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An Honest Day's Work: Pastoral Romanticism in Open-World Role-Playing Games

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Abstract: This paper serves as an exploration of the reliance of open world fantasy role-playing games on evoking emotions of pastoral romanticism in the player. Such games tend to be dominated by rural landscapes, and farming locations and objects often play a central role in the player's interaction with the world. In particular, the paper will investigate mechanics where the player receives a personal stake in a pastoral setting, such as when a player-controlled hero spends significant game time engaging in farmhouse construction, food production, or other central aspects of rural life. It is in this aspect, the paper argues, that pastoral romanticism creates a significant player appeal entirely separate from the allure of heroic adventuring. Players of fantasy games take on the trappings of the aristocrats of ages past in their idealized engagement with otherwise taxing rural life, and like the early modern bourgeoisie, fantasize about escaping from the pressures of a modern industrialist lifestyle just as much as they fantasize about killing dragons. In absence of meaningful control over physical productivity in the real world, this progression towards a "perfect" rural landscape that one creates through shaping the land according to one's wishes, is an appealing simulation of an activity not available to the average urban or suburban player. However, it simultaneously renders the same player a pseudo-aristocratic interloper into a fairytale version of working-class realities.

Keywords: *Video games, pastoral, open-world, fantasy, romanticism, estate, role-playing games, digital media, rural life, farming*

Open-world video games are often visually defined by an image of a rural landscape. A player character emerges from a cave, or relative darkness, climbs the nearest rock and stands with their back to the camera as it pans out. The shot is reminiscent of Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, but the fog has been blown away, and presented before the player is instead the landscape they get to explore, and make their mark on. To the modern urban dweller, this is "the countryside".[i] This trope has been used across genres, for a multitude of games, from the wastelands of post-apocalypse Massachusetts in *Fallout 4* and war-torn Velen in *The Witcher III: Wild Hunt*, to the lush green plains of Hyrule in T*he Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* and the tundra around Whiterun in *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*. It welcomes the player to the world in one breathtaking panoramic shot and reveals the open world available for exploration. The shot serves to intrigue and excite the player about the landscape, and often doubles as a promotional cover shot. It makes the point of these games clear; while there are plot lines to follow and characters to meet, interaction with an untouched landscape is the clear draw.

While there certainly are open-world games set in urban landscapes (a majority of the *Assassin's Creed* games and *Cyberpunk 2077* come to mind), the fantasy subgenre is dominated by rural settings. This, of course, has a simple explanation, in that the backbone of western fantasy is built upon medieval pastoral conceptions of pre-industrial society. This paper serves as an exploration of the reliance of open-world fantasy role-playing games on creating opportunities for idealized personalization of rural life. Such games tend to be dominated by rural landscapes, and farming locations and objects often play a central role in the player's interaction with the world. Settlements, while important, often end up as breakpoints in between journeys through the rural landscape; game play generally happens outside settlement space. While the games themselves have pre-defined and relatively structured narratives for the player to follow, the

specific gameplay features occurring in these rural areas are often examples of what Henry

Jenkins' influential article *Game Design as Narrative Architecture* refers to as environmental

storytelling, where the players' interaction with the narrative environment is what brings them

into the narrative itself, enabled to intervene in the landscape, and thus, in the story.[ii]

This paper will investigate mechanics where the player receives a personal stake in a

pastoral setting, such as when a player-controlled hero spends significant game time engaging in

farmhouse construction, food production, or other central aspects of rural life. It is in this aspect,

this paper argues, that pastoral romanticism creates a significant player appeal entirely separate

from the allure of heroic adventuring. Players of fantasy games fantasize about escaping from the

pressures of a modern industrialist lifestyle just as much as they fantasize about killing dragons.

Some of the most prominent games in the open-world fantasy genre, namely *The Elder Scrolls*

V: Skyrim - Hearthfire (2012), *Fallout 4* (2015), *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt - Blood and Wine*

(2016), and *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* (2017), all feature player-controlled

development of rural landscapes, which plays into the romanticism of the rural town. In absence

of meaningful control over physical productivity in the real world, this progression towards the

creation of a "perfect" rural town through safeguarding the area from monsters, and resourcing

from the abundant land around them, is an appealing simulation of an activity not available to the

average urban or suburban player. This pastoral romanticism is a continuous thread throughout

the fantasy genre, and can be found in a variety of media, not just in video games.

To better frame this argument about contemporary video game players, a brief

examination into the history of pastoral romanticism is necessary. This phenomenon did not arise

recently, and can be identified in several different time periods, and social spheres. The most

notable example of the concept lies with pre-industrial aristocrats such as Marie Antoinette, who

famously built a "peasant" house on palace grounds and popularized the *robe en chemise,* a simplified new style of dress, made of muslin rather than silk, which was a departure from the heavy French court stylings of her time. Her hameau, finished in 1783, loosely imitated a farm and did have functioning agricultural elements to it. It is emblematic of French aristocrats' "desire to restore in the midst of luxury the rustic life of [their] virtuous ancestors by copying at least their dwellings"[iii]. While the hameau did have practical functions, namely kitchen gardens, and two dairies, it was not primarily built to feed the rest of Versailles. The official narrative on the Versailles website pushes back against the idea that Marie Antoinette and her followers would "play milkmaid" yet highlight the intentionally rural architectural choices made in the construction[iv]. While she may not have had any desire to perform the physical labor of running the farm, it is still obvious that the hameau was built as a visual and physical respite from court life.[v] The practical functions of farming, milking cows, or tending to flowers would be on the whole provided by servants, adding to the image of a "self-functioning" rural escape. Most buildings were furnished to fulfill social functions, such as balls and tea ceremonies, as opposed to storing grain, furthering the idea that this was an aesthetic to exist within rather than playing at poverty.

However, at the heart of this performance lies a willful misunderstanding of the lifestyle and aesthetics of an impoverished rural land, and the misconception that a certain amount of happiness lies outside the 'trappings' of wealth and society. The pride of a day of work in the field, filling a grain silo, or milking a cow: here lie the true 'simple pleasures' of life that the rich supposedly long for. However, this thinking, of course, requires one to ignore the realities of bad harvest, generational poverty, the toll that manual labor takes on a body after years and years of nothing else. While the historicity of Marie Antoinette actually performing manual labor in her

hameau is debatable, other courtiers are recorded as pretending to be milkmaids, so we can see Marie Antoinette's behavior as part of a larger trend,[vi] also including concepts such as the hermitages found on 19th century British estates.[vii]

In each of the games we discuss here, the player is able to enact similar fantasies of a somewhat rural life. Central to all open world games is not just excitement, but engagement with the landscape. Depending on the game, this can manifest in various ways, further than just the aesthetics of the landscape. Simple details, such as respawn rate of the resources of wood and mining, play into the feeling that the player has a lasting impact on the direction that the world they are in takes. It makes a large difference whether a player encounters a wild, overgrown area with monsters running around, or one where all the monsters have been killed, and the trees have been cut down for their drop items.

All the games that this article focuses on have an additional component that fits into the romanticization of the pastoral lifestyle, namely that key to the player's completion of a quest is the physical erecting of structures, often built in an intentionally rural aesthetic. For the first category of case study, these manifest in estates that need to be constructed or restored and are handed down to the player. In the second, we will examine games that encourage the player to build larger settlements or towns in a largely rural setting, further cementing their connection to the land they play in. The connections are made not only through the erection of buildings, but through the establishment of relationships with various potential villagers, and a more active partaking in the upkeep of the village.

However, the unifying thread in all of these games, and in the genre overall, is the emphasis on glorifying manual labor without actually having the player perform it. Each section of rebuilding is split in quest lines, so the player can see the obvious progression due to their

"hard work" of retrieving material, and in many cases the player is tasked as being the sole originator of the materials needed for the rebuilding or building of the towns. By presenting it in this way, we argue that the player is the modern version of the aristocrat dreaming of the inherently unachievable bucolic ideal.

Part I: The Player As Manor Lord

In this first type of rural romanticism in role-playing games, the player character receives a built or unbuilt countryside estate as reward for successful adventuring. The player can subsequently embrace the rural ideal by shaping the landscape according to their own wishes, crafting their own vision of the romantic pastoral dream as a place to retire after the manual labor of monster slaying. As such, the idea of the player as the lord of a manor can be compared to the romanticized ideal vision of life in the country, as done in aristocratic terms.[viii]

Often the reception of such property and the construction of an estate functions mechanically as a quest or mission no different from earlier objectives focused around collecting bear hearts or killing necromancers. As such, the player's establishment of their perfect countryside estate is presented as an idealized task and as a vicarious participation in something fantastical on the same level as realistically impossible endeavors such as the battling of mythical creatures or particularly dangerous treks up a treacherous mountainside in mid-blizzard. A misstep, such as the placement of an undesired extension to the estate when one has decided one wants another, is easily remedied by loading a previous save-file, the same as fixing an equally unfortunate misstep that causes falling down a cliff and killing one's character. However, while other quests involve the completion of a particular task in order to obtain a reward and potentially progress the storyline, the construction of a countryside provides its own reward and its own modifiable storyline, as players are let loose by the game to craft their own

individualized rural vision and make their mark upon the landscape, no different from real-life

endeavors of aristocratic grandeur.[ix]

Figure 1: Promotional Image for The Witcher III: Blood & Wine © CD Projekt Red

   The Witcher III: Wild Hunt is among the most successful video games of the past decade.

Set predominantly in various forms of rural landscapes, it provides a striking glimpse into game

studios' portrayal of the pastoral. While the player spends considerable amounts of hours

traversing fields and farmlands with little to no interaction with the daily lives of the farmers

themselves, the final expansion for *The Witcher III, Blood & Wine*, practically serves as a virtual

vacation into an idealized rural world for players who have completed the main storyline.

Intended to be the final chapter in the story of Geralt of Rivia, the game's hero, the expansion

has a storyline of its own, but in this article we will focus on one specific gameplay aspect,

namely the player as the lord of a manor. In *Blood & Wine* the player/Geralt inherits a grand

rustic vineyard in a fairytale version of southern France, simultaneously receiving the objective

of bringing it back to its former glory. This involves hiring a steward to rebuild sections, making

home decorations, and constructing practical improvements such as a stable for the player character's horse.

The vineyard, Corvo Bianco, is intended as a player retirement home to digitally relax after a life of adventuring. The player as Geralt, having killed monsters in dirty swamps, dealt with criminal gangs in the side alleys of a metropolis, and conspired to assassinate kings along with the high and mighty, achieves the simple dream of stepping back and leaving it all behind, residing in a rural paradise surrounded by laborers toiling amongst the grapevines. Perhaps most telling of all, players themselves are not expected to do any work beyond the architectural organization of the property, whereas the hired steward insists on hiring workers to take charge of any actual manual labor, which the player then gets to reap the fruits of after a few days of waiting, without having lifted a finger.

Further supporting the aesthetics of this is the process of interior decoration. As part of the vineyard's refurbishment, the player can decorate the inner rooms of Corvo Bianco with paintings that are in themselves romantic idealizations of rural life without any of the negative aspects. Consider, for instance, the easily accessible painting Harvest Time in White Orchard. The painting is a depiction of the starting area the player can visit in the main game of *Wild Hunt*, a monster-infested village under foreign military occupation, which in base game is presented as a relatively bleak and realistic image of the war-torn rural countryside. The painting, however, is instead an idyllic presentation of open fields in the beautiful autumn sun, using warm colors and a carefully chosen scene to present a perfect vision of the rural ideal, not unlike Corvo Bianco itself. It is far more evocative of Thomas Cole's untouched landscapes than of Realist Jean-Francois Millet's *The Gleaners*, a well-known portrayal of workers toiling in the fields. The paintings, as well as the vineyard as a whole, add to the idea of the player building the perfect

rural estate, maximizing aesthetic appeal and rustic beauty to perform the same exaggeration and falsification of realistic rural life as Marie Antoinette' hameau.

Figure 2: Screenshot of a house in The Elder Scrolls V: Hearthfire, © Bethesda

In *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, the now-iconic Bethesda role-playing game set in a fictionalized version of Viking Age Scandinavia, the *Hearthfire* expansion plays a similar role, although open to considerably more personal customization. Plots of open land can be purchased after having performed services to the local population, after which the player can build grand estate houses on them. *Hearthfire* involves more personal effort from the player than the simple planning of *Blood & Wine* but remains solidly in the realm of country estate romanticism, the player an architect of a rural dream. Of the variety of rooms that the player can invest in, estates can contain gardens, stables, trophy rooms, and alchemy and enchanting laboratories.

To construct the manor, the player must secure resources, most prominently, a supply of timber and stone. However, as opposed to the other times the player is required to acquire resources for a quest, there is no actual physical labor involved. While there is the option for

mining some materials oneself, the lumber must be purchased from the owner of a sawmill, and delivered to the estate. This further removes the player from active participation in the construction he is building; he is not the builder, but rather the commissioner. As soon as the player possesses the necessary resources for constructing a particular house part, the construction itself occurs instantly, at the click of a button.

Much like the historical duties of "running an estate" this responsibility again falls squarely on a hired steward's shoulders. One can essentially hire a full staff, from a carriage driver to a bard, but after accepting their services, the player is not required to interact with them again. The steward is hired to perform the actual day-to-day duties required in the running of a countryside estate, so that the player is free to ignore the tedium of rural life and estate running, and instead, enjoy the countryside landscape in whatever way they choose.

Ultimately, the *Hearthfire DLC* is a fantasy estate construction simulator, where the player is allowed considerable freedom in building a rural home. Whereas *Blood & Wine's* Corvo Bianco is more restrictively defined, the potential estates of *Skyrim's Hearthfire* can go in whichever direction the player chooses within the confines of the location space.

Both these examples revolve around the player, an adventuring hero, getting to craft their own ideal of rural life as a retirement home after having accomplished the main objectives of the adventuring part of the games. Primarily this involves something along the lines of standing behind an architectural board planning extensions and decorations, and everything involving actual manual labor tends to either be done by someone else, or just instantly happen at the click of a button. Simultaneously, these processes involve the player as a pseudo-aristocratic intruder in a working-class rural context. This fits more into our classic understanding of pastoral romanticism, as the only individuals who would be able to do this from a historical perspective

would be those sufficiently removed from the actual realities of countryside hardship, while pretending to engage in its struggles.[x] This is the rural ideal conveyed in both *Blood & Wine* and *Hearthfire*; player-characters in their post-adventuring retirement phase have functionally ascended into pseudo-aristocratic rural behavior and entitlement.

It is further worthy of note that nothing can go wrong with these estates. There are no setbacks, no possible damage done to the estate or its denizens. *Skyrim's Hearthfire* estates can admittedly be attacked by bandits or giant rats, but these do not have the potential to do any physical harm, and rather simply exist to be repelled by the player in the occasional act of fantasized heroism. The perfect countryside estates exist only to be ideal visions, customizable to the player's desire, and nothing can interfere with the player's rural dream. Unlike the realities of peasant life, where there is a constant threat of degradation, injury, and natural disaster, the estates of players of *The Witcher III* and *Skyrim* are nearly indestructible. In the games, this is explained with workers hired, but is more likely a developer choice to avoid player boredom, similar to how the aristocrats playing at rural life accomplished the same through money and class exploitation.

Part II: The Player As Settlement Leader

In the previous segment, we examined the pseudo-aristocratic portrayals where the player gets to essentially embody a pre-industrial manor lord, using examples of *Skyrim: Hearthfire*, and *The Witcher III: Blood and Wine* as case studies. However, still other games focus their presentations of the rural by crafting small communities along with various non-player characters (NPCs). As per Henry Jenkins, NPCs in such spatial stories as these are often "stripped down to the bare bones" as a feature of the landscape itself, for the player to interact with in a manner no different from their interaction with the natural environment.[xi] The goal often starts out as group

survival, but evolves into the building of one or more thriving settlements, complete with their

own customization options. Here the player functions less as a practically authoritarian lord, and

more as a leader by consent, at least on the surface. The pastoral draw for the player lies not in

developing a character, but in interacting with the landscape,[xii] and again in making one's mark

on it. This takes the form of a digitally simulated process of (re-)building settlements and in

fostering relationships similar to small-town structures, including hiring and assigning

inhabitants to various settlement roles, and maintaining their happiness. In this way, this is a

different form of romanticizing rural labor, focusing on shared growth of a community in the

wild, although on closer examination, it does not appear to be dissimilar at all.

Figure 3: Screenshot of Tarrey Town in The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild, © Nintendo

The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild is a revitalization of the original *Legend of Zelda*

games, moving from a more linear story in previous games to an open world game. The game

begins with the protagonist, Link, exiting a cave and encountering the open plains of Hyrule, a

land devastated by some calamity where the majority of villages were destroyed, and have since

further regressed. The game contains few established settlements due to this devastation, and the

ones that do exist are exceptions rather than the rule. In all of the games examined in this paper, it is arguably the least inhabited, and most rural. As such, the player is able to explore largely untouched plains, while also finding little evidence of destroyed human development throughout the world.

One of the longest side quests in the game is the construction of Tarrey Town. The area starts from undeveloped land, and slowly, a town is built upon it with players' aid. This begins with the player being tasked with sourcing bundles of lumber for the burgeoning village, to build housing, not dissimilar to the acquisition of lumber in *Hearthfire*. The only other function that this item has in the game is to build campfires. There is even a specialized item that assists in this: the Woodcutters' Axe. The Axe can be used in combat, though it has comparatively low stats next to the actual specialized weapons, but is specifically made to chop down trees with far less swings and degradation than the swords found in the game. As the quest line progresses, Link must procure higher and higher increments of wood, making it necessary in some cases to go out to find areas forested enough to find the resources.

Crucial to the progression of the quest line, though, is the development of the town through recruiting villagers. This means that as the player travels across the world, they encounter wayward souls and convince them to move to the brand-new village at the edge of the world. As the town grows, more NPCs are added, and the player gets a sense that this will be a lasting settlement with children running around and a variety of stores available for perusal. The final step of the quest line requires recruiting a priest to oversee a wedding between the originator and one of the later NPC Gerudo you help to recruit. Link, and by proxy the player, becomes ingratiated into the society they have helped create, not only performing necessary physical functions for the building of the town, but establishing emotional ties as well. While there is no

mayoral role for the player to step into, there is the implication of them being a partial founder of the town, with the other NPCs acting as the day-to-day managers of the new village.

The NPCs recruited come from all corners of the playable map, and even though there are fast travel points above the town and nearby each recruitable NPC, the player still simulates the chance encounters that bring people together. While the gameplay is extremely open to user choice, the most probable order of encountering the NPCs required for the quest is almost reversed from the order as dictated by the Tarrey Town quest line; the priest who is the final NPC recruited for the town comes from the Zora people, who many players meet as their first of the four remaining nations. Most of the recruitable figures even have similar backstories of longing to find their place in the world.

Figure 4: Promotional image for Fallout 4, © Bethesda

Fallout 4 takes place in the alternate-futuristic Commonwealth of Massachusetts, decades after nuclear war has decimated the Earth. The landscape of the game requires brief comment: the game takes place in a condensed Boston metropolitan area, but due to the nature of the world, it is inaccurate to call it urban. While the player does spend a significant time in the center of Boston, a majority of the city has been bombed out, and the "urban" city is more rubble than

structure, making the majority of the explorable game space rural. The particular gameplay mechanic we shall discuss here, the settlement system, takes place more or less exclusively in the surrounding, rural, landscape.

The settlement system is an innovation brought to the Fallout series by *Fallout 4*. Here, the player is encouraged to build and maintain small villages across the world, actively making it safer and more habitable for NPCs not blessed with a multitude of weapons, medicine, and monetary currency. Settlements are established by finding a suitable site, setting up a radio beacon to broadcast to potential settlers, and building structures that support a rising community. Several different categories of settler needs have to be fulfilled and consistently managed by the player as settlement leader, including food, water, beds, and defenses. The successful management of these needs leads to settlement morale rising, whereas the neglect of one or more needs leads to the opposite. Furthermore, several of the needs, including food production and certain types of defenses, need to be manned by NPC settlers, assigned such duties by the player.

Unlike in *Skyrim* or *The Witcher 3* where there exists an NPC specifically for estate maintenance, the allocation of NPC resourcing lies with the player, providing a more accurate simulation of leadership in a growing community. The player also takes an active hand in manual labor of the settlement, including setting up buildings, defenses, crop planting, and irrigation, although, like in *Skyrim's Hearthfire Estates,* the erection of such structures is instantaneous. This in effect means that while the hardship of managing a rural farm is hinted at, unlike in the first two games, the actual manual labor is still cheated away for the enjoyment of the player.

The game further cements the idea that the player is a valued member of these burgeoning communities, as these settlements also serve as homes for the multitude of companions that the player can have accompany them through the game. When the player

decides to switch their companion, the non-active one is sent to a settlement of the player's choice, and effectively becomes another settler available for assignment to a task. This encourages the player to make the settlements as functional as possible, with an emotional tie to each space as the home of the follower NPCs.

Differences aside, *Fallout 4*'s settlements are not entirely removed from the pseudo-aristocratic dream of idealized rural life as a personal playground. NPCs have no preferences or opinions when it comes to settlement, and the player is able to make wide ranging decisions on the communities' behalf without comment from anyone. Even when happiness is decreasing, settlers will still do whatever they are told without complaining, although at a certain point they may choose to move away.

Even with the degradation of settlements, the player is still removed from many of the harshest realities of living in this landscape. Crops are planted instantly, without threat of failing harvest, which one might expect to be common in an irradiated wasteland. Settlers never age, fall sick or injure themselves beyond the ability to work, providing a workforce that never needs attending to. *Fallout 4* could have easily included these aspects, as similar mechanics exist for player characters in survival games, such as *The Forest* and *The Long Dark*. *Fallout 4* itself implemented a survival mode as a DLC long after the games' release, but the survival elements only exist for the player in order to add an additional personal challenge, and do not extend to the settlements or their other inhabitants. The appeal of the settlements lie not in a realistic portrayal of a rural context, but rather in the same overall fantasy of the rural ideal as the player's personal playground.

Conclusion

Both *Breath of the Wild* and *Fallout 4* share an emphasis on village structures and management rather than estate ownership. Whereas *Witcher* and *Skyrim* emphasize the aristocratic aesthetic ideal of the rural estate with little personal effort involved, the settlement management of the other two case studies involve significantly more emphasis on the simulation of physical labor by expanding the process of construction and maintenance. In this way, the idea that the player character performs personal work is communicated, without putting any of the actual burden on the player. The mark the player leaves on the world is consistently deemed a benevolent and positive impact on the world. As opposed to *Skyrim* and *Witcher,* the player is explicitly thanked and told of the benefit they bring to the world through the erection of the villages they create in *Breath of the Wild* and *Fallout 4*. The structures made are not merely for their enjoyment but serve a larger purpose in the post-devastation worlds they explore.

However, whether the player is a manor lord or a settlement leader the similarities between all four games in their portrayal of the rural context are far greater than the differences. In essence, it is all about romanticizing rural life whether it is through creating one's own perfect countryside fantasy, or simply by having fun in the digital process of simulating "farmwork". In all games, a lot of the aspects of rural labor are considerably shortened for the player's enjoyment. One does not ever get to see the processes of food production or construction. Rather, these just instantly happen, allowing the player to go on crafting their rural dream without interruptions caused by disruptive realism.

The modern player of a rural role-playing game is essentially pursuing the same idealized vision of rural life as pre-revolution aristocrats. Modern urban or suburban players of video games are just as removed from the realities of subsistence farming as historical privileged

classes, and while many may have visited farms and farming landscapes, and most reap the benefits of farmwork, there remains an emotional divide between the work and the product. Conceptions of what constitutes the "pastoral" are more shaped by the players' media exposure, rather than first hand-experience.[xiii] Past the exoticism of the pastoral for the urban modern player, there can be a deep desire for what a pastoral life can be a synecdoche for; these are all worlds either without or past the threat of destruction. The player gets to see the world "as it should be," a world without climate change, and where labor isn't accompanied by the reminder of economic pressures. These aspects are not inherent to rural life but are more easily envisioned with the ability to traverse the wilderness. Fantasy representations of rural life are not intended to provide opportunities for realistic engagement (this is arguably what the farming simulator genre exists for), but rather to give players a chance to create their own personalized and fictionalized visions of the pastoral.

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[ii] Henry Jenkins, "Game Design as Narrative Architecture", *Computer* 44 no. 4 (2004) .

[iii] Translation by Jill Casid in "Queer(y)ing Georgic: Utility, Pleasure, and Marie-Antoinette's Ornamented Farm" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 30, no. 3 (1997): 305.

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[vi] Meredith Martin, *Dairy Queens: The Politics of Pastoral Architecture from Catherine de' Medici to Marie-Antoinette,* 2011 .163

[vii] Campbell, *The Hermit in the Garden,* 96.

[viii] A good example, again from the French aristocracy, is Marie- Adélaide, of Louis XIV's court. See Martin, *Dairy Queens,* 70-71.

[ix] See for instance Sharon Farmer "Aristocratic Power and the Natural Landscape: The Garden Park as Hesdin ca.1291 -1302*" Speculum* 88, no. 3 (July 2013): 644-80.

[x] Sam Friedman and Aaron Reeves. "From Aristocratic to Ordinary: Shifting Modes of Elite Distinction"*, American Sociological Review.* Vol. 85 no. 2 (2020): 324.

[xi] Jenkins, "Game Design as Narrative Architecture", 122.

[xii] Paul Martin, "The Pastoral and the Sublime in Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion" *The International Journal of Computer Game Research* 11, no. 3 (December 2011).

[xiii] This is particularly well illustrated in Annie R. Specht and Tracy Rutherford "The Pastoral Fantasy on the Silver Screen".