With Hedeguyes, and trimly trodden traces,
Whilst systems nyne, which dwell on *Parnasse* hight,
Doe make them musick, for their more delight:
And *Pan* himselfe to kisse their christall faces,
Will pype and daunce, when *Phoebe* shineth bright:
Such pierlesse pleasures have we in these places (25-32).

At the very least, in his description, Hobbinol equates poetry with this scene of beautiful, dancing nymphs and graces, who are kissed by Pan. Colin Clout continues the metaphor, admitting that, “in such delights did joy amongst my peeres” and describing them as “wanton toyes” or undisciplined games of love. Colin Fairweather argues that while Hobbinol means to describe the scene as the pinnacle of literary achievement, Colin interprets it as a prurient description nymphs and muses: “Colin fails to register the careerist implications of Hobbinol’s idyll, which he understands merely as an erotic fantasy” (287). Whether or not Colin has humorously misinterpreted Hobbinol’s description, the playfully erotic and the poetic are intermixed by both shepherds, and Colin dismisses Hobbinol’s paradise as a distraction for young men: “ryper age such pleasures doth reprove, / My fancye eke from former follies move” (36-38).

Fairweather also points out that in the above stanza, Hobbinol ignores the hierarchies of the town, and he “naively travesties social degree: the image of fairies, graces, and nymphs dancing the heydeguy forbids any sense of remote dignity and collapses the tokens of social difference” (286-287). Hobbinol

describes the pastoral as a world without social hierarchy, where skill is the only distinguishing quality. In Hobbinol's vision, when the muses heard Colin play, "They drewe abacke, as halfe with shame confound, Shepheard to see, them in theyr art outgoe" (63-64). In this description, the muses are ashamed that Colin outshines them. We should remember, however, that in the *Aprill* lay, nymphs and classical gods metaphorically represent royalty. By Hobbinol's account, then, Colin has outshone those who rank higher than he in the social hierarchy. As soon as Hobbinol describes this scene, Colin contradicts it. The muses, he says, "holden scorne of homely shepheards quill" (67). Despite Colin's contradiction, Hobbinol has offered the image of an egalitarian community, concerned with poetry and learning, where skill is the only method of distinction. Colin, he claims, can stay here and triumph.

Rather than representing an abstract stage in development, I argue that, for Spenser, the pastoral represents a particular point in his history, when he was at university. In fact, in his biography of Spenser, Hadfield reads the eclogue as representing the moment when, as he was writing the *Calender*, Spenser left Cambridge, but Harvey remained. According to Hadfield, "The June eclogue witnesses Hobbinol/Harvey staying put and Spenser/Colin leaving for the south. The most plausible explanation is that this tells us that [Spenser] eventually had to move away from the Cambridge area, where Harvey spent his whole academic life" (85). While Hadfield suggests that the June eclogue shadows the actual events of Spenser's life, it is odd that he surmises Spenser "eventually had to move." In *June*, Colin rejects Hobbinol's plea that

he stay, as Colin argues he has outgrown the pastoral. In 1579, Spenser not only publishes the *Calender*, he marries for the first time. While this may not seem out of keeping with our notions of the academic life, in Cambridge students and fellows could not be married until the late nineteenth century. If Spenser's pastoral is associated with the life of the single male student, where poetry is not only respected, but written by everyone, Spenser's introduction into print, a very different interpretive community, and his marriage both bar him from returning to the egalitarian paradise of his university days. If we read this along with his biographical details, it seems that Harvey suggests Colin stay in the Cambridge environs, and Spenser argues he has outgrown them. Whether or not Spenser had the opportunity to remain at Cambridge, Spenser writes that Colin leaves of his own volition.

More than just a physical description of paradise, this eclogue imagines, in very playful and idyllic terms, the pastoral as a landscape where shepherds and nymphs as equals. The danger of *June*, however, is the possibility that it trivializes and dismisses the pastoral. After all, Colin views it as adolescent and will not stay. Yet, why write such a complex poem in order to move on from it? One obvious answer to that question is that Spenser is imitating the Virgilian poetic career, the model for establishing oneself as a national poet. Yet, Spenser has not just demonstrated that he can write in the pastoral style, he has transformed it. As we have seen, he is deeply invested in its egalitarian environment. Spenser deepens the presumed equality of the pastoral landscape by building the qualities of Ciceronian friendship into its relationships. And

yet, midway through the *Calender*, his representative shepherd turns away from the model.

The metaphor of university or school once again seems fitting for the pastoral. Although Spenser leaves Cambridge, it is an understatement to say that his life is shaped by his time at university. For Spenser, the son of a merchant and a scholarship student at school, Cambridge created the opportunities that led to his career as a secretary in Ireland, as well as the opportunity for poetry that led to his fame as a poet who eventually had an audience with the queen and drew a stipend from her.

Let us turn to a moment of connection between the pastoral and political in the praise for the ruling powers. The most sustained moment of praise in Virgil's *Bucolica* is Eclogue IV. While the identity of the unborn child praised in that eclogue is disputed, the poem itself was written to praise political figures, probably Augustus and Antony specifically, and to ingratiate Virgil to his patron. While the poem appears in *Bucolica*, for the duration of the eclogue, Virgil leaves the imagined world of the pastoral. The poem begins, "Sicilian Muse, I would try now a somewhat grander theme. / Shrubberies or meek tamarisks are not for all: but if it's / Forests I sing, may the forests be worthy of a consul" (1-4). These words are not put into the mouth of a shepherd, but the narrator appears to be Virgil himself. This departure from the pastoral landscape and the subjects that concern shepherds is nod in the direction of the grander things he has in store. When the descriptions in the poem are pastoral, they are not realistic Mantuan descriptions, but the highly

stylized and responsive landscape that came to be a feature of pastoral elegy.

At the child's birth Virgil predicts,

... earth will shower you with romping ivy, fox-gloves. Bouquets of gipsy lilies and sweetly-smiling acanthus. Goats shall walk home, their udders taut with milk, and nobody Herding them: the ox will have no fear of the lion: Silk-soft blossom will grow from your very cradle to lap you. ... Everywhere the commons will breathe of spice and incense (19-25)

The child is not placed in the pastoral landscape, but the landscape responds to him. The landscape is similarly depicted in the apotheosis of Daphnis in traditional pastoral elegy. Virgil's praise of the unborn infant is so effective, and so grand that in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance the accepted interpretation was that Eclogue IV prophesied the birth of Jesus. In contrast, Spenser embeds his praise for Elizabeth in the world of the pastoral. Virgil pauses his shepherds and distances himself from their landscape while he himself delivers his sustained praise. Spenser, on the other hand, embeds the poem in praise of Elizabeth in the pastoral landscape as well as the loose narrative of Colin Clout. Within the fiction of the *Calender*, Hobbinol recites Colin Clout's poem praising Elizabeth to demonstrate Colin's ability rather than Elizabeth's worth. The poem within the poem weaves the mythological world of the gods into the pastoral landscape. The moment that best captures the relationship between the mythic and the pastoral is "Lo how finely the graces can it foote" to the shepherd's pipe (109). Shortly after the muses begin to dance to the shepherd's music, Eliza, as Hobbinol/Colin refer to her,

joins them as the fourth muse, their equal in beauty. Yet even though she is described as a child of the gods, she is depicted sitting “upon the grassie greene” and decked in flowers (55). Hobbinol/Colin describe her as wearing a “Cremosin coronet,” “With Damaske roses and Daffadillies set: / Bayleaves betweene, / And Primroses greene” (59-62). While Virgil’s infant and count-
less versions of the elegized Daphnis remain distant and above the pastoral landscape, Eliza is woven into it. She may dance with the muses, but she dances to a shepherd’s pipe, and has no power over the pastoral itself. Yet, what is most striking about the poem is that Hobbinol and Thenot never discuss Elizabeth outside of the poem. For them, the poem is solely a display of Colin’s skill. Thenot questioned whether Colin could possibly be worth Hobbinol’s sorrow, asking “And hath he skill to make so excellent, / Yet hath so little skill to brydle love” (19-20). Thenot, however, accepts the poem as proof of Colin’s “skill to make so excellent,” and responds with pity for both Hobbinol and his friend, “Great pittie is, he be in such taking, For naught caren, that bene so lewdly bent. (156-57). Spenser has embedded the praise of Elizabeth into the pastoral world, and given provided the poem with an audience that sees it as a demonstration of the worth of Colin, rather than the worth of Elizabeth. One marvels that Spenser somehow got his embedded praise for Elizabeth to count in his favor, and yet was spared the consequences of his disapproval of Elizabeth’s decision about Edmund Grindal.

Virgil praises in his own voice and criticizes in the voices of his shepherds. Spenser praises and criticizes through his shepherds, and, if anything,

weaves his sustained praise of Elizabeth so thoroughly into the eclogue that it becomes more a demonstration of Colin's ability, rather than a tribute to Elizabeth. By embedding both praise and blame into the world of the pastoral, rather than giving the most eloquent poems to a noble disguised as a shepherd or an unnamed narrator identified with the poet, Spenser creates a world where the ethos of the poet is not established by his relationship to the court.

As Annabel Patterson famously observes, at the beginning of the first eclogue, Colin Clout is "poised uncertainly between Tityrus and Melboeus, between the poetics of accommodation and the poetics of dissent" (23). Like Virgil, Spenser crafts a poem that can do both. Famously, the *Calender* contains both a poem praising Elizabeth as well as pointed criticism of her and her court. Most directly, the shepherds in *Julye* warn of the danger of rising to a position of power. Thomalin says, "But I am taught by Algrins ill / to love the lowe degree" (213-4). "Algrin" is a transparent anagram of "Grindal" and the line refers to Edmund Grindal, the archbishop of Canterbury that Elizabeth had sequestered because he refused to outlaw prophesies. In a political climate where another author, John Stubbes, had been censured and would eventually lose his hand for criticizing the queen, this was a bold move. Spenser is partially protected from danger by the distance of the pastoral landscape, and the powerlessness of the shepherds.

As recent criticism has demonstrated, Spenser deliberately imports Ciceronian dialogue into his pastoral eclogues in order to create a discursive space

where everyone, from shepherds to the commentator, participate in *disputatio in utramque partem* as equals. However, many qualities of the *Calender* come not from Ciceronian dialogue but are inherent features of the pastoral. Spenser uses the genre of pastoral eclogues to conceptualize poetry as natively English, rising from an English tradition, as well as from continental and classical forms. This is in direct distinction from the previous models of Tudor poetry. Spenser also employs a pastoral version of arguing both sides of an issue. That is, while Cicero advocates for arguing both sides of an issue, pastoral eclogues more often present both sides, but leave the reader to draw the conclusion. The arguments primarily appeal to emotion, rather than reason. Pastoral eclogues are a space where arguments made in a variety of ways can all be considered. Spenser's focus on the role language generally and poetry specifically play in the establishment and maintenance of the community are also features of pastoral eclogues: Ciceronian dialogues look outward, back to the society that its interlocutors will return to, but pastoral eclogues look inward, and focus on maintaining the pastoral community. Perhaps the most notable feature of the pastoral eclogue, however is that it creates a space where the poem's subversive content can be published but go on uncriticized and unpunished. I have argued that both pastoral eclogues and Ciceronian dialogues set in the pastoral always contain implicit theories of how discursive spaces might function away from the forces of stratified society. While there is overlap between these theories, Spenser capitalizes on their differences, to create a space where multiple conversations happen.

Chapter 4

The Worth of Men in Moderata Fonte's *Il merito delle donne*

And why . . . cannot listening itself be revalued, perhaps even re-gendered?

—Krista Ratcliffe, *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness*

Moderata Fonte's *Il merito delle donne* or, in English, *The Worth of Women*, is often treated as a defense of women. After all, that is how the title and the prefatory material frame the book. More than that, Fonte's dialogue includes many of the standard arguments for women's equality and even superiority to men, as well as the standard list of classical exemplary women. However, this dialogue is the inverse of a defense of women; the women do not debate their own worth, but the worth of men. While any account of the dialogue mentions that the worth of men is the explicit subject matter, I want to draw special attention to this feature. Fonte argues that the worth of men must be re-evaluated, and defined according to their treatment of women, both publicly and privately, for the position of women to be improved. *Il merito* is the only Renaissance Ciceronian dialogue whose interlocutors are all women, and it is set in a garden that is protected against male intrusion.

The situation is almost comical in its reversal of gender roles: these women gather and debate the worth of men, without giving them the opportunity to respond or defend themselves. The dialogue includes defenses of women, not as ends in themselves, but as evidence that women and men are equals, and men are obligated to treat them as such. However, the most compelling defense of women in the dialogue is performative: these women demonstrate that they are as knowledgeable and as eloquent as men, but are restrained by unfair laws and customs. Through performance, the dialogue overturns the popular idea that women could be educated and silent and demonstrates that educated women alter knowledge through new standards of evaluation and methods of creation, and desire and deserve public voices. In this chapter, I argue that Fonte models her dialogue on *De Oratore*, having the women perform the qualities of the perfect orator, while debating and rewriting the standard of men's worth.

By taking men's worth, rather than women's, as the explicit subject matter, Fonte's interlocutors recast men's virtue as dependent on their receptiveness and reciprocity toward women. Following the example of Jane Donawerth, I examine Fonte's dialogue as a woman's theory of communication. Like many educated women, Fonte begins with a thorough knowledge of classical rhetoric, and recasts it to make room for women's voices, as her dialogue is an enactment of a conversation that takes place in a protected female space where women can talk freely. However, Fonte also employs the additional structure of Ciceronian dialogue. It is by reading her dialogue as a

reproduction of *De Oratore* with a female cast that we can draw out Fonte's more radical vision of women as public figures and orators.

Il merito is often rightly read as a descendent of its extremely popular Italian predecessor, Baldassarre Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano*. However, my own reading depends primarily on its relationship to its classical predecessor, *De Oratore*. This may seem like a strange decision, especially given the inclusion of women in Castiglione's *Il cortegiano* and their absence in *De Oratore*. However, as Joan Kelly argues, in *Il cortegiano*, "the men, in short, do all the talking; and the ensuing dialogue on manners and love, as we might expect, is not only developed by men but directed toward their interests" (35). Like *De Oratore*, *Il merito* is a single-sexed dialogue, where gender is a crucial element of the interlocutors' identities (even if that goes unstated in *De Oratore*), but which does not separate or stratify the interlocutors.

When viewed as a reading of Cicero's dialogue, *Il merito* poses many critical questions to *De Oratore*, especially about the gendering of virtue and of eloquence and Cicero's relative inattentiveness to the virtues and responsibilities of the audience. As Krista Ratcliffe observes, "Classical theories foreground a rhetor's speaking and writing as means of persuading audiences; these theories are only secondarily concerned with how audiences should listen" (20). Fonte, however, obliquely argues that men's worth depends on their receptiveness to women's speech, both publicly and privately. Fonte reverses *De Oratore*'s evaluation of eloquence as the most human quality, and instead elevates listening as the ability that separates humans from beasts. If men

do not listen to women, Fonte pointedly implies, they are less than human. Fonte's dialogue asks what conditions must be met in order for women to be heard as speakers with the potential to equal men in ability and persuasiveness. As we will explore, she imagines a variety of responses to this question, but her most sustained consideration is that men must be receptive to women in all relationships, from the most intimate to the most public. The other half of her argument is that women are capable of knowledge creation and eloquence. Through the women's performances, both as dialogic interlocutors and, in one instance, as a public orator, Fonte demonstrates that women are as capable as men in their ability to pursue and achieve the qualities of the perfect orator as laid out in *De Oratore*.

In 1600, Fonte's dialogue was published as a response to Giuseppe Passi's *Dei donneschi difetti* or *The Defects of Women*, a very popular attack on women in the ongoing Renaissance debate over the worth of women that is often referred to as the *Querelle des Femmes*. Moderata Fonte is the pen name of Modesta Pozzo, who died in childbirth, eight years before the publication of her dialogue. While her publisher inserted the dialogue into the *Querelle des Femmes* in response to a particular attack that was written after her death, Fonte also consciously placed *Il merito* in that ongoing debate. Almost four hundred years after its original publication, Fonte's dialogue has recently received attention as one of the first Italian proto-feminist texts. In it, she argues that women should have the same access to speech and persuasion as men. Although the interlocutors argue that all women should have better

opportunities for education, ultimately Fonte blames men for women's limited opportunities to speak as equals and to be heard: rather than debating the ability of women as speakers, Fonte's interlocutors argue that men are bad listeners. Because women must ultimately convince men that they deserve fair treatment, Fonte's interlocutors spend much of the dialogue developing how women and men should relate to one another. She begins by arguing that men's worth should depend on how well they treat the women in their lives. She then offers friendship as a basis for relationships between men and women, from the most intimate, to the most public.

The occasion of the dialogue is the reunion of seven friends of who are in different stages of life, particularly in regards to marriage and age. Although the dialogue takes place in Venice, it is set in a garden that is protected from men and removed from the city. The setting recalls that of Cicero's *De Oratore*. The friends meet for an impromptu gathering at the home of the recently widowed Leonora, and are surprised and pleased to find the newly married Helena among their number. Although the dialogue makes clear that a woman's marital status and her other relationships with men are always central to how a Venetian woman in the Renaissance could move through the world, the new statuses of Leonora as widow and Helena as wife are part of the motivation and immediacy of the subject matter.

Once settled into the private garden, the women elect the oldest, Adriana, to be queen of the festivities, and she chooses to have them continue the conversation about men that had begun spontaneously, but formalizes the

debate and divides the women into two sides. Adriana elects three women, Leonora, the young widow, Corinna, who is young, unmarried and somehow not compelled by her family to marry, and Cornelia, who is young and married, to make the case that men are wicked and therefore without worth. The other three, Helena, the young bride, Virginia, an unmarried young woman, and Lucretia, an older married women, are chosen to offer a defense of men. This is a reversal of defenses of women, which Panizza describes:

As objects of debate, women themselves – their ‘nature’ and their very soul, their rationality or irrationality, their status and roles in marriage and the family as wives, mothers and daughters, and in society – nevertheless occupied a central place in polemical prose writings by men from roughly 1450–1650. (“Polemical,” 63)

That is, even though the dialogue repeats several commonplaces of women’s defenses, it is significant that Fonte has reversed the genre, and men are subjected to this level of scrutiny by women.

The dialogue takes place over two days, and the two halves function in very different ways. The first day is concerned with the worth of men, which is evaluated solely based on their treatment of women. This debate is Ciceronian in that the characters are well rounded, and occupy positions that are not abstract absolutes, but that an individual might hold. However, as often happens in actual conversation, the sides of the debate are unbalanced, and every point made by Helena and Virginia in defense of men’s treatment of women is readily dismantled by the much more developed intellectual and

oratorical skills of Corinna and Leonora. The first day is primarily concerned with instances of oppression that are sanctioned and supported by laws and customs, but happen in personal relationships between women and their fathers, brothers, sons, husbands and lovers. These stories deal largely with the abuse of financial arrangements in early modern Venice, in which male relatives oversaw the dowries and financial means for their female relatives. The women name case after case of men who profited unfairly by withholding women's dowries or means of support. The abuses of husbands are more wide ranging, from infidelity to jealousy to being overbearing. Finally, the women describe all male lovers as dishonest, and willing to brag about their conquests, to the advancement of a man's reputation, but to the extreme detriment of a woman's.

In order to understand the terms of the debate, let us begin by examining the decree from Adriana:

I hereby give Leonora the task of speaking as much evil of [men] as she can, and Corinna and Cornelia can join in and take her side. And since I have the impression that Helena is so captivated by the charms of her new husband that she has some leanings toward the male camp, I give her leave to speak in defense of men, if she so wishes, and she may have Virginia and Lucretia as her companions." (57)

Note that Adriana doesn't explicitly ask that the interlocutors evaluate men's treatment of women, but that one side attack them and the other offer a defense. Both sides, however, shift the terms of the case to explicitly address

how men act toward women. But this debate does not weigh men's misdeeds against their moments of fairness: every woman, on either side of the debate, offers stories about men's cruelty to women. Instead, the debate hinges on whether men deserve their position of superiority. The arguments made on both days ultimately depend on the case for the equal worth of men and women; women's equality is the underlying warrant upon which the women base their cases for financial freedom and the liberty to marry or not marry as they please. This equality is also the basis of the case made on the second day, for women's freedom to pursue a public life, regardless of marital status.

It is not until the second day that *Il merito* most closely fits the model of Ciceronian dialogue, that is, a debate in which the interlocutors are well-matched and all sides present justifiable positions. The concerns of that debate are the practical issues of how women should best proceed in their quest for better treatment at the hands of men. On the second day, the women's conversation branches out into two seemingly contradictory directions. On the one hand, the women take all of human knowledge as their subject matter, while on the other, they offer practical, and often radical, suggestions for reorganizing the fundamental relationships between men and women, so that women have control over their own selves as well as the power to speak and act publicly. Fonte's two strongest interlocutors, Corinna and Leonora, disband the unified front they maintained when arguing about the worth of men; instead each desires to take the conversation in a different direction. Corinna leads the women on long conversational digressions on a wide range of topics, while

Leonora stays focused on the plight of women, and methods of redressing men.

The two opposing directions of the dialogue fit together snugly if we read Corinna and Leonora as counterparts for Crassus and Antonius: they perform the two sides of the debate over whether an orator should be concerned with all knowledge, or only seek to know what is necessary for immediate and practical concerns. Another feature of the second day is that the women propose new models for relationships between men and women. These models begin with the personal, in friendship, but the qualities of that friendship, specifically reciprocity and receptiveness, form the basis for a model in which women could speak publicly to men. At the heart of this formulation is Leonora's speech imploring men to treat women well. Although most scholars have focused on the personal relationships that are central to the speech's subject matter, textual cues ask us to consider the performance seriously as well.

At its most Ciceronian, the dialogue is a model of how knowledge is created through arguing multiple sides of an issue, but, of course, it shows knowledge creation in a domain of only women. To read *Il merito*, we must move continuously between explicit subject matter and the performance. The relationship between the two is complex and varied. In some instances, the subject matter is deepened and reinforced through the women's actions. In others, the more mundane arguments are explicitly discussed, while the performance, in contradistinction, offers more radical answers.

One crucial feature of the performance is humor. Although the dialogue

spans two days and makes serious cases about the worth of men and women, and offers long, encyclopedic digressions on natural history, medicine, rhetoric and many other subjects, the seven women never lose their ebullience, and the conversation maintains a sense of comradery and humor throughout. Even before the conversation begins, the women are described as “affectionately teasing one another and sharing delightful jokes” (46). This playfulness operates within the text in myriad ways. Perhaps most obviously it contributes to the reader’s enjoyment, adding levity even to the most strident arguments against men. However, it also blurs the lines between what should be taken seriously and what is meant as an exaggeration or a joke: the humor often serves as misdirection. Thomas Greene notes that a similar atmosphere in *Il cortegiano* allows the conversation to deal with difficult aspects of Renaissance Italian culture while simultaneously protecting its audience from their full implications:

The game really becomes a contest between the community’s will to understand itself, to examine and know itself, and conversely its will to protect itself from excessive knowledge, in order to function politically and socially. (qtd in Smarr 196)

In *Il merito*, this mechanism not only protects the community from knowing what it may not want to know, it also protects the author from the charge of blatantly saying what cannot be said. This lightness of tone not only makes the work entertaining, it also maintains playfulness in its *utramque partem*. The humor allows for plausible deniability: Fonte’s characters express some

radical opinions, but because the dialogue argues both sides of the same debate, and does so with humor, the audience never knows which positions are serious. As Cox observes, “the cultural tradition Fonte is drawing on . . . was one that had legitimized and, in a sense, neutralized, a set of apparently radical and subversive propositions regarding women’s status by relegating them to the twilight zone between seriousness, intellectual gamesmanship and paradox” (“Introduction” 16). That is, the dialogue both protects itself, but also neutralizes itself through its playfulness, humor and polyphonic nature.

Il Merito is kept light partly by the reactions to the two principal speakers, Corinna and Leonora. For example, on the second day, Corinna is the main instigator of compendious digressions on a variety of topics, and Leonora especially reacts with playful annoyance and attempts at redirection. Similarly, when Leonora offers her forceful and heavy-handed criticisms of men, the other women tease her for her unrelenting singlemindedness.

Another key feature of this text is the nested audiences that Fonte addresses, both internal and external to the dialogue. The most immediate audience is, of course, the women themselves. Like most instances of conversational rhetoric, this audience is named, not anonymous, and on an equal footing with the speaker. Each woman is both a member of the audience and a speaker at different points in the dialogue. Internally, as we will explore more fully when we explicate Leonora’s speech, there is occasionally an imagined audience of men, as the women debate how best to persuade men. Externally, the intended audience is also gendered. Fonte emphasizes from the beginning

that these conversations can only take place among women: “These women would often steal time together for a quiet conversation; and on these occasions, safe from any fear of being spied on by men or constrained by their presence, they would speak freely on whatever subject they pleased” (45). Because the women in the dialogue continually remind the reader that this conversation could only happen when no men were around, the men reading the text become voyeurs. This is particularly interesting and complex, as we will explore, when Leonora gives a speech to an imagined crowd of men, that she would not have given if any had actually been present.

The women not only notice the absence of men, they often predict the responses men would have to their conversation. For example, after one of the women tells a joke, Leonora and Lucretia predict that men would react with derision.

“Exactly,” said Leonora. “If a man could hear us now, joking together like this, how he would scoff! There’d be no end to it!”
“To tell the truth,” said Lucretia, “we are only ever really happy when we are alone with other women; and the best thing that can happen to any woman is to be able to live alone, without the company of men.” (47)

Their exchange puts the male reader in a position where he must examine his own reaction and identify or dissociate from the imagined man. It also serves to underscore the importance of the isolated setting and how women’s speech and actions are constricted by men. In another exchange, Corinna and Lucretia seem to predict a response like Passi’s *Dei donneschi difetti*.

“Just think,” said Corinna, “if men could have heard what we’ve been saying about them, how many much worse things they’d say about us in return. Because men will never put up with being outdone in malice (though it hardly counts as malice on our part to speak the truth).” “They’d probably write some contemptuous book about women as a reply,” said Lucretia. (116)

Here the women have painted any text written by a man that criticizes women as malicious and untrue. At different points throughout the dialogue, an interlocutor, almost sensing the male reader, claims that a man would be derisive about one snippet or another from their conversation. The women, however, will not let that stop them: “Oh, let them say what they want!” (234) Through these tactics, Fonte positions her male readers as voyeurs who can choose to be the men the women criticize, or the few it praises. Men’s negative responses are predicted and the women dismiss them, taking back some control from men who, as the dialogue makes clear, otherwise rule women’s lives.

On the other hand, while the interlocutors never imagine other women listening in to the dialogue, they always give any woman, regardless of her actions, even those who have been the adulterous lovers of their own husbands, the benefit of the doubt. To some extent, this affinity with other women extends beyond class and occupation. Fonte’s interlocutors vehemently defend women, recuperating them from men’s criticisms. Although Fonte never explicitly addresses women readers, one imagines her as a champion for women, as Fonte’s son, Pietro de’Zorzi writes in a prefatory sonnet, “Up to now, men could conceal all their misdeeds, but now their flaws, as well as women’s true

qualities, will be known from one end of the world to the other” (29). As Fonte limits and, to some degree, dismisses the responses of her male readers, her female readers are, in some sense, the intended audience, and the recipients of her defense of women, criticism of men, and her plea for equality between the sexes.

Fonte’s dialogue is a demonstration of women’s knowledge creation, but it also calls for the education of more women. The explicit discussion of women’s education in the dialogue is much less radical than the case made through the women’s performance. On the second day, Leonora makes the case that education leads to virtue. Her explicit claim about education is that it helps women to be virtuous, but the dialogue demonstrates that educated women want nothing less than to be autonomous selves. Most defenses of women’s education in the Renaissance rested on the union of knowledge and silence in women. In contrast, the women of *Il merito* make a case, through their performance, that is much nearer to Crassus’ in *De Oratore*: knowledge and eloquence must be united. To better understand Leonora’s argument for women’s education, let’s begin by looking at a passage from Juan Luis Vives’ famous treatise, *The Education of a Christian Woman*:

And, of course, if we wished to review past ages, we would not find any learned woman who was unchaste. On the contrary, the majority of female vices of this and previous centuries (and without a doubt they were more numerous among Christians than among any pagan or barbarian nation) sprang from ignorance, because women did not read or hear tell of those splendid exhortations

of the church fathers concerning chastity, solitude, silence, and feminine adornment and attire. (65)

Vives argues that, in the past, educated women were always chaste. He explicitly joins chastity, solitude and silence as the virtuous knowledge women gain through studying the church fathers. Leonora's case begins by mirroring these claims, but even in her short defense, she paints a very different picture of women's education and the virtue it engenders:

Many men also refuse to allow their women to learn to read and write, on the pretext that learning is the downfall of many women. As though the pursuit of virtue (which is where learning leads) led straight to its contrary, vice! . . . it's obvious that an ignorant person is far more liable to fall into error than someone intelligent and well read; and we see from experience that far more unlettered women slide into vice than educated women who have exercised their minds. How many illiterate maidservants, how many peasant girls and plebeian women give in to their lovers without putting up much of a fight! And the reason is that they are more gullible than women like us, who have read our cautionary tales and learnt our moral lessons and developed a love for virtue: we may still feel some pricking of the senses, but we know how to discipline our desires, and it's only very rarely that an educated woman allows herself to be carried away by her appetites. (236-7)

Like Vives, Leonora argues that education helps women to be more virtuous. In both defenses, chastity is equated with female virtue, but Leonora departs from Vives by not mentioning silence as a virtuous quality. In fact, she says that "the pursuit of virtue" is "where learning leads." This is, in essence, a redefinition of virtue, from a defined set of characteristics that education

encourages, to the product of learning. Therefore, as Leonora says, education cannot lead to vice, because pursuing knowledge is the definition of the pursuit of virtue. Leonora concentrates on chastity and virtue in this passage, but this radical redefinition of women's virtue may figure in the dialogue's implicit defense of the women's creating what Suzanne Magnanini refers to as a "female economy of knowledge," as well as to the women's desire to be heard, both in their private lives and publicly (294). Vives' defense of women rests on keeping the Christian woman in her proper place, but Fonte, through the performance of the dialogue, shows that education leads to a radical re-evaluation of the place of women.

Even in this short plea for women's education, Leonora characterizes women very differently from Vives. First she argues that "illiterate maidservants," "peasant girls" and "plebian women" are the most in need of education. While Vives has a complex relationship to class, his treatise is not directed at the education of plebians, peasants and maidservants. Leonora also describes women as desirous, and even educated women "may still feel some pricking of the senses." Another incongruence between the texts is that Vives paints the model Christian woman as demure and silent, but Leonora argues that uneducated women "give in to their lovers without putting up much of a fight." The converse of that claim is that educated women put up a fight, creating a much more active picture of virtue than the one Vives paints.

As I have shown, Leonora's argument in favor of women's education shadows traditional defenses from the Renaissance, but also departs from them

in subtle, but important, ways. Next, I want to consider one of the two radical effects of women's education that Fonte demonstrates through the dialogue. That is, Fonte shows that educated women are not receptacles of knowledge, but create and evaluate knowledge. The women create and evaluate knowledge on both days. On the first day, they evaluate and alter the commonplaces of traditional, often male-authored, defenses of women. On the second day, they take on general knowledge, defending women's interest in topics ranging from rhetoric to hunting to law, but also considering more traditional sites of women's knowledge, like fashion and the medicinal properties of food.

On the first day, during their debate about men's worth, the women lay claim to and alter two traditional sites of knowledge in defenses of women: first, Fonte puts the cases for women's equality or superiority in the mouths of women, fundamentally changing the meaning and reception of what was often a rhetorical exercise of making the weaker case the stronger. She also rewrites these counterarguments by making them evidence in a case that is explicitly about the worth of men, not the worth of women. Second, as Stephen Kolsky has argued, she moves the catalog of virtuous women from its usual central position in defenses, to an ancillary position. In addition, I argue that the women develop their own catalog, this time of how men have mistreated them, elevating their personal experiences and those of their acquaintances above the historical examples of great women.

The first of these sites is a set of counterarguments, largely written by Henricus Cornelius Agrippa, which controvert the traditional arguments

for men's superiority. As Paola Malpezzi Price observes, "The treatises on the superiority of women, which proliferated in this period, seem in fact to provide just another occasion for writers to display their rhetorical skill" (132). By having women voice these counterarguments, however, Fonte breathes life into them, bringing bodies and lived experiences to bear on what were largely rhetorical exercises.

Often, these counterarguments are clever re-interpretations of almost aphoristic knowledge. For example, Virginia sparks the others' argument for women's equality by naively asking, "if men are as imperfect as you say they are, then why are they our superiors on every count?" (59) Corinna responds that men's presumed superiority "is something they have unjustly arrogated to themselves. And when it's said that women must be subject to men, the phrase should be understood in the same sense as when we say that we are subject to natural disasters, diseases, and all the other accidents of this life: it's not a case of being subject in the sense of obeying, but rather of suffering an imposition" (59). Here, Corinna redefines what the statement "women must be subject to men" means. This is representative of Corinna's reasoned approach to cleverly rebutting arguments of men's superiority.

In another counterargument, Corinna argues that Adam is responsible for the Fall:

At this point, Helena broke in, "So who was the cause of the Fall, if not Eve, the first woman?" "On the contrary, the blame lies with Adam," replied Corinna. "For it was with a good end in mind –

that of acquiring the knowledge of good and evil – that Eve allowed herself to be carried away and eat the forbidden fruit. But Adam was not moved by this desire for knowledge, but simply by greed: he ate it because he heard Eve say it tasted good, which was a worse motive and caused more displeasure. (93-94)

Throughout the first day, Helena and Virginia raise justifications for men's defense in a perfunctory way, only to have them countered by Corinna or Leonora. Here, Helena raises Eve's responsibility for the fall and Corinna counters it. She argues that God punished Adam because he ate the apple out of greed, but Eve ate it to gain knowledge. Corinna puts women's desire for knowledge into the story of the Fall, and casts Adam as someone who is led by his belly, rather than his mind. This depicts Adam and Eve very differently from the usual counterargument, which is found in Agrippa: "God did not punish the woman for having eaten, but for having given to the man the occasion of evil, which she did through ignorance, tempted as she was by the devil. The man sinned in all knowledge, the women fell into error through ignorance and because she was deceived" (63). Here, Eve's excuse is ignorance, rather than a desire for knowledge.

Fonte's interlocutors also rewrite the famous passage from the *Phaedrus* in which desire and reason are represented as two horses. Lucretia argues that the aphorism "If you want to make a man wise, give him a wife," means that men become wise because they take on the responsibility of having a wife. Leonora, however, counters that explanation, arguing instead that women are the wise ones:

Imagine a carriage drawn by two horses . . . one noble, handsome, well-trained, and docile to the bit, going steadily down the right path; the other moody, restless, fiery, capricious, and given to going astray, always in danger of finishing up in a ditch somewhere with a broken neck, if it were not for the influence of the good horse beside it, pulling it back onto the straight and narrow. And that's the ill service wives perform for their husbands in marriage: they drag them off the path of evil and onto the path of good. (115)

In the Platonic version, the two horses represent desire and reason within a single person, rather than two halves of a married couple. This quotation does two important things for the case for women. First, it recasts them, not as an added responsibility, nor as the schoolchild that the women dread being compared to, but as the responsible party. In this retelling they are also not only capable of reason, but born to it. Of course, this rewriting of Plato may create as many problems as it solves, because describing women as creatures without passion has its own risks.

Catalogs of virtuous women traditionally feature quite prominently in defenses of women. This tradition begins with Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus* or *Concerning Famous Women*. Boccaccio's text emphasizes that these women were exceptional, but Christine de Pizan rewrites them as representative of women generally in *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames* or *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Kolsky argues that Fonte reduces the importance of this mainstay of defenses of women by relegating it to the end of the first day, and by treating the "*exempla* [as] open to reinterpretation, and perhaps more critically, to feminist revaluation" (980). Corinna certainly calls into question their effec-

tiveness. When Leonora argues that all men should know these examples of extraordinary women, Corinna answers that they all do, “They just pretend not to” (111). She goes on to explicitly compare this famous catalog of *exempla* with the personal stories the women have told all day, “And then, on the other side, think of how many husbands have treated their wives badly (and still do). It’s such a common, everyday occurrence that it’s unnecessary to recite examples of it: they’re almost all the same” (111). Here, Corinna almost dismisses the stories that have made up a substantial proportion of the day’s dialogue. When the women begin telling personal stories, Helena attempts to put a stop to them by arguing that “since it is envy that poisons the tongue of slanderers, if we speak ill of men, we shall be taken to be envious of them and, by implication, their inferiors” (60-61). In return, Leonora offers a powerful defense of women’s right to speak out against their oppressors.

We are not speaking ill of them out of envy . . . but out of respect for the truth. For if a man steals (to take an example), he must be called a thief. If men usurp our rights, should we not complain and declare that they have wronged us? For if we are men’s inferiors in status, but not in worth, this is an abuse that has been introduced into the world and that men have then, over time, gradually translated into law and custom; and it has become so entrenched that they claim (and even actually believe) that the status they have gained through their bullying is theirs by right. (61)

Leonora identifies the gap between men’s natural worth as women’s equals, and the unfair superiority they claim. The first day of the dialogue seeks to demonstrate both of these necessary conditions in order to show that women

are unfairly treated by men. Ultimately, women on both sides of the debate tell their stories of oppression at the hands of men. These stories only provide the outline of abuses, and are more like general cases than personal stories, but they are all attributed to particular women. What these stories do provide are how the details of the abuses of fathers, brothers, sons, husbands and lovers compound to imprison women in restricted social roles, unable to act publicly or marry (or not marry) as they chose. The women explicitly evaluate men based on how fairly they treat women. Cox argues that these personal stories are one of the strengths of this dialogue as its concern with “the relation between men and women in everyday life” is a “striking novelty within the *querelle des femme* and serve to expose the degree to which the arguments of the majority of *querelle* texts had become ossified and purely formal by this point” (“Prodigious” 243). What the women produce through their storytelling is a new set of exempla, this time about the misdeeds of men, rather than the virtue of women. It is only natural that the central exempla in the dialogue would be about men, rather than women: after all, men’s worth is the explicit topic of debate.

Even Helena, who at first wanted to stifle the stories of men’s mistreatment of women, expresses her own misgivings about her new husband. “I have a fear that my own husband may turn out to be one these jealous and brooding types . . . And I am very sorry for it, for I would never be one of those who would wish to risk my soul, my honor, and my life to avenge myself on him” (69).

Yet the women are careful not to blame other women. For instance, when Adriana relates her first husband's infidelity, Lucretia suggests that perhaps a spell had been placed on him. Cornelia replies that "all that talk about magic spells is just words: men do what they do because they want to" (70). Cornelia also denies the perceived mistakes of women and instead suggests that the mistake women make is "to suffer so many cruel deeds from [men] and not to flee their constant, tacit persecution of us and their hatred of us as we would a raging fire" (61).

The juxtaposition of personal stories with clever intellectual arguments is not an accident of the conversational form, but a deliberate method of knowledge creation that treats personal stories on par with intellectual counterarguments and the tradition of cataloging of exemplary women. On the first day, Fonte not only has women voice the arguments for their equality that had been made in other defenses written by men, she situates them in a debate about the worth of men, where personal stories of the interlocutors and their friends and acquaintances are evaluated with commensurable standing beside exempla and counterarguments.

Magnanini argues that much of the second day is Fonte's version of a *selva*, a Renaissance genre that was comprised of thick compendia of human knowledge, with organizing tables and indices. Part of my own contribution is to bring these features together under the umbrella of the women's methods of creating knowledge. I also want to add observations of how the women elevate the status of traditionally feminine knowledge to equal footing with

sanctioned, academic, masculine knowledge. As Corinna leads the women in a demonstration of the far-reaching capacities of their intellects and interests, they extend their conversation from the limited case of women's equality to men on the first day to show a breadth of knowledge driven by curiosity and practicality that mimics Crassus's claim that the orator must be knowledgeable about every possible rhetorical topic. This is part of the performative case they make for not only being men's moral and intellectual equals, but their potential equals in pursuing and achieving the qualities of the public figure of the perfect orator. Of course, the most overt comparison of women to public speakers is not Corinna's display of knowledge, but Leonora's practical demonstration of a speech to an imagined audience of men. With it, the women claim the capability to speak publicly, which is further supported by their discussions that demonstrate a firm grasp of rhetoric and law.

Even for women to have this conversation, away from men, reworks not only who possesses knowledge, but how it is transmitted. As Magnanini observes,

Through the exclusion of the paternal figure typically responsible for overseeing the education of females in their charge, the seven women are at liberty to shape their own curriculum, guided by their own interests and a desire for all kinds of knowledge. In a classroom devoid of gender hierarchies, the women explore together fields previously ignored in the female curriculum: geology, astrology, oratory, and the natural sciences. (295)

Magnanini argues that the women lay claim to knowledge that was usually

the domain of men. However, they also cover topics of women's knowledge as well, from fashion to the healing properties of stones and plants, and give these topics equal footing with subjects like science and rhetoric. In doing so, they not only lay claim to what had been men's knowledge, they create their own domain of knowledge which is judged by their own standards of value. When Helena says that the men would find their discussion of fashion appropriate, Corinna defends their right to discuss fashion and all other topics:

“Well, they shouldn't find anything to laugh at in our having discussed various different subjects either,” Corinna said. “For one thing, we've talked about them (or rather, touched on them) just casually and in passing, not because we consider ourselves experts. And, for another, we have just as much right to speak about these subjects as they have, and if we were educated properly as girls (as I've already pointed out), we'd outstrip men's performance in any science or art you care to name” (238).

Taken together, the two days demonstrate not only that women are just as capable of learning as men, but that the creation and evaluation of knowledge changes when women are educated. Vives argues that women should be educated so that they better know their place. Fonte argues that women should be educated because they are men's equals, and they can determine their own places.

The dialogue is not only a demonstration of women's ability, but also their desire for equality. If women can't convince men to treat them as equals, Cornelia advocates that they strike out on their own:

Wouldn't it be possible for us just to banish these men from our lives, and escape their carping and jeering once and for all? Couldn't we live without them? Couldn't we earn our own living and manage our affairs without help from them? Come on, let's wake up, and claim back our freedom, and the honor and dignity they have usurped from us for so long. Do you think that if we really put our minds to it, we would be lacking the courage to defend ourselves, the strength to fend for ourselves, or the talents to earn our own living? (237)

While this quotation sums up the women's frustration, and their faith in their own abilities, the text as a whole seeks reconciliation between men and women, rather than separation. At the heart of that reconciliation is the model of friendship.

Fonte argues that friendship should be the model for relationships between men and women, including in marriage, but Corinna also describes a cosmology based on friendship. If we take her seriously, we can locate friendship, with its emphasis on receptiveness and reciprocity, at the base of all relationships, public and private. Although less directly, the dialogue suggests new paradigms for public relationships between women and men and advances the tandem arguments of women's capacity for public roles, and men's obligation to be receptive to them in those positions.

When the women discuss friendship as a model for personal relationships, including marriage, there is no strong debate between the women, and even Helena and Virginia do not propose a weak version of the opposing side, as they do on the first day. Although there are a few moments when the women

suggest that a voluntary submission to men may be acceptable, the women generally argue that all relationships between men and women, both public and private, must be reordered not as hierarchical, but as egalitarian. They begin this reordering by suggesting friendship as a paradigm for personal relationships between women themselves, as well as for “innocent” relationships between men and women, and also for marriage. This is a major departure from most contemporary ideas of friendship which usually limit the relationship to one between men. In fact, Fonte’s characters go so far in their reversal of the status quo as to suggest that men are rarely capable of friendship.

Corinna argues that men find it hard to truly be friends because, “they are so ridiculously obsessed with their reputations, and with gaining the respect of those around them, that they behave very stiffly and formally in the pretense that courtesy demands it, whereas in fact their behavior is dictated by artifice” (124). Corinna continues to define friendship in opposition to artifice:

For a man who is a true friend to another must behave toward him in an absolutely frank and open manner: there must be no artifice in his behavior, no polite scruples, no hidden object or secret agenda . . . he should be as free and easy in all his dealings with him as he might be with a blood relative, even feeling at liberty to command favors when he needs them, and he should give his friend license to behave just as freely in return, never denying him anything he asks. (124)

The features at the heart of this definition are openness, reciprocity and receptiveness. Of course, an odd feature of this definition of friendship is that,

although Corinna has argued that women are more naturally predisposed to friendship, the definition is given in terms of men. The dialogue as a whole is a demonstration of female friendship, but friendship between women was not the traditional model.

The quality of reciprocity is underlined when Corinna quotes Aristotle as saying, “we should act toward our friends just as we expect them to act toward us” (125). Adriana also underscores the reciprocity inherent in friendship when she remarks that “When a friendship is genuine, the two friends should be united in their desires and their dislikes, and should share everything” (127). The women give a catalogue of classical friendships, all, of course, between men. This is the difficulty with rewriting friendship as most natural between women, but simultaneously demonstrating that the model of friendship they appeal to is the classical one. In her last speech on friendship, Corinna makes several bold claims about the capabilities of friendship.

True friendship, true affinity, is the cause of all good. For it is friendship that keeps the world alive: friendship seals the marriages that preserve the individual in the species, while the friendship and bonding of the elements maintains health in our bodies, and brings fine weather to the air, calm to the sea, and peace to the earth, so that cities can be built, kingdoms grow to greatness and all creatures live in comfort. (128)

In this description of the power of friendship, Corinna describes it as the bond that holds marriage, as well as societies and the universe, together.

Let us first turn to her claim that marriage is a form of friendship, one of the most untraditional and distinctive of Fonte's characterizations of both relationships. As Letizia Panizza notes, this is quite an astonishing rewriting of popular concepts of marriage.

Fonte does not follow the Neoplatonic and 'courtesan' solution of friendship and love *outside* marriage, nor the weak kind of affection *within* marriage of the clerical treatises that nevertheless preserve a mitigated form of dominion and subjection. By substituting Cicero for the Neoplatonic *furor*, and expanding what had been a relationship exclusively between men to between men and women, Fonte is original, and reconciles the unreconcilable: marriage and equality. (71)

Panizza points out what a departure the concept of marriage as friendship is from the more traditional views available to Fonte. Fonte, however, extends friendship far beyond this admittedly important relationship. Corinna describes a world at peace because of friendship. As the women's conversation of friendship bears out, she hints at a cosmology that is not hierarchical, but centered on relationships that are, if not necessarily equal, then reciprocal.

Of course, in addition to the powerful qualities that Corinna ascribes to friendship, the dialogue as a whole is a demonstration of women's friendship. While Corinna emphasizes the peace that results from friendship, the performance of the dialogue establishes that debate between friends, when it takes place in a playful and sympathetic atmosphere, is not counter to that peace. Unlike much of the conversation, the part of the dialogue devoted to

friendship is not a debate. There are no pro-forma dissenters, as there are on the first day, to motivate the conversation. No one argues for a hierarchical cosmology, or that women cannot be friends, or that marriage is not a place for friendship, even though all of those ideas had contemporary supporters. I attribute this to the central place this concept plays in the dialogue. It is, after all, what has brought these women together. More than that, the possibility of friendship between men and women is more than the basis Corinna suggests for marriage. It is also the relationship that authorizes Fonte's attempts to persuade men. This is counter to the most common ways rhetoric was depicted in the Renaissance period.

In his reading of the hermaphroditic way rhetoric was conceptualized in the Renaissance, Wayne Rebhorn describes the rhetorician as almost always in the middle, often having gained social status through education, but never reaching the level of the nobles. That is, being below the ruling class, but above the vast majority of people. He argues that

Renaissance rhetoricians [were] led to characterize the rhetor as a Hermaphrodite, both man and woman [because] this double nature reflects their own doubleness, their sense that they were, or could be, both rulers and subjects, both men and women, in terms of the culture within which they lived. In fact, the Hermaphrodite was a fantasy figure who extended that double nature in both positive and negative directions . . . Through him they could imagine themselves residing at the very center of the universe and simultaneously, paradoxically, enduring the fate of a total and permanent marginalization. (196)

Oddly, while the image of the hermaphrodite makes a rhetorician's life intelligible, it renders rhetoric inaccessible to women from middle class or noble backgrounds. Reborn collapses social standing and gender, arguing that rhetoricians identify with both the masculine and the feminine, because they are rulers and ruled. Implicit in this argument is that in relationships between men and women, men rule and women are ruled. According to Reborn, feminine depictions compare persuasion through speech to seduction and masculine depictions compare it to force. However, neither of these metaphorical understandings of persuasion are available to Fonte or her interlocutors. The feminine version was not available to women who wished to maintain acceptance in middle class and noble society, because feminine rhetoric was described as seductive and deceptive, which were identities that middle and upper class women could not occupy and maintain their social status. Masculine depictions of rhetoric were also off limits as, according to Reborn, they put the rhetor in the place of ruler, and while this hierarchical relationship might have been available for women when speaking to other women, a woman could not use this model when speaking to her husband, or to a group of men with similar social standing to her own. In fact, this is a central difficulty of Fonte's text. Her characters argue that women should be able to persuade men, but if persuasion either looks like force or like seduction, neither option is available to a "respectable woman." And if persuasion is often conceived along gendered lines when it's between men, it is much harder to avoid gender and power differentials when the speakers are women and the audience is men. What Fonte

offers instead is a new conceptualization of rhetoric based on friendship. This is the beginning of an unstated but implicit reworking of orator and audience.

According to Connolly, Cicero rewrites the relationship between orator and audience, reformulating the control the audience has on the orator as a beneficial test of truthfulness: if the orator does not convince the audience, he has not convinced himself. Moderata Fonte inherits these possibilities and anxieties, but with the compounding factor of wishing to create a space where women can address men. Rather than arguing that appealing to the audience means twisting an external, stable truth, or that the orator is also controlled by the auditors, or that the audience tests the veracity of the orator, Fonte argues that men do not listen to women because of their gender, regardless of ability. Whether we attribute their affinities and reversals to a deliberate intention on Fonte's part to reread and rewrite *De Oratore*, or to a product of how the gender of the characters refracts the genre of Ciceronian dialogue, the process of comparing *Il merito* to *De Oratore* reveals stunning mirrored reversals between the two dialogues. Perhaps this is not surprising, given that in *De Oratore*, Crassus deliberately aims to unite knowledge and eloquence, in contrast to the unification of education and silence that is central to most Renaissance defenses of women's education.

Fonte's characters never say explicitly that women's education and their public silence are contradictory, but that argument is made implicitly, through performance, as well as in moments where the possibility of women's public action is raised, only to be dropped suddenly, or to be masked by raucous

laughter.

Cicero aims to bring together philosophy and rhetoric, or knowledge and eloquence, in the face of a Roman view that philosophy has no application and therefore value, and against readings of Plato that cast eloquence and rhetoric as detractors from truth. Fonte's objectives mirror Cicero's in that she aims to unite knowledge and eloquence, but her major hurdle is that she means to do so for women. Fonte's dialogue demonstrates that both women and knowledge are changed in fundamental ways when women are educated. However, before we consider how women and knowledge can shape each other, I want to first look at the most striking point of contact and reversal between *De Oratore* and *Il merito*.

In the beginning of *De Oratore*, Crassus extolls the virtues of eloquence, declaring that, "there is to my mind no more excellent thing than the power, by means of oratory, to get a hold on assemblies of men, win their good will, direct their inclinations wherever the speaker wishes, or divert them from whatever he wishes" (1.30). Crassus emphasizes the orator as exceptional, "a single being" who arises "out of the innumerable company of mankind" who can use the common ability of speech better than all others (1.30). His focus is on singularity, and on the orator as the best version of humanity. Fonte's interlocutors, however, suggest that it is through listening and being persuaded that people are most human.

In the part of *Il merito* devoted to discussions and demonstrations of public speech and its persuasiveness, there is an implicit argument made that

men who are not moved by speech, including women's speech, are beasts. The discussion of oratory begins when Leonora declares that, "If only men could be moved by force of words . . . I'd try my hand at a public oration in the demonstrative genre: I'd shower them with praise and lavish every term of affection I knew on them, if only I thought it would work" (188). Corinna makes clear that the problem is not with Leonora as an orator, but with men as an audience. She imagines their reaction to a perfectly crafted and delivered speech given by Leonora.

Oh, that would really be something to hear! . . . Would you really dare stand up in front of all those censors, those know-alls, who do nothing but carp and jeer and mock? You could try all your best logical arguments, dialectical syllogisms, rhetorical colors, but it would all be to no avail. You could form fine concepts, clothe them in fine words, alter your voice, vary your style, draw on all the right figures of speech to construct arguments, prove laws, or recall examples, but you'd still have lost your case even before you started it, and even as you began your proem, you'd find your narration and epilogue already mapped out for you. (188)

According to Corinna, women do not speak publicly because men would not be persuaded, and worse, they would treat the speaker with derision. Obviously, in listing the rhetorical features that would not persuade men, Corinna also demonstrates her knowledge of rhetoric. Her short speech takes her audience through the offices of rhetoric: logical arguments, dialectical syllogisms and rhetorical colors are features of invention, and the proem, narration and epilogue are elements of arrangement. Her mention of fine concepts and fine

words refer to style, and the speaker altering her voice is a reference to delivery. This display of rhetorical knowledge reinforces her argument that the problem is not women's knowledge or skill, but men's prejudices that keep women from being persuasive speakers. It also aligns her with theory over practice: Corinna describes how to construct a speech, but Leonora gives one.

When Leonora is finally goaded into giving a speech, she softens her combative approach towards men, and addresses them with praise. As Panizza observes, Fonte "makes full use of the literary dialogue's traditional vocation of ambiguity . . . Both the radical position Leonora sporadically assumes in the conversation and the conciliatory position she impersonates in her oration are present in the dialogue, acting as flints in a tinderbox . . . producing sparks of truth to ignite the tinder of the receptive reader's mind" (245). This high contrast between how Leonora talks about men to the women and how she would address men themselves also shows her rhetorical sophistication and awareness of audience.

In essence, Leonora's case is quite straightforward, and a condensed version of the arguments made for women's equality and fair treatment on the first day. She begins by appealing to the equality between men and women, which she argues men "know full well that we were born with the same substance and qualities as you, and that we were given to you as companions in this life, not as slaves" (190). She continues to briefly recall the injustices done to women by the hands of their fathers, sons, husbands and lovers. I want to note that when she addresses husbands, she refers to them as "dear-

est friends and inseparable companions,” terms that put husband and wife on equal footing. Unable to fully erase the asymmetrical nature of early modern marriage, Leonora instead argues that if men treat women fairly then women “will even regard you as our masters, not through obligation, but through love” (191). This formulation is repeated again, in the more general context of all women to all men. In exchange for men’s fair treatment of women, Leonora says that women “pledge in future to be even more loving and submissive to you than ever – submissive, that is, as a free choice, out of love for you, not under compulsion” (192). Outside this speech, in the context of the dialogue between women, Leonora would never offer to submit to a man. She rejoices in her status as a widow and her freedom to make her own decisions. To take Leonora’s promise of submission out of the language and context of the speech, her argument may be that the only power a man should have over a woman is the power she freely gives. This is still limiting, but apparently Fonte’s characters, who are willing to consider utopian cities without men and the possibility of leaving their husbands and declaring their independence, apparently do not believe that men can conceptualize their relationships to women without women’s submission.

The speech is no exception to the playful and ebullient atmosphere of the dialogue, and before Leonora begins, “the other women crowded around, trying hard to hold back their laughter” (189) and after, “it was a long while before their laughter died down” (192). This laughter is not directed toward Leonora as an orator and does not undermine her ability. The women laugh

because the idea of men being convinced by a woman orator is absurd to them, and yet, throughout the dialogue they make the case that men's worth depends on their receptiveness and reciprocity toward women.

The women do not blame themselves or rhetoric for their inability to persuade men. In fact, they go on to praise rhetoric, echoing Crassus, as the very thing that separates people from beasts. In this part of the dialogue, three women give slightly different explanations for the (in)effectiveness of rhetoric. After giving her speech, Leonora says, "What I've said in the past has never had any effect and I don't hold out much hope that what I'm going to say in the future will carry much weight with men" (204). Surprisingly, Corinna does not return to her earlier line of reasoning, blaming the ineffectiveness on men's unwillingness to listen to women. Instead, she points out that, "People do say, though, that just as beasts are bound with ropes, so men are bound by the power of words" (204). The image of men being bound by words conjures the popular Renaissance figure of Hercules Gallicus, a version of Hercules from Lucian's *Herakles* who is identified with Mercury and depicted "as leading his followers by means of slender chains of gold and amber connecting his tongue to their ears" (Rebhorn 66). Corinna's comment assumes that women should be able to bind men with their words, but if the reader were to picture anything like Hercules, with chains attached to his tongue, the suggested power reversal along gendered lines would be radical and likely unpalatable to her audience.

Cornelia replies that the reason men are not bound by those words is because, "not all those who have the outer form of men are really men

underneath . . . So that saying about words having the power to bind men works only in a minority of cases, since there are few men who can truly be called men” (204-205). Here, Cornelia reverses Crassus’s claim that eloquence is what separates humans from beasts. Crassus argues that speech and eloquence are what makes men superior to beasts:

For the one point in which we have our very greatest advantage over the brute creation is that we hold converse one with another, and can reproduce our thought in word. Who therefore would not rightly admire this faculty, and deem it his duty to exert himself to the utmost in this field, that by so doing he may surpass men themselves in that particular respect wherein chiefly men are superior to animals? (1.8.32-3)

According to Cornelia, then, by not listening to women’s arguments, men reveal that they are not really men. As much of the dialogue asserts, the worth of men, and now, their very status as men, depends on their fair treatment of women, both in intimate, personal situations, but also how they treat women in public settings. Note that eloquence, rhetoric and oration never take the blame for women’s inability to persuade men through speech. Instead, Fonte, like Cornelia, redefines men or at least worthy men as those who can be true friends, and who can extend that friendship to women. More than that, none of the women suggest that it is inappropriate for women to speak publicly.

Rhetoric fails not because women can’t be good orators, but because men can’t listen, and especially not to women. *De Oratore* details the ways to be a good orator and make a good oration, but one of the core criteria is that

the orator be a man. Leonora and Corinna argue that, even with training and expertise, women cannot persuade the audience they most need to convince – men. In a sense, claiming that men cannot be persuaded by rhetoric is also a reversal, as it paints men, who are the usual speakers and audiences in the western rhetorical canon, as unresponsive to reasonable persuasion. This echoes the claim that men are emotional rather than reasonable, and puts women in the superior position because they are persuadable through language.

I want to contrast Leonora's speech with the women's collective advice on a more immediate form of persuasion. The dialogue itself is, in a sense, a fleshed-out inversion of a classical rhetorical exercise popular in the Renaissance period. Thomas Sloane introduces the question and its significance in rhetorical training:

An entire history of academic disputation could center on the question, Should one marry? Or, as it was put in Latin, Should a wife be taken? A favorite in the classroom for two millennia, the question must have appealed to students in that period, who were mainly boys and young men. (314)

Although the explicit subject these women debate is the worthiness of men, the women return again and again to whether a woman can be happy married, and many tell their personal stories of being trapped in marriages where their husbands treated them badly.

These women ask whether or not women should marry, not theoretically, but practically, as two of the women, Leonora, and the young widow,

Virginia, may be expected to find a husband shortly. Virginia defends men throughout the dialogue, and only near the end of the second day, as the dialogue is drawing to a close, does she finally say, "I've heard so many fine things about men yesterday and I've heard so many more today, that I'm beginning to feel almost converted to the position of Leonora and her companions. They've made me inclined to think I'd prefer not to submit myself to any man, when I could be living in peace and liberty alone" (238). This may be a victory for the side arguing that men are debased, but it is only a theoretical victory, not a practical one. Virginia's mother, Adriana, immediately replies that her daughter has no choice but to marry because her uncles demand it. What follows is a practical guide to rhetoric for the married woman. When Virginia asks what she should do if her husband turns out to be proud, her mother replies that "since we must needs be subject to them, the only thing to do is to flatter them and spoil them" (238). When her daughter asks, "but what if he were stern and terrifying?" Adriana counsels Virginia to be "patient, silent and long-suffering" (239). For jealousy, Adriana says to give him no reason to be so: dress as he likes and stay home if he prefers. If he has a vice, Adriana recommends that her daughter dissuade him "by reminding him of God's wrath and the world's judgment, offering up the example of other men who behave decently, and reproaching his defects obliquely by criticizing them in other people" (240). Adriana argues throughout that if he is a good man, these methods of persuasion will work, but Leonora chimes in after each example, saying that nothing will dissuade almost any man from his pride,

jealousy, sternness, or vices. This scene is advice about the practical reality that parallels Leonora's pretended speech. Men will not be persuaded by a woman's oration, but Adriana and Virginia hope that a woman may persuade her husband. Again, though, even Adriana qualifies each of her strategies by saying it will only work if he is a decent man. We are reminded of the claim that only men are bound by words, and beasts are not. While it may seem extraordinary to claim that if a man cannot be persuaded by a woman's oration, he is a beast, when we see the situation in miniature, and the woman speaking to all men from a stage turns into a wife trying to persuade her husband through speech, it becomes much clearer: a man who cannot be persuaded by this woman is a beast.

In other circumstances, Adriana's advice to her daughter might be the very essence of feminine rhetoric, as a woman crafts her speech and behavior to influence her husband. Here, though, there are no hints of seduction, because women are never seductresses in *Il merito delle donne*. The sense in which it is feminine is that someone from a position of little power persuades someone with more power.

On the second day of the dialogue, Corinna and Leonora oppose each other in a way that echoes the debate between Crassus and Antonius. Just as Crassus argues that the orator should have a real knowledge of all things, Corinna argues that women's knowledge should be far-ranging and as broad as possible, while Leonora, like Antonius, has a more direct approach, and is exasperated by Corinna's display of encyclopedic knowledge on a breadth of

topics. The reason Fonte does this is two-fold. If we see Corinna's demonstration of knowledge as an example of someone who possesses the breadth of knowledge approaching that of the fabled ideal orator, then Fonte shows that even with that knowledge, as well as the skills of oratory, a woman cannot use eloquence for the public and personal good that Crassus says it brings to men. In this way, Fonte shows that, for purely practical reasons, public oration is not a viable strategy for women. Secondly, though, Fonte demonstrates that Ciceronian dialogue is available to women, and that, oddly, that strategy itself undermines a mythic perfect orator, and shows that a more complete view of knowledge comes from many perspectives, rather than one "perfect" one.

The debate between Crassus and Antonius in *De Oratore* turns on the question of whether the orator needs to have a full understanding of human knowledge, or whether he can just borrow from the knowledge of others, rather than be an expert on all matters himself. Crassus argues that "he will be an orator, in my opinion worthy of so dignified a title, who, whatever the topic that crops up to be unfolded in discourse, will speak thereon with knowledge, method, charm and retentive memory, combining with these qualifications a certain distinction of bearing" (1.64-5). Like Crassus' perfect orator, Corinna speaks on any topic the women raise, demonstrating her breadth of knowledge. Leonora, however imitates Antonius in his attention to knowledge as useful. Opposing Crassus, Antonius argues that the orator must master topics that range from the political to the legal to the everyday, but "not in the sense that he is to advise on these matters one by one, as the philosophers do, yet

so far at least as to enable him to weave them skillfully into his discourse” (2.68). Leonora echoes Antonius’s argument that one’s knowledge must be useful rather than exhaustive when she argues that the women should only discuss what is directly relevant. She asks, “What have the kind of things we’ve been talking about got to do with us, may I ask? Are we doctors, by any chance? Leave it up to them to talk about syrups and poultices and all that kind of thing. It’s absurd for us to be talking about them” (180). Lucretia, however, counters,

You’re quite wrong . . . On the contrary, it’s good for us to learn about these things, so we can look after ourselves, without needing help from men. In fact, it would be a good thing if there were women who knew about medicine as well as men, so men couldn’t boast about their superiority in this field and we didn’t have to be dependent on them. (181).

The dialogue is peppered with versions of this exchange, on topics from law to natural history. Corinna leads the women on a tour of human knowledge, and Leonora argues that most of it is irrelevant. But Corinna’s show of knowledge does more than just reinforce Crassus’s position. By displaying her own breadth of knowledge, Corinna shows that women are capable knowing as much as the perfect orator should know. Collectively, the women discuss epideictic and judicial rhetoric, and Leonora makes a speech. Taken together, the women have all the qualities of the orator as described by Crassus, but it does not lead to the same personal advantages and the potential for public good as it does for men. In *De Oratore*, a man who has developed these qualities

has all that eloquence can offer. In his opening praise of eloquence, Crassus powerfully describes its potential to please, to persuade, and to protect others and oneself. Crassus advises his fellow interlocutors to “Go forward therefore, my young friends, in your present course, and bend your energies to that study which engages you, that so it may be in your power to become a glory to yourselves, a source of service to your friends, and profitable members of the Republic” (1.34).¹ However, the women show by example that if a woman were to master oratory, there would be no personal advancement or public benefit.

While Fonte shows that Cicero’s public eloquence is unfairly unavailable to women, she also demonstrates that Ciceronian dialogue, and *utramque partem* can be used effectively by women. She gestures toward the relationship between master and student by making Corinna much more knowledgeable than her friends, but while Corinna educates her friends on many topics, and is clearly the expert they turn to for guidance, Corinna does not offer an argument about the worth of men, the worth of women, or even the best course of action, that is clearly stronger than any offered by the others. Fonte’s characters respect Corinna’s knowledge, and defend her against Leonora’s attacks, but at the same time, that knowledge is not enough to offer a thorough and accurate description of the worth of men or the circumstances of women. Even in the realm of academic knowledge, Magnanini argues that, “On occasion . . .

¹This declaration of the power of oratory and the bright future Crassus suggests for these young men is undercut when, at the beginning of Book 3, Cicero reminds his brother of terrible tragic events that follow in the upheaval of civil war. (3.6-16)

a majority of the women share the burden of generating the catalogue of facts . . . By dividing the list among five characters, Fonte maintains the lively flow of the dialogue while depicting the women's conversation as a fruitful exchange of information that highlights either each participant's knowledge or her desire to learn more through the posing of intelligent questions" (288). That is, the women all participate in creating a compendium of human knowledge, rather than just Corinna. As Janet Levarie Smarr observes,

The topic of the game may be defined as men against women, but the game itself sets women against women in a discussion on the value of men and marriage and on the positions of women in society . . . the conflicts between radical and conservative views exist among women, even within women, as much as between women and men (228).

That is, Fonte employs Ciceronian dialogue to create a vision of feminism that allows for multiple perspectives, both between women and within women. Fonte turns difference and its consideration into a strength, rather than a weakness.

By recasting the genre of women's defenses as a conversation between women but about men's worth, Fonte creates a dialogue that demonstrates the worth of women, but also argues for the necessary changes men must make to elevate the status and position of women. If we read *Il merito* as a reproduction of Cicero's *De Oratore*, Fonte demonstrates that women are just as capable of eloquence as men, but closed off from its rewards. She implicitly

argues that this is because men will not listen to women, which is a failure that Fonte deems grave, for their sakes as well as for women.

Like *De Oratore*, the performance of the dialogue is a demonstration of one kind of rhetoric, while the subject matter is often concerned with another. Just as Fonte argues that women should have access to public lives and public speech but do not, she also demonstrates a method of knowledge creation and knowledge evaluation that was available to late 16th century Venetian women: Ciceronian dialogue. Cox speaks of Renaissance Italian dialogue collectively when she argues that “Although they are not the faithful records of speech, they have great value as records of how speech might be imagined, how possible intellectual communities might be fashioned, and possible models of communication essayed” (“Female Voice” 76). Fonte’s dialogue imagines several egalitarian futures for men and women, but its most immediate value was as a model of women’s discourse and knowledge creation.

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have investigated conversation and the Renaissance pastoral landscape, from its origins through 1600. My purpose has been to connect a series of texts that implicitly offer a theory of horizontally oriented discursive space: since every pastoral dialogue is set outside the city walls, each one makes an implicit argument about how conversation and even community might be organized away from the hierarchies of sociopolitical power. Every example of pastoral dialogue naturalizes some aspects of socially constructed differences in identity. However, they also imagine a discursive space that allows for dialogue that could not happen in the city.

I coined the term “pastoral dialogue” to investigate the overlap between Renaissance Ciceronian dialogues set in the pastoral and Renaissance pastoral eclogues. The two share several features in common; most obviously, they both take place at a remove from the city, and its sociopolitical climate. As texts written in dialogue, whether in poetry or in prose, they are both inherently about communication. The interlocutors of both genres are also explicitly interested in private speech as a site of persuasion and identity creation. In *De Officiis*, Cicero develops a theory of conversation that accounts for this: “There are rules for oratory laid down by rhetoricians; there are none for conversation; and yet I do not know why there should not be . . . And yet the same rules that

we have for words and sentences in rhetoric will apply also to conversation” (1.132). In defining rules for conversation in his section on decorum, Cicero makes conversation a site simultaneously for identity creation and the display of that identity. Conversation is the site where people, whether or not they have a public role, form their persona. Conversation is circumscribed, but it is not private. In each of these dialogues, the interlocutors create their personas through private conversation, and the authors create theirs in part through its publication. As Cicero reflects, private conversation may help a public figure inspire affection: “it is not easy to say how far an affable and courteous manner in conversation may go toward winning the affections” (2.48). Cicero’s attention to conversation and oratory as the two sides of discourse breaks down the distinction between public and private. This is a feature that has affinities with feminist conceptions of public space, because, according to Cicero’s description, any topic of private conversation has a public dimension. The pastoral dialogue is a site where the distinctions between public and private break down.

Both Ciceronian dialogues and pastoral eclogues implicitly approach language as persuasive and arguments as grounded in specific subject positions. Cases are argued from multiple sides, all of which are reasonable and often by interlocutors who are especially invested in their positions. For shepherds and Ciceronian interlocutors alike, conversation in the pastoral has a game-like component. For instance, the women in *Il merito delle donne* are given the topic of men’s worth and assigned positions to argue. In pastoral eclogues,

there are singing competitions, in which two shepherds improvise song and a third judges its worth. The game-like atmosphere makes the pastoral a playful environment and often a place for practice.

My dissertation also highlights the differences between pastoral eclogues and Ciceronian dialogues set in the pastoral. For example, although performance and style are always elements in the evaluation of pastoral dialogues, these are often the only criteria in pastoral eclogues. Another difference between the two is that Ciceronian dialogues often argue to a conclusion, whereas pastoral eclogues are more open-ended, presenting multiple sides of an issue, without settling it. Ciceronian dialogues generally take place in a temporary gathering and so the attention is often to a broader community, rather than specifically about the interlocutors of the dialogue. On the other hand, shepherds are the permanent denizens of the pastoral, and so pastoral eclogues are more invested in a theory of how speech and poetry create and maintain the community. Finally, shepherds of the pastoral have no power to affect the world outside the pastoral, whereas the figures of Ciceronian dialogue often do, or believe they do.

Like Susan Jarratt's *Rereading the Sophists* and Joy Connolly's *State of Speech*, I turn to moments in classical rhetoric as models for feminist rhetorical practices today. However, unlike Jarratt's and Connolly's projects, I have intermediary examples. In the *Calender*, Edmund Spenser creates a horizontally-oriented discursive space where only ability, rather than social status or even age, determine a shepherd's worth. In *Il merito delle donne*, Moderata Fonte

creates a discursive space where women can consider radical alternatives to a society that limits and oppresses them because of their gender. While Connolly also turns to Ciceronian rhetoric and *De Oratore* specifically as an ally of feminist thought, her focus is on the larger-scale issue of political practices generally. Ciceronian dialogues and pastoral eclogues are intrinsically about something small, the way a group of people whose speech has no direct application communicate with each other. And yet, the pastoral setting was therefore a site for Renaissance authors to imagine a different discursive space, often one that was not as limited by class or by gender.

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