

Reimagining Paradise: The Politics of Form in Dorothy Calthorpe's Garden of Eden

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Although the year 1660 has long served as a convenient dividing point in English historical and literary scholarship, the cultural production of the early Restoration period bears witness not to a sharp break from the past but to an ongoing interest in the debates and themes that animated discourse in the first half of the century. The tumultuous series of events leading up to and encompassing the civil war years continued to resonate in the decades immediately following the Restoration, shaping the particular force and tenor of political and literary discourse. Although the visceral trauma of the civil wars would feature less prominently in literature by the end of the century as order and rationality became the more dominant stylistic trends, in the years between the civil wars and the Glorious Revolution writers were still actively embroiled with the uncertainties and divided opinions that were common at mid-century. 1660 was thus, as Steven Zwicker has argued, a moment of “recovering and forgetting the past,”¹ an entrée into a Janus-faced period in which potent and highly politicized nostalgia existed side-by-side with a thirst for discovery and invention.

¹ Stephen N. Zwicker, *Lines of Authority: Politics and English Literary Culture, 1649–1689* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 200. For the literary transformations that marked the civil war period and shaped the half-century to follow, see Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640–1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

It is within this vibrant political culture that we can situate the writings of Dorothy Calthorpe, a relatively new figure in early modern literary scholarship. Calthorpe (1648–1693) was the unmarried daughter of James and Dorothy Calthorpe, members of a locally important gentry family in Ampton, County Suffolk. Her paternal grandfather, Sir Henry Calthorpe, was Solicitor General to Queen Henrietta Maria, and her maternal uncle, John Reynolds, was a captain in the Parliamentary forces. Calthorpe's autograph manuscript volume was discovered by scholars when it was sold at a Sotheby's auction in 2006 as part of a sale of property from an estate at Shrubland Park, Suffolk. The manuscript was purchased by the Beinecke Library at Yale University, where it now resides. The volume (Osborn b421 v.1) contains a variety of texts, including three poems, a prose romance about the Calthorpe family, and two prose narratives with spiritual and political themes: "A Castell in the Aire or the Pallace of the Man in the Moon" and "A Discription of the Garden of Edden." Notations within the volume indicate that it was begun in 1672–73 and completed in 1684, which locates its composition within the immediate context of the Exclusion Crisis (1678–81). Internal evidence from the manuscript strongly suggests that Calthorpe herself had royalist leanings.²

Although there has been virtually no published criticism on Calthorpe to date,³ the appearance of a new work by a seventeenth-century female author is undeniably tantalizing for scholars interested in women's writing as it seems to offer an ideal opportunity to extend a narrative of women's literary history by incorporating Calthorpe into a line of "firsts" or pioneers. Indeed, this approach is precisely the one proposed at the end of the Sotheby's catalog description of the manuscript volume. The description concludes by noting, "Dorothy Calthorpe's writings are entirely unpublished. The present unrecorded manuscript introduces a new source and

² We also know that Dorothy Calthorpe left a 1,000-pound endowment for the construction and maintenance of an almshouse in Ampton at her death. For more details about Calthorpe's biography and the physical manuscript itself, see Michelle M. Dowd and Julie A. Eckerle, "The Devotional Writings of Dorothy Calthorpe," *ANQ* 24.1–2 (2011): 89–98.

³ The only published study on Calthorpe is brief and largely descriptive in nature. See Dowd and Eckerle, "Devotional Writings."

a new personality to the canon of seventeenth-century female writers."⁴ This is the lure of the anthology, as it were — the impulse to discover women's voices from the past and make them available to modern readers as representative of an evolutionary model of women's writing.⁵ But reading Calthorpe exclusively as a "new personality" prevents a full consideration of her complex sociopolitical engagements and the ways in which her texts were constituted and often haunted by the old as well as the new. Specifically, the genres and formal structures that Calthorpe deploys in her manuscript reveal both her extensive knowledge of literary tradition and her active participation in early Restoration debates about property and aristocratic legitimacy.

Focusing on her fascinating prose account of the Garden of Eden, I offer a reading of Calthorpe that articulates the political significance of her formal choices. Making use of what has come to be known as "activist" or "historical" formalism, a methodology that assumes the *a priori* historicity of any genres or textual forms under scrutiny and is attentive to how those structures mediate between a text's content and its historical positioning,⁶ I argue that Calthorpe's garden narrative makes deft use of literary form and precedent to reclaim an ideal of aristocratic hegemony at an unstable sociopolitical moment. Reading "A Discription of the Garden of Edden" as a multi-generic conversation provides insights into a complex postwar nostalgia for aristocratic values and aesthetics coupled with a forward

⁴ Calthorpe's manuscript was listed and sold as part of Sotheby's Lot 94: "Seventeenth-Century Women's Literature" on July 13, 2006.

⁵ For a critique of this approach, what she refers to as "great woman' or 'turning point' linear model," see Margaret J. M. Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 61.

⁶ On "activist" formalism, see Susan J. Wolfson, "Reading for Form," *Modern Language Quarterly* 61.1 (2000): 1–16, and Marjorie Levinson, "What is New Formalism," *PMLA* 122.2 (2007): 558–69. On "historical" formalism as it specifically applies to early modern studies, see Stephen Cohen, "Between Form and Culture: New Historicism and the Promise of a Historical Formalism," in *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements*, ed. Mark David Rasmussen (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 17–42. On generic experimentation and the use of hybrid forms in the Renaissance, see Rosalie Colie's foundational study, *The Resources of Kind: Genre-Theory in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

thinking and nascent appreciation of the spoils of empire. The medium of this conversation is the land itself, the elite estates that were the visible symbols of aristocratic power throughout the century, and yet had been subject to destruction and seizure during the civil war period. By conjoining the generic mode of country house poetry with the biblical topos of the Fall, Calthorpe participates in the historical and literary process of ensuring an aristocratic ascendancy that will by the end of the century seem to have been a foregone conclusion. But these sociopolitical changes only seemed inevitable in retrospect; in fact, they were the complex results of dissent, struggle, and arduous debate. Calthorpe's account of the Garden of Eden, written in the 1670s and early 1680s, bears witness to some of the rhetorical strategies that enabled that narrative of elite hegemony to come into being. As her text demonstrates, consolidating and reframing gentry authority in the postwar period was as much a literary process as it was a legal and political one.



Calthorpe's short prose narrative, "A Discription of the Garden of Edden," contains an expository account of the prelapsarian biblical garden as well as an extended lamentation by Adam on the loss of Eden after the Fall. The narrative opens with a detailed physical description of the garden, which God has filled "with all sorts of variety beasts birds fish and fowLe fruits and flowers" (7v).⁷ Calthorpe conveys the lush beauty of Eden's natural world in language that ranges from conventional pastoralism to the more exotic. Her Eden thus contains not only a "murmuring riuer" (8r) and "all kind of deLisaous fruits" (8v) but also "curious arbors some of torteshell rathed all ov[e]r with Iesemine and others of iouery with suckLins twining about them" (9v). As suggested by the combination of "torteshell" with

⁷ Dorothy Calthorpe, "A Discription of the Garden of Edden" (1672–84), in the Beinecke Library at Yale University, Osborn b421 v.1, 7v-14r; quotations from the folio pages are cited in the text. With the exception of line breaks, Calthorpe's manuscript has not been modernized. For a modernized version of this text, see Michelle M. Dowd and Thomas Festa, *Early Modern Women on the Fall: An Anthology* (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2012).

"Iesemine" and "iouery," the narrative frequently associates the flowers and landscape with precious gems or other exotic goods. The walks of Eden are, for instance, "paued with amber and the beds of flowers planked with mother pearle" (9r). Notable in Calthorpe's description is the presence of a "Christall house" in the middle of the garden that is "shaded under the boughs of the tree of Life whose Leaden branches kissed the rooffe and the golden appels shining through Like bright stars" (8v). The golden apples, visible and enticing through the clear roof of the house, connect the tree of life with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil — the tree of forbidden fruit to which Adam refers explicitly later in the narrative (12r–12v). The crystal house is later described as a "pallace," the walls and floor of which are "paued with turkie stons [turquoise]" (9r). The estate also includes "seauerall goLde fountains poureing out all sorts of rich wins" (9v) as well as a marble wall with niches in which stand "Lions made of aleblastter gushing out of there mouths sweet watters and under them stood great chi[n]na sestorns to catch it" (10v). The narrative situates Adam and Eve in the midst of "this trunkquillity" (9r). However, the first half of the text remains focused throughout on the garden's highly ornamented structures rather than on the couple themselves.

Indeed, while Eve figures only marginally in the narrative, Calthorpe devotes a sizeable passage at the end of the text to Adam's lament on the loss of Eden. He addresses an extended monologue directly to his "Children" (11v), the future generations of humankind, who are also implicitly Calthorpe's late-seventeenth-century English contemporaries. Adam apologizes in impassioned terms for his role in mankind's downfall:

I was first disobeadient unto God that made me the Angells in heauen bLush and are ashamed of me this should a been your inheritance but I haue Left you nothing but a heape of miseries God indeed of his free good will gaue unto me by a sure promes heauen for an inheritance and in tailed it upon you butt I haue un done you all cut off[f] the intaile and prodigally made away all for one bit I ualued my wife and a appele more then you all more then this pleasant place nay more then heauen (11v–12r)

At the conclusion of his lament, Adam urges his descendants to learn from his “wofull experience” (13v) and to seek God’s mercy in order to regain paradise. He ends the narrative by stating “the mercy of God” has “sett open” redemption to all, but that the only way to the “eternall Joy in the kingdome of heauen” and an “everlasting habitation with the most great and Glorious Lord God” is “by the gate of the crose” (14r). Adam’s lament is the only spoken text in the narrative; although Eve is clearly present in the garden, she never speaks, and her role in the Fall is never explicitly addressed.

Calthorpe’s description of Eden is part of a longstanding tradition of retellings of the biblical narrative of the Fall. Such literary analyses of Genesis were highly popular and influential in the seventeenth century, John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* being the most famous example. However, men and women representing a variety of doctrinal positions turned to the story of the Fall to comment on topics ranging from the expected (sin and salvation) to the surprising (medicine and botany). In the first half of the seventeenth century, Aemilia Lanyer and Rachel Speght wrote interpretations of the Fall that would later influence Milton, and in the second half of the century republican Lucy Hutchinson would write her own epic version of Genesis, *Order and Disorder*, the first five books of which were published in 1679, around the same time of the composition of Calthorpe’s manuscript.⁸ Throughout the seventeenth century, retellings of the Fall were calibrated not only to the specific doctrinal beliefs of their authors but also to their political aims and the broader social climate in which they were written. Indeed, although the Fall was frequently interpreted as a story about human sinfulness or gender inequality, it also served as a foundational narrative for theorists interested in defining the terms of political legitimacy and governmental authority. In addition to being a vibrant discursive medium in which to discuss and debate political theory, retellings

⁸ On the influence of women writers on Milton’s narrative of the Fall, see Shannon Miller, *Engendering the Fall: John Milton and Seventeenth-Century Women Writers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). For a range of examples of women’s writings on the Fall narrative throughout the period, see Dowd and Festa, *Early Modern Women on the Fall*.

of Genesis and the Fall were central to debates about family and state in the seventeenth century as they were used to support specific genealogical claims about the nature of hereditary rule and legitimacy.⁹ As Shannon Miller has suggested, especially in the years following the civil wars, writers may have found “the story of all human origins a comforting opportunity through which to re-imagine and reconstruct a political and social world wrenched apart by violence.”¹⁰ Calthorpe similarly re-imagines this story of human origins in her tumultuous postwar moment, exploring the rich political potential of this biblical story of creation, sin, and salvation.

Calthorpe's narrative, however, contains several unusual features that distinguish it from most other seventeenth-century retellings of the Fall. Perhaps the most obvious is Calthorpe's decision to focus exclusively on Adam rather than on Eve or on the relationship between the first human pair. Nearly a third of the narrative is devoted to Adam's lament, a speech that neither mentions Eve nor asks who is ultimately to blame for the Fall but rather draws attention to Adam's own shortcomings and his pleas for the future of humankind. Unlike Milton's and Hutchinson's depictions, there is no serpent in Calthorpe's garden, and the actual moment of the Fall is skipped over entirely, merely alluded to in Adam's concluding lament. Another odd detail is the heightened attention to physical objects and, in particular, luxury goods that pervades Calthorpe's narrative. Although Milton and Hutchinson both include extensive descriptions of Eden in their epics, the tenor of both is quite different from Calthorpe's. Milton labels Eden a “sylvan scene” (4.140),¹¹ while Hutchinson depicts the plants and “native grace” (3.143)¹² of the garden. Neither includes anything akin

⁹ See Erin Murphy, *Familial Forms: Politics and Genealogy in Seventeenth-Century English Literature* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011), and Philip C. Almond, *Adam and Eve in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁰ Miller, *Engendering the Fall*, 3. See also William Poole, *Milton and the Idea of the Fall* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹¹ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler, 2nd ed. (Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2007).

¹² Lucy Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, ed. David Norbrook (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

to Calthorpe's crystal palace, surrounded by "summer houses made of looking glasse" (10r) and enclosed by a wall decorated with alabaster lions and china cisterns.

How might we account for these curious details in Calthorpe's garden narrative? The answer to that question, I suggest, lies in the fact that Calthorpe's text is simultaneously a narrative of Eden and a depiction of a seventeenth-century aristocratic estate. While both Milton's and Hutchinson's Edens are inflected by seventeenth-century aesthetic principles and ideologies of rural repose, neither take the analogy between the biblical garden and the early modern estate as literally or extensively as Calthorpe does. Indeed, for Calthorpe the relationship between Eden and the elite country house is not simply analogous but typological. The biblical garden both prefigures and offers an interpretive lens through which to read the sociopolitical landscape of Restoration England, and the elite estate in turn redefines the essential meaning of human virtue in a postwar world. By simultaneously drawing on the narrative of the Fall and the highly popular tradition of country house discourse, Calthorpe articulates a politically charged vision of English gentry society in which landownership and moral righteousness together guarantee authority and legitimacy.

Calthorpe's Adam is both original sinner and elite estate manager. This distinct combination of positions helps explain why Calthorpe devotes so much space to him in her text and why Eve is excluded from detailed consideration. In his first, more conventional role, Adam serves as a negative exemplar for contemporary Christians, the fallen children of God who are "vicious and . . . sinfull" (13v) because they learned such behavior from their human forefather. Adam's lament thus serves a didactic spiritual function in that it offers an opportunity for his seventeenth-century descendants to reflect on the nature of piety and virtuous action. In this sense, Calthorpe's Adam is an active character, one who defines virtue as an energetic pursuit of heaven in order to regain some of the understanding of the divine that was lost in the Fall. Sin in this formulation is equated with sloth and idleness, while the path to salvation requires active faith and vigorous labor. But what kind of action is required exactly? And why doesn't the text present Eve as an equally useful cautionary figure,

since her decision to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge was the impetus for the Fall?

In her treatment of Adam and her description of the garden more generally, Calthorpe aligns active Christian virtue with the specific politics and aesthetics of aristocratic landowners. If Calthorpe's Adam points the way to spiritual virtue, he does so as an elite property holder, surveying his fallen estate and lost inheritance. It is through the stewardship provided by wealthy landlords — a category from which Eve, by virtue of her gender, is largely excluded — that what has been lost might be restored. This is both a spiritual and a material process, one that suggests the parameters of proper human behavior at the same time as it articulates an ideal of gentry hegemony anchored by sovereignty over land. In the end, Calthorpe is less interested in the precise causality of the events leading up to the Fall than in the mechanisms by which a fallen world might recover a degree of prelapsarian harmony. And that process is inextricably tied to the restoration of sociopolitical order through aristocratic stewardship, land management, and the distinct pleasures afforded by luxury goods.

By conflating Eden with the elite estate Calthorpe offers a historically significant remapping of the Genesis narrative that is as much about redefining legitimacy for the present and future as it is about connections to the past. Written during the Exclusion Crisis, which brought questions of rightful succession to the forefront of political conversation, Calthorpe's garden narrative consolidates aristocratic values at the same time as it mourns the loss of the hereditary surety such values were assumed to sustain. Calthorpe returns us to the site of undisputed biblical origins at the very moment when a crisis of royal paternity is shaking England and appeals to legitimacy based solely on genealogical origins are losing their force.¹³ But Calthorpe is also writing during a period of significant changes in property law that would dramatically affect the aristocracy and landed gentry. During the civil wars and the years immediately following, a large

¹³ For a discussion of how ideas about claims to authority or property based on lineage changed during the seventeenth century, see Daniel Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500–1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 99–137.

number of gentry estates were seized, and those held by royalist families were particularly susceptible to damage and often complete destruction.¹⁴ Such losses had a profound influence on the cultural memory of many royalists in the postwar period, heightening a sense that the order and grandeur that supposedly (and nostalgically) defined aristocratic estates in the prewar years needed to be not only restored but refortified. The amendments to property law in the years following the Restoration were designed to do exactly this, and they proved to be enormously successful. Reforms sought by Parliamentarians during the Interregnum period, such as the move away from primogeniture and toward partible inheritance, ultimately failed, and in their place were established new laws that served the interest of large landowners.¹⁵ The abolition of the Courts of Wards and Tenures in 1660 and the Statute of Frauds in 1677 significantly weakened monarchical power over land and helped establish the ascendancy of wealthy property owners, who valued legitimacy of title and the preservation of estates through succeeding generations.¹⁶ Perhaps most significantly, the development of the strict settlement during this period — a legal device usually enacted through an entail that prevented families from dividing, selling, or otherwise alienating their lands — secured the prominence of the eldest male line, gradually increased the size of gentry estates, and “ensured that the aristocracy remained landed, just as great estates

¹⁴ See Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500–1700* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 150–56.

¹⁵ See J. P. Cooper, “Inheritance and Settlement by Great Landowners from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries,” in *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe, 1200–1800*, ed. Jack Goody, Joan Thirsk, and E. P. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 192–327, esp. 225–26.

¹⁶ On these legal developments, see A. R. Buck, “Cordelia’s Estate: Women and the Law of Property from Shakespeare to Nahum Tate,” in *Women, Property, and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England*, ed. Nancy E. Wright, Margaret W. Ferguson, and A. R. Buck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 183–97; Tom Williamson and Liz Bellamy, *Property and Landscape: A Social History of Land Ownership and the English Countryside* (London: George Philip, 1987), 122–24; and Cooper, “Inheritance and Settlement.”

remained aristocratic."¹⁷ The net result of these changes was that landed wealth was more secure by 1700 than it had been in the first half of the century. By the dawn of the eighteenth century, aristocratic claims to socio-political power were based securely in clear title to land.¹⁸

The legal changes that precipitated this shift were occurring at exactly the same time that Calthorpe was writing her garden narrative. Her text can thus be understood as part of an ongoing process whereby aristocratic ascendancy came to be discursively reimagined through the stability of land ownership and the consolidation of large estates. Read within this context, Adam's apology to his descendants that all this "Glorious place" (11v) of Eden would have been their "inheritance" (12r) if he had not been "disobedient unto God" (11v) and "cut off[f] the intaile and prodigally made away all" (12r) speaks directly to shifts in property law that retroactively exacerbate the seriousness of Adam's error. Despite the strictures of an "intaile," Adam has instead wasted his patrimony and ruined the inheritance of future generations. For Calthorpe, Adam's fall offers a cautionary tale in which sin is inextricably linked to being a bad landowner and in which the desire to return to prelapsarian harmony and godliness is equated with aristocratic stewardship.¹⁹ Adam as aristocratic landlord who is commanded to "raigne Lord and king" (8r) over God's creation embodies both a lost ideal of gentry order — a recollected world of idyllic ownership that pre-existed the crisis of hereditary succession during the Restoration and the chaos of the civil war years — and the promise of that order being reconstituted and strengthened in Calthorpe's postwar moment.

¹⁷ Buck, "Cordelia's Estate," 189. On the strict settlement, see also Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993), 102–3; Eileen Spring, *Law, Land, and Family: Aristocratic Inheritance in England, 1300 to 1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); and Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641* (Oxford University Press, 1967), 62–95.

¹⁸ On this point see Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past*, 134–37.

¹⁹ Elsewhere in the manuscript, Calthorpe includes a prose romance based on her own family history in which she describes her father's care of the family estate. We can thus read her Eden narrative as offering a direct contrast between Adam's behavior and her father's.

Calthorpe develops this concept of stewardship and landed authority most fully through her creative deployment of the genre of country house discourse. This genre, which originated with the georgic poetry of classical writers such as Virgil and Hesiod, was revived and developed in the seventeenth century by several prominent poets, most notably Lanyer, Ben Jonson, Andrew Marvell, and Thomas Carew. The English country house poem as a subgenre came to be characterized by such features as a “description of the estate rather than the house,” a “recommendation of country life,” and an overriding attention to land, legitimacy, and hospitality.²⁰ As a reimagining of a classical mode, seventeenth-century country house poems typically depict a landscape that “recalls the classical ethos of ‘profit and pleasure,’” an ethos that is in turn updated and revised to reflect agrarian conditions and property interests specific to early modern landowners.²¹ These conditions and the relationships of property owners, tenants, and the larger community that they produced were often far from harmonious. Indeed, as Heather Dubrow has argued, the country house genre had its roots in the “tensions surrounding the responsibilities of landlords and the ownership of land and homes in early modern England.”²² In this regard, the country house poem enacts a struggle between two distinct agrarian poetic genres, pastoral and georgic.

Pastoral poetry, which traditionally focuses on the conventions of purity and simplicity deemed to be characteristic of the lives of shepherds and other rural peoples, is notable for its celebratory nature and its attention to the pleasures of rural pursuits. Georgic, by contrast, is “the mode for representing cultivated nature,”²³ and, as such, tends to emphasize realistic details of landscape and property, including the presence of labor. Country house poetry often combines both of these modes, in the process offering

²⁰ Alastair Fowler, “Country House Poems: The Politics of a Genre,” *The Seventeenth Century* 1.1 (1986): 1–14, esp. 1. See also Heather Dubrow, “The Politics of Aesthetics: Recuperating Formalism and the Country House Poem,” in *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements*, ed. Rasmussen, 67–88.

²¹ See Andrew McRae, “Landscape and Property in Seventeenth-Century Poetry,” *Sidney Studies in English* 20 (1994–95): 36–62, esp. 42.

²² Dubrow, “Politics of Aesthetics,” 74.

²³ Fowler, “Country House Poems,” 4.

a partial invocation of each of their ideological registers. Such poetry is on the one hand clearly aligned with the georgic in its emphasis on “cultivated nature,” the physical buildings and structures (such as Calthorpe’s crystal house) that comprise the aristocratic estate and distinguish it from other rural landscapes. On the other hand, poems such as Jonson’s “To Penshurst” and Carew’s “To Saxham,” clearly elide the social tensions and realities that are typical of georgic.²⁴ In drawing on this — at times explicitly contradictory — generic material, country house poetry can simultaneously articulate a nostalgic desire for the elite estate as a center of hospitality and largesse while also inviting in traces of more divisive local politics and disputes. The hybridity of the country house genre may very well help to account for the fact that although it was predominantly associated with writers of a royalist bent in the seventeenth century, it was certainly not exclusive to them, as evidenced by the poems of Marvell and the elegies of Lucy Hutchinson.²⁵ Despite their elite setting and generally celebratory tone, the messier aspects of the local and the topical are always present at the (georgic) margins of these poems, ready to be invoked.

Calthorpe’s *Garden of Eden* narrative takes up the generic trope of the country house to present a vision of gentry hegemony specifically suited to the sociopolitical culture of the Restoration.²⁶ Her narrative recalls quite explicitly the formal devices typical of house poems from the period.

²⁴ For the critical debate about the relationship between georgic, pastoral, and the country house poem, see Dubrow, “Politics of Aesthetics”; Fowler, “Country House Poems”; McRae, “Landscape and Property”; James Turner, *The Politics of Landscape: Rural Scenery and Society in English Poetry, 1630–1660* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979); and Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 13–34.

²⁵ See, for example, David Norbrook, “Lucy Hutchinson’s ‘Elegies’ and the Situation of the Republican Woman Writer,” *English Literary Renaissance* 27.3 (1997): 468–521, esp. 477.

²⁶ Although most examples of the country house genre were in verse, the formal models and thematic preoccupations that characterized these poems were prevalent throughout the century in non-poetic forms that position the country house as an “icon for power, legitimacy, and authority.” See Kari Boyd McBride, *Country House Discourse in Early Modern England: A Cultural Study of Landscape and Legitimacy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 11.

One of the dominant features of country house discourse, for instance, is the *sponte sua* trope of natural bounty, a figure that dates back to Virgil's *Georgics*. Through this use of hyperbole, "the estate enjoys a providential plenitude, whereby bountiful nature seems almost to offer itself, as in the Golden Age, of its own free will."²⁷ In turn, this display of bounty is associated with the hospitality of both the estate and its landlords, another central theme of the genre. The entire estate serves as an emblem of its owner, frequently becoming "a microcosmic representation of ideally functioning society, and therefore the perfect state."²⁸ Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst" provides a classic, seventeenth-century example of the *sponte sua* trope:

Each banke doth yeeld thee coneyes; and the topps
Fertile of wood, Ashore, and Sydney's copp's,

To crowne thy open table, doth prouide
The purpled pheasant, with the speckled side:

The painted partrich lyes in euery field,

And, for thy messe, is willing to be kill'd.

And if the high-swolne Medway faile thy dish,
Thou hast thy ponds, that pay thee tribute fish,

Fat, aged carps, that runne into thy net.
And pikes, now weary their own kinde to eat,

As loth, the second draught, or cast to stay,
Officiously, at first, themselues betray. (25–36)²⁹

²⁷ Fowler, "Country House Poems," 2.

²⁸ Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, "Paper Frames': Lucy Hutchinson's *Elegies* and the Seventeenth-Century Country House Poem," *Literature Compass* 4 (2007): 664–76, esp. 666.

²⁹ Jonson, "To Penshurst," in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C.H. Herford and Percy Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925–52), vol. 8: 93–96.

The “fertile” land is described throughout in lush, idealized terms, while the grounds and creatures of Penshurst (as Raymond Williams famously noted) prove to be yielding and compliant to an extreme, offering themselves up willingly to human consumption.

Calthorpe makes use of the techniques of country house discourse to shape her description of the Garden of Eden, effecting a nicely calibrated balance between trope, setting, and theme. Her Eden certainly enjoys the providential plentitude typical of the country house. Instead of the “purpled pheasant” and “tribute” fish that offer themselves willingly for human consumption in Jonson’s poem, everything in Calthorpe’s prelapsarian garden, whether natural or man-made, seems to “congratulate mans happ[iness]” (8r); the river is filled with “siluer swans” and “ebeny boates ready to pay their dutty” to Adam and Eve (8r-8v). The *sponte sua* trope enacts the theme of hospitality that dominates country house discourse, in this case by associating the luxury and abundance of the crystal house and the Edenic estate with the refined elegance, magnanimity, and moral order wealthy estate owners increasingly aspired to in the seventeenth century.³⁰ For the nobility, the virtue of magnificence, revealed through elaborate display and combined with order and good discipline was the very essence of hospitality,³¹ and Calthorpe’s narrative, like Jonson’s poem before it, formally enacts this principle. However, although the nobility aspired to grand hospitality and munificence throughout the period, such virtues needed to be reasserted more exuberantly in the chaotic postwar period. By reaffirming ordered elegance, Calthorpe does not simply repeat a literary convention. Rather, she revitalizes elite aesthetics at a crucial historical moment in which the virtues of aristocratic rule needed to be asserted, not assumed.

³⁰ See Dubrow, “Politics of Aesthetics,” 68; R. Malcolm Smuts, “Material Culture, Metropolitan Influences and Moral Authority in Early Modern England,” in *Material Culture and Cultural Materialisms in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Curtis Perry (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2001), 203–24; and McBride, *Country House Discourse*, 138–71.

³¹ See Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 25–27.

Calthorpe further develops her portrait of elite hospitality in the text that immediately precedes the Garden of Eden narrative in the autograph manuscript: a poem of thirty-two lines titled “In commendations of a country Life it being so innocent.”³² The poem, which contrasts the idyllic life of a country estate with the “tumults of a City” (6v) is a classic example of the country house genre. In almost a direct mirroring of the *sponte sua* trope from “To Penshurst,” the poem describes how in this rural retreat, a “thousand Littell fishes meet your hooks / see in the waters how they nimblly gLide” (6v). The country remains “innocently pretty” because, at least at this unnamed rural estate, “euery thing Looks neate & fine / and there the Sun with brighter beams dos shine” (6v). The overall tone of the poem is one of both innocence and refinement; the “primrose bed” (7r) that welcomes the estate’s human residents enables repose and the pursuit of “Loue and Justice” (7v). The orderly, additive cadences of Calthorpe’s description similarly encode a sense of refinement and precision.

In the central portion of the poem, the speaker situates him or herself within this idyllic setting in a way that offers a unique vantage point on the landscape:

when there I’ue Ioyed in what the woods dos yeild
my walks Leads me into a gLorious feilde
which giuede [guide] me to the tope of that green hill
from whence I ueiw the ualle [valley] below at will
the pleasentst prospect can by eye be seen
for nature there all ore is dresst in green (7r)

Calthorpe’s speaker exudes control over the estate and its surrounding lands. The generosity of the landscape, which guides the observer to the top of the hill, empowers the speaker by enabling him or her to view “at will” the valley below from a position of socio-spatial authority. Leah Marcus refers to this technique as the perspective of a seigneurial landscape, a characteristic trope of seventeenth-century rural painting and

³² Calthorpe, “In commendations of a country Life it being so innocent” (1672–84), in the Beinecke Library at Yale University, Osborn b421 v.1: 6v-7v.

country house literature in which an “idealized landscape” is “dominated by a single controlling perspective” that aligns the interests of the landowner with that of the author.³³ As opposed to a cartographic approach to landscape in which (at least ostensibly) the perspective is neutral, seigneurial landscape organizes the perspective from the point of view of a single figure, namely the owner of the land. As such, this technique spatially replicates the socioeconomic politics of the elite estate and demonstrates quite vividly that the refined perspective afforded through aristocratic hospitality constitutes a significant form of power.

Explicitly rendered in “Commendations of a country Life,” this seigneurial perspective is further developed in Calthorpe’s *Eden* narrative through the more subtle device of Adam’s lament. Although the description of the garden is voiced by a seemingly omniscient narrator, Adam’s concluding speech positions him as lord of the estate just described. Adam was thus once “possessed of this Glorious place” (11v) and “liued in this paradise full of all these delights and pleasurs beyond imagination” (12v). As “Lord of all the creaturs” his “eyes could behold nothing but that which was flourishing and pleasing” (12v) in the prelapsarian world. As in her country house poem, Calthorpe establishes a single figure—in this case, Adam—to provide order to the landscape through the power of his controlling gaze. The natural hospitality offered by Calthorpe’s *Garden of Eden*, a garden that is highly cultivated, manicured, and prepared in accordance with Continental and English aristocratic aesthetics, is developed through a seigneurial perspective that espouses the authority and the perspective of elite landowners in the guise of Adam’s nostalgic remorse. At a historical moment suffused with both gentry nostalgia for the prewar years and an urgent desire to reestablish and strengthen the political and economic positions of wealthy landowners, Calthorpe’s *Eden* offers a wel-

³³ See Leah Marcus, “Politics and Pastoral: Writing the Court on the Countryside,” in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 139–59, esp. 142. See also McRae, “Landscape and Property,” 38–39. Aemilia Lanyer also makes use of a seigneurial perspective in her country house poem, “The Description of Cooke-ham.”

come vision of aristocratic hegemony founded on elite aesthetics and moral refinement.

Calthorpe's depiction of Eden as a lavish aristocratic estate also extends and reverses another of the dominant topoi of English country house poetry from this period: the *locus amoenus*, a setting that constitutes a perfect place, often contrasted to the outside world. Through a mixture of classical and Christian myth, poets frequently figured the elite estate as a paradisiacal space, a prelapsarian Eden.³⁴ Usually, the connection between the country house and Eden is an implicit one; the grand estates described by Marvell and Jonson earlier in the century, for instance, figure the estate and its lush grounds as an Edenic locale through allusion and suggestive imagery. Calthorpe literalizes this metaphor by reversing the frame of reference, yet she retains the association between aristocratic country retreat and prelapsarian pleasure. Bringing together the genealogical implications of Genesis with the ideological force of the country house, Calthorpe capitalizes on the fundamental elite ideal of the great estate as "the physical embodiment of a lineage, of its attachment of the land, and of its paternalistic leadership over a local community."³⁵ The narrative's palpable nostalgia for an ideal, elite retreat is also a product of Calthorpe's modulation of country house discourse through the biblical medium of Genesis and the Fall, a conjunction materialized through the narrator's use of the past tense throughout the text. Obviously, biblical narratives demanded the past tense, but the country house poem did not. As Dubrow writes, country house poems tend to "counter the threat of change and the fear that hospitality," like Eden itself, "is a lost ideal by speaking a grammar of present tenses."³⁶ We can see this formal development of a "lost ideal" in Calthorpe's own country house lyric, "In commendations of a country Life," which is written exclusively in the present tense. Calthorpe's blending of the formal characteristics of country house discourse with narratives about the

³⁴ Dubrow, for instance, describes Eden as "the originary country house" ("Politics of Aesthetics," 78). Similarly, Williams points out that in country house poems, "the provident land is seen as Eden," as a paradise in which "all things come naturally to man, for his use and enjoyment and without his effort" (*Country and the City*, 31).

³⁵ Smuts, "Material Culture," 206.

³⁶ Dubrow, "Politics of Aesthetics," 78.

Fall thus precipitates a grammatical shift that underscores her narrative's emphasis on loss, nostalgia, and a gentry ideal that is decidedly *past*, yet it also highlights the need to reimagine that ideal for a new postwar reality.

In a similar manner, the physical garden that Calthorpe imagines simultaneously recuperates a nostalgic past and connects elite hegemony to a new aesthetic order. The material features of Calthorpe's garden mark it as a product of her postwar historical moment, in that they reflect late-seventeenth-century shifts in gardening practices that served the interest of landed elites and helped establish their sociopolitical dominance. The design of formal gardens changed significantly following the Restoration, as wealthy estate owners came to prefer the French style of gardens, which often featured a central fountain enclosed within a rectangular border.³⁷ Such late-seventeenth-century designs emphasized "grandeur and recreation" instead of labor or the use-value of the garden itself.³⁸ One of the most notable features of formal Restoration gardens was the construction of artificial wildernesses within the gardens themselves. These usually took the form of "dense groves of trees threaded by sinuous paths,"³⁹ often laid out in "ornamental or fantastical style,"⁴⁰ and served as a buffer between the estate and the countryside. Indeed, one of the goals of this design was to extend the influence of the estate "beyond the boundaries of the formal garden, and into the countryside to subdue it," asserting control through careful topographic management.⁴¹ Calthorpe's narrative participates in this discursive process of legitimation: while her central garden features gold fountains like many of its historical counterparts, the text also explicitly demarcates a "fine wilderness" (9v) that is separated from the rest of the

³⁷ See Roy Strong, *The Renaissance Garden in England* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 220–23, and Jennifer Munroe, *Gender and the Garden in Early Modern English Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 122.

³⁸ See John Prest, *The Garden of Eden: The Botanic Garden and the Re-Creation of Paradise* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 95, and Rebecca Bushnell, *Green Desire: Imagining Early Modern English Gardens* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 106–7.

³⁹ Prest, *Garden of Eden*, 98.

⁴⁰ See the OED definition 1c for "wilderness."

⁴¹ Prest, *Garden of Eden*, 93.

garden by a “wall made of massy siluer” (9v). The presence of this artificial “wilderness” within her garden amplifies the authority of her Edenic space and the command it has over the surrounding countryside. Gentry authority gets established through a spatial rhetoric of separation that grants precedence to the protected vantage point of the formal estate.

Calthorpe’s garden may be distanced from the countryside and the people who live there, but it is fully invested in the world of luxury and consumerism that attended England’s increased participation in foreign trade and colonial ventures in the late seventeenth century.⁴² Calthorpe intensifies the perspectival identification of her garden by aligning it with a British imperialist gaze that surveys the grounds of Eden from the central palace and sees the goods of empire: exotic perfumes, marble, ivory, turquoise and other precious stones. Not only is much of the beauty of Calthorpe’s Eden dependent upon man-made objects, but even natural elements such as trees and the earth itself are described in artificial and highly rarefied terms: tree leaves “shined like satten” (9r), and the earth “caste forth a perfume like ciutt and muske” (8r). In a version of the *sponte sua* trope, the natural world beautifies itself in order to perpetuate the happiness and leisure of the original human pair. Calthorpe’s similes, however, define beauty in terms of expensive luxury goods that were imported into England in the late seventeenth century. Certainly labor is required to produce and market many of the items (such as civet and turquoise) that Calthorpe references, but such activity is entirely elided in the narrative. Instead, her text evokes a specific ideal of elite hospitality, displayed through “an excess of luxury that outstripped all practical needs.”⁴³ The land in Calthorpe’s narrative remains ordered and refined, true to the ideals of country house literature throughout the period, but now this rural excellence is predicated on an almost “sybaritic and decadent orientalism.”⁴⁴

⁴² Indeed the artificial wilderness of formal gardens was itself often understood in colonialist terms, ideologically representing not only a biblical wilderness but also the newly discovered America. As such, the wilderness symbolically puts the “reconquered population” out of sight, at a more distant remove. See Prest, *Garden of Eden*, 100.

⁴³ Smuts, “Material Culture,” 210. See also Heal, *Hospitality*, 25–27.

⁴⁴ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, 146. As McBride demonstrates, such focus on exoticism as intrinsic to the imperial fantasies of the ruling elite is typical of much

Calthorpe subtly modulates country house tropes to legitimize a highly specific vision of late-seventeenth-century elite English culture and aristocratic privilege signified in and through the precisely ordered features of her Edenic estate. The local and the topical — what we might think of as the obscured georgic elements of the country house genre — intervene in and help to delimit Calthorpe's otherwise nostalgic narrative.

The exotic and specifically foreign luxury that fills Calthorpe's garden distinguishes her narrative from country house poems earlier in the century and from other retellings of the Fall from this period. Thomas Carew's "To My Friend G.N." (1639), for instance, praises the country estate of Wrest specifically for its domestic and non-artificial attributes. He lauds the estate for its "native Aromatiques" (14) instead of "forraigne Gums" or "essence fetcht from farre" (15) and asserts that the architect designed the house "for hospitalitie" (24) but "Devoide of Art" (21) and without "curious skill" (22), evidenced in part by the house's lack of "carved Marble, Touch, or Porpherie" (23).⁴⁵ Similarly, Milton's Eden is decorated by "nature boon" (4.242) rather than with "nice art / In beds and curious knots" (4.241–42), and his Adam and Eve walk on a ground inlaid with flowers "more coloured than with stone / Of costliest emblem" (4.702–3). Hutchinson's Eden is likewise filled with plants "disposed in such rich order" (3.142) that could never be matched by "th' apeliike art of man" (3.145) or by an artist's "[l]icentious pens or pencils" (3.146). Calthorpe by contrast describes the beauty of her garden by praising its walks "cut with such art" (9v) and notes that the floors traversed by Adam and Eve are paved with actual "turkie stons" (9r) rather than with flowers that simply *appear* as colorful as gems. Calthorpe's garden is a world of splendor, luxury, and refinement that revels in rather than condemns the display of foreign objects and man-made delights. By showcasing the spoils of luxury and their orderly confinement within an elite estate, the narrative articulates an ethos of aristocratic authority based on the proper harnessing of foreign trade.

country house literature from the second half of the seventeenth century, including works by Richard Lovelace and Mildmay Fane.

⁴⁵ Thomas Carew, "To My Friend G.N. from Wrest," in *The Poems of Thomas Carew*, ed. Rhodes Dunlap (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), 86–89.

This attention to both luxury and the trade enabled by England's colonial activity marks Calthorpe's garden as a cultural product of late-seventeenth-century royalist ideology and aesthetics. Indeed, the exotic items that fill Calthorpe's garden bear a striking resemblance to those found in a slightly earlier text by a much more well-known royalist author: Margaret Cavendish. In her utopian fantasy *The Blazing World*, which was published in 1666 and therefore possibly known to Calthorpe, Cavendish describes the fictional world of her narrative in similarly luxurious and specifically exoticized terms. For instance, when the Emperor of the Blazing World brings the character the Duchess of Newcastle to view the royal stables he has built, he describes them as follows:

the main Building was of Gold, lined with several sorts of precious Materials; the roof was Arched with Agats, the sides of the Walls were lined with Cornelian, the Floor was paved with Amber, the Mangers were Mother of Pearl, the Pillars, as also the middle Isle or Walk of the Stables, were of Crystal; the Front and Gate was of Turquoise, most neatly cut and carved.⁴⁶

As in Calthorpe's description, Cavendish highlights the precious gems that signal wealth and power in an imperialist context of imported luxury goods. Both authors refer specifically to agates, crystal, cornelian, amber, and turquoise, and both describe the intricate cutting and carving that transforms raw stones and other materials into refined art; like the gates of the Emperor's stables, the walks in Calthorpe's Eden are "cut with such art" (9v). The similarity between the two narratives demonstrates Calthorpe's participation in a shared literary and cultural tradition, one in which the aesthetic principles of elite landowners find their articulation through the formal components of exotic description, panegyric directed at rarefied inanimate objects, and the use of simile to improve upon the natural world. As both of these texts demonstrate, colonialist commerce and luxury trade

⁴⁶ Margaret Cavendish, *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (1666), in *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader*, ed. Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 1999), 151–251, esp. 246.

were a crucial part of the process by which elite authority was established and consolidated in the postwar period.

By inviting in the objects of foreign trade into her idyllic retreat, Calthorpe deploys another conventional country house trope—that of “hyperbation” (or, the trespasser)—assuaging the fear of intrusion by co-opting it.⁴⁷ Exotic goods become domesticated, subdued, and controlled through the refined taste of the elite estate owners who display them. However, in bringing together country house and Edenic discourses, Calthorpe doubly sanitizes the spoils of empire by separating them from their source in trade; the turquoise and gold of her *Garden of Eden* exist simultaneously in the luxurious, yet commendably hospitable, world of the country house and in a world as yet free from sin. In this sense, Calthorpe’s formal choices enable her to have it both ways: she can celebrate the elite English estate as a symbol of domestic authority while also asserting that authority through the material pleasures afforded by imperial trade. English travel guides written earlier in the seventeenth century often warned against the corrupting influence of things foreign, even as they tentatively acknowledged the material gains to be had from commercial venturing. Many of these guides asserted, as did Bishop Joseph Hall in 1617, that the gentry should be “happy at home” since in England “God hath given us a world of our owne, wherein there is nothing wanting to earthly contentment.”⁴⁸ By Calthorpe’s day, such views about foreign trade had changed dramatically, and the economic benefits of travel were often openly embraced in courtesy books and other guides.⁴⁹ Rather than remaining “happy at home” and refusing “to put our selves

⁴⁷ See Dubrow, “Politics of Aesthetics,” 75–76.

⁴⁸ Joseph Hall, *Quo Vadis? A Just Censure of Travell as it is Commonly Undertaken by the Gentlemen of our Nation* (London, 1617), G1r. Other early seventeenth-century guides that warned against foreign travel and trade include Robert Dallington’s *A Method for Travell* (London, 1605) and James Howell’s *Instructions for Forreine Travell* (London, 1642).

⁴⁹ See, for example, Jean Gailhard, *The Compleat Gentleman: Or Directions for the Education of Youth As to their Breeding at Home and Travelling Abroad* (London, 1678) and Andrew Balfour, *Letters Written to a Friend, Containing Excellent Directions and Advices for Travelling thro’ France and Italy* (Edinburgh, 1700).

from the side of Eden"⁵⁰ — that is, England — Calthorpe's contemporaries are invited to remake their home *as* an Eden that has directly benefited from colonial and commercial enterprise.⁵¹ Her narrative thus situates its speaker and audience in a position of economic, spatial, and sociopolitical mastery, commanding views across social, temporal, aesthetic, and colonial domains. Reimagining paradise as a late-seventeenth-century country house, Calthorpe participates in an ongoing discursive process whereby gentry hegemony would be remade and consolidated during the tumultuous postwar years.

Calthorpe's deft combination of genres and formal tropes enables her to enunciate a specific vision of gentry hegemony during the early decades of the Restoration. By turning to the biblical story of human origins in the post-civil war era and retelling that story through the seigneurial lens of the country house, Calthorpe enacts a clarification of gentry ideology and legitimacy that establishes a sociopolitical world marked by order, refinement, and hospitality. By emphasizing the value of stewardship through the negative example of Adam in his lament and the positive example enshrined in the elite aesthetics of her prelapsarian garden, she poignantly highlights the gap between the nostalgic ideal of the garden and the virtuous behavior that must now be earned through action in a fallen world. Calthorpe thus confirms the virtue of order and helps establish the authority of wealthy landowners at a particularly volatile historical moment. Royalist poetics in the years between the civil wars and the Exclusion Crisis often describe the Restoration as both a return of monarchy and a return to traditional social values; such writings frequently articulate a vision of society marked by innocence, mirth, sociability, and purity.⁵² It is precisely by conjoining the spiritual implications of prelapsarian Eden with the politics of country-house aesthetics that Calthorpe is able to fashion an

⁵⁰ Hall, *Quo Vadis?*, G2v.

⁵¹ In a similar manner, gardeners sought to import luxury botanicals into England as part of an ideological project to recreate Eden domestically by gathering plants from abroad. See Amy L. Tigner, *Literature and the Renaissance Garden from Elizabeth I to Charles II: England's Paradise* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 159–94, and Prest, *Garden of Eden*, 38–56.

⁵² See Zwicker, *Lines of Authority*, 30, 80.

elite ethos that defines virtue and political order in terms at once innocent and richly materialist.

In Calthorpe's garden, social tensions and internal conflict have been excised in favor of a nostalgic return to a prelapsarian world, but her narrative is also forward-looking in its articulation of the aristocratic social and aesthetic principles of an emerging English imperial culture. The multi-generic nature of her text enables Calthorpe to establish her highly specific vision of a perfectly ordered society in the decades immediately following the Restoration. Depicting her garden as both Eden and an English country house, Calthorpe reframes generic protocols in order to recuperate and remake gentry ideology for a postwar world. Attending to the formal variety of her narrative and the complex interplay it stages between distinct generic modes helps elucidate the ways in which her text intervenes in and helps to shape its historical moment. If we look back on late-seventeenth-century England from the perspective of historical hindsight, the vision of aristocratic virtue, order, and sociopolitical mastery that Calthorpe narrates might seem like a *fait accompli*. But for Calthorpe, looking both to the past history of prewar gentry ideology and the future of England's landed economy and imperial commerce, this vision is very much a work in progress: it must be actively and imaginatively written into existence.