

Facilitators: Kim Adams, John Linstrom

Note taker: Chad Hegelmeyer

Attendees: MC Hyland, Tanya Schmidt, Nic Duron, Nate Preus

Meeting began shortly after 6pm with some comments by John about the original idea for this working group, which included running a CSA out of the English department. (The department declined to fund this for a few different reasons, and the CEPP application was amended to exclude it). General discussion followed. We began parsing the different terms that describe the interests of the group: georgic, pastoral, agrarian, and agriculture. In particular, discussion began with the etymology of the term “georgic”; some discussion was had on Virgil’s *Georgics*, (from the Greek for “husbandman” or “farmer”) and Dryden’s late 17<sup>th</sup> century translation, which sparked the rise of the georgic genre in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. MC mentioned Addison’s “Essay on the Georgics” which poses “georgic” as a “middle style.” She also gave us some details about georgic gardening styles in 18<sup>th</sup> century England that were basically panopticons from which you could watch your laborers work. One of the landscapers who made such gardens was Capability Brown, a name we spent considerable time discussing. MC informed us that Capability’s Christian name was “Lancelot,” which amused everyone.

John brought our discussion into the 20<sup>th</sup> century by talking a bit about Liberty Hyde Bailey, who took the science being done in land grant universities at the time and made it accessible to laymen in aesthetically pleasing literary ways. John is interested in how we can use these terms (“georgic,” “pastoral”, etc.) as “levers.” He gave the example of *American Georgics* and the subversive use of “georgic” by Cherokees like Elias Boudinot and David Brown to defend Native American rights to land.

The group was also interested in the consequences of using these terms. MC’s example here was an essay in *The Undercommons* which asks whether black radical thought needs a language that is entirely distinct from European concepts of property, which had been used to define Africans as property.

Conversation then turned to the understanding of the term “georgic” today as writing about all kinds of work, not just agricultural labor. A question was posed whether we should read the *Georgics* together as a group, possibly in Dryden’s translation.

After this, introductions were made. In Kim’s introduction, she mentioned the chapters of *Twelve Years a Slave* (about which she had just lectured) that describe cotton and sugarcane cultivation. The group discussed this along with Jean Toomer’s *Cane* (1923). We eventually figured out that mechanized cotton-picking became viable in 1944, well after the publishing of *Cane*, though several of us were a bit dubious about this date (provided by Wikipedia).

John said some really smart things about ecocentric and anthropocentric ecocriticism that (for some reason) everyone else but me decided to write down.

In Nate's introduction he mentioned the Urban Space Group (a.k.a. NYScapes) and the general consensus was that the two groups should consider doing some kind of cooperative event, perhaps an awkward dance/social similar to the kind jointly organized by all-boys and all-girls schools.

Finally, there was a brief conversation about the historical relationship of the term "agrarian" to legal/political movements of land (re)distribution in the Roman Empire, Britain, and the U.S.A.

The meeting was adjourned after a reading of poems: Maurice Mannings "A Panegyric Against the Consolation of Grief," James Longenbach's "Arcadia," and Camille Dungy's "Frequently Asked Questions: 10."

Thanks to Kim and Vignesh for venturing to the Lower East Side for greenmarket apples (which were super crisp and delicious) and good peanut butter, two kinds of beer (Brooklyn Lager and Sixpoint Sensi), and a whiskey from New York state whose name evoked Teddy Roosevelt.

*Edits: by John 10/18/15*