

Sacred Sheep:
Ovine Imagery in the Art of William Shakespeare,
Thomas Middleton, and Jan van Eyck

by

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Abstract

This thesis studies the image of sheep in Late Medieval and Renaissance culture. It analyzes sheep through three conceptual lenses: faith, fabric, and flesh. Through faith it studies sheep's Christian connotations. Through fabric it studies how the English Wool trade turned sheep into a symbol of greed; and through flesh it studies the rise of the mutton market and how it further debased sheep into a symbol of materialism. It takes as its core texts three early-modern plays: *King Lear* and *The Winter's Tale* by William Shakespeare and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* by Thomas Middleton, which contain complex depictions of the ovine. These plays are contrasted with the balanced view of sheep in the late Medieval painting *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* by Hubert and Jan van Eyck where the economic and religious connotations of the ovine are harmonized.

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Introduction

Faith, fabric, and the flesh: this thesis tells a story of sheep. As a symbol of faith, it is the *Agnus Dei*: Christ as the Lamb of God. As a source of fabric, it powered the economic enterprise of the English wool trade for over five centuries, which at its height provided the wool that powered the Flemish luxury cloth trade. As a metaphor for materialism, it is flesh – mutton, a meat staple that fed the burgeoning populace of early-modern London and became a sexual euphemism. Indeed, the sheep is a polyvalent point in late medieval and early-modern culture: a symbol stained by the dye of its time. Specifically, etched into the image of the sheep is a compelling tale of the energies of cultural loss and revivification in early-modern Europe. My study argues that the cultural connotations of the ovine as a Christian symbol of meekness and innocence experienced sustained literary defamation due to the socio-economic crises brought about by the rise of enclosure. Wealthy participants in the wool trade began to privatize common lands, turning them from arable to pastoral farm land, consequently rendering many men, women, and children homeless while surrendering vast acres to herds of sheep. Under the economic controversy caused by enclosure, poets, playwrights, preachers, pamphleteers – men of letters – began to view the sheep less as a symbol of innocence and more as a symbol of malevolence.

Beginning with Thomas More in *Utopia* (1516) the ovine image is destabilized. Through the character of Raphael Hythloday, More writes, “‘Your sheep,’ I replied, ‘which used to be so mild and content, are now, it is said, so greedy and wild that they devour men, laying waste and depopulating fields houses and towns’” (37). Poet Thomas Bastard in *Chrestoleros: Seuene Bookes of Epigrames* (1598) declares the sheep to be a “biting beast” (*Liber Quartus*, “Epigram 20,” line 8). With the calamities caused by enclosure perceived by the populace to be escalating, the image of sheep continues to be debased. My study begins in this introduction with a succinct analysis of the 15th century masterpiece of the Northern Renaissance, Jan and Hubert van Eyck’s *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* (c. 1432). In the chapters that follow, I contrast the harmonious conflation of the divine and the mercantile in the representation of the ovine in *The Mystic Lamb* to three early-modern English dramas that react with simmering skepticism to the soteriological connotations of the ovine elegantly captured by the van Eycks. In *King Lear* (first performed in 1606) Shakespeare sets the stage for the ovine to appear in a manner similar to van

Eyck, thereby setting up expectations for salvation, which he ultimately frustrates. In Thomas Middleton's satire, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1613) the ovine becomes a symbol of sexual appetite prompting laughter. In *A Winter's Tale* (first performed in 1611), the divine and the ovine are once more conflated. My study argues that in this romance Shakespeare issues a restoration – a cultural volta – in the representation of the ovine image. In *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare gives us the image of the ovine with the Christian connotations of innocence restored.

My study is situated in the context of New Economic Criticism. Marc Shell notes that “one goal of literary criticism is to understand the connection between the smallest verbal metaphor and the largest trope. The economy of literature seeks also to understand the relation between such literary exchanges and the exchanges that constitute the political economy” (7). My study builds on the premise that by reading a culture and its literary documents through the economic framework of the times we can see traces of philosophical engagement with the forces of profit within the texts themselves. Peter F. Grav argues that “placing Shakespeare's works, even those not obviously concerned with fiscal matters, within the range of economic discourse that shaped the Elizabethan and Jacobean period offers a highly productive way to enhance our understanding of his characters and their behaviors, not to mention their frequent reliance on financial terms and tropes to relate to their worlds” (114). However, where economic criticism on Shakespeare's plays focuses on mercantilism, Tudor currency debasement, and usury, my study considers the cultural influence of the English wool trade and the mutton market on early-modern literature.¹ My study treats the economic event of the wool trade and the mutton market as informing cultural tastes, religious attitudes, and aesthetic decisions. Both the English wool and mutton market are engaging subjects for New Economic Criticism because one cannot separate the religious overtones surrounding the Christian flock, the sheep as *Agnus Dei*, and Christ the Good Shepherd that influenced early-modern literature from the economic idea of the profit-generating *Ovis Aries* whose fleece and flesh, fed and clothed the early-modern European populace in general and the English in particular. To understand the history of the wool trade and

¹ “Historical contextualization is a mainstay of early modern New Economic Criticism, but the focus seems fixed on broader economic trends and events, such as the usury debate and Tudor currency debasement, rather than what some perceive as the narrower focus of much New Historicist writing.” (Grav 112)

the rise of the mutton market, my study engages throughout with K. G. Ponting's *The Wool Trade, Past and Present* and Peter J. Bowden's *Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England*.

Scholars have specifically examined the ovine image in early-modern culture and literature. My study is influenced by Paul Yachnin's and Karen Raber's work. Yachnin in "Sheepishness in *The Winter's Tale*" argues that "Shakespeare's play interprets human psychology, value, and destiny in the terms of ovine life" (216). My chapter on *The Winter's Tale* builds on Yachnin's idea about the centrality of the ovine image in Shakespeare's understanding of his characters. Specifically, I explore and extend Yachnin's idea that King Leontes possesses a "rammish" nature (220). However, my study is distinct from Yachnin's approach. For example, Yachnin makes a brief reference to the "instrumental use of sheep by people" when he writes that "[s]heep in Shakespeare's time were commodities within a complex economy as well as figures in a pastoral or scriptural landscape" (217). As a whole, my study makes overt this "complex economy" by foregrounding the English wool trade and its cultural influence on literature. My study also traces the "pastoral and scriptural" iterations of the ovine image in literary culture while explicating the socio-historical role the English wool trade played in transforming the ovine image from an ideal Christian symbol to a malevolent or "rammish" "biting beast." In short, my study seeks to place Shakespeare's ovine imagery within a wider literary and historical context from Desiderius Erasmus' comic examination of sheep in *In Praise of Folly* (1509), to the writings of More, Bastard, and numerous pamphleteers.

An influential work on early-modern ovine imagery is Karen Raber's *Animal Bodies, Renaissance Culture*. In the chapter "Working Bodies: Laboring Moles and Cannibal Sheep," Raber validates More's literary depiction of sheep as dangerous animals. She gives extensive evidence from animal husbandry manuals to support More's view that sheep are malevolent creatures. Raber argues that the traditional Christian view of the sheep as "the highest form of meek submission, a paradigm important for Christians aspiring to imitate Jesus in his incarnation as the Lamb of God (John 1:29)" (161), leads to "[d]efanging More's sheep" (164). By finding agricultural evidence for sheep's more violent and rapacious natures, she validates More's defamation of the ovine as cannibals; in so doing she turns sheep from being poor passive victims to being willful, worthy, opponents of mankind. My study makes extensive use of Raber's examination of sheep's malevolent nature but is distinct from hers because it extends the

analyses of early-modern ovine imagery to the economic enterprise of the mutton market and its cultural influence on the Renaissance drama *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* by Thomas Middleton. Also, my study of the ovine does not ally itself strictly to Raber's materialistic perspective. Instead, I examine how the English wool trade, the mutton market, and enclosure influence Shakespeare and Middleton in their understanding of the polyvalent nature of ovine imagery. In Shakespeare and Middleton's plays the ovine contains a plethora of connotations; it carries at once religious, materialistic, hopeful, despondent, innocent, and debased overtones. A key difference between my study and that of Yachnin's and Raber's is a deeper commitment to exploring the relationship between ovine agriculture and dramatic genre (tragedy, satire, and romance).

My study focuses on three dramas: *King Lear* and *The Winter's Tale* by Shakespeare and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* by Thomas Middleton. Each play is distinct in its approach to the ovine image, but all three plays can be better understood when contrasted with the painting *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* by Hubert and Jan van Eyck since it makes visible the conflation of the economic and the religious function of the ovine. For example, John Barton of Holme beside Newark (d. 1491), a "very wealthy" "provincial stapler," who made his fortune in the wool trade "set as a posy in the window of his house the motto": "I thank God and ever shall / It is the sheep hath payed for all" (Power and Postan 41). Holme unconsciously makes a similar conflation of the ovine's double cultural function as the van Eycks. They collapse the profit-generating *Ovis Aries* with the soteriological symbol of Christianity, the *Agnus Dei*. Economic salvation and the salvation of the soul become intertwined. But at the hands of influential men of letters, sheep were defamed as a source of the socio-political, as well as moral, ruin of the state. *The Mystic Lamb* gives a clear context through which one can comprehend the defamation of the ovine image in English literary culture. More denounces sheep in *Utopia* because of the rise of enclosure in England and the socio-economic injustices that ensued. Thus, the soteriological connotations of the sheep were destabilized by its socio-economic connotations of greed. But in 15th century Flanders the soteriological connotations of the ovine were intensified by the economic success of the luxury cloth trade which was dependent upon English wool.

Although *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* is mostly analyzed from a religious perspective, my study analyzes it from an economic perspective with the goal of establishing the

harmonious image that Shakespeare and Middleton later respond to in their plays. Indeed, in *Van Eyck*, the accompanying text for the 2020 exhibition in Ghent, Jan Dumolyn and Frederik Buylaert argue that “the urban economic network of the Low Countries does deserve systematic attention as the context for the van Eycks’ work” (100). As Dumolyn and Buylaert note:

The material culture that is so clearly present in van Eyck’s work and which was also advancing in terms of quality and diversity, was thus an essential part of his world and that of his public and his clients... Jan van Eyck’s life and work were certainly influenced, in other words, by these changing economic structures and by short-term economic cycles. (97-100)

I argue that in *The Mystic Lamb*, the Flemish renowned for their luxurious cloth trade and sumptuous religious paintings viewed the sheep both as the source of human salvation as well as a source of economic salvation. Thus, not apart from, but laying right beneath the semiotic world of the painting is the actual world of the Ghent luxury trade. Ghent, one of the *drie steden* was saved by the sale of luxury clothes, which were dependent on the wool from English sheep. As an altarpiece, this painting was used in the spiritual services that served the public life of Ghent. This altarpiece would have played a central role in the communal life of Ghent; it would have signified on an overt level the mystery of the Eucharist embodied in the symbol of the Mystic Lamb, but on a subtler level it would have suggested to the community a celebration of their town’s economic lifeline: Ghent’s place in the luxury cloth trade.

The Flemish cloth trade, which was dependent on English wool, was a source of wealth for Flanders. As John H. Munro notes “long serving as Europe’s leading cloth exporters, the Low countries collectively became the wealthiest, most densely populated, and most highly urbanized region north of the Alps” (2). As Dumolyn and Buylaert note, “[t]extiles remained an important part of the urban economy, but there was an accelerating shift – in the large Flemish centres in particular – towards the exclusive production of high-quality cloth rather than the mass production of cheaper fabrics. Ghent and Ypres seem to have clung primarily to the cloth industry, but to its most expensive segment” (96). The Flemish cloth trade survived rivalry from England’s broadcloth trade by concentrating their market on luxury fabrics. As Munro notes, “such a luxury orientation in textile manufacturing certainly found its economic justification by

the very survival of the Flemish urban luxury draperies for almost a century, from the 1340's to the 1440's' (53). Quality became the driving factor for cloth produced by the Flemish *drie steden* (Munro 54).

Given the central place the Flemish luxury cloth trade held in the cultural life of Flanders, it is no surprise that van Eyck, the greatest painter of the Northern Renaissance, lends a meticulous eye to the depiction of rich fabrics in his oeuvre in general and in *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* in particular. For example, in the upper panels of the polyptych depicting the court of heaven, the angels and the Deësis are the most sumptuously dressed, while Adam and Eve are naked, isolated and separated from God and from each other. Condemned, each is contained within the narrow outer wings of the panel. Their nakedness here connotes shame, but the sumptuously swathed figures of the angels and the Deësis show how van Eyck links fine fabric to the resplendence of divinity. More interesting is the possibility that these could well be examples of the luxury garments of the Flemish cloth trade.

In *The Ghent Altarpiece*, salvation comes in the shape of sheep. Van Eyck presents us with the sheep as a symbol of salvation and the source of sartorial splendor. Although the figure of Christ the Almighty is enthroned in his full majesty in the top-centre panel, his presence is not one of comfort but judgment. The Christ in the role of *Salvator Mundi* is contained and embodied in the lamb who is heroically displayed upon a sacrificial altar, his hind legs aesthetically striking a stance in contrapposto as his life blood spurts from a single wound in his chest out into a chalice. This is the savior in the painting, who by his blood redeems the sinning race of Adam from Original Sin. This is the savior who also redeems the descendants of Adam from the shame of their original parents' nakedness by clothing them in rich fabrics. The Flemish luxury cloth trade and the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world are fused into one visual tale, in which salvation comes twice to humanity in the shape of sheep: first as the *Agnus Dei* that offers atonement, second as the *Ovis Aries* that offers adornment. The first saves humanity from shame and separation from God; the second offers humanity a source of economic salvation in the form of the English wool trade and the Flemish cloth trade. To highlight the *Ovis Aries* peeking through the *Agnus Dei*, van Eyck makes an interesting decision. He exchanges the lamb with a woolly full-grown sheep. Visually, the *Agnus Dei*, which literally translates as "Lamb of God," is shown with the appropriate proportions. But in van Eyck's painting, the ovine savior is

depicted with a greater stature and an adult fullness to his coat. The fullness of its coat is a reminder of the raw material – wool – on which Ghent had come so desperately to depend. By merging the mercantile and the soteriological van Eyck offers an intriguing perspective on salvation through luxurious clothes: sartorial soteriology. This merging of the mercantile and the spiritual in no way diminishes the significance of the sacred sheep. It in fact highlights and extends the idea of salvation. The sheep saves as the *Agnus Dei* who takes away the sins of the world. But the sheep also saves as the *Ovis Aries* that provides the raw material that becomes the principal means of sustenance for an entire town.

In order to understand the emotional desolation that Shakespeare and Middleton draw upon, it is necessary to highlight the unconditional trust in the ovine's soteriological powers that van Eyck depicts. In the central bottom panel, the procession of saints, martyrs, and doctors of the church move from the four corners of the composition toward the central figure: The Mystic Lamb. Directly above the Mystic Lamb is the Almighty: God in the celestial court of heaven. But as our gaze moves vertically downwards from the regal embodiment of God dressed in a gold-trimmed and bejeweled red mantle, our eyes come to rest on the world of the pastoral. God in the world assumes the shape of sheep. Therefore, mankind is encouraged, like the group of holy men and women, like God himself, to move towards the sheep. Salvation is the act of being brought near to beast. The single sheep stands as shepherd, while the groups of holy men and women are flocks of the faithful. Consequently, the gaze of the faithful is pinned on the sheep; it is their indefatigable source of hope – both worldly and celestial.

This thesis examines how two English playwrights react in their dramas to the cultural loss of the ovine's harmonious connotations. In chapter 1, "Fabric: Sartorial Soteriology," I argue that in *King Lear*, Shakespeare follows a similar Christian convention evident in the visual narrative of the van Eycks' *The Mystic Lamb*. In both the painting and the play, nudity is a liminal experience that awaits the salvation of a symbolic re-attiring with fine clothes. But despite the presence, in *Lear*, of fine clothes, liminal nudity, and the setting of the sheep-cote which, I argue, is the hovel that houses Poor Tom, Lear, and his entourage, Shakespeare's imagery of sheep is scant. This reticence surrounding sheep is intentional. Shakespeare, similar to van Eyck, sets the stage for *The Mystic Lamb* to appear but at the last minute he negates the possibility of salvation by rejecting the convention of worldly redemption inherent in the script

of ovine Christian liminality. By analyzing the numerous pamphlets denouncing sheep and greedy landlords written during the same period as *Lear*, socio-political upheavals caused by enclosure, and King James I's sympathetic reaction to the rioters, I argue that it is evident that with this cultural nexus of insurrections caused by sheep, Shakespeare makes the ovine absent in his tragedy because it was a constant presence and a constant irritation in the quotidian, economic, and political lives of his early-modern audience. I further argue that this absence of overt ovine imagery ensures that the resplendent portrayal of salvation in *The Mystic Lamb* which is dependent on the fusion of the *Agnus Dei* that saves and the *Ovis Aries* that clothes is impossible in *Lear* where opulent clothing lose their soteriological function and sheep-cotes are populated not by sheep but by desolate humans. In short, I argue that the absence of overt ovine imagery is treated conceptually by Shakespeare as the absence of faith in a Christian convention surrounding sheep.

In chapter 2, "Flesh: Mutton and Middleton," I build on the argument made by numerous critics that in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, Middleton uses the market as a metaphor. Many critics rightly note that in Middleton's satire human bodies are treated as commodities. However, through an examination of early-modern economic history I argue that Middleton uses the *mutton* market as a metaphor. Middleton knowingly portrays the commodification of human flesh using the cultural conventions concerning the commodification of sheep's flesh. For example, the popular delicacy of Welsh mutton is turned in Middleton's satire into the Welsh Gentlewoman who is "sold," "consumed," and referred to in terms similar to the early-modern meat product. Particularly, Middleton's satirization of the mutton market is put in the context of early-modern cultural attitudes toward mutton. Indeed, by the 17th century, mutton was a well-established euphemism for "whore" and "cunt." For example, a "muttonmonger" was a man who had an unbridled appetite for sex (female flesh) as well as mutton (sheep's flesh). However, despite the materialism of the satire, I argue that Middleton, due to the polyvalent nature of sheep, is compelled to deal with the religious connotations of the ovine and the contradictions that ensue. For example, he sets his play during the season of Lent where the consumption of mutton is prohibited and at the same time Christians are reminded of the Eucharistic doctrine of salvation: they are exhorted to eat the body and drink the blood of the Paschal Lamb, Jesus, in effigy. I argue that Middleton, like Shakespeare in *Lear*, is grappling with a sense of loss

surrounding the transformative powers of the ovine. As we will see, Shakespeare's tragedy, *Lear*, and Middleton's satire, *Chaste Maid*, are polarized reactions – prompting either laughter or tears – to the very same anxieties.

In chapter 3, "Faith: The Divine Ovine," I argue that in *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare reforms the ovine image back to its soteriological connotations of innocence and faith. The same anxieties that are insurmountable in *Lear* are present here. The death of the innocent Cordelia is not unlike the death of Hermione. But where the innocent Cordelia remains dead, the innocent Hermione is resurrected. Despite the liminal presence of the sheep-cote in *Lear* there is no restoration of the destitute king. But in *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare gives us the pastoral setting of the sheep-shearing festival that dominates the fourth act. In this liminal scene full of ovine imagery, Shakespeare "Draw[s] our throne into a sheepcote" (4.4.784). In this Romance, the effect of being brought near to beast is the restoration of the lost princess, Perdita, back to the royal court, which is a catalyst for Hermione's resurrection. Particularly, this chapter begins by examining the literary nexus in which Shakespeare is situated. By tracing the evolution of the ovine image from the Bible to early-modern literature and by analyzing parallel socio-political events that informed poems and pamphlets denouncing sheep, I highlight the cultural stakes and hurdles Shakespeare had to overcome in order to insist in his text's imagery that the ovine is a symbol of innocence.

Fabric: Sartorial Soteriology

The authorship of a 1581 treatise entitled “A compendious or Brief Examination of certain ordinary complaints of divers of our country men in these our days,” according to Thomas Edward Scrutton “was at one time attributed to William Shakespeare!” (97n2). It is now clear that the initials W. S. refer, not to the famous playwright, but to William Stafford. The fact that the authorship of a pamphlet that paints a “gloomy picture” of dearth and greed with sheep at the centre as “innocent offenders” (Scrutton 97), was at one point attributed to Shakespeare, England’s greatest writer, suggests that literary works that criticize enclosure occupied a privileged place in English culture. Although Shakespeare did not author a pamphlet, this chapter argues that he authored a parabolic play criticizing enclosure. I argue that central to the plot of *King Lear* is the concept of sheep and all it signifies to the early-modern mind: salvation through the *Agnus Dei*; the evils of the economic enterprise of the wool trade; the ravages of enclosure and the socio-political malaise it caused. Shakespeare hangs his exploration of these ovine-inflected themes on the Christian script of liminality and shows how this script absolutely fails in a world infused with the energies of economic greed. In such a world the meek *Agnus Dei* is replaced by the rapacious *Ovis Aries*, sartorial opulence signifies corruption, and sheep-cotes become habitats not for sheep but humans debased to the level of beasts. In *King Lear* the Christian script of liminality that promises restoration after tribulation is presented and then intentionally reversed. Shakespeare shows how the Christian idea of salvation that is dependent upon the image of the Lamb of God is unsustainable in a society where sheep are the backbone of a ruthless enterprise that left many men, women, and children homeless, in a manner similar to Lear and Edgar.

Shakespeare creates in Edgar a character who self-consciously uses the Christian script of liminality to construct hope in worldly salvation. Victor Turner in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* argues that “[l]iminality implies that the high could not be high unless the low existed, and he who is high must experience what it is like to be low” (97). Although Turner takes as his case study an African tribe, the Ndembu in Zambia, the liminal script that hovers over the entirety of *King Lear* is the Christian idea that after great tribulation and lowliness comes resurrection – a restoration of harmony. In Christian thought the *exemplar par excellence* of liminality is Christ himself who said to his followers: “These things I have spoken unto you,

that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). When disaster strikes, Christ encourages his followers to conform to his pattern of liminality. Edgar follows suit.

Michael Edwards argues that Shakespeare alludes to the Crucifixion subtly in *King Lear*. He notes that Shakespeare “refers to a suffering greater than that of Lear and Poor Tom and serving, perhaps as a measure of all the sufferings of the play, without allowing it to signify itself clearly” (24). Edwards argues that this allusion to Jesus comes through in the “Pillicock jingle” in which Edgar in the guise of Poor Tom replies to Lear’s “’twas this flesh begot / Those pelican daughters” (3.4.74-5). Poor Tom sings, “Pillicock sat on Pillicock Hill: alow, alow, loo, loo” (3.4.76). “Could Edgar be thinking: ‘Pelican sat on Golgotha hill’?” (Edwards 23). Edwards argues that “If [his] reading of the Pillicock jingle is correct, it emphatically does not mean that Edgar, Lear, or anyone else is a Christ figure, nor does it indicate that Edgar is knowingly referring to the Cross. It means that Shakespeare allows *himself* to refer to that vast event, which is not out of proportion to his play. The reference is entirely earned by the real extremes of evil, suffering, and devotion in which his imagination involves us” (25). With this allusion to Christ, Edwards also notes the liminal overtones that inform the play especially in the character of Edgar: “We shall probably note that Edgar, having reached, as he believes, the lowest position of the [Fortune] wheel’s turn, sees himself between lamentation and laughter, and so, we might add, between tragedy and comedy, and this may lead (as well as to thoughts about the relation of tragedy to comedy) to the reflection that the Crucifixion does indeed give way to the Resurrection, that the deepest darkness is finally pierced by light” (25). However, Edwards notes that this resurrection never comes: “Yet Shakespeare is surely involving his own spectators in some such false assurance, since, as we know, Edgar is mistaken: there is worse to come” (25-6).

The character of Edgar begins as the heir to the Earldom of Gloucester but through the treachery of his brother, Edmund, he is forced to flee sans title, sans land, sans identity, sans everything. Edgar is self-aware of the complete erosion of his own identity; he cries out to himself, “Edgar I nothing am” (2.2.188). But Edgar is also hopeful. For example, in the scene where he undergoes the disturbing transformation from well-attired nobleman and courtier to a half-naked homeless lunatic, Poor Tom, he gives a soliloquy describing his conundrum, his physical transformation, and his immediate pragmatic plans for self-preservation. Edgar

understands that he is in a deadly conundrum because he is being hunted. In order to preserve his life, he must transform his appearance from nobleman to the sorry sight of a country lunatic:

Whiles I may 'scape,
 I will preserve myself: and am bethought
 To take the basest and most poorest shape
 That ever penury, in contempt of man,
 Brought near to beast: my face I'll grime with filth;
 Blanket my loins: elf all my hair in knots;
 And with presented nakedness out-face
 The winds and persecutions of the sky.
 The country gives me proof and precedent
 Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices,
 Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms
 Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;
 And with this horrible object, from low farms,
 Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills,
 Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,
 Enforce their charity. Poor Turlygod! poor Tom!
 That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am. (2.2.172-88)

In this guise of a Bedlamite, Edgar will fit into the impoverished landscape of “low farms / Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills” (2.2.184-5). However, Edgar is not a man of despair, for where Lear runs out into the storm moaning and wailing, the young Edgar is a man of action who, rather than bemoan the injustice of his situation, focuses instead on delineating a plan for self-preservation. He is able to stay focused because he believes himself to be following a familiar trajectory: status quo – tribulation – restoration. By submitting to his *via dolorosa*, he affirms his worldly hope because he believes that by patiently bearing tribulation, restoration will come.

But Edgar's speech reveals that he lives in a world plagued by social injustice. For example, his own use of the word “pelting” pragmatically denotes the socio-economic realities of the time. In flight for his life, he believes he must affect poverty in order to survive: upon putting on the visage and lunatic bearing of the mad he will hide in plain sight by crying loudly and drawing attention to himself, and like other poor and beastly Bedlamites will “[e]nforce the charity” of people from “[p]oor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills” (2.2.187,185). Edgar's speech precedes Lear's scene on the heath. Thus, we can connect the hovel and heath where Lear ends up to Edgar's precalculated plan to emulate the Bedlamites who seek safety in “sheep-

cotes.” Edgar’s decision to emulate wretched Bedlamites who seek safety in “Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills” (2.2.185) suggests that the setting is pastoral land. Sheep-cotes are pens in which the sheep are kept. The mills Edgar refers to are most likely fulling mills. Fulling was an important step in the production of woollen cloths. The fulling process tightened the fibres of the fabric. Now the word “pelting” on one level means “paltry” – poor or meaningless, but on another level, it could refer to villages where sheep-pelts were made hence the presence of the fulling mills, the sheep-cotes, the heath, and the poor disenfranchised people which sheep have robbed of land. Therefore, the hovel in which Lear and his retinue find Edgar could be a derelict shepherd’s shelter seeing that Edgar has planned to seek sustenance from “sheep-cotes.” Indeed, Chris Fitter in his intriguing essay on class politics in *Lear* notes that in “1605, ‘City magistrates took action against masterless men spending the night in sheep-pens in West Smithfield’ records [A. L.] Beier” (13). Fitter quotes Beier: “‘God’s poor lived not only like animals, but *with* them’” (13). In order to fulfil the conventions of Christian liminality, Edgar assumes the appearance of lowliness; he strips himself to near nakedness and, being homeless, hovels with sheep.

Edgar’s change of appearance read through Turner’s idea of liminality shows that Shakespeare’s understanding of social status and salvation is couched in terms of the sartorial. Turner argues that the change in status from member of society to neophyte – one undergoing a liminal experience – is marked by a sartorial change. He argues that “[l]iminal entities, such as neophytes in initiation or puberty rites may be represented as possessing nothing. They may be disguised as monsters, wear only a strip of clothing, or even go naked, to demonstrate that as liminal beings they have no status, property, insignia, secular clothing indicating rank or role, position in a kinship or system” (95). Similarly, Hanna Scolnicov argues that Shakespeare makes use of a culturally calcified image of a man stripped to his loin cloth who in his near nakedness is a universal symbol of suffering. She argues, “I believe that it is rather Edgar’s striking appearance on stage, naked but for his loin-cloth, that is iconic, pointing to the long tradition of Christological representations, and that he assumes the practice of the imitation of Christ” (199). Both Scolnicov’s reading and a reading through Turner suggest that Edgar is self-aware of a certain liminal script or convention and that this narrative, going from high to low suggests some measure of hope.

Scolnicov gives a powerful reading of Edgar as an emulator of Christ. She argues that Shakespeare presents Edgar's Poor Tom as a symbol of the Man of Sorrows, the suffering Christ. She writes that "[t]his icon of the Man of Sorrows is familiar from countless medieval and renaissance paintings, and I am suggesting that Shakespeare uses this traditional visual image, lifting it from its strictly religious context and giving it a humanist significance" (199). Interestingly she argues that Shakespeare's characterization of Edgar's transformation from well-dressed nobleman to half-naked wretch is indirectly influenced by the self-portraits of Albrecht Dürer. She writes that "[t]he beggar's outfit will be shown to characterize Edgar as a Christ figure, naked except for the loincloth wrapped around his private parts, a figure practicing the Imitation of Christ. The radical shift from young aristocrat, the son of the Earl of Gloucester, to the poor, crazed beggar taking on Christ's suffering will be elucidated through a comparison with the self-portraits of Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528)" (193). Scolnicov compares two self-portraits in oil of the beautifully attired Dürer from 1493 and 1498 to two drawings of Dürer half-naked as the Man of Sorrows from 1521 and 1522 depicted with "the instruments of the Passion, such as the scourge and fasces" and the sidewound (201). She interprets Edgar's transformation from well-attired courtier to Poor Tom as similar to Dürer's transformation in the depiction of himself from well-dressed, good-looking man to half-naked pitiful figure. She writes, "[l]ike Edgar, Dürer has recorded his two faces – first, the good-looking young man, then the Man of Sorrows" (204). She argues that "[b]eyond his more literal transformation into the folkloric figure of Tom O' Bedlam, Edgar's disguising-soliloquy offers a verbal parallel to Dürer's visual self-fashioning as the Man of Sorrows. Through his *imitatio Christi* Edgar is no longer merely himself, but an embodiment of the idea of the Man of Sorrows" (207). Scolnicov's reading suggests that Stuart audiences viewing the figure of Poor Tom, in a culture saturated with images of the Man of Sorrows, would have translated the suffering of the half-naked wretch on stage into a universal symbol of human suffering.

However, Scolnicov is careful to note that Dürer's influence on Shakespeare would have been very indirect, by osmosis rather than direct experience. She asserts that "[a]lthough it is unlikely that Shakespeare ever saw the said drawings, it is certainly the case that Dürer's pictorial world influenced the visual world of the Renaissance in general, including that of England" (206). Although Scolnicov notes cautiously, "I am not arguing for any direct connection between the German painter and Shakespeare," she suggests instead that "the motif

of the imitation of Christ is one of the elements comprising Shakespeare's characterization of Edgar, and that unravelling the significance of Dürer's presentation of himself in the image of Jesus can help us understand this important component in Edgar's complex figure" (206). She writes, "[n]ot only is there the parallel between Edgar's description of himself as young courtier and Dürer's self-portraits as young dandy, but they both also take upon themselves the imitation of Christ" (206).

Where Scolnicov focuses on Edgar's imitation of the image of the suffering Christ, this chapter expands her reading by arguing that Shakespeare appropriates the image of the Man of Sorrows as well as the image of the *Agnus Dei* in his understanding of human suffering. Edgar's idea that being "brought near to beast" (2.2.176) will preserve his life suggests that his hope of attaining worldly salvation is dependent on coming in contact with a lowliness embodied by animals. He symbolically finds shelter in sheep-cotes. I argue that Edgar's understanding of the liminal process as evidenced in his speech and subsequent actions is centered on proximity to the ovine – the *Agnus Dei* not the *Ovis Aries*. In Christian doctrine, the ovine is the remedy for human tribulation. For example, Jesus Christ's liminal experience, his tribulation and death, is described in ovine imagery: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7). Jesus's suffering is the antidote to Man's damnation, but it is also the model of how Man should bear his own suffering; to borrow Lear's words, one must be "the pattern of all patience" (3.2.35). However, although Lear articulates this doctrine, it is Edgar who demonstrates it. For example, although Edgar has ample opportunity to reveal his true identity to his blinded and penitent father, Gloucester, he withholds this information for a long time. Edgar's patience stems from his reliance on the Christian image of liminality: the suffering Christ, the Man of Sorrows, half-naked, beaten, bleeding, yet silent as a lamb. Edgar in stripping himself of the veneer of civilization is simultaneously paradoxically acquiring the signifiers of divinity. Edgar says that he is being "brought near to beast" (2.2.176). Superficially, he means that he is transforming himself into a bare human without the accoutrements of civilization such as reason and appropriate attires. Homeless, he is also sheltering with sheep. In this sense, being "brought near to beast" means to be debased. But in the Christian context, being "brought near to beast" is a revivifying act because it mirrors the well-known journey of God's son, Jesus, who is turned into a beast – a lamb – in order to atone for the sins of humanity. The Man of Sorrows, for

a Christian audience, is the first “proof and precedent” of how to bare human suffering, who is not unlike the Bedlam beggars whose “bare arms” are “mortified” with “nails” (2.2.181-3). Although Jesus never physically metamorphosizes into an ovine creature he is symbolically depicted as a lamb to be or already slaughtered.

Where Scolnicov argues that the character of Edgar indirectly draws on the self-portraits of Albrecht Dürer, this chapter argues that Shakespeare’s understanding of Lear’s and Edgar’s experience of liminality indirectly draws upon another art work from the Northern Renaissance – *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* (1432) by Hubert and Jan van Eyck. Where Scolnicov focuses primarily on how both Edgar and Dürer engage in *imitatio Christi* in their change from the well-dressed cultivated dandy to the half-naked wretch, I want to emphasize the sartorial nature of liminality as it appears in *King Lear* and *The Mystic Lamb*. Specifically, I want to argue that Shakespeare’s understanding of liminality, Christian soteriology, clothing, nudity, and the powers of the ovine symbol are similar to the van Eycks’ artistic choices in their depiction of the salvation of Mankind in *The Mystic Lamb*. For example, like the procession of the faithful in *The Mystic Lamb*, Edgar and Lear move toward the ovine. Edgar’s vision of being brought near to beast is similar to van Eyck’s composition of the procession of the faithful in *The Mysitic Lamb*. In the bottom central panel, the eyes of the faithful are pinned on the sacred sheep, as they move toward it. They recognize the ovine as their source of spiritual and worldly salvation. The half-naked Edgar makes a similar gesture of faith by moving toward a sheep-cote, he is brought near to beast in a Christian sense of liminality. Like Scolnicov I cannot claim that Shakespeare saw the famous polyptych. But I argue that Shakespeare and the van Eycks are drawing on the similar script that salvation can be depicted in sartorial terms: status quo expressed as courtly attires – liminality expressed as near nudity and proximity to lowly beasts – restoration expressed as a return to opulent clothing.

The Christian liminal script of sartorial soteriology – salvation couched symbolically in clothing – is well encapsulated in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). In this story, the eponymous figure, the son of a wealthy man, will come to a place of wretchedness revealed by his near nakedness in the form of rags – what Lear calls a “looped and windowed raggedness” (3.4.35). But when the good father sees the Prodigal returning from afar, he runs to kiss his son and asks his servants for an immediate change of clothes: “the father said to his servants, Bring

forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:” (Luke 15:22, KJV). Darryl Tippens argues that “William Shakespeare was often attracted to the Bible’s most famous parable,” the Prodigal Son (57). Tippens argues that the “image of the outcast stripped of all his wealth can be seen especially clearly in two tragedies written about the same time *King Lear* and *Timon of Athens* (the ‘still-born’ twin of *Lear* according to Alfred Harbage). Both plays feature shocking images of the naked outcast – Lear, Gloucester, Edgar, and Timon” (68). Indeed, Tippens argues that “Cordelia reveals her understanding of how the Prodigal story fits Lear’s circumstance. She receives the ‘poor perdue’ (literally, the ‘lost one’) with biblically charged rhetoric” (69). Cordelia’s words to her father evoke the imagery from the parable when the prodigal son is brought near to beast – penned with pigs for shelter:

And wast thou fain, poor father,
To hovel with swine, and rogues forlorn,
In short and musty straw? (4.7.39-41)

Tippens argues that Shakespeare “echo[ed] this scene from the parable on such varied occasions” because “it seems that the scene of leanness and tattered clothes, of swine and husks, vividly conveyed the spiritual and psychological destitution encountered in moments of deepest crisis” (69).

Susan Snyder in her essay on *King Lear* and “The Prodigal Son” notes that “Lear has hoveled with a fool and a ‘madman,’ rogues forlorn certainly, but not with swine. Yet Cordelia’s description strikes no jarring note, for she has chosen, as a kind of emblem for Lear’s experience, an image of degradation already familiar” (361). The familiarity of Cordelia’s description of her father’s plight would have “reminded” Elizabethan audiences of “another foolish man who came down in the world and was finally reduced to living with swine and sharing their food” (Snyder 361). Shakespeare’s allusion to the prodigal son would have caused an anticipation of restoration. Indeed, he teases his audience with the well-established image of restoration from the parable: the change of clothes and the kiss of forgiveness. As Snyder notes, the “broken Lear is greeted as the Prodigal was, not with the expected reproach but with music, fresh garments, and a kiss” (363). Indeed, similar to the famous parable, the desolate Lear is refitted to reflect his restoration only when the spiritual figure of salvation, Cordelia, comes to his rescue. Cordelia like the parabolic father is the one who calls out for a change of clothes for her prodigal parent:

Cordelia: ... Is he arrayed?

Gentlemen: Aye, Madam; in the heaviness of sleep,

We put fresh garments on him. (4.7.24-6)

Earlier, Cordelia had also asked Kent to change his clothes: “Be better suited. / These weeds are memories of those worsen hours; / I prithee, put them off” (4.7.7-9). The fact that the Christ-like Cordelia emphasizes the importance of opulent clothing and insists that Lear and Kent change into finer garments strengthens the link between salvation and the sartorial, a link that Shakespeare will ruthlessly sever in the final moments of the play.

Critics have noted Shakespeare’s sceptical attitude towards the sartorial. For example, Maurice Charney and Laurie Shannon analyze *Lear* through the theme of nakedness and clothing. Charney reads the nudity and clothing in *Lear* symbolically. He argues that “[t]he nakedness-clothes theme is a moral polarity, in which the truth of nakedness is contrasted with the false appearances created by clothes” (81). Charney argues that “Lear’s speeches on the theme of nakedness assume that clothes represent a corrupt social order based on the false appearances money can buy” (78). Indeed, Shakespeare displays great distrust in fine clothing because in *Lear*, being brought near to beast does not guarantee worldly salvation. Before his liminal experience, Lear has faith in the symbolic power of clothes and indeed speaks of them as a metaphor for authority and sophistication. For example, when arguing with his daughters in a bid to retain his men he compares his superfluous need for his knights to their superfluous need for fine clothing:

Thou art a lady;

If only to go warm were gorgeous,

Why nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear’st,

Which scarcely keeps thee warm. (2.2.473-6)

Lear rightly notes that if warmth was the only necessity for her clothing, Regan would not be dressed in such fine attires which are elegant but impractical. The splendour of Regan’s garment points to the fact that she is a lady and not a beast. However, once Lear is sheltered in the sheep-cote and has had what should have been a transformative encounter, his view of clothing turns negative: “Through tattered clothes great vices do appear; robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold, and the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks. Arm it in rags, a pigmy’s straw does

pierce it” (4.6.168-171). Shakespeare’s repudiation of fine clothing as a signifier of salvation upsets his audience’s expectation of the Christian script. The Prodigal parable and *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* function within a prescribed worldview that restores harmony through the metaphor of sartorial splendour after a debasing encounter has been overcome. But in *Lear*, Shakespeare withholds the promised end.

Charney argues that in *Lear* Shakespeare sees nakedness as a virtue. Where Shannon reads Lear’s speech on “unaccommodated man” as a poor, bare, forked animal in a pessimistic tone, seeing in Man’s nakedness a natural “underprovisioning in the face of the environment” (“Poor, Bare, Forked,” 196) when compared to the “coatedness” of animals, Charney reads Man’s nakedness as a symbol of Truth. He argues:

Renaissance symbolism makes nakedness the most important symbolic attribute of truth. *Nuda Veritas*, the naked goddess, is without pretence, disguise, or duplicity. ‘As naked as Truth’ is a proverbial simile, and it appears often in Shakespeare as a moral formula. (80-1)

However, Charney does not argue for a neat dichotomy whereby clothes strictly represent “false enticements and glossy deceits” and nudity represents the purity of truth (85). Instead, Charney argues that “nakedness is the traditional image of unadorned truth; of innocent and vulnerable babes, fools, and madmen; and also of a wild and bestial nature, untempered by law, kindness, or justice” (87). Clothes also contain a spectrum of meanings. Charney argues that in “all of Shakespeare, and especially in *King Lear*, clothes represent the values of society, of the status quo, of an external socially conceived morality” (87). Indeed, Charney comes close to arguing that clothes serve a liminal function in *Lear*. He writes, “[s]ymbolically, clothes represent one’s identity, and it is only by first becoming naked that one can be reclothed and achieve a new identity. Tragic recognition always involves a stripping away of pretences, so that one may emerge from his agony, like Lear, with ‘fresh garments’” (88). Charney’s reading is similar to Turner’s understanding of the function of clothes; Turner argues that “secular clothing indicat[es] rank or role, position in a kinship or system” (Turner 95). Hence, after Lear is saved by Cordelia and re-attired, Charney notes that “Lear’s ‘fresh garments’ are part of his cure, and he needs to recognize what they are before he can re-establish his identity: ‘all the skill I have / Remember not these garments’ (66-7)” (80).

Shannon also analyzes Shakespeare's skeptical attitude toward clothing in *Lear*. Her approach is founded on a zoographic reading that takes *coatedness* as a case study and highlights Man's negative exceptionality in comparison to other creatures. Shannon's reading of *Lear* decenters Man. He is no longer the measure of all things but is placed "among the *dramatis animalia*" (*The Accommodated Animal*, 165). For example, in the hovel scene, Lear makes the grand declaration that "Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal" without the accoutrements of animal products such as "silk," "hide," "wool," and "perfume" harvested from the bodies of "the worm," "the beast," "the sheep," and "the cat" (3.4.101-5). Shannon argues that "*King Lear* exposes an abject humanity's underprovisioning in the face of the environment" ("Poor, Bare, Forked," 196). Man's "underprovisioning," the fact that human beings are born without natural protection from the environment and thus must appropriate the natural coats of other animals to protect their skin is what Shannon describes as *negative* exceptionalism ("The Eight Animals," 477). Shannon argues that rather than seeing Man as Nature's exception due to his possession of reason, which other animals lack, *Lear* understands Man to be Nature's exception due to his lack of a natural bodily cover – coatedness – which other animals have. She argues:

...nakedness seems to be a condition to which no other animal is subject. Indeed, nakedness versus coatedness may be as important as an approximation of any distinguishing principle between "man and beast" as more familiar criteria, like sentience, the possession of language, social and moral punishments, the capacity to lie, cooking habits, tool use, the apprehension of death, or an eternal soul. ("Poor, Bare, Forked," 190)

Shannon's reading of *Lear* is dark and in keeping with the harrowing nature of the play. She writes, "Man remains exceptional, certainly, but in *King Lear* he is creation's *negative* exception" ("Poor, Bare, Forked," 175). In a similar vein, Yachnin also notes Shakespeare's dark vision of Man in relation to animals, "[i]ndeed, *Lear* suggests that men are worse off and more brutish than the animals since they cover up their essential animality beneath the products of animal bodies" (222). Shannon takes *coatedness* as a case study to argue for the self-sufficiency of non-human animals. She argues that "in the archive of natural history, we see that the 'coveredness' of animals – their not being really 'naked' – figures their self-completeness or

natural sufficiency: the integral animal comes equipped with a good-enough coat already on its back” (“Poor, Bare, Forked,” 186).

Although Shannon reads *coatedness* in a philosophical framework, I extend *coatedness* to a socio-economic framework by an analysis of *Lear* through the English wool trade as well as through the Christian script of ovine liminality where Man is “brought near to beast.” Of the animals Lear mentions in the hovel, the worm, the beast, the sheep, the cat, it is the sheep which would have resounded most in the ears of the early-moderns. Indeed, even Shannon notes that the ram was “itself the very source of borrowed warmth for early modern humans” (“Poor, Bare, Forked,” 188). Yet sheep were not just a source of borrowed warmth for the early moderns, they were at the epicentre of an economic trade that made some of them wealthy and politically powerful and others homeless. Peter J. Bowden begins his book on the wool trade with this assertion:

Until the era of the Industrial Revolution wool was, without question, the most important raw material in the English economic system. The staple article of the country’s export trade in the Middle Ages, it remained until the nineteenth century the indispensable basis of her greatest industry. Every class in the community, whether landlord, farmer, merchant, industrial capitalist or artisan, had an interest in wool, and it was the subject of endless economic controversy. (Bowden xv)

Sheep were no mere metaphor nor Man’s lowly outfitter. Sheep provided the raw material of England’s greatest economic enterprise. English wool made staplers and woolmen wealthy, robbed the poor of land, and was used to fashion the most beautiful luxury cloths of Ghent and Florence.

Aside from nudity and clothing, critics have also analyzed *Lear* from the perspective of genre. Sarah Beckwith argues that “[r]omance is present in *King Lear* not only in the Gloucester / Edgar subplot, added from the *Old Arcadia* and absent in *King Lear*, but in the fact that it is so pointedly and remorselessly a deliberate inversion of the romance form” (92). She argues that “[r]omance is the form that systematically converts chance into providence” (92). Beckwith notes that there is no such conversion in *Lear* because the play is an anti-romance. However, after *Lear* Shakespeare writes his great romances. Beckwith argues through a comparison of

Pericles with *Lear* that “Shakespeare explores the notion that with the return and renovation of romance can come a restored faith in the possibilities of grace” (92).

Where Beckwith argues that *Lear* is a “deliberate inversion of the romance form,” decades earlier Nancy R. Lindheim argued that *King Lear* inverts the pastoral form. Lindheim writes:

What we have been tracing here is, I think, the transformation of an essentially pastoral perception; but *King Lear* is not itself primarily a pastoral. The play uses pastoral structure to get at pastoral ideas – to arrive at basic man and a purified order of human values that encompasses public justice and private compassion – but once having arrived at the theme of human feeling, Shakespeare goes on to treat his material according to the tragic mode. (181)

Lindheim quotes Maynard Mack’s assessment that *King Lear* is “the greatest anti-pastoral ever penned” (qtd. in Lindheim 169). According to Mack, “*King Lear* alludes to the patterns of pastoral romance only to turn them upside down” (Lindheim 169). Lindheim notes that “one of the standard conventions of pastoral elegy is the comparison between the protagonist’s death and the rebirth cycle of vegetative nature, a comparison which points to man’s alienation from a nature that he is otherwise harmoniously part of and which formulates the anguish and tension that the final consolation of the elegy then overcomes” (182). In *King Lear*, Shakespeare famously sets up this pastoral expectation of rebirth only to dishearten his audience. Under Cordelia’s care, when Lear awakes, the restoration has already happened: “in the heaviness of sleep, / We put fresh garments on him” (4.7.24-6). Cordelia speaks to him as her sovereign, “How does my Royal Lord? How fares your Majesty?” (4.7.45-6). When Lear asks where they are, Cordelia says courteously, “[i]n your own kingdom, Sir” (4.7.83). This is the moment of Lear’s resurrection. During his liminal experience Lear had been in hell metaphorically. But now he is restored to Cordelia, fresh garments have been put on him, he is referred to as ‘Royal Lord’ and ‘your Majesty,’ and he is acknowledged as possessing a kingdom. Yet, the resurrection is unsustainable. Lear wants to go back to hell:

You do me wrong to take me out o’th’grave.
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound

Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald, like molten lead. (4.7.54-9)

Lear is incapable or unwilling to accept his restoration: “No, no, no, no; come let’s away to prison” (5.3.9). Shakespeare has deliberately set-up an expectation of resolution by evoking the conventions of Christ’s liminal experience, the romance form, and the pastoral genre only to withhold the restoration, which is the *dénouement* of all three conventions.

The reason why these scripts cannot function in Lear’s world is because the characters misrecognize a material and socio-economically unjust society as a divine world where the *Ovis Aries* is the *Agnus Dei* and where desolation is a transitional experience. Lear wants to believe that he exists in a symbolic world similar to the painted vision of *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* where nudity is a liminal experience and moving near to beast is revitalizing one. But Although Lear’s world is set in an ancient Albion, Shakespeare was deeply concerned with what was taking place in Stuart England.

Chris Fitter analyzes *Lear* by taking into account the socio-economic nexus of Shakespeare’s England. Fitter argues that *Lear* is Shakespeare’s skillfully subtle protest against the ill treatment of common men and women in Tudor and Stuart England. ‘Subtle’ is the operative word. Shakespeare does not take the direct manner of a pamphleteer but employs what Fitter calls “stagecraft secrets” (1). He writes:

Indictment of authority, however, risked intervention by the censor: and I will close, accordingly, by demonstrating how Shakespeare built three further instances of humane outcry against the commons suffering into the drama’s original *performance* dimensions. Working by ‘stagecraft secrets,’ I suggest, the popular politics of *King Lear* move beyond representing political issues into practicing them within the wooden O. (Fitter 1)

Indeed, Shakespeare’s references to land, hungry peasants, pelting villages, and social injustice would have conjured up for early-modern audiences the matter of the day: ongoing socio-political unrest caused by enclosure. Fitter in his essay argues that issues of class are at the heart of *Lear*. His claim of class politics in *Lear* is not new. Numerous critics have argued that a number of plays written in the 17th century reflect the social anxieties of an economic shift from feudalism to proto-capitalism. However, Fitter is careful to “terminate” the idea that *Lear* is a

play about the subversion of the “hereditary warrior nobility” by “the ambitious bourgeois individualism of emergent capitalism” (1). Fitter argues that there *is* class-antagonism in *Lear* but that this class contempt has less to do with the bourgeoisie and their proto-capitalist, individualist mentality geared towards gain at all cost, rising up against the feudal values of the old world. In fact, it had everything to do with contempt toward commoners. Fitter argues, “[s]ketching the new historiographic paradigm, and the politico-economic circumstances it ascribes to commoners circa 1606, I shall proceed to argue that, while a form of class-antagonism does indeed structure *King Lear*, it is scarcely that of bourgeoisie against nobleman” “but of embittered poorer commoners reacting to assault by the governance of the expanded propertied bloc (1,6). Arguably, Fitter’s idea lends an even darker dimension to Shannon’s already dark view of Mankind. If Shannon’s zoographic reading of *Lear* produces a universal vision of Man as a forked, naked, animal that is negatively exceptional in its lack of a coat, which implies a lack of bodily integrity, Fitter’s socio-political reading confirms Shannon’s view of Man but demotes it from the universal to the particular. It is not Man in general who makes a paltry vision, it is Man disenfranchised.

Fitter argues that *Lear* is Shakespeare’s subtle protest against social injustice caused by enclosure. He asserts, “Shakespeare’s play, I will suggest, repeatedly protested against recent governmental initiatives” (Fitter 1). As his case study, Fitter singles out the figure of Poor Tom. Where Scolnicov reads Poor Tom as a Man of Sorrows, Edwards, as a suffering Christ-like figure, and Shannon reads him through *Lear*’s critique of Man as negatively exceptional in the hovel scene, Fitter reads Tom through the politico-economic climate of early-modern England. He argues:

The threat to noble power in the period of *King Lear* thus lay not with the prosperous bourgeoisie, but was evoked in Poor Tom, and all he represented to the eyes of authority: the suffering, impoverished commoner, with his clandestine egalitarian state of nature, risen and defeated in 1381, defeated again in 1450 and 1549, but about to explode afresh in the Midlands rising of 1607: the feudal outsider now haunting Absolutism. And he was now to be found, exposed beneath the skies, standing in the groundling pit at the public theatres. (8-9)

Although Fitter rightly situates *Lear* in its socioeconomic climate, he leaves out one most important detail: sheep. He does mention an anecdote on sheep to illustrate a point concerning the powers of communal ties, but he does not trace the social ills, such as poverty and homelessness, affecting Tudor and early Jacobean England back to the ovine.² Fitter rightly argues that “[a]nother source of mutually embittering class-friction engaged by *King Lear* was homelessness” (11). Indeed, the image of “houseless heads” dominates the play. Fitter argues that “Tudor men, women and children displaced onto roadways by bankruptcy or enclosure, fire or disease, throughout the century were the casualties of industrial paralysis, callously inflated entry fines, or surplus population” (Fitter 11).

Yet pamphlets written during that era prove that there was a perception that homelessness was caused by enclosure. For example, in 1550, a year after the onset of Kett’s rebellion “[Robert] Crowley made a vigorous attack on the great farmers, ‘the cormorants and greedy gulls who take our houses over our heads, who buy our grounds out of our hands, who raise our rents, ... who enclose our commons. There is not so much as garden ground safe from them’” (qtd. in Scrutton 90-1). This is why *Lear* comes to feel a kinship with the dispossessed:

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,
 That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
 How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
 Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you
 From seasons such as these? Oh, I have ta'en
 Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp.
 Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
 That thou mayst shake the superflux to them

² “John Walter writes of the power of shaming in a face-to-face society, as when Sir Thomas Tresham in Northamptonshire, notorious for enclosure and harsh practice to his tenants, found himself in 1603 unable to sell his sheep in local markets. The locals instead excoriated his behaviour, noting that his sheep had done much wrong in the commonwealth. Tresham sold only one sheep that day, to an outsider.” (Fitter 11-2)

And show the heavens more just. (3.4.32-40)

Lear's homelessness parallels the homelessness of early-modern England's poor. He had given his land to his two daughters with the understanding that in fealty to him they will care for him. But Goneril and Reagan like the "greedy gulls" who enclose the commons take the house over Lear's head and leave him to wail unbonneted beneath a hostile sky. Goneril and Regan force their father into homelessness in a manner similar to the greedy early-modern landlords: they raise the rent exorbitantly. For example, in "Anatomie of Abuses" (1583) Philip Stubbs writes "landlords make merchandize of their poor tenants, racking their rents, raising their fines and incomes, and setting them so straight upon the tenterhooks that no man can live on them" (qtd. In Scrutton 95). Goneril and Regan, like the cruel landlords, rack the rent of their aged father. Where the English poor were forced to pay more money or be driven to homelessness, Lear is forced to give up more of his accoutrements of power: his retinue. He bargains with his daughters on the size of his retinue as if he were bargaining upon the cost of rent:

Lear: (*To Goneril.*) I'll go with thee,
 Thy fifty yet doth double five and twenty,
 And thou art twice her love.

Goneril: Hear me my Lord;
 What need you five and twenty? Ten? Or five?
 To follow in a house, where twice so many
 Have a command to tend you?

Regan: What need one? (2.2.462-469)

Lear, upon the realization that he is incapable of meeting so high a cost for his living, his knights, his remaining accoutrement of regal power dismissed, and all his land alienated from him, he runs into the storm a homeless man. But it is important to remember that early-modern homelessness was more likely caused by sheep dispossessing people than by wolfish children dispossessing their parents. By analyzing the timeline of insurrections from 1540 to 1607 through the literature of criticism against enclosure we find that *Lear* was written in an era where the air was charged with social outcries against sheep and the men who owned them.

In fact, by the time *Lear* is written in 1605 the social ills caused by sheep had been discussed *ad nauseam*; complaints about sheep had been ongoing in prose, pamphlet, and poetry

since More's 1516 attack in *Utopia*. Michael Hattaway notes, "enclosure was the most popularly perceived cause of dearth: it had helped generate Kett's rebellion in 1549 and helped catalyse not only food riots, but, particularly among rural artificers (many of whom lived in forest areas), the radicalism that irritated the Tudor and Stuart regimes between 1586 and 1631" (24). For example, in 1540, nine years before Kett's rebellion of 1549, Thomas Becon writes in *The Jewel of Joy* (c. 1540) "The burden of all is the same: the sheep, the parks, the greedy caterpillars of the common weale, who add Lordship to Lordship, farm to farm, pasture to pasture. How do the rich men and especially such as be sheepmongers oppress the king's liege people by devouring their common pastures with their sheep so that the poore people are not able to keep a cow for the comfort of them and of their poor family... I know towns so wholly decayed there is not stick or stone standing" (qtd. in Scrutton 82). Wealthy men in their desire to expand their ovine assets have made the land hospitable to sheep but inhospitable to mankind. People's dissatisfaction with the status quo was felt at every level of society and it bred the ground for insurrection. As Scrutton notes "[f]or the next ten years the air is full of complaints till they come to a head in the insurrections of 1549" (Scrutton 82).

In 1604, a year before *Lear* is written, a certain Mr. Trigge of Grantham publishes his "Petition of the Two Sisters, Church and Commonwealth, for the restoring of their ancient commons, which late inclosure with depopulation uncharitably hath taken away" (Scrutton 81). Trigge warns: "There was a statute made of late for the maintenance of the tillage and reedifying farms decayed. It is to be feared that God has observed how diligent some were to see the poor whipped by a statute made at the same time, and how slack in the execution of that other act of reedifying and plowing, wherefore if Enclosers and Depopulators of towns mean to be saved at the day of judgement, let them willingly cast open their closes again and reedify the farms they have decayed" (qtd. Scrutton 81). Interestingly, *Lear*'s prayer during the storm reads as a response to this attitude of righteous indignation against landowners. For example, having recently been made homeless, Lear realizes that he has done a poor job as King and caretaker of his people, "O I have ta'en / Too little care of this" (3.4.36-7). His remedy for salvation is to feel the hunger and bear the homelessness of the poor he had once neglected. Without reading *Lear* through the reigning monarch of the time, King James I was, however, also moved by the plight of the poor. For example, two years after *Lear* is written insurrections were still on-going and King James I was moved to pardon the perpetrators. As Scrutton notes "in 1607 a serious riot

took place in which fences and park palings were everywhere thrown down. The riot was easily suppressed; but the King, who seems to have sympathized with the poorer inhabitants, issued a Commission to inquire into the causes of the riots, with special instructions that ‘the poor should receive no injury by the encroachments of the richer neighbors’” (104-5). *King Lear* was performed before James I in 1606. Could the sympathy James I felt towards the poor who rioted in 1607 have been roused by his experience of watching *Lear* a year before? Fitter’s essay would reply in the affirmative.

Yet, aside from such subtle notes, Shakespeare goes silent on sheep. Shakespeare is careful not to allude directly to sheep as most pamphlets, poems, and prose have done. Instead with rhetorical subtlety Shakespeare creates a playwright’s version of a visual concept called *viewer completion*. Kurt Hanks and Larry Belliston write in the chapter “Viewer Completion” that “the lines not put into a drawing are as important as those that are” (120). The fact that Shakespeare does not mention the cause of land theft might hint at an intentional absence. Here absence becomes the highest form of presence. Shakespeare still retains the negative shape surrounding the sheep with subtle yet significant allusions such as the sheep-cote in the pelting village that offers shelter in the storm and the emphasis on clothing, land, and homelessness, triggering in his audience a theatrical *viewer completion*. Edward A. Hamilton writes “if the designer triggers the human imagination and compels the viewer to provide details, he is setting up an ideal learning situation. The artifice of incomplete form leaves room for imagination – the mind then fills in the details and works out the visual form” (qtd. in Hanks). I argue that the very absence of ovine imagery in a play preoccupied with animal figures, fine clothing, exposed skin, and bad weather, is a conceptual strategy to trigger an awareness of the very concept on which it is mute.

Arguably, a way to trace the mute presence of the ovine in Shakespeare’s text is through his characterization of the landscape. In the battle between Man and sheep the source of conflict was the land. During enclosure, pastoral replaced arable farming; swaths of land were surrendered to sheep leaving many humans homeless and dispossessed. Arguably, this agricultural change is evident in *Lear*. Although an agricultural setting may contradict what we understand to be the brutal landscape in *Lear*, Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Richard Marggraf Turley and Howard Thomas argue in their essay that *Lear*’s setting is arable farm land. Specifically,

they make a profound argument on the imagery of the heath scene. Their article considers the land in *Lear* by challenging the now ubiquitous image of the barren heath. As they write, “[t]oday’s audiences could be forgiven for thinking that in *King Lear* Shakespeare was wholly uninterested in the worked land as a meaningful context for his drama” (520). The most influential interpretation of *Lear* is Peter Brook’s 1962 staging and his 1970 film. In the film, Lear is “situated amid stark, bare sets that suggest a postapocalyptic winter landscape” (Archer, et al. 520). The idea that “the mental disintegration of the lonely king [is] reflected in and enhanced by a barren, dead set” has been inherited by subsequent productions (Archer, et al. 520). Yet Archer et al. argue, compellingly, that the setting of the famous Act 3 Scene 2 is indeed arable farm land. They assert that “[t]he image of a heath, with its accrued layers of resonance as a psychological waste land in *King Lear*, is misleading” (522). Their evidence for this assertion is an examination of *Lear*’s editorial history:

...closer scrutiny reveals that the blasted vision of Lear’s play world actually derives from a series of unauthorized editorial invention. The erroneous idea of the mad and dispossessed king in scene 18 cavorting on a ‘blasted heath’ – a phrase which, as [James] Ogden notes, comes from *Macbeth*, not *Lear* – was established by Nahum Tate in his 1681 rendering of the play, when he used ‘Desert Heath’ to describe the setting for scenes in Act 3. Nicholas Rowe picked up the term for his 1709 edition. But as the 1608 quarto clearly states, the climax of the play and of Lear’s madness takes place in a ‘high-grown field’ full of ‘sustaining corn’ (18.7, 6). The king’s weaving of a crown that incorporates weeds, including ‘furrow-weeds,’ ‘rank fumitory,’ and ‘darnel,’ only makes sense if this is arable, worked land. Lear’s movement from the storm and hovel of the middle of the play to this lush and fertile landscape has a powerful dramatic function, heightening (only to frustrate) the audience’s expectations of redemption in the final scenes. (Archer, et al. 520-1)

But the text seems to encourage the reading of a barren land. As Shannon writes, “Gloucester notes that ‘the bleak winds do sorely ruffle’ and highlights the landscape as an especially hostile *nuda terra*: ‘For many miles about / There’s scarce a bush’ where Lear might take shelter” (*The Unaccommodated Animal*, 167). Added to the image of the *nuda terra* is the image of the poor with unfed sides. If the setting is arable land why does Gloucester give the image of a barren

earth and Lear the image of hungry peasants? Archer, et al. argue that “[i]n 1604, Shakespeare was forty, and he seems to have started making provision for his eventual retirement. But what should have promised peace and prosperity delivered a period of sustained civil and social unrest fueled by a series of bad harvests, death by starvation and malnutrition, and land enclosures” (537). Indeed, I argue that a lot of answers to *Lear* lie in that last assertion, “land enclosures”: pastoral replaced arable farming. Land was no longer tilled to feed humans but was used to feed sheep.

The land in *Lear* can be read, as Shannon does, as *nuda terra*; it can be read, as Archer et al. do as arable farm land; and it can also be read as pastoral land populated by sheep. By reading *Lear* through the lens of economic history we find that all three geographic suggestions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Because land enclosure was the process by which arable farm land was converted into pastoral land, the heath scene could encapsulate an historical moment that depicts the turn from arable land to pastoral land. A high grown field close to a sheep-pen prefigures the domination of the English landscape by sheep. Similarly, the *nuda terra* can be read as an effect of ovine grazing habits. Karen Raber in *Animal Bodies / Renaissance Culture* highlights the image of rapacious sheep damaging society that Thomas More and Thomas Bastard establish in prose and poetry. Raber writes, “[a]s grazers, sheep are one of the most damaging because they require so much land and food: by preference, sheep eat as many broad-leaved plants as they can obtain... In comparison to their fellow ruminants (cows, for example), which eat primarily tough grasses, sheep eat such a diverse array of material that they leave little to reseed and grow anew; they also tend to crop close to the ground, which means they can easily overgraze an area if not moved frequently or provided supplementary foods” (165). Therefore, the image of a *nuda terra*, a barren earth, an arid landscape does not exclude the possibility of a pastoral landscape but may in fact be a consequence of sheep grazing. As Raber notes “although sheep are often assumed to graze in arid regions, in fact they *create* arid land, especially where human intervention increases herd densities” (165). Hence, Gloucester’s comment that “[f]or many miles about / There’s scarce a bush” (2.2.508-9) does not refer to a land that is innately barren, but one that may have been made barren by the presence of sheep.

In *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, the transformative power of contact with the ovine beast is the centre of the composition. This sacred sheep is vertically inserted between a dove

symbolizing the Holy Ghost above it and a *fons vitae* (“Fountain of Life”) below it. Above the dove at the lower edge of the top-centre panel is a large crown at the feet of “The Almighty.” This visual stacking of symbols – the crown above the dove of the Holy Ghost, which is above the Mystic Lamb – shows how “The Almighty” in the remote celestial court of heaven depicted in the top-centre panel descends into the world of Man in the bottom-centre panel. God is made flesh and makes his dwelling amongst us in the shape of sheep. As the *Agnus Dei* is the centre of Christian soteriology so is the Mystic Lamb the centre of van Eyck’s painting. It is the charged point where material culture, economics, and spirituality collide. By expunging sheep from *Lear*, the liminal script van Eyck beautifully illustrates that promises restoration through encounters with the ovine, begins to crumble. Fine clothes become symbols of corruption not spiritual sovereignty and being brought near to beast does not guarantee redemption. By deflating his audience, Shakespeare is encouraging them to seek the restoration denied them in the play in the real world.

Flesh: Mutton and Middleton

In *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1613) Thomas Middleton makes much ado about mutton: from the very first scene, where Maudlin Yellowhammer mentions “samphire,” which Allan Brissenden notes is a “plant growing on rocks by the sea, used in salads and especially good with marsh mutton,” through to the final act (1.1.7, 5n7). Many critics of *Chaste Maid* have written about the theme of commodification. From Brian Gibbons to Alexander Leggatt to Gary Kuchar, the metaphoric transformation of human beings into marketable flesh has indeed been noted. In a similar vein, anyone reading *Chaste Maid* cannot help but notice Middleton’s frequent allusions to mutton. Other meat products are mentioned such as veal (2.2.123) and calf (2.2.63), but pride of place is given to mutton: mutton is the meat staple the corrupt promoters most long to confiscate; mutton is the term used by many characters as a slang for “whore” and “cunt.” Given the emphasis on the theme of commodified (human) flesh – especially female flesh – mutton might seem to be a random choice among other meats to serve as a metaphor for carnal lusts. But Middleton’s choice is not random. Analysis of economic history shows that by the 17th century the mutton market had gained ascendancy over the wool trade; rather than being bred for wool, sheep were now being fattened up for consumption. Critics are right that Middleton used the marketplace as a metaphor, but this essay elucidates that Middleton used the *mutton* market as a metaphor. By adding the dimension of economic history, by analyzing details of the mutton market, I argue that what many critics have read as Middleton’s moral ambiguity is actually moral despair. In *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, Middleton depicts the turn of the ovine image from a symbol of faith to a symbol of flesh. As the wool trade gives way to the mutton market, and the once voracious cannibal sheep becomes a succulent food staple of the bustling city of Jacobean London, Middleton shows that with this shift whatever spiritual connotations of the ovine that remained after the defamation of sheep due to enclosure are here further debased because the soteriological substitution of the Lamb of God for fallen mankind is turned into the comic substitution of human bodies for sheep-meat and the use of human bodies as commodified flesh.

From Brian Gibbon’s seminal text *Jacobean City Comedy: A Study of Satiric Plays by Jonson, Marston and Middleton* (1968) to recent criticism, there has been a focus on the theme of materialism in *Chaste Maid*. Critics have argued that the materialism in Middleton’s text is most evident in his portrayal of human relationships. For example, Gibbons argues that in *Chaste*

Maid human relationships are structured around profit: “[a]ll human relationships are conceived of in terms of financial contract” (167). He gives the example of Yellowhammer’s relationship to Moll; “her father, Yellowhammer, regards his daughter as a marketable commodity” (Gibbons 167). Gibbons notes that Middleton mocks the materialism of his characters, but he also notes that “materialists fascinated Middleton, and though he satirises them persistently, the effect can be disturbingly ambiguous, as in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*” (116). Gibbons does not ground his analysis of Middleton’s theme of commodification in the actual market place of Jacobean London. In point of fact, Gibbons asserts that an economic analysis of city comedy is beside the point. He writes, “the plays do not present in any useful sense ‘a keen analysis in economic terms’ nor may they be rashly cited as evidence of actual conditions at the time” (29). My point of departure from Gibbons’ analysis is in the important role played by economic history in the analysis of Middleton’s satire.

Alexander Leggatt in *Citizen Comedy in the Age of Shakespeare* (1973) also addresses Middleton’s preoccupation with materialism. Importantly, he draws more attention to the theme of commodification. He notes that “Citizen comedy in the period under discussion is concerned with social relations in their most material form – sex and marriage, money and property” (151). Leggatt, who describes *Chaste Maid* as “the climax of [Middleton’s] achievement in citizen comedy” notes that all characters in this satire engage in the “brisk trade in human flesh” (138, 139). Indeed, Leggatt asserts that “sex has been detached from love; here, it is simply a marketable commodity” and “family values are made to serve financial interest” (139). The (sexual) marketing of human flesh is made possible by the fact that “[h]uman beings are described in terms that reduce them to beasts, inanimate objects or salable commodities” (Leggatt 141). Where Gibbons asserts that city comedies “delineate the forces of human emotion which money unlooses, not the workings of money itself” (30), Leggatt describes a marketplace mentality at work in the social and sexual relationships in *Chaste Maid*.

However, Leggatt’s analysis of profit-seeking motives remains symbolic of the coarsening of social values. His analysis of commodification points, not to an actual economic trend influencing the playwright, but to Middleton’s moral ambiguity and his fascination with materialists. Indeed, Leggatt in the conclusion to *Citizen Comedy* argues that the amoral energies of the genre and its preoccupation with sex and money is an affirmation of life:

But too exclusive a concern with stability and preservation can lead to meanness of spirit. The cheaters who deal in money and the whores who deal in sex may be out for themselves, but they are also keeping the traffic of life moving, keeping society from atrophy. In their attacks on respectability, we recognize an amoral energy that, whatever else we may think of it, keeps social life lively and challenging. (151-2)

Leggatt's analysis on settings such as Bartholomew Fair and Cheapside is apt. For all their trickery and treachery there is never a dull moment and we are entertained by their energies. But I would rather stay suspicious of the pleasures of watching characters cheat and swindle each other possibly because to acquiesce to the carnivalesque mood may be to miss the troubled economic context informing each character's actions. As even Leggatt notes: "Nor is Middleton always content with a purely sporting interest in the game: he thinks – and forces us to think – about the implications of his character's behavior" (134-5). Yet Leggatt's analysis of the implications of characters' behaviour remains at the level of the social instead of being broadened to account for deeper cultural anxieties, which later critics will address.

As criticism of *Chaste Maid* progressed, more critics approached the theme of commodification through an analysis of the abstract energies of exchange. For example, Susan Wells takes a distanced view of the marketplace while agreeing with Gibbon's assertion that the play cannot be read according to the actual economic conditions of the time. Wells argues that the city comedy writers were influenced by the energies of the marketplace. However, she is careful to note that she uses the concept of the marketplace as a metaphor: "Let me first clarify the concept of the marketplace as a place both of trade and of celebration. I am using the term, of course, metaphorically: the marketplace is a secular space, public space, space in which activity is spontaneous and uncontrolled" (Wells 38). Thus, she argues that the "writers of city comedy" employed a "distanced evocation of the norms of the marketplace" in order to "celebrate commerce as a part of the communal life" (49). In short, the marketplace is invoked in city comedies not to elucidate economic tropes within the satires but to account for the carnivalesque energies of the play. Wells asserts that although "greed may be posed as the central ethical problem of the play... the conventional answers – charity and contentment – press upon our attention less than the play's image of the lavish and carefree material life of the festive marketplace" (54). Wells' analysis of the marketplace is apt but her analysis of the carnivalesque energies of exchange is narrowly focused on the satirical use of commercial language.

Similarly, Liberty Star Stanavage understands the economic through the linguistic. She notes that “[t]hroughout the play, domestic situations are referred to in the language of exchange and economy” (150). Indeed, in referencing the critical history of the play, she notes that “[n]umerous critics have considered the human as commodity in *Chaste Maid*, largely in terms of the value systems of the play, highlighting how language of commercial concerns shapes the expression of identity” (145). The representation of human bodies as commodified flesh has been established since Gibbons and Leggatt; Stanavage’s analysis continues in the same vein but draws more attention to the use of commercial language in describing social relationships.

Wells’ analysis of the energies of exchange segues in more recent criticism of city/citizen comedy to a sustained economic analysis. Shannon Miller and Gary Kuchar both draw a connection between the commercial language describing sexual relationships and the commercial changes happening in Jacobean society. In these essays, themes such as wittolry and whoredom are read as anxious reflections of monumental changes in Jacobean England’s economy. For example, Miller focuses on the female body as the site where anxieties induced by the economic transition of Jacobean society from feudalism to proto-capitalism are worked out. On the other hand, Kuchar reads acquiescent cuckoldry – wittolry – as a symbol of a shift from relationships based on feudal values to relationships based on proto-capitalist values.

In “Consuming Mothers/Consuming Merchants,” Miller argues that city comedies were a literary response to anxiety-inducing “economic transformation” during the 17th century (74). Miller argues that “during the seventeenth century writers in quite distinct genres explicitly or implicitly attempted to comprehend this changing system of economic exchange” which was “the transition from feudalism to capitalism that marked the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” (74, 73). The central goal of her essay is to “examine the links between a growingly capitalist – and increasingly carnivalesque – economy and discourses on female bodies in anti-feminist tracts, court masques, and finally in two Jacobean city comedies,” *Chaste Maid* and Ben Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) (Miller 75). In Susan Wells’ essay the energies of exchange are dealt with in more abstract terms, but here Miller’s argument concretizes the theme of commercialization with reference to an actual and monumental economic transition. In so doing, she reveals a deeper source of anxiety fueling the play’s shrill carnivalesque energy.

Kuchar, like Miller, reads city comedy as a literary response to the economic transition from a feudal to a proto-capitalist society, but where Miller focuses on female bodies as the site

of cultural anxieties, Kuchar focuses on homo-social relations between “mercantile upstarts” – middleclass citizens – and aristocrats who engage in the commercialized exchange of spouses (28). Kuchar reads the literary history of the wittol – the acquiescent cuckold – and the changes in attitude toward this character as significant of historical changes in the understanding of worth from the fiduciary to the mercantile. Kuchar’s main argument is that the shift from a husband to a wittol, is symptomatic of a shift from the feudal emphasis on honour to a mercantile emphasis on profit.

The citizen’s exchange of his wife to a degenerate aristocrat for wealth becomes an expression of the anxiety-inducing ascendancy of proto-capitalist thought. Thus, in city comedies, feudal values are not completely eradicated but are under great threat from mercantile energies. Although Kuchar’s analysis builds on decades of criticism, he offers a more rounded understanding of the theme of commodification and the pull to materialism in city comedies. According to Kuchar, the commodification of human flesh is not simply symptomatic of the forces of appetite but is an exercise in determining the limits of a new social contract based on transactional encounters as opposed to fiduciary attachments.

In this chapter, I want to extend Kuchar’s point that the shift from the fiduciary husband who is anxious to defend his honour in relation to his wife’s chastity to the mercantile wittol who turns his wife into a salable commodity is symptomatic of Jacobean England’s change from feudalism to capitalism. I argue that this shift from fiduciary husband to mercantile wittol can be read as a reflection of the agricultural-economic shift from ovine husbandry, where sheep are an asset maintained for their fleece, to the rise of the mutton market where sheep are commodities fattened and slaughtered to produce flesh. Although the wool trade was exploitative of humans it remained fiduciary to the sheep. Wool men cared more about their ovine assets than they did for the many people who became disenfranchised due to enclosure. Indeed, sheep were painstakingly cared for by shepherds: they were exercised, oiled, and tended. But once they became a commodity as opposed to an asset they were no longer exercised but fattened to be slaughtered. Middleton depicts how the historical and economic sway from sheep as a source of fabric to sheep as a source of flesh complicates the religious attitudes of his time. The ascendancy of mutton in early-modern food culture is problematic. By becoming an increasingly popular and preferred source of meat, mutton comes close to mocking the image of the *Agnus*

Dei's flesh – the body of Christ. Hence, the sacrament surrounding the ingestion of the body of the *Agnus Dei* is comically confounded with the ingestion of the *Ovis Aries*' flesh.

Mutton's consumption as well as the economic and literary history surrounding it made it a polyvalent symbol. Middleton, who was educated at Oxford, would have been aware of More's famous passage in *Utopia* (1516) on cannibalistic sheep who eat men and swallow down villages and towns. The historical irony would not be lost on Middleton that in the voracious city of London, the great ovine menace that was once a source of economic controversy and socio-political uprisings in the 16th century, is here in the 17th century so easily consumed. The appetite of London's carnal populace is shown to subsume the voracious appetite of sheep by consuming its flesh. Indeed, by the 17th century the ovine image became a symbol of human appetites in the form of mutton. Although mutton has always been a food staple, there was a shift in its economic and cultural importance as it became the preferred source of meat. As the pamphleteer responsible for, "The Decay of England only by the Great Multitude of Sheep" (1550-3) notes "most substance of our feeding was want to be our beef, and now it is our mutton, and so many mouths goeth to mutton which causeth mutton to be dear" (qtd. in Ponting 27). In fact, the mutton market was sustained mostly by the bustling consumer culture of London. According to Peter J. Bowden, in *Tudor and Stuart England*, "by far the greatest single influence on the meat market at this time was exercised by London" (10). Indeed, "as early as 1600, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire sheep were being fattened for the London market" (Bowden 11). In this city space of carnality, sheep's flesh was accumulated to satiate appetites.

The turn to mutton had its cause in ironic socio-economic relations between sheep and space. Ponting argues that the rise of human population affected ovine husbandry because it limited the amount of space on which sheep could graze. Ponting notes that "[m]ost of the complaints [about sheep] could equally well be explained by an expanding population" (28). He notes that the sheep is "an animal which can be grown to produce two very different products, wool and mutton" but in "practice, any attempt to make it a real dual-purpose animal results in getting the best in neither, and a decision as to which comes first, good mutton or good wool, must be made" (Ponting 25). In order for sheep to produce fine wool, they must be exercised by roaming. The exercise makes their wool healthy and their muscles strong. The former makes them ideal for producing fine cloths. The latter – the toughened flesh – makes them a poor source of mutton. With the increase in human population brought on by urbanization, sheep have less

space to roam, exercise less, become fatter and thus become an ideal source of succulent mutton. Ponting notes that “the sixteenth century buyer seeking wool for fine broadcloth,” “was finding it increasingly difficult to obtain sufficient fine wool and there can be little doubt that the reason lay in the increase in England’s population causing an increase in mutton consumption; and the farmer, trying to meet this demand by breeding fatter sheep, was also getting coarser wool” (25).

As feudalism slowly turned to proto-capitalism, as fiduciary relationships slowly gave way to mercantile encounters, the rise of the mutton market turned the sheep from assets and objects of care into commodities. For example, sheep kept for their fleece generate a seasonal product. They are not a product in themselves but a profit-generating asset that must be maintained in order to keep yielding fleece. Thus, the exercise of roaming ensures that the fleece is fine only because the sheep themselves are healthy. But once the sheep is bred for its flesh it becomes a commodity – expendable: it is fattened up to be slaughtered. The farmers no longer need to concern themselves with the health of the sheep because its fleece is no longer the source of profit but its fattened flesh which will be swiftly consumed by the ravenous appetites of London. Hence, the powerful symbol of fiduciary care, the Shepherd and his sheep, which is the principal subject of Psalm 23 and the doctrine of salvation, which was destabilized by More and Bastard as the biting beast that consumes Man, is in *Chaste Maid* further debased into the image of the fleshmonger selling meat: citizens of London exchanging money for human bodies that are referred to in whole or in part as “mutton.”

The shift from feudalism to mercantilism, from the wool trade to the mutton market, from sheep’s fleece to sheep’s flesh, further debased the ovine image from a symbol of faith to a symbol of flesh. Where the *Agnus Dei* is a symbol of sacrifice, where the twin lambs in *The Winter’s Tale* are a symbol of innocence, here the multiple allusions to sheep’s flesh – mutton – is a symbol of the ascendancy of appetite: the appetite for food and the lusts of the flesh. By the 17th century, sheep, more specifically, the consumption of sheep-meat acquired sexual connotations. For example, mutton became a slang for whore; mutton was also a slang for “cunt.” A mutton-eater is a sheep-biter and both terms meant whoremonger. Described in *Shakespeare’s Insults: A Pragmatic Dictionary*, a sheep-biter is “a mutton-eater or one who runs after ‘mutton’ (ie. after women). A whoremonger” (372). Thus, when the libertine poet John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester describes the libidinous Charles II in a mock epithet, he writes “Here lies our mutton-eating king,” (Brewer 872). Indeed, one of Charles II’s epithets is the

“Mutton Eating Monarch.” “Mutton-eating” did not describe his culinary predilections, but his unbridled appetite for female flesh. Mutton, then, became the perfect metaphor for appetite because it conflates both gastronomic and sexual gluttony.

In *Chaste Maid* Middleton gives us a world emptied of spiritual notions; it is a world where flesh profits all. Cheapside is full of ovine flesh parts in the form of succulent mutton and an obsession with the parts of human flesh. Here, human beings are conflated with or substituted for the ovine either by being referred to as a ram, an ewe, or a piece of mutton, or like the live baby in the basket, they are knowingly disguised to be mistaken for a piece of lamb. For example, the figure of the Welsh Gentlewoman is Middleton’s concretization of the concept of flesh. He creates a character who is nothing but a symbol of sexual desire: a piece of mutton. Interestingly, Middleton draws on common knowledge at the time about the mutton market and plays with his auditors’ culinary knowledge about regional delicacies. Indeed, Ponting notes that “Welsh sheep were to be praised only in the dish for they were the choicest mutton” (32). Similarly, Bowden also mentions the place of Welsh sheep-meat in the mutton market. He writes that “Welsh mutton was sweet, and for this reason sheep from Wales were driven to London and there slaughtered to feed the city’s growing population” (11). This gastronomic knowledge is made comical in *Chaste Maid*. Whorehound has brought his Welsh paramour to London to be consumed by Tim: “Now wench thou art welcome to the heart of the city London” (1.1.92-3). On cue, in the scene where Tim kisses the Welsh gentlewoman, upon parting lips he conflates kissing her with eating Welsh mutton:

O delicious, one may discover her country by her kissing.
 ‘Tis a true saying, there’s nothing tastes so sweet as your
 Welsh mutton: (4.1.160-2)

In this comic moment Tim is conflating the Welsh gentlewoman’s lips with her vulva. To Tim “her kissing” is similar to “her country.” “Country” here on one level refers to Wales, the geographic origin of the famously sweet and succulent mutton, but on the other level it is a homonym of “cunt-ry”: the female vulva/vagina. Middleton is playing with his early-modern auditors’ knowledge of the succulent sweetness of Welsh mutton and the draw of fleshly lusts.

The energy of the absurd conflation of the human with the ovine, which is couched in terms of unbridled appetite is Middleton’s mockery of his culture’s turn to materialism. Mutton became a culturally complex symbol that reveals a contradiction whereby Christianity urges its

adherents to resist the fleshy lusts of the body and to cease consumption of meat during Lent yet exhorts them to metaphorically eat the flesh of the Lamb of God. Although it has been argued by most critics that Middleton's play is morally ambiguous, this chapter argues that Middleton's mockery of material appetite masks a sense of loss. As society shifts from feudalism to proto-capitalism, values such as honour and trust are eroded as profit and exploitation slowly gain ascendancy. Most importantly, Middleton's frequent allusion to mutton highlights that the ovine image has shifted again. In More's and Bastard's writings the ovine image shifts from being a symbol of sacrifice – the *Agnus Dei* – to being a symbol of economic greed and rapacity. But in Middleton's satire, sheep shift from being symbols of rapacity, but which are themselves objects of care causing socio-economic mayhem, to becoming symbols of unbridled sexual appetite reflecting spiritlessness and moral decay. For More and Bastard, sheep were dangerous because they caused humans to lose their land. But Middleton notes that in Jacobean London where sheep are swiftly consumed by humans, the ovine becomes a cultural metaphor of citizens' devolution into gluttony, materialism, and sexual debasement.

In *Chaste Maid* Middleton satirizes the turn to materialism in terms of ovine husbandry. Most of the characters in *Chaste Maid* are primarily concerned with their domestic economy: getting married, begetting, inheritances, and dowries. Preoccupation with the domestic sphere is a mundane and important part of society. However, what makes Middleton's portrayal of the domestic economy satirical is that he couches the economic and sexual exchanges, marital and extra-marital, in terms of ovine husbandry. Throughout the play, his characters use the language of ovine husbandry to describe their social desires, and in doing so dehumanize themselves. For example, Touchwood Junior upon seeing Sir Whorehound with his Welsh Gentlewoman paramour remarks to himself:

My knight with a brace of footmen
Is come and brought up his ewe mutton
To find a ram at London; (1.1.140-2)

We learn that Whorehound is hoping to rid himself of his paramour by passing her off as his virginal and “virtuous niece” whom he hopes his prospective father-in-law, Yellowhammer, will marry off to his son, Tim (1.1.158). Whorehound is using the Welsh Gentlewoman as currency in his desire to appease the Yellowhammers, marry Moll, and attain her dowry. He says to his paramour, “I bring thee up to turn thee into gold wench, and make thy fortune shine like your

bright trade. A goldsmith's shop sets out a city maid" (1.1.99-101). Where Touchwood Jr. uses ovine husbandry to understand Whorehound's desires, Whorehound uses the language of goldsmithing. These two economic systems have differing views of worth: in goldsmithing worth is not intrinsic but requires an arbitrate to determine the worth of the gold. Hence, the Welsh 'whore' can be transformed by the Goldsmith Yellowhammer into a marriageable virgin. But Whorehound's plan fails: his paramour is revealed to be far from virginal. Whorehound's evaluation of worth is poor, but Touchwood Junior's observation is astute: the Welsh paramour is described as an "ewe mutton," which is a euphemism for whore but also an agricultural commodity. Specifically, she is Welsh mutton, the most succulent and most delicious of its kind. Therefore, she is not a currency: she is not a store of value susceptible to fluctuations like money whereby she can go from whore to virgin, socially worthless to valuable. She is a commodity; her intricate worth lies in her flesh which has been brought to London to be consumed, like the historical Welsh ewes driven *enmasse* into the city to satiate appetites.

Although *Chaste Maid* mocks the unbridled appetites of several characters, Allwit, is the prime example of how Middleton satirizes the rise of materialism through the metaphor of the mutton market because of his role as husband/fleshmonger who capitalizes on the unbridled appetites of sexual gluttons like Whorehound. Indeed, Allwit himself is aware of his role. He says of himself, "'tis his living; / As other trades thrive, butchers by selling flesh, / Poulters by venting conies, or the like coz" (4.1.239-41). Where characters, such as Whorehound are tempest-tossed by their unbridled lusts, Allwit's cool self-control gives him an enormous economic advantage. Most of the criticism of *Chaste Maid* seems intrigued by the character of Allwit. Gibbons argues that Middleton is reluctantly fascinated by Allwit. He writes "it is [Middleton's] acknowledgement of the practical possibility of Allwit's successful existence by pragmatic policy alone which shows that Middleton is turning over the question 'why is this feasible if it is immoral?'; it is out of this quarrel with himself that Middleton makes his art" (168). Leggatt's view of Allwit is less enthusiastic. He sees Allwit as a failure. He writes "we have seen how Allwit congratulates himself on his financial independence, but in giving up his responsibilities he has also given up his authority" (Leggatt 140). Leggatt sees Allwit's wittolry as contemptible, not as a pragmatic success: "In short, [Allwit's] sense of freedom is an illusion; he is in many respects the most enslaved character in the play" (140). But Jennifer Panek paints a compelling portrait of a man who is able to eschew patriarchal responsibilities, "the need to

police his wife's chastity and the obligation to provide for his household," and at the same time maintain his patriarchal privileges (80). She argues that "while the audience does not see Allwit orchestrate the beginning of his wife's relations with Sir Walter Whorehound – and is thus prevented from judging him as either pimp or a dupe – his termination of the Whorehound affair leaves little doubt as to who is in control" (Panek 82). Allwit's wittolry stands out as a great success in the history of the literary genre. Indeed, Panek argues that Allwit stands apart from other cuckold/wittol characters "because the play thoroughly destabilizes any position from which its audience could either ridicule him as a cuckold or despise him as a pimp" (81). Arguably, Allwit differs from other literary wittols such as Ben Jonson's Corvino because his model of wittolry is not couched in purely mercantile terms but in the feudalist-inflected economic model of ovine husbandry.

Allwit and Whorehound are adulterations of the shepherd and his ram in the economic sense of ovine husbandry. Economically, a lecherous ram expands the wealth of the herd through reproduction. The bestializing and monetizing of human sexuality that translates it into ovine husbandry is powerfully illustrated by the character of Allwit because he destabilizes the wittol script; his cuckolder is the dehumanized object, not his wife. It is clear that Middleton is both deeply fascinated and perplexed by Allwit. Indeed, Gibbons asserts that "materialists fascinated Middleton" (116). The character of Allwit is a brilliant example of Middleton's engagement with a purely materialistic psyche "devoid of all religious and moral conviction," and "uninterested in morality" (Gibbons 167). In fact, the name Allwit, a pun on 'wittol,' also implies 'all wit' – to be full of cunning. Hence, in his monologue, Allwit's justifications for wittolry, although powerfully comic and ironic, are highly logical, sound, and economically impressive if viewed from the perspective of animal husbandry. In this model of husbandry, Allwit like a gentleman farmer expands to a robust state his domestic economy. Whorehound serves as the ram that tups Allwit's ewe bringing forth progeny and expanding his wealth. Allwit is unmotivated by sexual passions and his aloofness to lechery gives him an economic advantage. Although he wears the horns of the proverbial cuckold, he is raised far enough above animal passions that he is able to shepherd Whorehound's unbridled sexuality to his own advantage. Middleton portrays Allwit as logical and perceptive:

The founder's come to town; I am like a man
Finding a table furnished to his hand,
As mine is still to me, prays for the founder;

Bless the right worshipful, the good founder's life.
 I thank him, h'as maintained my house this ten years,
 Not only keeps my wife, but a keeps me,
 And all my family; I am at his table,
 He gets me all my children, and pays the nurse,
 Monthly, or weekly, puts me to nothing,
 Rent, nor church duties, not so much as the scavenger:
 The happiest state that ever man was born to. (1.2.12-22)

Allwit is not just unperturbed by Whorehound's liaison with his wife, he is grateful for it. Allwit believes that he has been relieved of a litany of labours by Sir Whorehound. Whorehound "keeps [Allwit's] wife," "keeps [Allwit]," begets Allwit's children, and "pays the nurse" that cares for them (1.2.17-9). What most men would find scornful, Allwit describes as "[t]he happiest state that ever man was born to" (1.2.22). Allwit's exultation is reminiscent of the words of a "very wealthy" "provincial stapler," John Barton of Holme beside Newark (d. 1491), who made his fortune in the wool trade and "who set as a posy in the window of his house the motto": "I thank God and ever shall / It is the sheep hath payed for all" (Power and Postan 41). Like the wool trader, Barton, Allwit clothes his economic enthusiasm in religious language. Barton confounds two ideas in one when he thanks God for the sheep that has "payed for all" (Power and Postan 41). On the economic level he is grateful for the *Ovis Aries* that powers the wool trade and has made him a wealthy man. On an ecclesiastical level, he is grateful for the *Agnus Dei* who "payed for all" Mankind's transgressions canceling the debt of Original Sin.

Allwit makes a similar contraction to John Barton of Holme by conflating economic advantage with spiritual salvation. Allwit speaks of Whorehound as if he were a Christ-like figure. Allwit "prays for the founder" and "Bless[es] the right worshipful, the good founder's life" for furnishing his table (1.2.15). Whorehound has paid for all. However, although the Christ figure brings salvation and liberation, he also takes upon himself the sorrows, sufferings, and the debt of Original Sin that belongs to humanity. Allwit sees Whorehound as enacting a similar grace for him. Whorehound not only provides for his family and furnishes his table, he also takes upon himself the sorrows and torments that would otherwise have fallen upon Allwit:

These torments stand I freed of, I am as clear
 From jealousy of a wife as from the charge.
 O two miraculous blessings; 'tis the knight
 Hath took that labour all out of my hands;
 I may sit still and play; he's jealous for me –

Watches her steps, sets spies – I live at ease;
 He has both the cost and torment; when the strings
 Of his heart frets, I feed, laugh, or sing,
La dildo, dildo la dildo, la dildo dildo de dildo. (1.2.49-57)

Allwit uses words such as “torments,” “labour,” and “cost” to describe a typical husband’s economic and emotional expenditure in relation to his wife’s upkeep and chastity. Indeed, the word “torment” appears twice, first in the plural and then in the singular. Allwit’s reasoning is clear: procreation is a labor. Allwit asserts that he is relieved both of the economic expenditure of having to take care of his wife and his children as well as the emotional expenditure of engaging in the mechanics of spousal jealousy: “Watch[ing] her steps, set[ting] spies” (1.2.54). Compared to Whorehound’s emotional, economic, and sexual labours is Allwit’s joyful leisure: “the Knight / Hath took that labour all out of my hands; / I may sit still and play” (1.2.51-3). Allwit’s wittolry is, by Middleton, satirically couched in the language of salvation. Indeed, Allwit refers to Sir Whorehound’s sexual and economic labours as “two miraculous blessings” (1.2.51). This language of salvation emerges from the image of the *Agnus Dei*, the beast that is on the one hand burdened with the sins of man and on the other hand eaten up as the body of Christ.

By setting the play during the period of Lent, Middleton highlights the emptying out of spiritual significance and the complete lack of self-control that occurs when appetite gains ascendancy. *Chaste Maid* is set during the 40-day period of ritualistic mourning leading up to Resurrection Sunday. During this period, excess of flesh – food and sin – is repressed. In this state of relative privation, the Christian emulates Christ who mourned in advance his own crucifixion. Lent requires penitence, abstemiousness, and mortification of the flesh as one prepares himself to experience in thought Christ’s tragic crucifixion and his glorious resurrection. For its adherents, Lent is a yearly exercise in liminality. The end result is an inner purification as one gains from the sacrifice made by Christ. Although *Chaste Maid* is set during Lent, the atmosphere of the play is carnivalesque; rather than the mortification of flesh we get the multiplication of flesh by fornication, adultery, gluttony and all manner of lechery. By creating a carnivalesque mood in a play set during Lent, Middleton is orchestrating a powerful reversal of expectations because Lent and Carnival are in perpetual conflict. In *Carnival and Theatre*, Michael D. Bristol argues that the “central and, in the Renaissance, most pervasive

festive symbol of that agonistic style is the Battle of Carnival and Lent” (72-3). Bristol argues that this perpetual battle between Lent and carnival is couched in culinary terms as flesh versus fish: “[t]he most immediate and pressing concern expressed in the traditional Battle of Carnival and Lent is culinary, for whatever spiritual significance the season may have, its actualization in material culture takes the form of a shift in cuisine that purports to be a fast” (74). Thus, Middleton’s multiple allusions to mutton highlights the bustling energies of carnal desire. Middleton presents his audience with characters serving diverse lusts of the flesh be they money, social rank, sex, and progeny, through the metaphor-laden craving for mutton, which is forbidden during the restrictive period of Lent. In *Chaste Maid* the carnivalesque mood runs rampant and Lent is unvictorious. This inability to temporarily sever or suppress fleshly ties to the material world and its lusts is symbolized by Middleton as the inability to dietarily eschew mutton.

Middleton gives us characters who are breaking the restrictive culinary rules of Lent. “Lent, what cares colon for Lent?” (2.2.86) asks the scheming Allwit to the mutton-mongering protesters. But, even Lent, an entire season, does not escape the theme of commodification. For example, during the Promoters scene, Mr. Oliver is described by the first Promoter as one of “our benefactors” (2.2.138). We learn that Mr. Oliver is “Mr. Beggerland’s man, the wealthy merchant / That is in fee with us” and who “purchased the whole Lent together” (2.2.140-1, 143). Since Mr. Oliver works for the man who has purchased Lent, the Promoters do not confiscate his mutton. The quick mention of this absent Mr. Beggarland is important. We know that he has “purchased” Lent, which most likely means he has bribed the promoters for the entire season. More importantly, this great bawd is named “beggar-land” which powerfully hints at enclosed lands – lands taken from the poor leaving them beggared. His profession as a “merchant” could very well be in the trade of sheep for fleece or flesh. The irony is that as a merchant he has “purchased” Lent. He has turned a ritualistic season marked by abstemiousness into a commodity which he buys in exchange for the freedom to consume prohibited flesh. Allwit’s remark, “Lent, what cares colon for Lent?” (2.2.86), at the immediate level emphasizes the well-established dichotomy of the needs of the spirit being at odds with the needs of the flesh. The carnal needs of the colon are indifferent to the spiritual needs of the soul.

But Middleton’s carnal setting teases out a contradiction concerning Lent, because according to the sacrament of the Eucharist, according to Jesus, to his very words, consumption

is also at the heart of salvation. Repudiation of the flesh and the consumption of Christ's flesh are both necessary for salvation. Although Jesus himself addresses a crowd and says: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63), perplexity emerges when Jesus begins to talk about the role of his body in the salvation of Man. Jesus's divine epithet spoken by John the Baptist is the cry, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, KJV). Jesus Christ becomes the living Paschal lamb, *Pascha Nostrum*, which is an echo to the salvation of the Jews in the land of Egypt. Jesus becomes the true Passover lamb who is killed, consumed, and whose blood is smeared on the doorposts so that the angel of death may pass over. As St. Paul notes, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7, KJV). Jesus himself tells a crowd of followers that they must consume his flesh if they wish to be saved. This is not a suggestion; it is a command. Jesus Christ says that if his followers do not eat his flesh, they will have no life in them:

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. (John 6: 53-6, KJV)

Later, on the eve of his crucifixion, the breaking of his body and the spilling of his blood, he will ask his disciples to eat his flesh in effigy *in memoriam*: "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19, KJV). This is the origin of the Eucharist. But the pretext of the Eucharist is superficially absurd. Putting these lines of thought together from the Biblical verses, a comic idea emerges that the divine ovine, the Lamb of God who asks of his followers to feast on his flesh, is a miraculous piece of sheep-meat. Bruce Boehrer argues that it is the "anti-pastoral" environment of Jacobean London that causes a reversal of traditional values (45). Boehrer notes that in this debased setting "Christus Redemptor is reborn as Christus Edax" (45). Middleton's setting further debases the *Agnus Dei*.

Allwit is symbolic of the contradiction that perplexes Middleton's play. Arguably, he is the character most acclimatized to the anti-pastoral environment of Jacobean London. Yet Allwit himself is of a morally complex nature. For example, he is characterized as cold and calculating

because he sees sex as a commodity and objectifies Whorehound's body as a dildo. In one of Allwit's compelling asides he says of Whorehound: "He has both the cost and torment; when the strings / Of his heart frets, I feed, laugh, or sing, / *La dildo, dildo la dildo, la dildo dildo de dildo*" (1.2.55-7). A dildo is an artificial penis; a substitute for a man's actual phallus. The chorusing of the word "dildo" follows immediately after Allwit's joyful observation that Whorehound has become a substitute for him in his marriage: "'tis the knight / Hath took that labour all out of my hands; / I may sit still and play" (1.2.51-3). Allwit does not see Whorehound as a threat because he has dehumanized him. Allwit sees Whorehound as a dildo – an object that is disposable and replaceable. But this is distinct from other wittols who objectify their wives. Allwit objectifies a degenerate aristocrat while maintaining a fiduciary relationship to his wife. In the *ménage à trois* Whorehound becomes the whore whose body and money are used up and then tossed aside. Despite the Allwits' mean use of Whorehound, there is a kind of poetic justice to their scheme; one does not feel particularly sorry for Whorehound.

Allwit's commodification of Whorehound's flesh is contrasted with the compassion he feels at the sight of the commodified flesh of animals. For example, when Allwit sees the Promoters lying in wait for citizens who have broken the Lenten law of forbidden flesh, his language reveals a surprising empathy toward the animals:

By the mass, promoters,
 'Tis so, I hold my life, and planted there
 To arrest the dead corps of poor calves and sheep,
 Like ravenous creditors that will not suffer
 The bodies of their poor departed debtors
 To go to th' grave, but e'en in death to vex
 And stay the corps, with bills of Middlesex. (2.2.61-7)

Allwit uses anthropomorphic metaphors to describe the relationship between the corrupt promoters and the pieces of flesh they confiscate. For Allwit, the pieces of veal and mutton are not meat to satiate human appetite but are "bodies" (2.2.65). The idea of referring to pieces of meat as "bodies" suggests that they possess a soul. Indeed, Allwit likens these animals to "poor departed debtors" whose bodies being denied to their families are also denied a Christian burial until all debts are paid (2.2.65). By denying the debtor an ecclesiastical burial, the creditors place the individual's soul in jeopardy (sinners and suicides were also denied Christian burials) – a second kind of prison sentence to the one first spent in debtor's prison. Allwit sympathizes with

these animals and refers to them as “poor calves and sheep” (2.2.63). The irony of course is that Allwit musters no such compassion for Whorehound when he is carted off to debtor’s prison.

Allwit, for all his mercantile energy and pragmatic policy, maintains a fiduciary relationship to his wife. She is never a commodified object in his eyes, never a piece of flesh, but a person he respects. For example, after the Allwits discard Whorehound, they discuss what their next enterprise should be. The conversation begins with the question: “What shall we do now wife?” to which Mistress Allwit replies, “As we were wont to do” (5.2.166-7). Although they settle on letting out lodgings, not wittolry, the idea comes from Mistress Allwit not her husband:

Mistress Allwit:
Let’s let out lodgings then,
And take a house in the Strand.

Allwit:
In troth a match wench... (5.2.168-70)

Allwit relies on his wife’s financial advice and regards her as a partner of worth. He is grateful for her idea calling it a true match because, from exploiting Whorehound, they now have the appropriate furniture to open a whorehouse elegant enough to “lodge a countess” (5.2.174). But his words “[i]n troth a match wench” aside from being an expression of enthusiastic agreement with his wife’s idea is also a comment on the fact that she is his match (5.2.170). In the *ménage à trois*, Whorehound is the object – the “dildo” – who serves as a substitute husband to Mistress Allwit (1.2.57).

Although the character of Allwit is usually read by critics as an amoral and gross materialist, he reveals a morally complex nature. He does not commodify his wife, but respects her counsel, seeing in her a worthy partner. He is repulsed by the lechery of the corrupt promoters. He displays surprising empathy towards dead animals. In a sense, he substitutes dead animals for humans; rather than feel any stirrings of amity toward the Promoters, he feels compassion for the animals now turned into commodified flesh. Allwit is similar to the ‘wench’ who substitutes a baby for a piece of mutton, which a Promoter at first thinks is “a lamb’s head” (2.2.187). These comic substitutions, empathy for meat as opposed to people, hiding a baby in a basket as if it is a piece of mutton, echo the soteriological substitution of the sacrificial spiritual lamb for a dead object – a piece of flesh. In *Chaste Maid* Middleton signals a loss that had occurred in his culture. By evoking imagery of sheep in a debased context, Middleton reveals

how the slow decimation of the ovine symbol which began with Thomas More's *Utopia* has reached such a point of decay whereby men and women have embodied the rapacious appetites of the beasts that once haunted them.

Faith: The Divine Ovine

The Bible paints a meek image of sheep in the symbol of Christ the *Agnus Dei*, the Lamb of God. For example, in Isaiah 53:7 a prophecy concerning the Messiah to come reads: “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (KJV). Jesus’ willingness to lay down his life for the salvation of the world is expressed using the metaphor of ovine culture. William Shakespeare explores this religious triangulation of God as loving shepherd, Christ as the *Agnus Dei*, and Christians as a meek flock in his romance *The Winter’s Tale*. This chapter builds on Paul Yachnin’s essay, “Sheepishness in *The Winter’s Tale*.” Yachnin argues that the conceptual centre of this Shakespearean romance is the human adoption of the ovine attitude of sheepishness. Leontes, through the course of the narrative must learn humility. However, Yachnin also astutely notes that Leontes at the start of the play is already ovine-like; he displays an infanticidal violence that Yachnin describes as “rammish” (220). The dual nature of the ovine, as violent or meek, in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* intentionally mirrors the dichotomous view of the ovine in early-modern culture. Christianity venerates the *Agnus Dei* as a symbol of humility, but the exploitative economy of the English wool trade led to the literary defamation of the ovine as rapacious carnivores devouring humans. In *The Winter’s Tale* (first performed in 1611), Shakespeare issues a major literary reformation of the ovine symbol through the character of Leontes who must turn from being an embodiment of “rammish” violence or what Thomas Bastard in 1598 calls a “biting beast” (*Liber Quartus*, “Epigram 20, line 8) to the meekness and humility exemplified by Christ the Lamb of God.

The critical perspective on sheep is largely polarized. Yachnin sees in the ovine a religious triangulation whereby the sheep becomes the model of meekness that humans must emulate in their relationship to God. He argues that *The Winter’s Tale* “elaborates the Christian metaphor of the virtuous human community as a flock of sheep along lines derived from animal husbandry and everyday Christian knowledge about people and animals” (217). But Karen Raber in *Animal Bodies, Renaissance Culture* looks to early-modern husbandry manuals and sees a vicious and voracious creature. Raber writes: “Driven by their various ideological agendas, critics [Yachnin, Julian Yates, Christopher Burlinson] generally ignore what would have been as clear as day to some of [Thomas] More’s contemporaries: that sheep were indeed toothy,

rapacious creatures, and that there was abundant reason to fear them – not merely the humans who bought and sold them or enclosed the lands they grazed, but the sheep themselves” (164). Raber’s view is supported by ample historical evidence as well as literary perspectives, most famously Thomas More’s *Utopia*. Raber’s reading of More’s text is materialist. She declares “I will read More’s and other’s sheep for what we can learn about their material natures, and for what we can understand about why cannibal sheep are not easily redeemed as poor passive victims, mere instruments of evil human landowners and exploiters of labor” (Raber 164). Her materialist reading of the ovine preserves the agency of the sheep by viewing it as an animal capable of doing harm to humans as opposed to a metaphor by which humans better understand themselves. She describes the latter approach as “defanging” sheep (164). Raber is right that cannibal sheep are not easily redeemed. Alongside More, poet Thomas Bastard, and numerous pamphleteers paint in heated words an enmity between Man and sheep. But this chapter argues that despite these cultural hurdles Shakespeare redeems the Christian connotations of the ovine. In *The Winter’s Tale*, he deliberately highlights the Christian connotations of the ovine because he is in opposition to the materialistic view gaining ascendancy which sees the sheep as a symbol of greed and rapacity because of the havoc enclosure wreaked on the socio-political lives of the early-modern English.

This chapter builds on Yachnin’s idea about the centrality of the ovine image in Shakespeare’s understanding of his characters. I argue, like Yachnin, that “Shakespeare’s play interprets human psychology, value, and destiny in terms of ovine life” (Yachnin 216). Specifically, I explore and extend Yachnin’s idea that Leontes possesses a “rammish” nature (220). However, my study is distinct from Yachnin’s approach. For example, Yachnin makes a brief reference to the “instrumental use of sheep by people” when he writes that “Sheep in Shakespeare’s time were commodities within a complex economy as well as figures in a pastoral or scriptural landscape” (217). This chapter makes overt this “complex economy” by foregrounding the English wool trade and its cultural influence on *The Winter’s Tale*. This chapter also traces the “pastoral and scriptural” iterations of the ovine image while explicating the socio-historical role the English wool trade played in transforming the ovine image from an ideal Christian symbol to a malevolent or “rammish” “biting beast.” In short, my study seeks to place Shakespeare’s ovine imagery within a wider literary and historical context from Desiderius

Erasmus' comic examination of sheep in *In Praise of Folly* (1509), to the writings of More, Bastard, and numerous pamphleteers.

The Bible generates a tradition of conflating the religious and the ovine as it uses sheep imagery to portray the spiritual comfort of salvation. The Bible is replete with ovine imagery alluding to soteriological ideas. In arguably the most famous passage from the Bible, Psalm 23, mankind's relationship to divinity is expressed in the metaphor of the lamb and its shepherd. The poem famously begins: "The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want" (KJV, Psalm 23:1). Written by the shepherd boy David who would one day become the King of Israel, this psalm inspires a great sense of spiritual solace. As one of the defining passages in the Christian canon, it arguably continues to offer such solace for adherents of the Christian faith. In the psalm, the image of the loving shepherd and his dependent lamb is a metaphor for salvation. At the immediate level, the loving shepherd is God, while the lamb is Man. On another level, the loving shepherd is Christ, while the lamb is the believer. On yet another level, the shepherd is God the Father, and the lamb is the *Agnus Dei*.

In the 16th century the preeminent Renaissance humanist, Desiderius Erasmus, mocks with biting sarcasm the conventional meekness of the ovine in his text *In Praise of Folly* (1509). Erasmus's view of the ovine in this satire is particularly important because his mocking insight into the sheep is independent of direct concern with enclosure and its damaging socio-political effects. He writes in the character of Folly, "Thus all along in the holy scriptures there are frequent metaphors and similitudes of the most offensive creatures, such as stags, hinds, lambs, and the like. Nay those blessed souls that in the day of judgment are to be placed at our Saviour's right hand are called sheep, which are the most senseless and stupid of all cattle, as is evidenced by Aristotle's Greek proverb..., a sheepishness of temper, i.e., a dull, blockish, sheepy, unmanly humour" (203). Erasmus with his biting wit is quick to note the contradiction inherent in the Christian virtue of sheepishness. On the one hand it is necessary for salvation. A certain meekness is accorded to the adherents of the Christian faith, the flock. Yet on the other hand it is perceived as pusillanimous in a man; a sheepishness of character is an Aristotelian vice.

The Christian virtue of sheepishness when present in Christ himself is treated as a kind of paradox. Christ's sheepishness is paradoxical because he is both meek and mighty, lowly, yet royal. Erasmus writes "yet of such a flock Christ is not ashamed to profess himself the shepherd.

Nay he would not only have all his proselytes termed sheep, but even he himself would be called a lamb as when John the Baptist seeth Jesus coming unto him, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God; which same title is often given to our Saviour in the apocalypse” (203). Indeed, the Book of Revelation paints a compelling scene of the triumph of this humble creature. The Apostle John beholds its adulation from the mouths of an angelic multitude crying, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (KJV, Revelations 5:12). It is an irony Erasmus enjoys: the Christ who at the apocalypse is enthroned as an all-powerful judge appears at this cosmic event in the symbol of a lamb, “the most senseless and stupid of cattle” (203).

Enclosure was a practice that turned the meek sheep monstrous in England’s cultural imagination. Enclosure was the privatization of land which lasted from the 14th to the 19th century. It was an agricultural practice in which land use was slowly converted from arable farming, the production of crops, and the sharing of common land to pastoral farming, the raising of livestock – specifically, sheep – and the privatization of communal land. Enclosure greatly transformed English society. Thomas Edward Scrutton in 1887 writes in *Commons and Common Fields* that “the desire to carry out sheep-farming as a commercial success led to the consolidation of holdings, the conversion of arable land into pasture, and, wherever it was possible by law or by violence, to the enclosure of commons” (75). The success of sheep-farming led to the rise of vices such as greed, the very opposite of the charitable virtue the sheep is supposed to culturally embody.

The rise of enclosure was a direct result of the naturally voracious grazing habits of sheep. Because sheep need to roam and graze freely, more and more land was acquired for their consumption. Indeed, much would be made of their voracious appetites in early-modern culture’s imagination. Raber notes that “sheep were, and are, notorious consumers: they can eat their way through tons of grass or fodder in a short period of time” (165). This insatiable appetite is what made them a metaphor for greed. Raber writes “as grazers, sheep are one of the most damaging because they require so much land and food; by preference, sheep eat as many broad-leafed plants as they can obtain ... sheep eat such a diverse array of material that they leave little to reseed and grow anew; they also tend to crop close to the ground, which means they can easily overgraze an area if not moved frequently or provided supplementary foods” (165). Sheep

rearing also, as Julian Yates notes, “recod[ed] labor relations” because the amount of labor needed for pastoral farming was greatly less than that needed for arable farming (7). For example, it takes one shepherd to manage a large flock, as opposed to the production of corn, which would have required several hands to plant, tend, and harvest. As Scrutton writes: “with the demand for land and the almost universal rise of prices came a great rise of rents; the small freeholders and those who lived by the plough found it harder and harder to gain a living: the poor men who had relied on the common for the grazing of their one cow, saw it surcharged by the sheep of wealthy graziers, enclosed by rich nobles for their sheep-farms, or converted into a park for their deer” (75). Sheep, the backbone of the lucrative wool-trade, became precious commodities in the eyes of their owners while those disenfranchised laborers were dismissed as expendable.

Complaints about sheep were circulating through society. K. G. Ponting notes “Tudor England was full of complaints that the demand for wool was causing more and more land to be given up to sheep grazing. These complaints are found everywhere, in pamphlet, in sermon and in verse” (27). In the famous pamphlet *The Decay of England only by the Great Multitude of Sheep* (1550-3), the writer delivers a scalding rebuke on the evils of enclosure. The pamphlet begins: “*Certayne causes gathered together, wherin is shewed the decaye of England, only by the great multitude of shepe, to the utter decay of houshold keeping, mayntenaunce of men, dearth of corne, and other notable dyscommodityes, approued by syxe olde Prouerbes*” (ed. Tawney and Power 51). The “syxe olde Prouerbes” are listed:

The more shepe, the dearer is the Woll.

The more shepe, the dearer is the motton.

The more shepe, the dearer is the beffe.

The more shepe, the dearer is the corne.

The more shepe, the skanter is the whit meate.

The more shepe, the fewer egges for a peny. (ed. Tawney and Power 51-2)

The anaphoric repetition of “the more sheep” connotes a crescendoing sense of anxiety that was rife in the populace. More in *Utopia*, had noted earlier how the sheep was a cause of dearth:

“‘And so it is because of this [enclosure],’ I continued, ‘that the price of food has risen in many parts. Wool too has gone up in price. So much so that the poor, who used to make cloth in

England, cannot now afford to buy it, and so are driven from work to idleness” (38). From prose to pamphlets, it was evident that the rise of sheep was diminishing the status and wellbeing of Man.

Biblically, sheep had denotations of meekness, but in English culture they had acquired connotations of greed. Socio-politically they were at the epicenter of the devastating effects of enclosure visible in the English landscapes and the lives of the dispossessed. Although the *OED* describes “sheepishness” as “Simplicity, stupidity; timorousness; excessive bashfulness or diffidence” (Simpson and Weiner), by 1611 the word “sheepishness” or any semantic gesture toward the ovine would have been culturally stressed by the ravages of enclosure that left multitudes homeless and fallen in a life of wandering, vagabonding and thievery. Sheep were seen as rapacious not timorous; blood-thirsty, not diffident. Interestingly, More’s *Utopia* can be read as a literary response to Erasmus’s *In Praise of Folly*. More and Erasmus were good friends. Yet, both texts paint very different images of sheep. In *Utopia* the character of Raphael Hythloday after speaking sympathetically on the problem of thieves and vagabonds and the socio-economic injustices that lead unfortunates toward the life of crime turns his attention to sheep: “‘Your sheep,’ I replied, ‘which used to be so mild and content, are now, it is said, so greedy and wild that they devour men, laying waste and depopulating fields houses and towns’” (37). Where Erasmus, a man born in Rotterdam, takes the ubiquitous religious perspective of sheep as an intriguing albeit ‘foolish’ Christian symbol, which are on the one hand “senseless” and “stupid” but on the other hand are saintly symbols of our souls’ salvation, More, an English politician as well as a deeply devout Catholic, qualifies this naive image of the sheep.

Living in England More was acutely aware of the growing anxieties and the ravages sheep were causing. But he had an even closer perspective on how the greed for wool was affecting the socio-political fabric of his time. As William P. Weaver notes in the introduction to *Utopia*, “given the scope of [More’s] experience, it is hardly surprising that, when an English delegation was being formed in 1515 to try to resolve various commercial disputes with Flanders over the vital wool trade, both the King’s council and the Merchant Adventurers asked that More be a part of the delegation” (12). More had a front row seat to the importance wool played over the economic wellbeing of Flanders; being resident in England, he was aware of how sheep were changing the landscape through enclosure; and being a man of letters, he was cognizant of the

cultural shift in the perception of sheep. Indeed, he penned a crucial passage that has forever altered our cultural understanding of the ovine.

Read alongside the other, these two friends' accounts of their cultural view of the ovine show how quickly the status of sheep was changing in Europe. The contrast in accounts highlights the manner in which England's cultural view of the ovine was slowly being shaped by an economic as opposed to a religious perspective. More is in no position to mock the sheep as "senseless" and "stupid" as Erasmus does. He is witness to how the greed for wool, the central raw material of a vital trade, has warped the socio-economic fabric of his country and by extension changed the religious mascot of meekness into what the English poet Thomas Bastard decades after More will term a "biting beast" (Bastard 96).

Although More was the first major writer to pen the turn of the ovine from meek to malevolent in 1516, his perspective was soon echoed by other writers. Poet Thomas Bastard includes two poems in *Chrestoleros: Seuen Bookes of Epigrames* published in 1598 that deal specifically with this new image that More gives us of the once innocent ovine turned malevolent: sheep as man-eaters. In "Epigram 20" (*Liber Quartus*) and "Epigram 8" (*Liber Sextus*), Bastard's tone reflects the growing anxiety and animosity directed at the sheep. Bastard in his poems asserts that it is the beast and the beast alone that is to blame for social evils. On the other hand, More had tempered his anthropomorphizing of the sheep by highlighting the fact that it is the greedy and privileged class of society who engender enclosure. For example, More notes that it is the "nobles and gentlemen, and even the holy abbots" who "leave no ground to be tilled, enclose every bit of land for pasture, pull down houses, and destroy towns, leaving only a church for a barn" (37). More is clear that it is the activity of human greed that is causing these men to increase the rents on their lands to such obscene sums that the tenants are intentionally forced out of their homes. Human greed, for More, is the vice and the sheep are by happenstance the cause and instrument of oppression. These poor tenets "are so wearied by oppression that they are driven to sell" their goods such as "household furniture" when they are forced off the land (More 37). They become homeless wanderers. The result is that they fall into a life of penury or, tragically, thievery. As More so pointedly puts it "what's left but to steal and hang"? (37). The greed of the landowners was causing so much land to be given up for the sheep, that many lives

fell into destitution and whole towns, decayed. Many turned to stealing and the moral as well as the social fabric of England was imperilled – all because of sheep.

It is this knowledge of social injustice that fuels the mood of intense rage in Bastard's two epigrams on the evils of enclosure. Bastard, for rhetorical effect, erases the significance of human greed and instead turns the sheep into an icon of social evils. In "Epigram 20" from *Liber Quartus*, Bastard takes More's vivid image of the man-devouring sheep and concentrates it by charging up its affect. He removes the significance of human greed because he wants to distill his poetic image into the neat and memorable concept of 'Sheep vs. Man' fighting for territory:

Sheepe haue eate vp our medows & our downes,
 Our corne, our wood, whole villages & townes,
 Yea, they haue eate vp many wealthy men,
Befides widowes and Orphane children.
Befides our ftatutes and our iron lawes,
 Which they haue fwalloed down into their maws,
 Till now I thought the prouerbe did but ieft,
 Which faid a black fheepe was a biting beaft. (Bastard 96)

Bastard not only divides his characters into sheep and men, but also makes use of the possessive pronoun "our." He writes in a tone that aligns the reader with the human fraternity rising up against a common ovine foe. The sheep poses a threat to all mankind – even you, the reader, are not safe. Bastard employs the pathetic rhetoric of "us vs. them." This pathos, of course, has to be curated. In reality it was not a case of man vs. beast but a case of the wealthy exploiting the poor. Yet the wealthy men whom More 82 years earlier had referred to as "fat cat[s]" are here presented as helpless victims (37). Bastard writes that "Yea, they haue eate vp many wealthy men, / *Besides* widowes and Orphane children" (lines 3-4). Bastard lumps the "wealthy men" with the most vulnerable of victims "widowes and Orphane children." Yet this was very far from the social reality. Wealthy men were not being eaten up by sheep. As long as their flock did not perish with disease such as murrain, these men profited. What is most intriguing is that there is one group missing in this list of victims – common men. Their absence is noteworthy, indeed overt, because historically, the men of the commons constantly led riots against enclosure.

Bastard's employment of pathetic rhetoric is used to flame the embers of social indignation. In fact, his words carry the tone of insurrection – a desire to incite social change by force. Insurrections were many. As Michael Hattaway notes “enclosure was the most popularly perceived cause of dearth: it had helped generate Kett's rebellion in 1549 and helped catalyse not only food riots, but, particularly among rural artificers (many of whom lived in forest areas), the radicalism that irritated the Tudor and Stuart regimes between 1586 and 1631” (24). These insurrections were as a result of the disillusionment the poor felt with legal actions that did not lead to sufficient social change. Bastard's poem explains that the Law's impotence is as a result of the sheep's destructive appetite. He writes that added to the humans and human habitations consumed, the sheep have also eaten up human institutions – “ftatutes and our iron lawes,/ Which they have swallowed down into their maws” (5-6). The law is no match for the gigantic “maws” – greedy throats – of these voracious beasts descending on and ravaging the English landscape. Bastard demonstrates how the very fabric of civilization is completely useless in the face of these monstrous sheep. For Bastard, these sheep threaten to cause a collapse of society's foundation. All human institutions as well as humans themselves – save common men – were helpless in the face of the ovine scare. By showing how wealthy men, women, children, laws, and institutions were defenseless, Bastard is playing up, indeed legitimizing, the revolts made by common men to bring about social change.

Bastard's dismissal of the force of “ftatutes and our iron lawes” as ineffectual is, arguably, fair. Although legal steps were taken, statutes and acts passed by Parliament, sheep continued to monopolize the landscape and lives of the English poor. Scrutton notes that “the evils of inclosures were first brought to the attention of Parliament early in the reign of Henry VII” (76). Following this, “the Parliament passed two acts, one local – the other general” in 1487 (76). The general act, “sometimes referred to as the Statute of Enclosures” was “‘An act against the pulling down of towns’” (Scrutton 77). This was an act in reaction to the complaints that sheep were devouring towns. In *Utopia*, More writes that sheep are “laying waste and depopulating fields houses and towns” (37). Bastard's poem echoes this same social fear: “Sheepe haue eate vp our medows & our downes,” “whole villages & townes” (1). ‘An act against the pulling down of towns’ “is confirmed and extended by two acts in 1514 and 1515” during the reign of Henry VIII (Scrutton 77). Scrutton notes that both acts “complain of the pulling down of towns, and of the ‘laying to pasture lands which customably have been manured

and occupied with tillage” (77). Both acts also “require the towns decayed to be re-edified within a year” (77). Despite legal efforts to contain the greed of sheep-farmers, Scrutton writes that “unfortunately the Statutes of Enclosures were not enforced with any rigour” (80). Indeed, “all acts alike were evaded” (Scrutton 81). But these bitter complaints concerning enclosure “come to a head in the insurrections of 1549” (Scrutton 82). With the failure of the wealthy to heed the terms of these acts, the poor took matters into their own hands. Bastard’s poem, published in 1598, serves as a reflection of their spirit of insurrection in the face of enclosure.

In “Epigram 8” in *Liber Sextus* Bastard reflects on the despair caused by the change in sheep’s status due to the lucrative wool trade. In this short poem, Bastard shows how the change in status for sheep causes a change in status for men. His reaction is that of animosity, again, directed solely at the sheep and not at the greedy men who own them:

When the great forefts dwelling was fo wide,
 And careleffe wood grew faft by the fires fide :
 Then dogs did want the fhepherds field to keepe,
 Now we want Foxes to confume our fheepe. (142)

Contained within the poem is a hope for a return to a harmonious worldview with man at the centre not sheep. The speaker hopes that Nature will contain the sheep’s oppression of humans. In fact, he desires that these sheep, which have been characterized as being man-eaters, be consumed by foxes. The irony is that where once “the great forefts dwelling was fo wide” – that is, before the enclosure of the commons – the shepherds and their dogs guarded the lives of their sheep from predators. Now there is a “want”, a great desire, to have foxes “consume our fheepe.” More’s *Utopia* also contains a similar sentiment: a desire that Nature herself remedy the sheep’s oppression of humans. Where Bastard “want[s] Foxes to confume our fheepe,” Hythloday notes, “For after the great increase in pastureland a plague killed off a vast number of sheep. Perhaps God, vexed by the owners’ display of greed, sent a murrain” (38). Hythloday reads the fact that a certain flock has wasted away from an ovine disease as evidence of divine providence.

Bastard’s poems grieve the loss of a harmonious worldview: anthropocentrism. This worldview where Man is more important than beast in the hierarchy of being because he is closer to the divine, had come under the great threat of the ovine and the evils of enclosure. As William Tyndale writes in 1528, “Let them [Christian landlords] not take in their commons, neither make

parks nor pastures of whole parishes; for God gave the earth to men to inhabit and not unto sheep and wild deer” (qtd. in Scrutton 78). A world where the lives of sheep are more valuable than those of disenfranchised labourers is a world that has lost its humanity. At the time, sheep were consuming humans who were dehumanized by being deemed dispensable. In More’s account, the man-eating sheep and the “fat cat,” an animalistic and gluttonous image of the wealthy, prey on the rest of society. As Raber notes, “sheep and humans have changed places in Hythloday’s description of England due to the ravages of enclosure; cannibal sheep now consume humans enjoying a new species identity, while human beings, alienated from the land and prior systems of labor, become bestialized, meat for sheep” (170). Rather than Man enjoying a privileged position in Nature the paradigm shifts as sheep monopolize land.

The painful irony is that the ovine, in its religious context, was the one animal who raised the status of the human to the level of the divine. In the anthropocentric religious worldview, the ovine serves as a bridge between humanity and divinity. The symbol of the *Agnus Dei*, the divine ovine, was a reminder for humans to assume the lowly attitude of the lamb in order to rise higher in their expression of divinity. But due to the rise of enclosure the ovine became a symbol of loss. As men and women lost their livelihoods and homes, early-modern Man lost his mascot of salvation.

Yet Shakespeare in *The Winter’s Tale* attempts to reform sheepishness and the ovine to its traditional connotation of divine humility. The cultural view of sheep as meek and mild was deeply affected by its place at the centre of a lucrative economy. By engaging with the ovine, Shakespeare is forced to grapple with the symbol as well as all the contradictory concepts the 16th and early 17th century had stained it with: meekness, grace, humility, viciousness and greed.

Yachnin argues that “the central character in the story of animality, suffering and salvation is, as we will see, the rammish King Leontes” (220). Indeed, Shakespeare’s entire ovine reformation rests on the character of Leontes who must go from being “rammish” to being “sheepish.” The fact that both adjectives point to the ovine and yet have opposite meanings is evidence of the polarized perspective of religion and economics. “Rammish” denotes ram-like violence, an attribute encapsulated by More’s and Bastard’s literary image of cannibal sheep. “Sheepish” connotes Christian humility – the biblical view of the ovine.

Yachnin argues that like rams, Leontes harbours an “instinctual harmfulness toward his own children” (223). As evidence he quotes from Edward Topsell’s *The Historie of Four-Footed Beastes* (1607). Topsell notes that for a newly born lamb what poses an immediate danger to it is not an external predator but the ram: “When the lamb is newly fallen, for a day or two or three, till they grow strong, and are well filled with milk and know their dams, and so long as the rams feed with the females they keep in the lambs, that so they may be clear day and night from all violence of the rams, for at night they lodge single and alone by their dams’ sides” (Topsell 641). Even the ewes are potential victims of rammishness. Indeed, concerning the realm of ovine mating, these early-modern husbandry manuals cast the ram in a lecherous light. According to these texts, the ram is a sexually violent creature. For example, in *Four Books of Husbandrie*, Conrad Heresbach “warns to keep rams away from herds lest the ewes be ‘lamed with lechery’” (Raber 166). Interestingly, this rammish sexuality has been explored before by Shakespeare in *Othello*. For example, in the opening act, Iago incites fear into Brabantio’s heart with the suggestion that his daughter will be, to borrow Heresbach’s term, “lamed with lechery”:

Even now, now, very now, an old black ram
Is tupping your white ewe. Arise, arise,
Awake the snorting citizens with the bell
Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you.
Arise, I say! (1.1.90-4)

Iago paints Othello as rammish and then succeeds in contorting his character by fanning the embers of sexual jealousy within him. A similar sexual jealousy burns in the heart of Leontes in Act 1. Richard Strier argues that in *The Winter’s Tale* “the major realm to be redeemed is that of sexuality. An innocent version of adult sexuality must be convincingly presented” (39). Although Strier argues that this redemption is about human sexuality, sexual desire in this play is better read as a synecdoche of human experience. But in a play where conflict arises from a husband’s unfounded sexual jealousy, Strier is right. Human sexuality – Leontes’ in particular – is the cause of much sorrow and unhappiness in this Shakespearean romance, which opens on the edge of tragedy. The madness of sexual jealousy that Othello works himself up to is where we first find Leontes: mentally contorted by dark unfounded fantasies of female lechery. Yet the story of

Leontes' relationship to sexuality in his marriage is a vehicle by which Shakespeare redeems the ovine image.

The Winter's Tale begins with a powerful image of ovine innocence: Polixenes' nostalgic reference to his childhood friendship with Leontes. His words are homo-centric in nature. They reveal a profound yearning for a purer masculine bond between himself and his friend, one that excludes sexual experience:

We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' th'sun,
 And bleat the one at th'other. What we changed
 Was innocence for innocence; we knew not
 The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dreamed
 That any did. Had we pursued that life
 And our weak spirits ne'er been higher reared
 With stronger blood, we should have answered heaven
 Boldly, 'not guilty', the imposition cleared
 Hereditary ours. (1.2.66-74)

Polixenes recalls his childhood days with a fondness that masks a deeper psycho-spiritual malaise. The image of the twinned lambs gives a powerful sense of childhood innocence. According to Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, Polixenes' image is about "the similarity in human and animal life and emotion, here illustrated by the children like lambs frisking and bleating in the sun" (306). More's view of sheep as beasts "so greedy and wild that they devour men" (37) and Bastard's pejorative "biting beast" (*Liber Quartus*, "Epigram 20, line 8) are here countered by Shakespeare's celebration of the lamb as an image of innocence. In Shakespeare's romance, sheep answer "not guilty" (1.2.73) to the litany of literary accusations from More, Bastard, and many incensed preachers and pamphleteers.

The image of twinned lambs Polixenes speaks of at the beginning of the play when he is in the Sicilian court is revived in Act 3 scene 3, which is set in the Bohemian countryside. The "twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' th'sun" (1.2.66) have turned into the Shepherd's two lost sheep: "They have scared away two of my / best sheep, which I fear the wolf will sooner find / than the master" (3:3: 64-5). These two lost lambs can be read as a metaphor for Perdita and Leontes.

Where Perdita is physically lost, Leontes is spiritually lost. It is interesting to note that Polixenes chooses the image of the lamb to convey his innocent early experiences free from the knowledge of Original Sin. It is not strange in the sense that Polixenes is King of Bohemia, a land characterized by Shakespeare in this play as pastoral. In fact, Polixenes' very first lines make use of metaphors drawn from ovine culture. In Act 1 scene 2 he says, "Nine changes of the wat'ry star hath been / The shepherd's note since we have left our throne / Without a burden" (1.2.1-3). He worries that he is yet to produce an heir. What is interesting is that the idea of the atonement seems to be lost or indeed non-existent in this fictional world.

The imagery of lambs for Polixenes makes him think of an era of mental and bodily innocence forever lost, he believes, to both he and Leontes who have grown to be men of "stronger blood" (1.1.72). However, to the ears of a Christian audience the reference to lambs, innocence, and hereditary sin would conjure up the entire doctrine of salvation: Christ the innocent lamb of God takes away the sin of the world; he redeems mankind from the burden of Original Sin. Shakespeare has set his play in a pre-Christian world where the idea of salvation does not exist. For example, when Hermione cries out for supernatural assistance she yells: "Apollo be my judge" (3:2:116). This is a pagan world. However, although the Christian concept of Original Sin is not overt, the early-modern audience understands that the hereditary imposition Polixenes refers to is Shakespeare's reference to the Augustinian doctrine. By establishing a pre-Christian setting Shakespeare can work out the parameters of his own understanding of salvation. He turns naturally to the ovine image.

Shakespeare began to explore a sheepish ideal in *King Lear*. Although there are only a few short overt mentions of sheep in this anti-pastoral tragedy, the language of the characters refers to ovine themes: poverty caused by enclosure and the Christian script of sheepish liminality which promises salvation by being brought near to beast. Edgar and Lear begin the tragedy with a sense of worldly hope in the liminal experience. They are aware of this script of sheepish Christian liminality: it is the "physic" that will cure their social lowliness and reinstate them into a place of power. The "physic" that cures them of pomposity and makes them humble is the act of being "brought near to beast." Edgar takes this script to heart and decides to hide in poor pelting villages and sheep-cotes. Lear is brought to make shift in a hovel where Edgar is already sheltering. I argue that this hovel is the sheep-cote Edgar mentions in his preceding

monologue. The conceptual presence of sheep, evoked by the sheep-cote, is supposed to trigger in the minds of the audience a sense of comfort similar to the procession of the faithful in *The Mystic Lamb* whose gaze are fixed on the sacred sheep, secure in the knowledge that he is the source of their worldly and spiritual salvation. Yet despite hovelling in a sheep-cote, the promised redemption never comes. This is because Lear's world does not reflect the divine world of *The Ghent Altarpiece* where the divine ovine spills his lifeblood for the salvation of Man. Lear's world reflects the harsh socio-economic realities of Tudor and Stuart England where the sheep is not the *Agnus Dei* but just an *Ovis Aries* incapable of conferring redemption but responsible for creating arid lands through overgrazing.

Nevertheless, Shakespeare completes the train of thought he begins in *Lear* about sheepish liminality in *The Winter's Tale*. Sarah Beckwith argues that Shakespeare in the romance, *Pericles* (1607), "stages the recovery of [a] voice" that is lost in the tragedy, *King Lear* (89). Beckwith asks the question in relation to *Pericles*, "how is a voice lost?" (89). She writes that the "abdication scene of *King Lear* might provide one response to that question. At the beginning of *King Lear*, a daughter finds that she has nothing to say" because "[w]ords of truth and of love are alike impossible at Lear's court" (89). But Beckwith argues that the voice that is lost in *Lear* returns in *Pericles*. The recovery of that lost voice is symbolic of the recovery of lost faith. As Beckwith writes, "[i]n *Pericles*, Shakespeare explores the notion that with the return and renovation of romance can come a restored faith in the possibilities of grace" (92). Where Beckwith argues that the lost voice in *Lear* returns in *Pericles*, I argue that the lost ovine image in *Lear* returns in *The Winter's Tale*.

The Winter's Tale is Shakespeare's fulfilment of the idea that being brought near to beast will bring about salvation. Like Edgar, Florizel believes in being brought near to beast. The only difference is that Florizel's contact with the ovine – his act of humility – is rewarded by the restoration of his lover, Perdita, from a sheep farm in the country back to the Sicilian court. In Act 4, Florizel compares his dressing down to attend the sheep-shearing with Perdita as an act similar to the actions of several deities in love:

Apprehend

Nothing but jollity. The gods themselves,

Humbling their deities to love, have taken
 The shapes of beasts upon them: Jupiter
 Became a bull, and bellow'd; the green Neptune
 A ram, and bleated; and the fire-robed god,
 Golden Apollo, a poor humble swain,
 As I seem now. Their transformations
 Were never for a piece of beauty rarer,
 Nor in a way so chaste, since my desires
 Run not before mine honour, nor my lusts
 Burn hotter than my faith. (4.4. 25 - 34)

Where Edgar's script is the sheepish Christian idea of liminality, Florizel turns to pagan culture for examples of being brought near to beast. But in a scene whose setting is a sheep-shearing festival, the beasts that Florizel has literally been brought near to are the many sheep that surround him. Where Edgar makes symbolic contact with the ovine by hovelling half-naked in a sheep-cote, Florizel disguises himself as a shepherd to attend a sheep-shearing. Like Edgar, Florizel's belief in being brought near to beast by taking the shape of a beast is inflected with Christian overtones. For example, Florizel's list of pagan deities undergoing "humbling" "transformations" into the "shapes of beasts" in the cause of love, will trigger in the minds of an early-modern Christian audience, another deity who undergoes a similar transformation into the "humbling" shape of a beast for the sake of love: Jesus Christ, who becomes the Lamb of God. Jesus is not unlike "the green Neptune" who is transformed into a ram. Even Polixenes unwittingly compares his son's interest in a lowly maid to Christ's humbling love for mankind. After revealing himself, Polixenes shows his repulsion with Florizel's desire to marry a shepherdess: "thou art too base / To be acknowledged: thou a sceptre's heir, / That thus affect'st a sheep-hook!" (4.4.397-9). Yet an early-modern audience will recall someone else who was himself "a sceptre's heir" that did affect a "sheep-hook" – the Good Shepherd, Christ. Although Christ as the *Agnus Dei* takes the shape of a lowly lamb, "stupid and senseless" (Erasmus 203), he is also depicted as a royal figure. Thus, his assuming a humiliating lowliness is the dramatization of his love for humanity; in the cause of love, he is brought near to beast, experiences a resurrection, and is restored to his heavenly throne. But by going through that

liminal experience himself he also restores humanity through salvation. Florizel does the same for Perdita. He dons a lowly disguise and is brought near to the sheep she tends as shepherdess. But in the end, he is reinstated to his royal status. Florizel's attendance at the sheep-shearing festival sets off a chain of events that leads to Perdita's restoration as princess of Sicily and the resurrection of Hermione.

Florizel is indeed Christ-like because he believes that faith is inviolable. For example, after the storm of threats of violence made by his father, Polixenes, who in this moment is in a similar vein as the rammish Leontes was at the beginning of the play, the Shepherd and Perdita are absolutely demoralized but Florizel says to the frantic Perdita who lacks faith, "It cannot fail but by / The violation of my faith;" (4.4.479-8). Perdita laments and quakes and resigns herself to her lowly position in life pleading with Florizel to return to his father while she will "queen it no inch farther, / But milk [her] ewes and weep" (4.4.429-30). But Florizel is absolutely unperturbed by his father's rage. Florizel in Act 4.4 is set-up as an embodiment of Christian faith. The fact that he is surrounded by sheep highlights the plays validation of faith in the sheepish Christian script of liminality.

Florizel embodies the Pauline definition of faith, which Leontes must embody in Act 5 and which Shakespeare tries to awaken in his audience. Florizel's faith is dependent on piercing through the obvious and seeing the substantial. St. Paul defines faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (KJV, Hebrews 11:1). Florizel has no knowledge of the fact that Perdita is a princess; all he knows is that she is of great worth which her disguise as queen of the sheep-shearing rightly reveals. In Act 4.4 Shakespeare works very hard to redeem the ovine image; his method of recovering the Christian connotations of the ovine is by teaching his audience how to see like Florizel. We have to pierce the obvious and see the substantial. For example, at the beginning of Act 4.4, Florizel says to Perdita "This your sheepshearing / Is as a meeting of the petty gods, / And you the queen on't" (4.4.3-5). Florizel is reading the sheep-shearing festival poetically. Basically, a sheep-shearing, although a communal activity, is part of the business of the wool trade. It is rooted in economic reality. For example, in Act 4.3, the scene preceding Florizel's statement, we see the Clown trying to calculate how much money the wool shorn at the sheep-shearing festival will come to: "Let me see: every 'leven wether tod; every tod yields pound and odd shilling; fifteen hundred shorn, what comes the wool to?" (4.3.32-4). In

the scene that immediately follows, Florizel teaches us how to read this sheep-shearing not only as an economic enterprise but as spiritually significant: “This your sheepshearing / Is a meeting of the petty gods” (4.4.3-4).

Florizel’s words encourage us to poetically read this congregation of sheep, shepherds, and shepherdesses as a gathering of demigods. Although Florizel’s words are intentionally hyperbolic, they do in fact pierce through the reality of the dramatic situation. Perdita is unknowingly in a liminal state: she is a royal princess leading the life of a shepherdess. Florizel has intentionally disguised his noble origins. The King Polixenes and the courtier Camillo are also intentionally disguising their true noble identities. But Perdita is quick to counter Florizel’s symbolic reading of the sheep-shearing. She calls herself a “poor lowly maid, / Most goddesslike pranked up” (4.4.9-10). Perdita says of the sheep-shearing “our feasts / In every mess have folly, and the feeders / Digest it with a custom” (4.4.11-12). Perdita takes neither her attire nor the festival seriously but sees both as a folly. But the audience knows that Florizel sees correctly and that Perdita is wrong. She is no lowly lass but a royal princess, whilst the sheep-shearing is no folly but a gathering of several nobles and courtiers in disguise whose meeting will alter the course of the play, once their identities are revealed.

The great revelations that occur in Act 4.4 take place in a scene dominated by sheep. The dramatic actions of disguise, recognition, and misrecognition are juxtaposed with the presence of sheep prompting a symbolic reading of the creatures who serve as a backdrop to this scene. In Christian thought the sheep is a symbol of humility. Specifically, it is a symbol of divine majesty disguised as lowliness or as divinity in its liminal stage. When this Christian symbol is placed in a worldly early-modern context, it can be recognized as a symbol of spiritual salvation or as a symbol of economic evil. But Shakespeare prompts his audience to recognize the true substance behind the sheep, in a similar way that Florizel recognizes the true substance behind Perdita. In *The Winter’s Tale*, Shakespeare shows that sometimes worldly salvation is only a matter of successful recognition. By recognizing Perdita’s true worth, Florizel begins a chain reaction that ends with Hermione’s resurrection. But Hermione’s “death” occurs because Leontes misrecognizes her. Indeed, the tragic counterpart to *The Winter’s Tale*, *King Lear*, is a tale of misrecognition. Leontes like Lear must learn to see better. But where *The Winter’s Tale* includes as its longest scene a sheep-shearing festival that we are prompted by Florizel to read as a liminal

space where the divine connects to the worldly, in *King Lear* we are given a sheep-cote and arid landscapes emptied of the ovine but populated by desolate human beings.

Act 4 scene 4 contains within it the seed that will become the resurrection in the final act. The faith that Paulina asks Leontes to awaken in Act 5 is here embodied in Florizel. Although Florizel embodies the success of sheepish liminality, resolution in *The Winter's Tale* is dependent upon Leontes assuming a similar lowliness. He must go from rammish to sheepish. Like Leontes, the sheep can never go back to its innocent image free from the knowledge of violence, greed, and human suffering. A redemption narrative must be put in place. Leontes as a young boy was a lamb frisking in the sun; as a man he becomes, as Yachnin argues, a rammish king. But as an older man Leontes takes upon himself, with Paulina's help, the attributes of sheepishness. Shakespeare in *The Winter's Tale* tells an ovine story of cultural redemption using the rammish king Leontes. Leontes goes back to that sheepish world of childhood innocence, but he does so not by reverting to being a 'boy eternal' in a pastoral setting, but like Florizel he "Draw[s] [his] throne into a sheepcote" (4.4.780-4); Leontes adopts the mental attitude of sheepishness by briefly laying down his sceptre and being subdued by Paulina's sheep-hook. Where Florizel's faith arises intuitively from within, it is Paulina who tells Leontes: "It is required / You do awake your faith" (5.3.94-5)

Shakespeare acknowledges the ovine vice of rammishness in his play, a vice denoting a wild and violent nature, which More, Bastard, and Raber use to describe sheep. But Shakespeare ultimately celebrates the ovine virtue of sheepishness. In response to More and Bastard as well as the numerous pamphleteers who bitterly complain about sheep, qualities of the ovine – violence and indulgence – are the cause of damnation but adopting the attitude of the ovine – sheepishness – is the source of redemption in the play. Shakespeare proves that there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so. In *The Winter's Tale*, he shows how the ovine can contain a wide range of meanings; as a symbol, it is multivalent. But Shakespeare deems it of great cultural importance to issue a restoration of this image back to its original soteriological symbol of humility, meekness, and grace for it continues to remain in Christian thought a mascot of salvation. Like the procession of the faithful in van Eyck's *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, Shakespeare's eyes are pinned on that source of worldly and celestial salvation – the sacred sheep.

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