

Idealism vs. Realism: A Comparative Intertextual Study of Marlowe's Shepherd and Raleigh's Nymph

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Abstract

The pastoral genre traditionally presents an idealized, static landscape where nature and romance are perceived as immune to the inevitable passage of time. This research explores the intertextual confrontation between Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" and Sir Walter Raleigh's "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd." The primary objective is to investigate how Raleigh utilizes formal mimicry to systematically deconstruct the pastoral myths established by Marlowe's original verses. Distinct from previous thematic comparisons, this study offers a methodological novelty by synthesizing intertextuality with a deconstructive framework to expose the systemic collapse of the pastoral genre from within. This study employs a qualitative-content analysis method to analyze the intricate structural and semantic shifts between the two canonical poems. The study demonstrates that while Raleigh adopts Marlowe's formal structure, he strategically subverts the time paradox that Marlowe proposed. By exposing the hidden aporia within Marlowe's utopian promises, Raleigh proves that the material and botanical imagery of the shepherd are inherently fragile and self-destructive when confronted with reality. The implication of this study is that Raleigh's response serves as a sophisticated meta-criticism of the linguistic instability found in classical pastoral rhetoric. It is hoped that this research will encourage future literary studies to further examine the role of counter-narratives in dismantling established generic conversations through the lens of empirical realism and temporal logic.

Keywords: Intertextuality, Deconstruction, Marlowe, Raleigh, Semantic shift.

1. INTRODUCTION

The pastoral tradition in Elizabethan England functioned as a sophisticated cultural lens, refracting the anxieties of a rapidly changing society into the tranquil imagery of an idealized rural life (McIntosh, 2021). During this era, the countryside was reimagined not as a site of gruelling agricultural labor, but rather as a secular “Eden”—a literary utopia where the rhythms of nature were perfectly attuned to human emotion (Eckstein & Caruth, 1965; Weinkauff, 1969). For the Elizabethan courtier and intellectual, the pastoral mode offered a strategic retreat from the treacherous complexities of political life and the urban decay of London. By evoking the classical ghosts of Virgil and Theocritus, poets of the age constructed a “Golden Age” narrative (Perkell, 2002), where the landscape was perpetually lush, the climate was an eternal spring, and the shepherd served as symbolic vessel for pure and uncorrupted expression.

This construction of the rural “utopia” was less about the reality of the English soil and more about power of the poetic imagination to defy the constraints of time and mortality (Braga, 2016; Gerber, 2019). In the pastoral world, nature was essentially static and benevolent, providing a stage where desire could be articulated without the interference of social hierarchy or economic necessity (McIntosh, 2021). This aesthetic obsession with “perfection” created a dominant discourse that celebrated the decorative over the functional and the ideal over the tangible. It was within this climate of heightened romanticism that the most iconic invitation of the era was penned, setting the stage for a poetic vision that would define the pinnacle of pastoral idealism while simultaneously inviting its own deconstruction.

Analyzing pastoral world in Elizabethan literary works remains highly relevant today, as this period serves as the foundational era where the fundamental tension between idealistic romance and empirical realism first took shape in English literature (McIntosh, 2021; Kelley & Sacks, 1997). While modern literature is arguably more relatable in its surface themes, these classical works provide the primary blueprints for understanding how language is utilized to both construct and deconstruct human values across centuries. By revisiting this particular era, researchers can trace the genealogy of the ‘counter-narrative,’ a literary tradition that began when Elizabethan writers started questioning the stability of the “Golden Age” myths. Understanding these roots is essential for today’s literary landscape, as the critical debates initiated during this period continue to influence how contemporary authors challenge established norms and explore the complexities of reality versus imagination (Brown, 2004; Weimann, 1986). Ultimately, the study of Elizabethan texts allows for a deeper comprehension of the evolution of scepticism, providing a necessary historical anchor for the postmodern critiques found in contemporary literary discourse.

Christopher Marlowe, in his masterpiece, *“The Passionate Shepherd to His Love,”* embodies this utopian vision in one of the most iconic romantic invitations in English literary history. This poem operates as a pure manifestation of pastoral idealism, in which Marlowe creates a world isolated from physical suffering and the consequences of time (Vaccaro, 2017). Through the voice of Shepherd, Marlowe offers an aesthetic landscape filled with promises of natural luxuries, from “beds of

roses” to garments adorned with myrtle leaves, all presented as eternal and unfading entities. The relationship between love and nature in this text is described as symbiotic and completely flawless; nature is no longer a wild force to be conquered, but rather an obedient servant to human romance (Tjuana et al., 2024). Using melodious diction and beautiful imagery, Marlowe constructed a discourse on “perfect life” that completely ignores socio-political realities and the natural law of decay. The main focus of this poem is not on the feasibility of these promises, but on the persuasive power of the idealistic vision itself, which ultimately places the lover and the reader in a fantasy of static and eternal happiness.

However, Marlowe’s utopian vision was not left unchallenged. Sir Walter Raleigh, a statesman, explorer, and leading intellectual of the Elizabethan era, responded critically through his poem, “*The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd*.” Raleigh did not simply write a reply poem, but rather made an intellectual intervention that deliberately borrowed Marlowe’s own rhyme and meter structure to undermine the credibility of the Shepherd’s arguments. Through the voice of the Nymph, Raleigh presented sharp scepticism in response to each of Marlowe’s romantic offers. If the Shepherd speaks from a position of static utopian idealism—a perspective that envisions the natural world as an eternal and unchanging spring disconnected from the reality of decay—the Nymph respond with cold, rational wisdom. This contrast highlights the tension between Marlowe’s ahistorical romanticism and Raleigh’s insistence on temporal consequence. Raleigh positions his work as the “voice of reality” that exposes the falsehood of pastoral promises, turning this dialogue into an intellectual confrontation in which each of Marlowe’s metaphors of beauty is broken by Raleigh’s inevitable logic.

The interaction between these two poems ultimately transcends the boundary of literary aesthetics and transforms into a profound philosophical debate between idealism and realism. This conflict is not merely a matter of writing style, but a clash between two fundamental worldviews: Marlowe’s view of the world through the lens of “as it should be”—a place where love can stop time and eliminate suffering—against Raleigh’s view of the world “as it is.” Raleigh introduces the element of *memento mori*, or awareness of death, into the pastoral space (Wang, 2023), reminding readers that flowers will wither, seasons will turn, and sweet promises will rot away with the passage of time. Thus, the intertextual relationship between these two works becomes a crucial case study of how literature is used as a discursive battlefield to question the nature of truth, time, and human existence in the midst of a transient world.

Several scholarly works have laid the groundwork for understanding the complexities of Marlowe’s and Raleigh’s pastoral dialogue. Tjuana et al. (2024) emphasizes that the Shepherd’s appeal is not merely romantic but is deeply rooted in a specific linguistic style, where carefully chosen diction and imagery serve to unveil the hidden layers of Elizabethan idealism. This idealized vision is also explored in a comparative study with Nazrul Islam’s work by Rokeya and Ahammed (2016), which suggests that the Shepherd’s fantastic promises are a universal manifestation of romantic psychology, transcending cultural and temporal boundaries. However, more recent critical inquiries have begun to question the sincerity of this pastoral façade. An

analytical study titled “Can We Trust the Shepherd?” by Vaccaro (2017) challenges the traditional reading of the poem by suggesting that Marlowe’s use of hypnotic meter and unrealistic material promises, such as gold and amber, acts as a deceptive persuasive tool that deliberately ignores the inevitable decay of nature. Furthermore, the enduring influence of this poetic debate is highlighted in an article by Altabaa (2025), which examines how subsequent poets like John Donne and William Carlos Williams have revisited these texts, marking a significant shift in gender relation and the perception of love across different literary eras.

While these existing studies provide valuable insights into the stylistic and psychological dimensions of the poems, there is still room for a more focused exploration of the intertextual mechanics between Marlowe’s invitation and Raleigh’s response. Much of the current literature examines Marlowe’s idealism or Raleigh’s scepticism as individual thematic expressions, or compares them within broader literary traditions. However, there is an opportunity to look closer at how Raleigh’s poem functions as a direct and structural dismantling of Marlowe’s logic, where the response does not just follow the original, but actively deconstructs its foundational promises. This study intends to bridge these perspectives by focusing on the discursive struggle that occurs when these two texts meet. Accordingly, the objective of this research is to analyze how Raleigh’s intertextual response deconstructs the pastoral idealism of Marlowe’s poem through a realist critique of nature and mortality. This study, however, offers a distinct contribution by synthesizing Kristeva’s intertextuality with a Derridean deconstructive framework to expose the systemic collapse of the pastoral genre from within. Unlike previous analyses that treat Raleigh’s response merely as a thematic rebuttal, this research investigates the specific internal contradictions that Raleigh utilizes to dismantle the temporal logic of the pastoral tradition. By focusing on this methodological synthesis, the study intends to bridge these perspectives by examining the discursive struggle that occurs when these two texts meet. Through this lens, the study hopes to clarify how Raleigh uses the Shepherd’s own language to expose the transience of the world, offering a deeper look into the shift from Renaissance idealism to a more grounded realism..

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Contextual Overview of the Poems

Christopher Marlowe’s *“The Passionate Shepherd to His Love”* (c. 1599) stands as a definitive hallmark of the Elizabethan pastoral lyric, characterized by its rhythmic consistency and idealized imagery. The poem is structured in six quatrains of iambic tetrameter with a consistent AABB rhyme scheme, a formal choice that enhances its persuasive and “song-like” quality. Narratively, it presents a shepherd’s invitation to an unnamed nymph, promising a life defined by leisure and aesthetic pleasure within a landscape of “eternal spring.” This vision is encapsulated in the opening stanza, where the Shepherd establishes the utopian tone of his offer:

*“Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove”*

(Marlowe) Stanza 1, Line 1-2

Directly challenging this vision, Sir Walter Raleigh's *"The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd"* (1600) functions as a formal and thematic "shadow" to Marlowe's work. Raleigh intentionally mirrors the structure of the original—adopting the same six-quatrain format and iambic tetrameter—to engage in a direct, stanza-for-stanza poetic dialogue. However, while the form remains identical, the perspective is fundamentally shifted toward a realistic skepticism. The Nymph introduces the harsh reality of temporal decay, countering the Shepherd's promises with the inevitable arrival of winter and the fragility of human promises.

*"If all the world and love were young,
And truth in every Shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move,
To live with thee, and be thy love."*

(Raleigh) Stanza 1, Line 1-4

By mirroring Marlowe's structure while subverting its core message, Raleigh transforms the pastoral utopia into a realistic reflection on human mortality, establishing a discursive tension that remains central to this study.

2.2. Intertextuality and Hypertextuality

Conceptually, intertextuality views a text as never truly autonomous or independent, but rather as a mosaic of quotations (Kristeva, 1980). Referring to her work, every text is constructed through the absorption and transformation of other text that have existed previously. In this view, the textual space is an intersection where various textual surfaces engage in dialogue with one another, so that the meaning of a work does not only originate from the author's intention, but also from its connection to a broader network of discourse. This process transforms the position of the text from a mere static product into a dynamic productivity that recycles the structures and signs of other literature (Klages, 2006).

The mechanism of intertextuality is also reinforced through the concept of transtextuality, particularly hypertextuality as formulated by Genette (1997). Hypertextuality describes a relationship that unites text B (hypertext) with text A (hypotext), in which text B cannot exist without the presence of text A through a process of modification or imitation. In this relationship, the second text often takes a transformative approach to the formal structure of the source text—whether through style, rhyme, or narrative structure—in order to produce an effect of parody, criticism, or reinterpretation that fundamentally shifts the original message.

In this study, the intertextual framework is used to analyze how Raleigh's poetry operates as a mosaic that absorbs Marlowe's formal structure and then deconstructs its content. Raleigh positions his text as a hypertext that consciously borrows the "backbone" of rhyme and meter from Marlowe's text as a hypotext, but with the aim of intervening in the narrative of pastoral idealism that is offered (Altabaa, 2025). By exploiting this textual dependence, Raleigh is able to transform universal promises of perfect love (Rokeya & Ahammed, 2016) into a realist discourse that highlights transience, proving that Raleigh's critical meaning can only be achieved through direct dialogue with the structure built by Marlowe. To execute this intertextual examination systematically, this study follows three operational steps derived from Genette's (1997) and Kristeva's (1980) frameworks:

1. Textual Mapping (Identification): Identifying the formal properties of Marlowe's poem as the hypotext, specifically its meter and rhyme scheme, and tracing how Raleigh adopts them as a hypertext.
2. Comparative Juxtaposition: Aligning specific stanzas and imagery from both poems to observe how the second text responds directly to the first.
3. Semantic Transformation Analysis: Analyzing how Raleigh transforms Marlowe's signifiers into realistic signifiers of decay, thereby shifting the meaning of the entire pastoral discourse

2.3. Deconstruction Theory

Deconstruction is a critical approach developed by Derrida (2016) to dismantle basic assumptions about the stability of meaning in a text. Derrida argues that language is unstable and meaning is always deferred. The main focus of deconstruction is to identify and undermine the "binary oppositions" that often underlie Western thoughts, such as presence or absence, speech or writing, and nature or culture, where one element is usually considered superior or has greater authority than the other. Deconstruction works by showing that these oppositions are not absolute: the element considered inferior actually contains traces of the superior element, so that the hierarchy can be reversed or dismantled (Derrida, 2016).

Through deconstruction, a text is no longer seen as a unity with a single central meaning or "transcendental truth." Instead, Derrida emphasizes that existence of internal contradictions or gaps within the text that negate its main message. This deconstructive process does not aim to destroy the text, but rather to explore the tension between what the text consciously intends to convey and what is actually implied behind its linguistic structure (Hendricks, 2016). By examining these points of uncertainty, readers can reveal how a text often "betrays" its own logic through endless ambiguity and wordplay (Klages, 2006).

In this study, deconstruction theory is used to analyze how Raleigh's poem exploits logical gaps in Marlowe's pastoral promises. Raleigh carries out a deconstructive process by reversing the binary oppositions constructed by Marlowe. Raleigh demonstrates that Marlowe's idealism can only stand by ignoring the realities of time and death. Through this lens, this study analyzes how Raleigh "enters" Marlowe's linguistic structure to dismantle the illusion of pastoral truth, proving that within every promise of happiness offered by the Shepherd, there are always traces of decay and an inevitable end. The deconstructive analysis in this study is carried out through the following systematic stages:

1. Identification of Binary Opposition: Mapping the hierarchical oppositions established in Marlowe's text.
2. Locating the Aporia: Identifying the internal contradictions in Marlowe's pastoral logic, specifically how his promises of eternal material gifts inherently rely on the very nature that is subject to decay.
3. Inversion and Displacement: Demonstrating how Raleigh's response flips these hierarchies, placing the "repressed" element (death and time) as the dominant and inescapable truth, thereby de-centering the Shepherd's pastoral authority.

2.4. Pastoral and Counter-Pastoral Framework

Thematically, this study operates within the dialectic between the pastoral tradition, which represents a perfect rural utopia, and the counter-pastoral convention, which functions as a realist critique. The pastoral tradition, as reflected in Marlowe's vision, tends to abstract nature into a static, suffering-free aesthetic space. However, this research uses a counter-pastoral lens to dissect how Raleigh systematically debunks this fantasy by introducing elements of *memento mori*, a philosophical concept that serves as a reminder of the ephemerality of life and the inevitability of death (Wang, 2023), and the transience of natural law. Through this framework, Raleigh not only rejects the Shepherd's offer, but also deconstructs the pastoral genre itself by shifting the focus from the idealism of "Eternal Spring" to the reality of time, decay, and the inevitability of human mortality.

3. METHODS

This research is a qualitative study employing qualitative content analysis as its primary method to systematically examine literary texts through an objective approach as formulated by Abrams (1971). This approach treats the poems as autonomous entities, focusing the analysis on internal textual dynamics rather than external biographical or historical contexts. The primary data consists of words, phrases, and verses representing pastoral promises and realist responses sourced from Christopher Marlowe's "*The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*" and Sir Walter Raleigh's "*The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd*." To ensure a rigorous execution, the research process is executed through the following systematic stages:

1. Data Collection: Performing repeated in-depth readings of both poems to identify formal elements, such as rhyme, meter, and structure, alongside thematic imagery including nature, material promises, and temporal responses.
2. Comparative Identification: Mapping the intertextual points where Raleigh directly responds to Marlowe's specific lines. This stage utilizes a comparison table as an analytical instrument to align the source text (hypotext) with the responsive text (hypertext).
3. Data Analysis: This stage involves a three-fold process: (1) applying intertextuality theory to examine the hypertextual relationship between the works; (2) utilizing a Deconstructive lens to uncover internal contradictions and dismantle binary oppositions; and (3) assessing the paradigmatic shift from Pastoral idealism to Counter-Pastoral realism.
4. Drawing Conclusion: Synthesizing the findings to determine how Raleigh's realism effectively deconstructs Marlowe's idealism through their complex intertextual dialogue.

To establish rigorous trustworthiness, this study adheres to the four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility is achieved through prolonged engagement with the primary texts and persistent observation, ensuring that the deconstructive nuances are accurately captured. To further solidify this, the research employs an interrater reliability strategy involving two independent peer reviewers with expertise in literary theory. These interraters cross-examine the data categorization and the alignment between the poems' stanzas and the deconstructive

findings, thereby minimizing individual bias. Dependability is maintained through a transparent audit trail that documents every phase of the research, from initial close reading to the final synthesis. Confirmability is ensured by grounding all interpretative claims strictly in direct textual evidence, demonstrating that the findings are derived from the data rather than the researcher's preconceptions. Finally, transferability is facilitated by providing a thick description of the theoretical framework and analytical steps, allowing other researchers to apply this intertextual-deconstructive methodology to similar comparative literary studies.

Furthermore, research ethics are strictly maintained through academic integrity, providing proper attribution and accurate citations for all theoretical and data sources to preclude plagiarism. These comprehensive measures are designed to produce a coherent, transparent, and scientifically accountable analysis of the intertextual dynamics between Marlowe's and Raleigh's works.

4. RESULTS

This section presents findings obtained through in-depth textual analysis of Marlowe and Raleigh's poems. The data is categorized into several main aspects, starting from formal harmony, which includes stanza structure, rhyme, and meter, to textual correspondence mapping, which shows how Raleigh repositions Marlowe's pastoral imagery. The data are systematically organized to provide a comprehensive overview of the intertextual mechanisms used by Raleigh in responding to the Shepherd's idealistic claims.

4.1 Stanzaic Structure and Symmetry

Based on textual observations of both poems, there are very rigid and precise structural similarities. Both "*The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*" and "*The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd*" are constructed with identical poetic architecture. Raleigh not only responded to the content of Marlowe's message, but also deliberately adopted the entire poetic framework as a form of formal mimicry. Data regarding the alignment of these structures is summarized in the following table.

Table 1. Structural Correspondence between Marlowe's and Raleigh's Works

<i>Structural Element</i>	<i>Marlowe (Hypotext)</i>	<i>Raleigh (Hypertext)</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Total Stanzas	6 Quatrains	6 Quatrains	Exact structural mimicry
Total Lines	24 Lines	24 Lines	Mathematical symmetry (4x6)
Meter	Iambic Tetrameter	Iambic Tetrameter	Adoption of the original "pulse"
Rhyme Scheme	AABB	AABB	Sonic echoing for recognition
Refrain Placement	Stanza 1, 5, 6	Stanza 1, 5, 6	Intentional framing of the argument

This 4x6 structural identity creates a "poetic structure" that symbolizes the perfection of the Golden Age, while providing rhythmic stability that makes both

sides' arguments sound measured. By using the same “envelope structure” device—where the first stanza opens the premise and the last stanza provides the conclusion—Raleigh ensures that readers recognize the resonance of Marlowe’s text. However, while Marlowe’s circular structure creates the impression of eternal spring, Raleigh uses the same vessel to dismantle this idealism by showing that the Shepherd’s conclusion is impossible to achieve due to linearity of time and age.

4.2 Metrical and Rhyme Consistency

In addition to the similarity in stanza structure, the data shows consistency in meter and identical rhyme scheme between the two texts. Marlowe uses iambic tetrameter (four iambic stresses in a line), which gives a light, lyrical, and romantic rhythm. Raleigh adopts the exact same meter, creating an auditory resonance that compels readers to compare the two arguments on the same sound wave frequency.

The following table presents a comparison of the meter and rhyme in the first stanza as a representation of the entire text.

Table 2. Metrical and Rhyme Comparison

<i>Poem</i>	<i>Line Analysis (Scansion)</i>	<i>Meter</i>	<i>Rhyme Scheme</i>
Marlowe (L1-L2)	Come live / with me / and be / my love , / And we / will all / the plea / sures prove .	Iambic tetrameter	A (love) / A (prove)
Raleigh (L3-L4)	These pret / ty plea / sures might / me move , / To live / with thee , / and be / thy love .	Iambic tetrameter	A (move) / A (love)

The data in Table 2 shows that Raleigh uses the same Masculine Rhyme (rhyme on the last stressed syllable) as Marlowe, such as the word pairs move/love. The consistent use of AABB rhyme (couplet) throughout the 24 lines creates an impression of poetic certainty and security.

For Marlowe, this smooth rhyme and meter function as an acoustic “sedative” to cover up the impossibility of his promises. In contrast, Raleigh uses the same smooth rhythm to inject bitter realism. By imitating the “heartbeat” of Marlowe's poem, Raleigh ensures that each of his rebuttals feels like a logical consequence arising directly from the Shepherd's own melody. This consistency proves that The Nymph's Reply is not just an ordinary response poem, but an act of total aesthetic “piracy.”

4.3 Comparative Mapping of Textual Correspondences

After establishing structural similarities, this study conducts an in-depth mapping of the textual correspondence between the two poems. Raleigh did not simply write a new poem, but also “plagiarized” specific elements in Marlowe’s texts, from landscapes and material objects to botanical promises. This mapping aims to show how each idealistic image offered by the Shepherd is systematically confronted and transformed in meaning into a fleeting reality by the Nymph. The summary of comparative mapping of the texts is shown in the table below.

Table 3. Comparative Identification Mapping

<i>Unit of Analysis</i>	<i>Marlowe's Hypotext</i>	<i>Raleigh's Hypertext</i>	<i>Intertextual Transformation</i>
The Foundation	"Come live with me and be my love"	"If all the world and love were young"	Subversion: Raleigh transforms the imperative sentence into conditional sentence (If).
Landscape	"Shallow rivers... Melodious birds sing Madrigals."	"When rivers rage and Rocks grow cold... Philomel becometh dumb."	Cacophony: Raleigh changes the melodious sound with the fury of nature and silence.
Material Wealth	"Buckles of the purest gold... Coral clasps and Amber studs."	"Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten... In folly ripe, in reason rotten."	Moralization: Raleigh redefined gold as folly and materialism as decay.
Botanical Imagery	"Beds of roses, and a thousand fragrant posies."	"The flowers do fade... To wayward winter reckoning yields."	Entropy: Raleigh introduced the concept of winterization and "calculation." Irreversibility: Raleigh mimics the closing syntax but states that the conditions are impossible to fulfil.
The Invitation	"Then live with me, and be my love."	"Then these delights... May move."	

The data in Table 3 shows that Raleigh's intertextual strategy works through the technique of meaning inversion. Raleigh consistently takes the same signifiers from Marlowe, such as rivers, flowers, and jewelry, but changes their signifieds from symbols of eternity to symbols of deconstruction. For example, Marlowe's image of a calm "river" is transformed into a "raging river" in Raleigh, signifying a shift from nature as passive decoration to a threatening physical force.

Furthermore, this transformation reveals a shift in tone from naïve certainty to rational scepticism. The use of the word "if" in Raleigh's first line instantly undermines the entire foundation of the Shepherd's authority. The results of this mapping prove that Raleigh's text functions as a meta-critique that not only rejects the offer of love, but also exposes the internal logical failures in the pastoral genre that attempts to ignore the laws of nature and the passage of time.

4.4 Inventory of Thematic Imagery

This section identifies and catalogues the dominant imagery in both poems. The findings reveal a sharp contrast between Marlowe's aesthetic-decorative sensory imagery and Raleigh's biological-physical imagery. Marlowe constructs a landscape through soothing auditory and visual imagery to sedate the Nymph's rationality, while Raleigh uses tactile (touch) and gustatory (taste) imagery to expose this falsehood.

The following is a table cataloguing the thematic imagery found in both texts:

Table 4. Inventory of Thematic Imagery: Idealism vs. Realism

<i>Type of Imagery</i>	<i>Marlowe's Imagery</i>	<i>Raleigh's Imagery</i>	<i>Sensory Shift</i>
Auditory	"Melodious birds sing Madrigals"	"Philomel becometh dumb"	Musical harmony → total silence.
Visual/Color	"Purest gold", "Coral clasps", "Amber studs"	"Flowers do fade", "Reason rotten"	Vibrant permanence → visual decay.
Tactile/Thermal	"Slippers for the cold" (as a luxury)	"Rocks grow cold", "Rivers rage"	Manageable comfort → hostile environment.
Gustatory/Moral	"Pleasures prove" (sweetness)	"Honey tongue, a heart of gall"	Superficial sweetness → internal bitterness.
Material	"Beds of roses", "finest wool"	"Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten."	Soft textures → brittle and fragile.

The data in Table 4 shows that Marlowe relies heavily on the image of Locus Amoenus, or a pleasant place. Auditory images such as "*birds sing Madrigals*" create the illusion that nature is a concert hall designed for human comfort. Marlowe also uses luxurious visual images such as gold, coral, and amber to convey an impression of eternal wealth. Overall, Marlowe's imagery is static; he presents beauty as an inanimate object that will never change or decay.

In contrast, Raleigh confronts each of these images with biological and physical realities. Where Marlowe presents "*Shallow rivers*" as places of relaxation, Raleigh counters with "*raging rivers*," transforming the element of water from a source of tranquillity into a physical threat. Raleigh also introduces a very powerful gustatory (taste) image through the metaphor "*honey tongue, heart of gall*." This image serves to deconstruct the binary between outward appearance (Marlowe's sweet poetry) and inner reality (Raleigh's bitter truth).

Furthermore, Raleigh shifted his focus from the beauty of materials to their fragility. Words such as "wither", "break", and "rotten" give his poetry a rough texture, which contrasts sharply with the "soft wool" or "silk" texture of Marlowe's poetry. This inventory proves that Raleigh not only rejected the Shepherd's offer, but he systematically replaced the decorative pastoral aesthetic that emphasizes the law of entropy and the natural process of decay.

4.5 Identification of Paradoxes and Semantic Shifts

Research data shows a significant semantic shift in the keywords used by both poets. This phenomenon is referred to as a shift from Pastoral Signifier (beautiful signifier) to Realistic Signified (real meaning). Raleigh does not eliminate the objects offered by Marlowe, but rather adds a temporal dimension that creates a paradox: that material beauty actually holds the seeds of its own deconstruction.

The following table identifies the shift in meaning in several key symbols:

Table 5. Semantic Shifts and Paradoxical Inversion

Key Signifier	Marlowe's Semantic Context	Raleigh's Semantic Shift	Paradox Identified
Gold	Symbol of eternal wealth and value.	Defined as "folly" or stupidity.	Wealth is useless against the passage of time.
Roses	Symbol of comfort and fragrance. Represents the sweetness of the Shepherd's words.	Symbol of rapid decay.	The "bed" of comfort becomes a pile of rot. Sweetness is a mask for internal bitterness.
Youth	A static state of being.	A fleeting condition dependent on "If".	Youth is only a "trace" that is always passing.

The data in Table 5 reveals the main paradox in pastoral logic: the promises made by the Shepherd are self-destructive. For example, the shift in meaning of the word "gold." For Marlowe, gold is a symbol of luxury that he offers to entice the Nymph. However, Raleigh performs a semantic shift by juxtaposing "gold" with "folly" and "rotten." The paradox is that gold—which physical cannot rot—becomes "rotten" morally and logically because it cannot stop aging.

In addition, there is a paradox in the image of "*Beds of Roses.*" In Marlowe's logic, roses are a symbol of abundant comfort. Raleigh dismantles this by showing a shift in meaning from "fragrance" to "soon wither." This paradox shows that the more beautiful a pastoral promise is, the faster it will crumble when faced with the reality of winter.

This semantic shift proves that language in the pastoral genre is unstable. Raleigh shows that words such as "love", "young", and "happy" are not permanent facts, but variables whose meanings will change over time. By identifying this shift, it becomes clear that Raleigh not only emotionally rejects Marlowe's offer, but also undermines the linguistic credibility of the Shepherd's entire argument.

5. DISCUSSION

After presenting the results data, this section will delve deeper into the intertextual dynamics and mechanisms of deconstruction that occur between the two texts. The analysis focuses on how Raleigh utilizes formal mimicry to undermine the authority of Marlowe's pastoral narrative by revealing the aporia and internal contradictions in the Shepherd's promises. Overall, this discussion aims to synthesize the paradigm shift from Golden Age idealism to temporal realism, which is at the heart of Raleigh's critique.

5.1 The Intertextual Dialogue: Mimicry as Critique

An analysis of the relationship between Marlowe's and Raleigh's texts reveals a complex intertextual dialogue, in which Raleigh does not simply write a response, but rather engages in a comprehensive aesthetic "piracy." Using Kristeva's (1980) concept of the Mosaic of Citations, it is apparent that Raleigh constructed his text from fragments taken directly from Marlowe and then rearranged them into sharp critique. Raleigh employs what is known as formal mimicry by adopting Marlowe's poetic

identity, such as the use of iambic tetrameter and AABB rhyming scheme, to ensure that the reader's ear remains on the same frequency as the original poem. In this theory, every text is an absorption and transformation of another text; Raleigh absorbed Marlowe's rhythm not to celebrate it, but to create a familiar resonance which he then filled with a message of bitter realism, forcing readers to realize that the beauty of form does not guarantee the truth of content.

This intertextual power is further reinforced through the use of highly specific word placement to create auditory echoes. Marlowe opens his poem with a very assertive promise: "*And we will all the pleasures prove*" (L2), a statement that radiates boundless optimism. Raleigh responds to this line by borrowing almost its entire sound structure, but changing its status to a supposition: "*These pretty pleasures might me move*" (L3). By retaining the word 'pleasures' and the rhyme "move/love," Raleigh does something called as Polemical Hypertextuality (Genette, 1997). Raleigh uses Marlowe's text as a Hypotext or foundation, but he performs "plastic surgery" on its meaning. Raleigh's use of the word "*might*" is a linguistic intervention that undermines Marlowe's absolute certainty, suggesting that the beauty offered by the Shepherd is only a fragile speculative possibility, not a definite reality.

Raleigh's intertextual strategy reaches its peak through the use of word-for-word quotations that serve as memory anchors for readers. One of the most striking examples is the repetition of Marlowe's line, "*A belt of straw and Ivy buds*" (L17), which Raleigh rewrites identically except for one pronoun: "*Thy belt of straw and Ivy buds*" (L17). Theoretically, this repetition serves to validate the existence of the source text while simultaneously deconstructing it. In Marlowe's text, the line is part of a long list of lavish promises of gifts. However, by adding the word "*Thy*" (yours), Raleigh intertextually shifts ownership of the object back to the Shepherd as a reminder of futility. Raleigh shows that the straw belt is no longer a beautiful gift, but rather material evidence that will soon decay over time. Here, Raleigh acts like an intertextual "parasite" that enters the body of Marlowe's poem, using the beautiful cells of pastoral aesthetics to spread a counter-pastoral logic that emphasizes transience.

Through this intertextual dialogue, Raleigh proves that his text cannot stand alone; its power lies precisely in its ability to interact with and undermine Marlowe's claims from within the structure he borrows. Raleigh does not reject Marlowe's aesthetics by creating a new form, but rather by "inhabiting" the old form and revealing its internal contradictions. By maintaining the same melody but changing the lyrics to be more skeptical, Raleigh creates an effect of dissonance for the reader. This confirms that every promise made by the Shepherd in *The Passionate Shepherd* contains the seeds of its own refutation in *The Nymph's Reply*. Overall, this dialogue is not merely an exchange of love letters, but an ideological battle over how language is used to construct or destroy a myth of happiness.

5.2 Paradigmatic Shift: From Idealism to Realism

The paradigm shift from idealism to realism in the dialogue between Marlowe and Raleigh marks a fundamental transition in human perception of nature and time. Marlowe builds his world on the foundation of static pastoral idealism, where time seems to stand still at the moment of "eternal May." This is evident in Marlowe's promise:

*“The Shepherds' Swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May-morning”*
(Marlowe) Stanza 6, Line 21-22

The use of the phrase “each May-morning” implies an endless cycle that defies the laws of entropy. Philosophically, this is a manifestation of the concept of *Locus Amoenus*, an ideal place that is immune to seasonal changes and biological decay. In this paradigm, nature is seen as a passive decoration that exists solely to satisfy the desires of human subjects.

Raleigh immediately dismantles this static paradigm by introducing destructive linearity of time, or entropy. Through the contrasting lines,

*“The flowers do fade, and wanton fields
To wayward winter reckoning yields”*
(Raleigh) Stanza 3, Line 9-10

Raleigh shifts the focus from visual beauty to the inevitable biological process. The use of the word “reckoning” implies that every pleasure in youth is a debt that must be paid when winter arrives. The implication is that beauty is not a fixed entity, but a variable bound by the laws of time. This argument is in line with the view of modern literary critics who argue that Raleigh is actually deconstructing the “politics of time” in the pastoral genre, which is often used to hide the reality of work and physical suffering in the countryside.

This paradigm shift also extended to perceptions of the environment, from decorative to hostile. While Marlowe offered “*shallow Rivers*” as a melodious musical backdrop, Raleigh responded with “*Rivers rage and Rocks grow cold*” (L6). Here, nature is no longer a servant of man, but an indifferent and potentially dangerous force. This shift indicates a transition from an anthropocentric view—where humans are the center of nature—to a more realistic and skeptical view. It can be argued that Raleigh is positioning the Nymph as a rational subject who refuses to be trapped in the false myth of natural harmony, a position often associated in comparative studies as the beginning of modern skepticism in 16th-century English poetry.

In addition, this shift includes a redefinition of material and wealth. Marlowe's idealism views jewelry such as “*Coral clasps and Amber studs*” as symbols of permanent prosperity. However, Raleigh repositions this materialism into the category of fragility through the lines:

*“Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten:
In folly ripe, in reason rotten”*
(Raleigh) Stanza 4, Line 15-16

The use of the metaphor “rotten” on inanimate objects such as thoughts or reasons shows that in Raleigh's realism paradigm, physical beauty without a strong logical foundation will end in futility. This argument reinforces the thesis that Raleigh not only attacked the content of Marlowe's poetry, but also attacked the epistemological validity of those promises; that something that cannot logically endure does not have real value.

Overall, the synthesis of this paradigm shift proves that Raleigh's realism serves as a correction to the distortion of reality caused by pastoral idealism. Raleigh shows that the foundation of all human happiness must be based on the recognition of

physical mortality and limitations. By replacing Marlowe's mythical "Golden Age" with the real "Winter Age," Raleigh asserts that truth in literature does not lie in its ability to embellish reality, but in its courage to face bitter truths (Lamarque, 2010). This creates a precedent in Western literary tradition where the counter-voice has the power to undermine the authority of the main narrative through empirical evidence and temporal logic (Arminio, 2024).

5.3 Deconstructive Reading: Dismantling the Pastoral Myth

The deconstructive reading of the dialogue between Marlowe and Raleigh reveals that Marlowe's pastoral text actually contains the seeds of its own destruction even before Raleigh writes his reply. From a Derridean perspective, a text often relies on hierarchical binary oppositions, where one element is considered superior to the other (Derrida, 2016). Marlowe constructs his world on opposition such as idealism/realism, spring/winter, and presence/absence. However, Raleigh exploits the cracks in this structure by reversing the hierarchy, showing that what Marlowe considers 'presence' (eternal happiness) is actually an 'absence' hidden by language.

Raleigh's main strategy is to expose the aporia, or logical impasse, hidden within Marlowe's promises. One of the clearest examples is the metaphor "Beds of Roses" (L9). In Marlowe's logic, roses are a sign of static comfort. However, Raleigh exposes this internal contradiction through the line:

*"The flowers do fade, and wanton fields,
To wayward winter reckoning yields,"*

(Raleigh) Stanza 3, Line 9-10

Here the aporia emerges: for the rose to be a beautiful "bed," it must be picked; but once picked, it begins to die. Thus, Marlowe's "bed of roses" is a paradoxical object whose existence as a symbol of love depends on its biological death. Raleigh forces Marlowe's text to admit that the beauty it promises is actually evidence of impending destruction.

The reversal of binary opposition is also seen in how Raleigh dismantles the concept of material wealth. Marlowe places "Gold" and "Amber" at the center of his persuasive authority. Raleigh deconstructs this center by juxtaposing materialism with intellectual failure:

"In fully ripe, in reason rotten"

(Raleigh) Stanza 4, Line 16

In this sentence, Raleigh "decentralizes" the Shepherd's power. The absolute value of gold is subordinated to "reason" and "time." Raleigh shows that the center of Marlowe's world is not truth, but a folly that attempts to ignore the laws of nature.

Furthermore, this deconstruction targets the stability of meaning in pastoral language itself. Raleigh shows that Marlowe's words are slippery. When Marlowe says "all the pleasures," he means to express totality. However, Raleigh shows that this 'totality' is only a trace that will disappear. Through the line "*Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten*" (L15), Raleigh emphasizes that every sign of happiness always contains a 'trace' of its future absence. There is no pure presence in the pastoral world; every rose contains a trace of wilting, and every youthful love contains a trace of aging. Raleigh proves that Marlowe's language is a construction that attempts to delay the reality of death, but this delay cannot last forever.

The authority of the Shepherd as a sovereign subject is also deconstructed by Raleigh through the use of repetitive conditional structures. Marlowe closes his poem with the conviction: “*Then live with me and be my love*” (L24). In contrast, Raleigh shifts this authority from ‘human will’ to ‘will of time.’ By stating “*But could youth last, and love still breed,*” (L21), Raleigh shows that Marlowe’s entire arguments depends on one condition that cannot be fulfilled. In deconstruction terms, Raleigh exposes that Marlowe’s text is built on a void or logical emptiness. The Shepherd’s persuasive power collapses because its main foundation, the subject’s immortality, is merely a linguistic fiction that has no referent in the real world.

In conclusion to this deconstructive analysis, Raleigh’s *The Nymph’s Reply* serves as a meta-critique that proves the pastoral genre to be a fragile myth (Scafoglio, 2017; Segal, 2014). Raleigh not only refutes Marlowe; he dismantles the mechanisms by which pastoral texts work by concealing their own contradictions. Raleigh shows that truth does not lie in sweet rhetoric, but in the recognition of the instability of language and the transience of existence (Vishwakarma, 2025). Through the dismantling of binaries and the revelation of aporias, Raleigh effectively erodes the authority of the pastoral narrative, leaving behind a reality in which humans must define themselves not through fantasy, but through an awareness of time and limitations.

5.4 Synthesis: The Inevitable Collapse

The synthesis of this entire analysis shows that the collapse of the pastoral myth in the dialogue between Marlowe and Raleigh is not merely a romantic rejection, but a logical consequence of the failure of pastoral language in the face of temporal reality (Eriksen, 2022). The main evidence of this collapse lies in how Raleigh successfully proves that Marlowe’s promises are built on “empty” foundations. When Marlowe offers absolute “pleasures,” he fails to take into account the law of entropy that is inherently attached to every natural object. Raleigh’s argument regarding “*Winter reckoning*” (L10) effectively serves as an audit of reality, showing that pastoral beauty is only a temporary delay of inevitable destruction. This destruction is inevitable because Marlowe’s text attempts to separate “pleasure” from “time,” a duality that is biologically and physically impossible to maintain.

The second piece of evidence for this collapse is the failure of pastoral materialism as a tool of persuasion (Fernández-Giménez, 2002; Tait, 2021). Through semantic shift identification, it is apparent that the luxurious items offered by the Shepherd—such as straw belts, coral, and amber—lose their value when confronted with aging. Raleigh cleverly proves that these objects are “future trash” through the line “*Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten*” (L15). This argument shows that Marlowe’s persuasive power collapses because he tries to bribe the subject (Nymph) with objects whose duration is shorter than the subject’s own life. Epistemologically, Raleigh proves that the “truth” in Marlowe’s poetry is merely an artificiality that masks “reason rotten” or logical failure.

Finally, this collapse is confirmed by Raleigh’s syntactic manipulation of Marlowe’s “envelope structure.” By using the same structure but changing the imperative sentence into a conditional sentence (“*If all the world and love were young*”), Raleigh proved that the entire pastoral world could only exist if the laws of

nature (death and time) were abolished. Since this condition is impossible to fulfill empirically, Marlowe's entire poetic construction collapses into a logical void. Raleigh not only ends the poem with a rejection, but he also strips the Shepherd of his authority as a credible narrator. Ultimately, this synthesis affirms that The Nymph's Reply is a victory of reality over fantasy, where bitter truth proves to have a more solid foundation than sweet lies.

6. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Sir Walter Raleigh's *The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd* is not merely a poetic response, but a systematic deconstruction of the pastoral conventions established by Christopher Marlowe. Through precise formal mimicry, Raleigh adopts Marlowe's structure and rhythm to ensure that readers remain on the same aesthetic frequency before he injects sharp counter-pastoral logic. The findings show that Raleigh cleverly transforms Marlowe's imperative sentences into conditional clauses ("If"), which instantly undermine the Shepherd's authority by revealing the logical impossibility of his promises. The paradigm shift from the idealism of "eternal May" to the realism of "winter reckoning" proves that pastoral beauty is merely a linguistic fiction that attempts to ignore the law of entropy. Raleigh successfully decentralizes materialistic values such as gold and roses by showing that everything physical is subject to the linearity of time and biological decay. Overall, this intertextual dialogue affirms that truth in literature does not lie in sweet rhetoric, but in the courage to acknowledge the transience of human existence. Thus, Raleigh's work functions as a meta-critique that effectively dismantles the myth of eternal happiness in the pastoral tradition through empirical proof and temporal logic.

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