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Land, Labor, and Colonial Economics in Thomas Morton's *New English Canaan*

As long as critics have written about it, Thomas Morton's *New English Canaan* has been positioned as a counterhistory to William Bradford's canonical *Of Plymouth Plantation*. One vein of critical reception has dismissed Morton's text as a flawed literary anomaly, effectively repeating Bradford's own befuddled and anxious response to Morton's aesthetics.¹ A smaller but impassioned vein of literary criticism has, in turn, elevated Morton over Bradford on the basis of his egalitarianism, proto-environmentalism, or multiculturalism *avant la lettre*—essentially celebrating Morton as a more laudable expression of individualism and freedom than that represented by the pilgrims.² Despite their differences, both of these critical responses keep intact the central terms of a liberal-nationalist American literary history that has obscured the global economic implications of New England colonialism.

Historians such as Karen Ordahl Kupperman and Edith Murphy who have emphasized Morton's commitment to colonial trade have complicated these bifurcated representations of Morton. I wish to combine here these scholars' emphasis on trade with the efforts of more recent critics, notably Phillip Round, and Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, to situate Morton and Ma-re Mount within a transatlantic literary and cultural arena. Morton's volume is read and taught in small and selective excerpts even more often than Bradford's, but I argue here that its stylistic and structural difficulties might be made more legible by reading all three of the books that make up *New English Canaan* in the context of Morton's already intersecting regional and transcontinental economic relationships. *New English Canaan's* satirical critique of the Separatist Puritans' incapacity for enjoyment—a relatively brief portion of the book that has been the nearly exclusive focus of literary criticism—is in fact interwoven with

the book's sustained theory of English colonial economics. The book condemns the New England Puritans as financial and cultural illiterates whose ungoverned access to colonial trade destroys at once the order of a traditional social hierarchy and the natural productivity and wealth of New England. Drawing on the literary forms of the masque and pastoral, Morton presents the Separatists as inept performers of an illegitimate class/status identity and urges an aristocratic reordering of the colonial society and economy that, he insists, is already modeled in the landscape itself.³ Yet Morton's pastoral depiction of the landscape also elides the labor of those Native Americans and indentured servants that transforms natural bounty into economic profits. To this extent, Morton's vision relied on the exploitative economic relations that characterized the early modern Atlantic world rather more than it challenged or offered an alternative to them, as Linebaugh and Rediker argue that it does.

As Bradford tells it, Morton and his eclectic group of Ma-re Mount traders are guilty of creating and then profiting from numerous forms of economic and social inflation; their actions have led to the inflation of prices, the inflation of consumption and spending practices, the inflation of the social position of servants and Native Americans, and the self-inflation of Morton himself, whom Bradford calls a mere "pettifogger" (226) who now thinks himself "high" (231). Morton's prompt spending of his fur trade profits figures forth the bountiful self of the aristocratic country landlord out of England's recent feudal past. Morton—probably a recently risen member of the "middling gentry"—performatively claims this identity even as he accuses the Puritans of illegitimately performing their class/status.

At the time of the Plymouth-Ma-re Mount conflict, there was literally no working model of a profitable plantation in New England. The economic drama of *New English Canaan* is therefore staged against a backdrop of land ownership disputes, trading rights and pricing conflicts, and colonial financial failure on the plantation level. A good many critics have located in fur trade competition the repressed center of Bradford's heightened animosity toward Morton.⁴ But although Ma-re Mount and Plymouth found themselves competing in the same fur trade, Morton suggests that each plantation was engaged in that trade as a means to advance very different colonial economic visions: for Plymouth, trade is a form of labor engaged in by a largely agrarian community, while for Ma-re Mount trade

is a laborless means to support a leisured class of manor lords in the image of the old English countryside.⁵ Both groups looked backward, in different ways, to economic formations that predated the capitalist world-system, although both participated in mercantile capitalist arrangements central to that world-system in their efforts to arrive there. What Bradford saw as Morton's dangerous social and economic forms of inflation, Morton represented as the natural and pleasurable re-productivity of the New World. Whereas Bradford saw in Ma-re Mount opportunistic waste, Morton saw in Plymouth wasted opportunity. Only by reading *New English Canaan* in its entirety might we begin to expose Morton's vision of plantation economics and a colonial class/status system, as well as the obscured labor relations that underlie his aristocratic pastoral ideology.

LITERARY FORM AND LAND RIGHTS

Critics who have sought a central agenda for *New English Canaan* have been stumped by the generic and stylistic discrepancies between the book's three sections. The first book offers a proto-ethnographic description of the native Algonquins, and it differs from similar New World manners-and-customs portraits only in its overtly sympathetic portrayal of the natives. The second book is a promotional tract that describes in detail the New England landscape and its commodities—features that were also, like the manners-and-customs material in book 1, a common element of contemporary travel literature. The third book's critical history of the region's present English inhabitants has, of course, dominated critical responses to Morton's volume. Rather than treat the first two books as appendages to the politicized history of the last one, however, I reconsider all three in terms of the travel narrative genre to which the first two so clearly belong. Of the three books, the middle one's extensive description of the landscape has been the most routinely neglected in both criticism and literary anthologies, though I would argue that its pastoral concern with the use and exchange of the land and its "Catalogue of commodities" supports the economic argument advanced by the entire volume.

One of the effects of privileging Morton's third book is that it prevents critics from seeing *New English Canaan* within cultural and literary contexts other than New England regional politics and Bradford's then-unpublished history.⁶ The literary influences on *New English Canaan* do

include biblical, classical, and Renaissance literature,⁷ but Morton engages those sources, I suggest, largely in the context of contemporary travel writing and the developing capitalist world-system that sustained the genre. The texts that formed the most powerful and immediate print context for this 1637 volume were contemporary promotional and descriptive travel accounts of New England such as John Smith's *Description of New England* (1616) and *Advertisements for the Unexperienced Planters of New England* (1631), *Mourt's Relation* (1622), Edward Winslow's *Good Newes from New England* (1624), John White's *The Planter's Plea* (1630), and William Wood's *New England's Prospect* (a book published in 1634, and to which Morton refers repeatedly and critically in his own volume). Unlike any of these texts, however, Morton's is not addressed to present or would-be investors, because the very premise of his book is that New England yields rather than needs wealth. Morton offers an appealing vision of colonial land remarkably free of the need for labor to an audience of English gentlemen. In doing so, Morton was likely echoing and building on the most well-known travel collection of the time, Samuel Purchas's *Hakluytus Posthumous; or Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625) which, like *New English Canaan* (but unlike the travel narratives listed earlier), targets a gentry more than a merchant audience. In Morton's view New England requires not merchant investors but gentry landholders, and his book is designed to appeal rhetorically to those he believes would govern the land best: elite English gentlemen with the means to settle and ability to rule a manor-style colonial plantation supported by a kind of trade-tenancy. To advance this economic vision, Morton pastoralizes promotional travel writing. *New English Canaan* blends and cross-fertilizes such "high" or "court" literary forms as the masque and pastoral with such "low" or "commercial" literary forms as the colonial brochure or promotional tract.⁸

Included in Purchas's collection were writings by several of the explorers and agents associated with Sir Ferdinando Gorges, president of the Council of New England, which held a royal patent to Northern New England, and for whom Morton worked as a lawyer. It is believed that Gorges first used Morton's name on a grant for New England land, as part of an effort to convince Virginia Company critics that the council's patent did not constitute a monopoly.⁹ After his 1628 exile from Massachusetts and return to England, Morton worked as a land patent lawyer, defending Gorges's New England land grants and challenging the Plymouth patent, while also writ-

ing *New English Canaan*.¹⁰ Among the competing promotional travel narratives he read must certainly have been Gorges's own 1622 tract, *A Briefe Relation of the Discovery and Plantation of New England*, written primarily to encourage further settlement in New England in the face of growing skepticism about its safety and profitability. In it, Gorges presents a plan for re-creating in New England the economic and social relations of the old English countryside.

Gorges proposes to divide the land "into Counties, Baronries, Hundreds, and the like" (*BR* Ev) and "these Lords of Counties may of themselves subdiuide their said County into Mannors and Lordships, as to them shall seeme best." He furthermore determined that these lords would govern the manor through keeping local courts, "as is heere vsed in *England*, for the determining of petty matters, arising betweene the Lords, and the Tenants, or any other" (*BR* Ev-E2r). While the countryside will be inhabited by these manor lords, the cities or towns will be home to merchants who, Gorges claims, will "gouverne their affaires and people as it shall be found most behouefull for the publique good of the same" (E2r). Gorges's colonial vision places country gentlemen and city merchants in geographically and politically separate worlds. Morton's interest in *New English Canaan* is clearly in the former, and his book largely endorses his colleague's vision of a New England countryside governed by a colonial aristocracy of landholders.

Daniel Shea has argued that Morton, who was well acquainted with Jonsonian masque from his days at Clifford's Inn, presents *New English Canaan* as a masque designed to produce a "metamorphosis" that would install Morton in New England while excluding the disorder of the Separatists' antimasque (58). *New English Canaan* might be seen as a colonial masque that performs its pastoral excess not for the court and the king, I suggest, but for the Council of New England and its leader Gorges. But if Ben Jonson's court masques celebrated the authority of and encouraged loyalty to James I, Thomas Morton's *New English Canaan* affirms instead his loyalty to Gorges and the council.

Morton delivers much of his praise for Gorges through references to King Solomon, many of which echo the opening book of *Hakluytus Posthumous*. In his book, Purchas presents King Solomon's discovery of gold at Ophir as an exemplary voyage that inaugurates the empire-building continued by Columbus, Cabot, and countless others. Morton, too, mentions

early in his book King Solomon's act of sending "ships to fetch of the gold of Ophir" (17) shortly after introducing Sir Ferdinando Gorges as "our Solomon" who has directed "the English Nation" to its own "golden mean" (11).¹¹ While Solomon discovered the precious metal of gold, Gorges has found a land whose "gold" is its geographical location.

New English Canaan presents New England to its audience of English aristocrats as a pastoral utopia of potentially unlimited pleasure and profits, but only if it is organized around a hierarchical socioeconomic order supported by colonial trade rather than King Solomon's gold or Plymouth's labor. Morton's book, which culminates with a traditional masque revels, invites its aristocratic readers to join with and reproduce the colonial economy summoned by the book's masque, and to restore to Morton the land and trading privileges denied him by the disordered antimasque of the Puritans. Land is absolutely integral to *New English Canaan*, which develops an aesthetics of colonial pastoral that finally locates within the landscape itself the right of English gentlemen to possess New England's land and wealth.¹²

PASTORAL AND MASQUE

In his recent study *What Is Pastoral?* Paul Alpers suggests that literary form needs not only a diachronic but what he calls a *diachoric* dimension that would account for aesthetic differences across space as much as those across time (x). I adopt Alpers's proposal here to suggest that Morton's book develops a colonially specific instance of English pastoral that incorporates elements of seventeenth-century court and country-house pastoral, but transforms them into what I call "trading-post pastoral." Morton's trading-post pastoral in *New English Canaan* mocks Plymouth's class/status alliance with agricultural and artisanal labor, challenging what Timothy Sweet identifies as Bradford's georgic vision. *New English Canaan* might be seen to import into colonial New England, and thus to transcontinentalize, the political and socioeconomic effects of seventeenth-century English pastoral. It appropriates colonial land for a specifically aristocratic English imperialism, but it also imports the pastoral aesthetics of the English court and countryside into the landscape of New England and into the genre of colonial American travel writing. As I explore in more detail later, Morton's trading-post pastoral imagines a colonial world of gentle-

manly leisure and luxury made possible by profiting off of the naturalized labor of Native Americans and the unacknowledged labor of indentured servants.¹³

The final three words of *New English Canaan*—“*Cynthius aurem vellet*” (199)—come from Virgil’s *Eclogues*, and align Morton as “Mine Host” with the Roman poet whose pastoral verses appeared in a new English translation in 1628, just as Plymouth was in the process of exiling Morton from New England. Raymond Williams explains that traditional Virgilian pastoral depends on a contrast “between the pleasures of rural settlement and the threat of loss and eviction” (17). If the pastoral mode serves the land patent lawyer Morton well, it is because when he writes *New English Canaan* he has been evicted from land and trading privileges to which he believes he was entitled through Gorges and the council. Morton’s inflated celebration of the New England landscape registers precisely the discrepancy between his present loss and his former pleasure. *New English Canaan* represents, as Alpers suggests that all pastoral does, a “convening”—a gathering for dialogue and song—in order to acknowledge (and aestheticize) this loss.¹⁴ But Morton—who by losing the land has also lost the trading rights and profits that accompany that possession—develops a pastoral not of the shepherd dispossessed of pasture but of the landowner dispossessed of his trading post. Morton’s is a pastoral in which colonial gentlemanly leisure can be supported by the “natural” profits received from a trade sustained by the labor of others. Far from a Leveller-like figure, as some have suggested, Morton presents New England as a place where country gentlemen like him are illegitimately evicted from their estates by Puritan farmers who incompetently “play” at gentlemanly status; for him, New England requires not leveling, but reordering.

For Raymond Williams, seventeenth-century English pastoral operates in the interests of “a developing agrarian capitalism” (22), and he situates the development of the pastoral form within the rapidly changing economy of a period marked by the interrelated emergence of land enclosures, vagrancy, and capitalist relations.¹⁵ The world of agrarian labor and rural poverty became, as Williams argues, screened out within early modern pastoral, which erases the tensions that characterized classical pastoral to leave its figures suspended “not in a living but in an enamelled world” (18). And by idealizing the social and economic relations of English country life, the pastoral of the country-house poem screens out not only the

labor of the rural poor but also the country landowner's increasing participation in the "forces of pride, greed and calculation" that characterize the new capitalist age (28). We might see Morton's *New English Canaan* performing for its gentlemanly audience this same aristocratic disavowal, much as pastoral masques did for the monarch or country-house poems did for the gentry. Morton offered the gentlemen who were members and supporters of the council a vision of New England that resembles the old English countryside, where landowners and laborers gather together in scenes of traditional hospitality and revelry that elide this vision's very dependence on complex regional and transcontinental commercial arrangements. Morton's use of pastoral and masque traditions negotiates his own disavowed participation in these commercial relations by separating from the present an idealized and abundant past.

Morton ends his book by invoking Virgil, and begins it with the conventional pastoral tropes of a temporal Golden Age and a spatial golden mean. As his book's title already explains, New England is an earthly paradise, an Eden, a "second Canaan" (93), a "land that for her excellent endowments of nature may pass for a plain parallel to Canaan of Israel" (91). The idyllic site of New England is characterized by both a geographic and an economic "golden mean." Morton reminds readers that the ideal sites for colonization are those situated within "the temperate Zones" between the extremes of "hot and cold." New England is precisely located "within the Compass of that golden mean" (8) and "Massachusetts" is furthermore situated in "the middle part" (12) of New England, an observation made earlier in Gorges's *Briefe Relation*, when he placed New England "not onely . . . in the temperate Zone, but as it were in the Center, or middle part thereof" (Dv).

When Gorges goes on to call for "industrious people, to reape the commodities that are there to be had" and join the present colonists in their "health and plenty" (D3v), he introduces the need for human industry that was a traditional element of colonial promotional writing. Since at least the earliest tracts by Richard Hakluyt, English writings justifying North American colonialism argued that the goals of spreading Christianity and gaining economic profits could be reached only through the hard work of training, planning, and planting. In *New English Canaan*, however, Morton eliminates this rather conventional call for industrious colonists. In doing so, he not only deviates from the appeal of Gorges and others but does so

without returning to the earlier colonial economic model of gold or silver discovery that underpins the writing of Columbus or Raleigh. Morton is able to erase altogether the need for English labor, for Morton's colonists will not work but rule over a land that already works for them. He argues that man is justified, by virtue of his "wisdom," to rule over all the creatures that fall within "the Compass of that golden meane" (8). This paradise emerges, however, only by the same "magical extraction of the curse of labour" that Raymond Williams discovers at work in the pastoral country-house poems of Jonson and Carew (32). For Morton, the paradise of New England is a laborless world because the very climate that makes it a geographic golden mean also makes it an economic golden mean. As he notes, the winds not only bring the rain but "do blow Trade" (10) in the same direction. And as this phrase suggests, the work of trade in this second and superior Canaan is associated less with human beings than with the natural world itself.

Yet one of Morton's most delightful descriptions of an Edenic golden age in the golden mean of Massachusetts exposes also, on closer inspection, a revealing account of the kind of labor and economic relations that enable such bountiful beauty to bring pleasure to the leisured owner-observer. In the pastoral paradise of New England, Morton finds

so many goodly groves of trees, dainty fine round rising hillucks, delicate fair large plains; sweet crystal fountains and clear-running streams that twine in fine meanders through the meads, making so sweet a murmuring noise to hear as would even lull the senses with delight asleep, so pleasantly do they glide upon the pebble stones, jetting most jocundly where they do meet; and hand in hand run down to Neptune's Court, *to pay the yearly tribute which they owe to him as sovereign Lord of all the springs.* (53-54; emphasis added)

The landscape here is a place of supreme leisure, extraordinary bounty, and playful happiness. Yet what is a pleasurable performance of nature from the position of the recumbent Lord (whether the resting Morton or Neptune himself) is also, from the perspective of the running streams, an act of labor and financial payment. The "tenant" waters are meanwhile working continuously, if with great apparent happiness, to pay their rent to the "landlord" (or waterlord, perhaps, in this case) of the sea. The natural world itself models a socioeconomic arrangement that is repeated among its in-

habitants, since the relationship here between Neptune, the lord of the sea, and the laboring streams, is precisely that between Morton, trading post owner, and the Indians, who have a “covetous desire . . . to commerce with our nation, and wee with them” (17).

Morton’s pleasurable description of the pastoral landscape follows immediately after his initial announcement that he arrived in New England “with 30 servants, and provision of all sorts fit for a plantation” (53). He undertakes the “survey of the country” that results in this description, he claims, “while our houses were building” (53), a phrase whose passive tense elides the human labor of the servants engaged in house construction.¹⁶ Just as often, however, Morton’s descriptions of the country’s natural inflationary excess exclude the presence of human beings altogether. In book 2 in particular, sentence after sentence struggles to make language rich enough to describe the wealth of the country:

Contained within the volume of the land, fowls in abundance, fish in multitude, and discovered besides, millions of turtledoves on the green boughs; which sat pecking of the full ripe pleasant grapes that were supported by the lusty trees; whose fruitful load did cause the arms to bend. With which here and there dispersed you might see lilies, and of the Daphnean tree; which made the land to me seem paradise. For in mine eye, ’twas Nature’s Masterpiece: Her chieftest Magazine of all, where lives Her store. If this land be not rich, then is the whole world poor. (54)

This is a landscape so wealthy that it literally bends over to offer itself to its reclining inhabitants. Morton has likewise seen so many bass “stopped into the river close adjoining to my house . . . as will load a ship of 100 tons” (84), and “[o]f Smelts there is such abundance that the Salvages do take them up in the rivers with baskets, like seives” (86). Some fish are so big and numerous, claims Morton, that “fishermen only eat the heads and fins, and throw away the bodies” whereas other fish “do almost come ashore, so that one may step but half a foot deep and prick them up on the sands” (87).

Morton’s economics of laborless abundance challenge the economics of investment that characterize most contemporary colonial travel writing. Morton deliberately contrasts, for instance, both the content and the style of his description with that of William Wood’s *New England’s Prospect*, published in 1634 while Morton was writing *New English Canaan*, and

which he repeatedly refers to as “a wooden prospect” (57). Wood, whose book adopts plain style, insists on the necessity of both colonial investment and labor. A rich man, Wood emphasizes, coming to New England “must first scatter before he gather,” or become momentarily poor through expenditure before “his increase comes in double” later (68). Future prosperity can arrive only if human labor is expended in the present, for “whereas it is generally reported that servants and poor men grow rich, and the masters and gentry poor, I must needs confess that the diligent hand makes rich and that laboring men having good store of employment, and as good pay, live well and contentedly” (73). Morton characterizes this expenditure of labor as, at best, unnecessary and unintelligent waste, and at worst, a deliberate misrepresentation designed to dissuade competing claimants to the country. Why work, Morton asks, when trees bend over to deliver their fruit, and fish wash ashore at one’s feet? Morton’s New England, in contrast to Wood’s, is a land not of labor but of leisure, because the land itself yields all the commodities any inhabitant might need.

Book 3, which might appear to abandon the promotional pastoral of the previous book for its satirical history of the Plymouth Separatists, actually relies on Morton’s earlier description of the land’s abundance to support his critique of the Puritans’ economic mismanagement of New England. After his return to Massachusetts with Isaac Allerton in 1629, Morton describes an attempt by “Captain Littleworth” (Captain John Endicott) to organize the beaver trade within the region granted them by the “Patent of the Massachusetts” (164). Captain Littleworth, whose very name announces his financial valuelessness, requires the planters to sign articles promising to “*follow the rule of God’s Word*” (165) if they wish to reside within the compass of the patent, and to contribute to the “general stock” if they wish to participate in the beaver trade within that patent. But after only six months, the participating partners called for an accounting and discovered that “instead of increasing the profit, they had decreased it; for the principal stock . . . was fretted [fretted, wasted or worn away] so, that there was a great hole to be seen in the very middle of it which cost the partners afterwards one hundred marks to stop” (166). Morton, on the other hand, as the only planter who refused to sign the articles and to enter into the trade agreement, “did not only save his stock from such a Cancar [canker or open wound], but gained six and seven for one” (167). As if their regional financial arrangements mimic transatlantic ones, the Separatist

planters make a poor investment that yields only loss. Morton represents another economic possibility altogether, in which, without any apparent risk, his possessions multiply six- or sevenfold. The Puritans' economic ineptitude is repeatedly aligned by Morton not only with their religious, but with their socioeconomic, identity.

When Littleworth/Endicott responds to the failure of his trade arrangements, for example, by organizing a raid on Morton's home, his actions betray not only his financial ignorance but also his class/status ignorance of the traditional hospitality and feasting customs of the English countryside. Littleworth reportedly enters Morton's house under the pretense of recovering corn and other goods belonging to the Separatists, although Morton maintains that Littleworth's loss was his own fault, the result of having "improvidently trucked his store for the present gain in beaver" (167). Littleworth's greed causes him to sacrifice his colony's common store of food for the promise of failed future returns (167). While Morton is securing his ammunition in the woods, the "Commissioners entered the house; and wilfully bent against Mine honest Host, that loved good hospitality. After they had feasted their bodies with what they found there, they carried all his corn away, with some other of his goods, contrary to the laws of hospitality." Morton charges the men with violating old English countryside traditions of good hospitality, but such violations are themselves the result of the Puritans' blindness to the pastoral excess that surrounds them. After they leave, for instance, Morton simply kills some "fowl, and venison" with his gun, taking advantage of "the plenty of the country, and the commodiousness of the place affording means by the blessing of God. And he [Morton] did but deride Captain Littleworth, that made his servants snap short in a country so much abounding with plenty of food" (168). Endicott and his men experience poverty and hunger, and must resort to theft, because they lack the knowledge and ability to reap the landscape's natural abundance that country gentlemen like Morton possess.

Indeed, the hierarchy of class/status groups that brought order to the traditional English world so often invoked by Morton, has clearly collapsed in New England. One chapter in book 3, titled "Of the Degrading and Creating of Gentry in New Canaan," tells the story of how one English gentleman newly arrived in New England was arbitrarily "degraded" in rank by "Joshua Temperwell" (John Winthrop) simply because the man "incurred

the displeasure of great Joshua" (174). Meanwhile, a pious Separatist who had become wealthy through the beaver trade was, upon renouncing such commerce for religious reasons, "made a Gentleman of the first head" (175). The Separatist Church is likewise characterized by this collapse of the traditional socioeconomic order, for any of those who govern the church, "though he be but a Cowkeeper," might become a public preacher (181). The danger of this social mobility, Morton observes, might be seen in the example of King Louis XI, who "advanced his Barber to place of Honor, and graced him with eminent titles," permitting him even to address political matters with "foreign princes" (183). The French monarch soon learned, however, that the man "behaved himself so unworthily (yet as well as his breeding would give him leave)" that he had to be exiled from the kingdom. For Morton, the Separatists are precisely such a group of commoners who have duped themselves into believing they can become gentlemen. Book 3 is in large part an effort by Morton to expose the Puritans' "ass's ears [that] will peep through the lion's hide"; he intends to expose the socioeconomic identity of "these illiterate people" (184) who, as common laborers, lack—from Morton's point of view—the ability and legitimacy to govern and manage the paradise that is New England.

Morton turns to the genre of the masque in book 3 to depict to the council and Gorges in theatrical terms the conflict between the Puritans and himself, employing the songs, dances, mythological figures, and revels that characterized the Stuart court masque. Just as Ma-re Mount's revels appeared profligate to Bradford, Stuart court masques were perceived by many to be a wasteful and excessive display, particularly at a time when England was in an economic depression. In his critical 1625 essay on masques, for example, Francis Bacon called them expensive "Toyes" and sharply took them to task for their extravagance. In Patricia Fumerton's brilliant analysis, the Jacobean court masque emerges as a performance of the crown's ambivalent relationship to colonial commerce. Thus, the performative work of a masque like Jonson's 1624 *Neptune's Triumph* was to "mask the fact that the 'private' sel[ves]" of the aristocrats enjoying the production were "the very embodiment of such greedy consumption" (173) as was contained and demonized within the embedded antimasque. *New English Canaan* offers the same satisfying identity to its English aristocratic audience, although its distinction between the world of the masque and the antimasque is the presence not of trade but of labor. The intrusion of the

disorder of the antimasque—represented by the ignorant, blind, and incompetent Separatists—represents the entrance of commoners, exposed by their labor, into the realm of gentlemen landlords.

MOLES, INSECTS, AND LABOR

If book 2 presents a landscape of natural abundance that reproduces itself without the need of human labor, book 3 presents its Puritan inhabitants as a kind of plague whose misguided labor brings morbidity and infertility to Canaan's paradise. Morton frequently describes the Plymouth Separatists as moles, first calling them by this name when he records their unacknowledged inability to interpret the poem he nailed to the maypole in celebration of the renaming of his plantation. He mocks their "most pitifull[]" inability "to expound" the poem (135), concluding that they "despise" learning and "vilify[] the two universities . . . not considering that learning does enable men's minds to converse with climents [*sic*] of a higher nature then is to be found within the habitation of the Mole" (141). Morton proceeds to offer his own analysis of "the Poem according to the true intent of the authors of these Revels, so much distasted by those Moles," and his literary explication is designed "to convince them of blindness as well in this [literary interpretation] as in other matters of more consequence" (139). As moles who live in the darkness aligned here both with a common social ranking and the soil itself, the Separatists have no access to elite knowledge, but also no access to the climate of New England's temperate zone and its abundant productivity.

The "habitation of the Mole" is of course more specifically the tilled soil where crops are planted, an association that Edward Johnson made explicit in his *Wonder-Working Providence* when he identifies moles with what Timothy Sweet calls "too much intensive concentration on farming" (57; see 29 in Johnson). This agrarian exclusivity has for Johnson the effect of blinding these farmer-moles toward other economic possibilities, including most particularly that of trade. But in Morton's representation, the Puritans cannot profitably manage trade even when they try, for the economic blindness associated with their social ranking renders them unable to even see New England's natural abundance. *New English Canaan* brings to light the abundant value of New England that has been hidden by the Separatist moles (and their writers like William Wood).¹⁷ The Puri-

tans' class/status might prepare them to be able laborers of the soil but not competent traders of commodities.

Consider the example of "Master Bubble," the unidentified character whose exploits Morton describes in the chapters leading up to his account of the Ma-re Mount revels. Bubble is described as one who spends countless hours uselessly recording the language of the natives; since he is unable to understand what he has recorded, his efforts are a complete "loss of labor." He also is described as being so dull an orator that he "lulled his auditory as fast asleep as Mercury's pipes did Argus' eyes" (123), rendering his own listeners at least temporarily blind. When he comes to visit Morton, the grace he delivers—with closed eyes—at the dinner table is so long that Morton decides to help himself to the food during "this blind oratory . . . and had half-done before this man Bubble would open his eyes, to see what stood afore him" (124). And Bubble's idiocy and blindness extend to his trading ability as well, for Morton explains that he would "buy anything that was to be sold" regardless of its price, and solely on the basis of how much time he was allowed for payment (123). Later, while trying to take advantage of the inland beaver trade, Bubble convinces himself of some illusory Indian conspiracy, and runs away without his shoes and with "his breeches . . . on his head" (128), a blindly inverted trader running away from profit. He recovers all the goods and equipment he brought with him only because the Indians are honest enough to bring them back. Morton later observes, in his list of the Separatists' tenets, that they pray with their eyes closed "because they think themselves so perfect in the high way to Heaven that they can find it blindfold. So do not I" (188). And after burning Morton's house down upon finding him guilty in court of several charges, Morton observes that "they had found their error (which was so apparent that Luceus' eyes would have served to have found it out in less time)" (190–91).

Book 3 repeatedly characterizes the Separatists as laborers whose blindly unnecessary work produces nothing of value. Book 1's proto-ethnographic account of the Indians is, on the other hand, an inadvertent record of the necessary human labor that quietly sustains Morton's aristocratic pastoral vision. This point goes surprisingly unacknowledged, however, in Linebaugh and Rediker's study of the Revolutionary Atlantic world, which identifies "new forms of self-organization" among workers that appear in response to the "processes of expropriation, exploitation, and colonization" that characterize the early seventeenth-century Atlantic world. These

new forms were often characterized by members of the ruling class as “monstrous,” and they identify the image of the seven-headed hydra as one of the most common formulations of this monstrosity (40). Thomas Morton uses precisely this image to describe the Puritans’ perception of his small group, and Linebaugh and Rediker nominate Morton’s Ma-re Mount as one of many alternative communities within early modern capitalism, describing Morton as one who “advocated acquiring the land through co-operative trade with the Native Americans,” who “praised their midwives, medicine men, and uses of the land,” and whose “followers, servants and fugitives of several languages and colors, hoisted the maypole and joined the round dance, earning the wrath of the Puritans” (62). But it is perhaps less easy to celebrate Morton’s collective than this description suggests, for when Linebaugh and Rediker describe the ruling class’s erasure of workers’ labor from landscape descriptions, they could very well be describing Morton’s own text: “[T]he field is *there* before the plowing starts; the city is *there* before the laborer begins the working day. Likewise for long-distance trade: the port is *there* before the ship sets sail from it; the plantation is *there* before the slave cultivates its land” (42). The abundant landscape of New England is likewise for Morton *there*, before the indentured servants and Native Americans work and hunt and build it. Morton’s pastoral vision — much as the wealth that will effortlessly arrive for the gentlemen landlords whom he invites to New England — depends on the toil of others, on the occluded labor of the Native Americans and indentured servants who also inhabit New England.

If the Puritans are moles, then the Indians are ants and bees. The two animals that prosper best in the “*Zona Temperata*” are, Morton notes, “the Ant and Bee” (10) — both of which are identified with industriousness and with hoarding. Morton’s interest in ants and bees is evident in several other references that link the productive qualities of these insects with the imperialist figure of King Solomon. In book 2, for instance, Morton describes the incredible abundance of the country, which is “so infinitely blest with foode, and fire, to roast or boyle our Flesh and Fish” and so temperate that no man should have cause for complaint “unless he be one of those that Solomon bids go to the Ant and the Bee” (89). In this passage, Morton quotes, if somewhat inaccurately, from the passage in Proverbs — a book traditionally attributed to Solomon — which suggests that the “lazybones”

should "Go to the ant" and learn from the insect's diligence and hard work how to avoid poverty and want (Proverbs 6.6–11).

It is, however, neither the colonial organizer Gorges nor the landholder Morton who are aligned with these industrious insects, but the Native Americans who inhabit New England. In fact, Morton's reference is particularly revealing when we remember that in his description of the Indians' method of storing corn underground during the winter months, he compares their practice "to the Ant and the Bee" (36), and he even earlier declared the entire "*Zona Temperata*" of New England as the ideal habitation of "the Ant and Bee" (10). Morton's portrayal of the Indians as generous, tractable, and even "ingenious" (37) does of course offer a sympathetic portrait of them, as it also convinces would-be planters that they need not fear Indian violence in New England. But he is more subtly here castigating those reports and individuals who have characterized New England as intemperate, or unproductive, or barren—and suggesting, Solomon-like, that these "lazybones" should "go to the Indians." But Morton is not suggesting that settlers and planters need themselves learn how to become hard-working ants and bees like the Indians, but only that they need to trade with them in order to take advantage of the productivity and abundance that already, by virtue of the natives' entirely naturalized labor, flourishes in New England. Like aristocratic landowners in England, the colonial landowner can live in pastoral leisure, free from labor, collecting profits from trade in the place of rents. If Ma-re Mount operated as other colonial New England trading posts or "truck houses" did, for example, Morton would have first extended credit—in the form of guns, food, clothing, or tobacco—to Native Americans who were expected to repay their debt by returning with marketable animal furs and hides. Those furs would then have been sent to Europe, where there was increasing demand for beaver pelts and other "luxury furs" (DePaoli 177).

While it is unclear just what comprised Morton's own activities at the trading post, he significantly never represents himself as engaged in any activity other than the country gentleman's sport of hunting. Even when labor is clearly required in order to make game into a marketable commodity, this labor is either left undescribed or ascribed to the Indians. He remarks, for example, on the "great abundance" of geese, which have often appeared as "1000 before the mouth of my gun. I never saw any in England

for my part so fat as I have killed there in those parts. The feathers of them make a bed softer then any down bed that I have lain on; and is there a very good commodity. The feathers of the Geese that I have killed in a short time have paid for all the powder and shot I have spent in a year, and I have fed my dogs with as fat Geese there as I have ever fed upon myself in England” (62–63). The economic usefulness of the geese he shoots appears almost a by-product of the sport of hunting, and Morton never describes himself preparing or exchanging (i.e., plucking and selling its feathers) any of the game he kills. He does, however, frequently describe the work of the Indians in building homes, catching fish and game, and preparing goods, such as when he notes in his report on elk that “their hides are by the Salvages converted into very good leather” and “of this leather, the Salvages make the best shoes, and use to barter away the skins” (70).

If an English landowner like Morton need not work, it is because the land and its inhabitants will work for him. While Morton himself engages in the English gentleman’s leisure activity of fowl-hunting, the Indians are often described in terms that, at least inadvertently, reveal their physical labor. They build houses by “gather[ing] poles in the woods” and “placing them in form of a circle or circumference; and bending the tops of them in form of an Arch, they bind them together with the bark of Walnut trees, which is wondrous tuffe.” These poles the Indians then “cover with mats, some made of reeds and some of long flags, or sedge finely sowed together with needles made of the splinter bones of a Crane’s leg, and with threads made of their Indian hemp, which their groweth naturally.” They construct beds of “planks commonly about a foot or 18 inches above the ground, raised upon rails that are borne up upon forks” and use as blankets “coats of deerskin, otters, beavers, raccoons and of bears’ hides, all which they have dressed and converted into good leather with the hair on for their coverings” (21). While accounts such as these do contain a wealth of fascinating ethnographic detail, in their very detail they also seem to dwell on the amount of labor expended by the Indians to transform the landscape’s raw materials into useful products.

The skins prepared by the Indians are, of course, the most valuable of their productions for the trading-post owner Morton, and he observes that the Indians have sometimes had so many moose hides that “they have bestowed six or seven at a time upon one Englishman whom they have borne affection to” (70). Even English fish hooks, he notes, can be traded

to the Indians in exchange for a valuable beaver skin, which, in turn, can be traded for even greater profit. Moreover, in the best English countryside traditions, the natives who work to construct such homes offer guests leisured hospitality, and "will spread a mat for him, of their own accord, and lay a roll of skins for a bolster, and let him lie," only waking him in order to feed him meat they have prepared (22). The description of Indian labor here resembles Morton's account elsewhere of the beaver, who "cuts the bodies of trees down with his foreteeth . . . And with the help of other beavers . . . they draw the log to the habitation appointed, placing the logs in a square; and so by piling one upon another, they build up a house, which with boughs is covered very strongly, and placed in some pond to which they made a dam of brushwood like a hedge" (72-73). In fact, Morton sustains throughout his book such parallels between the Indians, the animals, and the landscape of New England, representing all three as "naturally" productive and fruitful. Morton's pastoral effectively blurs the dependence of his own leisure on the laboring bodies of Native American men and women who hunt, build, prepare exchangeable animal skins, and reproduce children.

Morton extends this naturalized and aestheticized productivity to Indian women as well, and marvels that even when Indian women are "as great as they can be" with child, "yet in that case they forbear neither labor nor travel. I have seen them in that plight with burthens at their backs enough to load a horse, yet do they not miscarry, but have a fair delivery, and a quick. Their women are very good midwives, and the women very lusty after delivery, and in a day or two will travel or trudge about" (26-27). In book 2, Morton reminds us, he demonstrated "how apt [the country] is likewise for the increase of Minerals, Vegetables, and sensible Creatures" (120). Not only is the soil fertile and commodities abundant, but "in New Canaan the deer are accustomed to bring forth 2 and 3 fawns at a time" (92)—evidence of a remarkable natural fertility. Likewise, he insists, "the increase of . . . Children" (120) proceeds effortlessly in New England; despite the fact that far fewer women live there than in Virginia, more children have been born in seven years in New England than were born in 27 years in Virginia. In his tale of the "Barren Doe of Virginia, Grown Fruitful in New Canaan," Morton yokes wealth and eros together, Solomon-like, by insisting that profit and pleasure are simultaneous in a land as fertile as New England.

In the poetic prologue that presents New England as a “fair virgin, longing to . . . / meet her lover in a Nuptial bed,” Morton claims that the country, like the virgin, is “most fortunate / When most enjoyed” — and he insists throughout his book that it is, indeed, necessary to enjoy New England, to take pleasure in it, in order to make it prosper, to make it “fortunate.” Morton offers his own pastoral colonial economy as a (re)productive alternative to the Puritans’ fruitless labor, arguing that, at present, Canaan’s “fruitful womb, / Not being enjoyed, is like a glorious tomb” (7). The erection of the phallic maypole, and the invitation in “The Song” to “Lasses in beaver coats” (138) to come and join them — an expression of hope that “wives [might be] brought over to them” (139) — represent Morton’s identification of Ma-re Mount with masculine sensuality, but also with reproduction and trade (since the women will arrive, apparently, wearing exchangeable commodities).¹⁸ For Morton and his fellow traders, profits are generated by pleasure and consumption, rather than by labor and hoarding. Why should Englishmen labor to accumulate goods, when New England and its *zona temperata* allows them to immediately enjoy its products and profits without any work? While Morton emphasizes the “getting and hoarding” capacities of ants and bees, it is crucial to note that what makes New England so attractive is that it does not require English gentlemen to labor like such insects, since the industriousness and productivity of the ant and the bee do not represent qualities demanded of those settlers who would hope to inhabit and plant New England so much as they represent qualities already possessed by a landscape and inhabitants that Morton portrays as naturally productive.

Morton deliberately bars from his dense and difficult text those moles doubly associated with cultural illiteracy and agrarian labor. The meaning of Morton’s text cannot be accessed by such common readers, no matter how hard they might try, just as the abundance of New England cannot be enjoyed by labor. *New English Canaan* therefore depends on a courtly reading model that, as Julie Solomon describes it, elicits readers’ desire and encourages them to project themselves into and fashion themselves out of a text, much as aristocrats would have read Spenser and Sidney. Part of what makes Morton’s text so unintelligible (and also so interesting) is that he mobilizes this earlier courtly reading model in the service of what is largely (though not exclusively) this newer commercial content. By including the texts and explications of his several poems, he asks readers to locate

their desire and to fashion themselves as colonial aristocratic lords precisely in response to his merchantable "Catalogue of commodities." Morton's inflationary language is itself a kind of site of fertility, reproducing readers as leisurely country gentlemen who watch as the "natural" processes of commodity trade reproduce New England in the image of the English countryside. *New English Canaan* thus offers its readers a kind of aristocratic colonial fantasy; it promises would-be planter-gentlemen the pastoral possibilities of unlimited pleasure and leisure rather than the burden of hard labor and the necessity of sacrifice.

NOTES

I thank Jennifer J. Baker, Marc Bousquet, and Eric Wertheimer for their helpful comments on this essay.

1. See, for example, Adams v, 103; Connors 81; Arner 217; and Shea 52, 56.
2. See Drinnon on Morton's incipient communalism (409); Zuckerman on his "casual democracy" (276); Arner on his natural paganism (162); and Demos on his protoenvironmentalism (x). Dempsey (124), Zuckerman (263), and Slotkin (64) all portray him as a multiculturalist.
3. In using the more flexible formulation of "class/status" to describe socioeconomic formations in the seventeenth-century British Atlantic, I borrow from the work of James Holstun, who asserts that although premodern status categories "do not refer exclusively to the mode of production" they "would collapse and become meaningless if they were not at least *partly* and even . . . *primarily* class relations" (99).
4. See Kupperman, Salisbury, and Demos.
5. John Demos remarks that "trade was secondary" at Plymouth "to agriculture and artisanship," which was not true of Ma-re Mount (85). This broader debate about colonial economic ideology also helps to explain why Morton continued to be prosecuted by Puritan New England authorities years later, even after his claims to the fur trade would have been minimal.
6. Bradford's section on Morton, of course, was written nearly two decades after the events it records, considerably after Morton wrote his own volume.
7. See both Arner and Connor for discussions of Morton's hybrid and backward-looking style.
8. I share here Arner's view that Morton mixes "pastoral and promotional modes" (217).
9. For more on whether or not Morton had a legitimate claim to land in New England as early as 1620, see Dempsey 69–72. Dempsey also explains that Morton came from the "middling gentry" (22) and that his family, like Gorges's, probably attained that status through his father's military service for the Crown.

10. The Plymouth patent was in fact revoked in 1635, but the revocation was never put into effect.
11. Gorges himself nominated King James II as "another *Salomon*, for wisdom and justice" (4) in his 1658 *Briefe Narration*. Orgel notes that King James I was often represented as Solomon (73) and that he was portrayed as Neptune in Jonson's January 1625 masque *Neptune's Triumph for the Return of Albion* (71).
12. Patterson suggests that in the seventeenth century, pastoral and georgic became necessarily intertwined around the crucial issue of land ownership (134). Among critics of Morton, only McWilliams recognizes the centrality of "legal land title" to the Ma-re Mount conflict (45).
13. Salisbury astutely recognizes that Morton's "admiration of the Indians' lifestyle was largely a shrewd recognition of their skills in efficiently extracting and utilizing the region's natural resources" (161).
14. Unlike Williams, Paul Alpers suggests that pastoral does not deny but instead naturalizes and aestheticizes such painful realities as suffering or death or error (59) — or, he might have added, labor.
15. Annabel Patterson similarly tracks the early modern fate of pastoral and its class allegiances when, following Anthony Low, she aligns pastoral with the aestheticized and intellectualized realm of "an aristocratic and later royalist elite," and the alternative form of the georgic with the "radical scientific thought or . . . social protest" of "those involved in 'work,' whether commercial or agricultural" (138).
16. Dempsey observes this elision of Morton's servants' labor (148).
17. For this understanding of moles, I am indebted to Tim Sweet's fine reading of Johnson in his *American Georgics*.
18. See Murphy's analysis — which reads the "Rise Oedipus" poem as the depiction of a contest in which the manly Morton and the feminized Pilgrims compete for the hand of the land itself — for further evidence of the contrast between Morton's erotic economy of abundance and the Puritans' wasteful and empty infertility.

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