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THE TRANSFORMED PASTORAL IN RECENT ENGLISH-CANADIAN LITERATURE

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the use of the pastoral form in recent Canadian literature. As the pastoral constitutes a literary site where a concern for landscape converges with a search for community, it has been employed as a myth in nationalist discourses whose functioning depend heavily on symbolized landscapes and idealized social types. The philosophical basis of the pastoral is the classical opposition between nature and culture. For this reason, its representations are often coded as 'natural'. To this extent, the pastoral participates in a hegemonic myth-making system, constituting a limited semiotic field in which certain representations are privileged while others are negated. Following Marx and Barthes, the thesis contends that an attack on the nature/culture opposition is essential to undermining the hegemony of the myth-making process. In the context of nationalism, a pastoral can articulate a critique of dominant and 'naturalized' representations when it questions its own use of the nature/culture opposition.

RESUME

Cette étude explore l'utilisation de la forme pastorale dans la littérature Canadien-anglais contemporaine. Comme la forme pastorale constitue une site la ou un intérêt dans le paysage converge avec un désir pour la communauté, il est souvent utiliser dans des discours nationales qui depends sur des paysages transformés en symboles et des type sociales idéalisés. Car le base philosophique de la forme pastorale est l'opposition classique de la nature et de la culture, ses représentations sonts souvents donnés la désignation 'naturelle.' Après Marx et Barthes, cette étude affirme que une attaque sur l'opposition nature/culture est essentiel pour s'affaiblir la pouvoir du procès de la production des représentations nationales mythiques. La forme pastorale peut critiquer des idées 'naturelles' quand il se questionne son propre utilisation de l'opposition entre la nature et la culture.

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In memory of Cuthbert David, my grandfather.

INTRODUCTION

In his essay "The Garden in The Machine: Three Postmodern Pastorals," John Cooley suggests that many contemporary American pastoralists are incapable of positing a healing relationship between humanity and nature because "we are quite beyond the death of the woods" (408). Consequently, the American postmodern pastoral is obsessed with decay and disease, with technology and commerce, and is best described as a "pastoral [of] disintegration" (415). The pastoral paradigm from which Cooley works "embodies a complex, often tension-filled, interplay between city and country, between civilization and unmodified nature" (405). His emphasis on "unmodified nature" as the point of reference for evaluating the vagaries of culture and capitalism leads Cooley to underestimate the possibility of positive exchanges between "man and nature" and, simultaneously, to overstate the injurious effects of nature's physical transformation.

In part, this problem stems from Cooley's essentially Romantic conception of the pastoral which accepts, at face value, the opposition between nature and culture, an opposition which can be overcome by the seer's transcendental union with an isolated and 'untouched space'. Interestingly, the traditional pastoral is less concerned with "unmodified nature" than with the partially modified landscapes of agrarian society. Though the existence of untouched nature is increasingly threatened on the North American continent, a more

or less traditional pastoral may endure by focusing explicitly on this middle landscape as opposed to the wilderness.

Since the advent of the Group of Seven, it is particularly the wilderness, and the landscapes of the North, which have been "central to what one would call the search for an essential-Canadian in the country's national literature and art" (Wilson, 94). In this context, earlier writing, such as that of the Confederation Poets, which often depicted rural, as opposed to wilderness landscapes, was seen to employ European literary models rather than forms suited to the indigenous situation. As a result, pastoralism has been largely ignored in recent Canadian writing, even in relation to texts which seem to demand its consideration.

It is the pastoral and its dependence on the 'middle landscapes' of rural Canada with which this study is concerned. While failing to command the same attention as the North, half-tamed landscapes such as Ondaatje's Bellrock and Clarke's Whylah Falls are nonetheless essential to the nationalist mythologizing of the Canadian middle classes. This thesis sets aside the notion of the Canadian wilderness and its impact on the Canadian imagination; it is an important theme which has been well-served by many other critics. Rather, in focuses on the pastoral as a literary site where a concern for landscape and community collide. It treats the pastoral as a "proto-narrative structur[e] which can be articulated in different ways, which can be overdetermined and pressed into service by various meanings, and which is capable of organizing and making sense of many different experiences" (Bommes and Wright, 289).

Chief among the meanings to which the pastoral may give form is the idea of the nation. Essential to the pastoral's effective articulation of national identity is the maintenance of the nature/culture opposition which permits certain significations to appear as 'natural,' while disorganizing other articulations on the basis of their political or historical character. As Michael Bommes and Patrick Wright have argued, national landscape, endowed with all the authenticity and value of 'nature,' tends to undermine the effectiveness of the "oppositional practices" of minority interests by 'de-activating,' or marginalizing a class-based historical consciousness (253). This effect is achieved in part from the bonding of 'history' with the 'image of nature' so that an aestheticized and 'natural' spectacle displaces an "effective sense of living history" (McKay, 33).

As a means through which national identity may be expressed and maintained, the pastoral is a likely object of concern for so-called 'minority' or 'ethnic' writers and theorists. Given that "the multicultural perspective in contemporary Canadian writing results not least from a critical approach towards conventional forms of (literary) perception" (Klooss, 355), it is not surprising to find that the pastoral has been reworked to accommodate the oppositional heritages of the working class and of various ethnic minorities.

Chapter 1 is principally concerned with the pastoral in Canadian literature; it builds a critical vocabulary and critical framework that permits the examination of pastoral in relation to ideologies of 'belonging'.

Like Chapter 1, Chapter 2 is introductory and methodological in its conception. It focuses on the work of Karl Marx, specifically the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts and the German Ideology, and Roland Barthes' Mythologies, as suggestive of a means for undermining the nature/culture opposition. It concludes by detailing the philosophy and form of what I am calling the Transformed Pastoral, a genre which, unlike Cooley's postmodern pastoral, neither accepts the opposition of nature and culture, nor mourns the loss of that first, problematical term.

In chapters 3 and 4 I discuss Michael Ondaatje's In the Skin of a Lion and George Elliott Clarke's Whylah Falls, respectively. Both books have been praised as classic examples of Canadian 'minority writing' and both employ pastoralism as a vehicle for opposing restrictive notions of nationalist belonging.

CHAPTER 1

CANADIAN LITERATURE AND THE PASTORAL

> One Day there were soldiers on all the goat paths. I took pains to blend in with the rocks.
>
> --from "Evil Eye" by Ann Diamond

A common complaint about Canadian Literature concerns its obsessive attitude to nature and 'the land'. In a similar fashion, Canadian literary theory has been criticized for its equally exaggerated 'topocentrism' such that "true literary commentary" is consistently displaced by a ferociously introspective "cultural history" (Surrette, 44). A study which undertakes to discover and examine the factors that animate the 'topophilia' and topocentrism of some of Canada's cultural producers might investigate these complaints by examining these normative tendencies in Canadian literary and cultural theory. The following analysis is particularly concerned with the notion of landscape and its relation to the classical opposition of nature and culture. It focuses on the pastoral, a literary site where these issues converge. It extends previous readings which view the pastoral as a potentially counter-oppositional ideological practice, relating the genre explicitly to the myth-making of bourgeois nationalists.

"A society needs a system of legitimation and, in seeking for it, always looks to a point of origin from which it my

derive itself and i"s virtues," writes Seamus Deane in his introduction to Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature. In the case of Canada, which is neither religiously, ethnically, or linguistically homogenous, this "point of origin" has most assuredly been the land itself. Since ours is am imagination still struggling to map itself, writings about the land have held, and will continue to hold, a privileged place in Canadian literature.

Notable instances from the hey-day of Canadian literary nationalism are Northrop Frye's The Bush Garden and Margaret Atwood's Survival, transparent in their attempt to articulate an already shared or potentially shareable national identity in terms of the unique contribution of Canada's natural environment to Canadian art. Unfortunately, these works, in their designation of themes and motifs 'natural' to the Canadian imagination, resorted to a brand of ecological determinism whose obfuscating and deleterious effects persist in Canadian literary criticism to this day. Just as William Collin (The White Savannahs) and E.K. Brown (On Canadian Poetry) did before them, Atwood and Frye did not so much discover certain trends in Can. Lit. as establish them.[1] So unyielding are these canons of thought that, once established, it takes constant, concerted and direct attacks to dislodge

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[1] Heather Murray, in her essay "Women in the Wilderness" has demonstrated the extent to which Canadian classics have been packaged and marketed in order to conform with *the* wilderness tradition as elaborated by Atwood. For instance, the popular New Canadian Library edition of Moodie's Roughing it in the Bush leaves out whole sections that are incompatible with the "Nature as Monster" motif now synonymous with Moodie's work.

them. Hence, the sweepingly anti-geographical, anti-nationalist counter-movements implicit in titles like Paul Stuewe's Clearing the Ground and Frank Davey's Post-National Arguments.

Largely due to this backlash, a concern for geography no longer holds the exclusive position it once enjoyed in Canadian literature; it lives on in a slightly altered state, however, in post-colonial critical discourses as "the poetics of place." Generally suspicious of universals, essences, origins, and the 'master narratives' that promote them, modern, politically motivated literary criticism unmasks these things as culturally determined. In the Canadian context, post-colonial theory has interrogated the effects of imported European taxonomies on the perception of non-European places (the Canadian wilderness in particular) arguing for the most part, à la Marjorie Hope Nicolson, that when it comes to reading landscape we see what we have "been taught to look for" (in Davis, 141).

While discussions of this sort usefully focus on the imposition of some form of culture on nature, the analysis I present in this study inverts that formulation in order to address the manner in which *nature* is imposed on *culture*. That is to say, how is the image of nature used as a trope in a "bourgeois system of communication"[2] that generates, through a

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[2] In other words, the public sphere in which some actions are officially endorsed while others are made "incomprehensible" (261), in effect negated by being shifted into the 'private' sphere where opposition becomes mere opinion. The bourgeois system of communication thus describes a "social horizon for the members of society" (260); it a system of legitimization and control, of translation and silencing.

process of inclusion and exclusion, an ostensible 'public,' 'general,' or 'common' interest?

Drawn from Gramscian and post-Marxist (Althusserian) institutional analyses, this notion of common interest bolsters our understanding of hegemony by stressing the "ways in which political power secures itself through routine institutional practices rather than, more specifically, in those signs, images and representations which we term ideology" (Eagleton, 1990a, 145). It should not be thought that 'hegemony' and 'ideology' are mutually exclusive concepts; if anything, an understanding of hegemony demonstrates the manner in which the 'ruling ideas' must always be grounded in practical activity, in our intercourse with the institutions that give form to our social existence. Hegemony delineates the space within which our identity as subjects is constituted. It indicates the means by which we come to think of ourselves as Canadian or Quebecois, as liberal or conservative, as Christian or Jewish, as white or black. It denotes both a *process* and a range of choices in which the former is always predetermined and the latter always limited. Since subjectivity itself cannot exist in the absence of a horizon, an excluded Other, oppositional criticism does not seek to destroy hegemony, but to understand it better so as to make its operations more inclusive.

Through the discourses of race and ethnicity, religion and nationalism, hegemony promotes collective identities disruptive of a class-based consciousness; it likewise disorganizes the challenge posed by those ethnic and racial, religious and nationalistic 'minorities' who work to change prevailing social

relations, finding themselves ill-served therein. Unlike traditional Marxist hermeneutics, which are perhaps overly concerned with rupture and the overthrow of the relations of production, the study of hegemony reflects on the manner in which order is *maintained* and the status quo preserved. We must therefore look to the ways in which power is personalized: received, not as a force imposed from above, but in such a way that a subject "consents to its imperatives in the form of consenting to his own deepest being" (Eagleton, 1990, 32).

The link between power and selfhood--which a concern for hegemony makes explicit--demands a careful consideration of 'identity' and its various permutations, including 'subjectivity' and 'authenticity'. Identity studies are undeniably *au courant* in modern cultural theory. It is not surprising, then, to find that much old ground has be re-tilled in order to unearth answers to--not the age-old query of *who are we*[3]--but to the rather more modern question of *what does it mean to say who we are*? Seamus Deane has argued for "a new discourse for a new relationship between our idea of the human subject and our idea of human communities" (3). Guided by just this sort of enquiry, people interested in nationalism have demonstrated the existence of a link between a society's ability to think collectively, to 'imagine' (in Benedict Anderson's sense of the term) themselves into a community, and landscape imagery.

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[3] Or Northrop Frye's famous question "Where is here?" which again emphasizes the Canadian preoccupation with place as cultural identity's chief determinant.

Anthony Smith, in his Ethnic Origin of Nations (1987), cites landscapes as major repositories of so-called national character. Both its land and history must appear unique to that nation alone. Because, as Smith himself notes, nationalism penetrates and lends its support to a complex mesh of ideologies that coalesce around the "feelings of belonging" (Sollors, 289) that give the discourses of race and ethnicity (Appiah, 282) their authority, depictions of nature can serve a dangerous discourse of pedigree, origin and essence:

> national identity... [is] directly influenced by collective perceptions, encoded in myths and symbols, of the ethnic 'meanings' of particular stretches of territory, and the ways in which such stretches are turned into 'homelands' inextricably tied to the fate of 'their' communities. (183)

An ideological perspective, landscape's relation to the imagining of community is a complicated one. Certainly, nationalism's influence is not one-sided; it and landscape are at the very least, interdependent. As much as landscape serves nationalism, nationalism filters down into our modes of landscape *appreciation*, so that their value for us is in fact underpinned by an obscured or mystified politics of exclusion. While national landscape

> appears to bear no more trace of race than class, gender, or religion, it is actually sufficiently dependent on suppositions of ancestral continuity to be not only white but also actively exclusive of what it constitutes as 'Others.' (Bommes and Wright, 267)

National landscape, functionally important to a country like

Canada which has no one specific ethnic point of origin, thus manifests itself, somewhat ironically, in the lives of Canada's cultural minorities as the imposition of a limit to their participation in the shaping of Canadian identity. The land and its images serve as both battleground and prize in contemporary battles being waged in Canadian letters over national identity and the right to self-definition. As an initial and still popular means of securing 'national character' and, increasingly, as a convenient vehicle for readings opposed to said national character, 'the land' is--more than ever--of concern to students of Canadian literature.

In its attempt to understand the politics of landscape, art historical studies have for some time emphasised ideology and the development of nationalism in its analyses. Even though this approach is compatible with literary works, literary theory has been slow to respond to these innovations and has only recently begun to examine its texts for the ideological use of landscape. Unfortunately, the little that has been done remains dominated by examples drawn from British literature and British topography. Ironically, it has not been applied in any thorough manner to literary texts like <u>In the Skin of a Lion</u> and <u>Whylah Falls</u> which reflect--if not anticipate--the bourgeois exploitation of a reified image of nature.[4]

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[4] The reasons for this are themselves political; the relationship between the 'image of nature' and collective identity is a confusing one: rarely is their interdependence made explicit. In fact, 'nature writing' by and large signals itself as an *escape* from politics. Criticism, having accepted the idea of nature and culture as antithetical and unrelated likewise accepts nature a

As long as the image of nature circulates within a bourgeois system of communication it is a powerful ideological tool. Idealized, symbolic landscapes, once deployed under the aegis of 'national interest,' can and have reinforced the control of public institutions by some class of persons while denying other groups equal access or say. Though indisputable, the link between national or public interest and the image of nature remains surprisingly mysterious. Few accounts specify the mechanism that offers up landscape as a likely vehicle for collective imaginings. Those that do usually focus on the "logoization" (to use Benedict Anderson's term) of natural imagery, that is, the facility with which its features can be reproduced in the form of stamps, greeting cards, commercials, and, in much the same way, in poetry and fiction. In so doing however, these analyses substitute description for explanation: the reproducible and recognizable quality of scenic sites and landmarks certainly contributes to their effectiveness as repositories of national character, but fails to explain their desirability in this capacity in the first place.

This is not to say that these critics are unaware of the 'stabilizing' effects of 'the image of nature' on social structures. Far from it. The popular reasoning of the academic left, implicit in what Anthony Smith calls the "greening" of institutions, goes something like this: culture plays its perceived opposition to nature to its own advantage; it grounds its contradictory and tumultuous history, a history

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refuge from social conflict and the responsibilities of modern living. It takes pastoral writing at its word.

which entails the marginalization of minority interests, in 'timeless,' 'united,' and 'wholesome' images in order to fortify by a naturalizing, essentialist rhetoric its tenuous grip on the political conch. Because this essentialism belies a historical consciousness ('living history') the more an institution or class or idea can have itself thought or spoken about in conjunction with natural imagery, the more 'natural' it appears and politically unassailable it becomes. The major failing of this argument--which I hold to be essentially accurate in its description of the potentially dangerous effects of 'directed' landscape--is that it employs a leftist 'common sense' which it leaves unstated.

Since landscape is the image of *nature*, it is not at all likely that the problem can be tackled without some recourse to prevailing ideas about nature and the non-human itself. If Alexander Wilson is correct when he asserts that "the idea of nature as an untrammelled refuge is most attractive to cultures...whose values tend to rest on a rigid distinction between the human and the non-human," then it is that distinction which must be investigated. Until the classical opposition--of a difference in kind--between nature and culture is queried, the mechanism by which the hegemonic deployment of natural imagery is carried out will remain for the most part unchallenged. If this dualism is to remain, and we may well discover that its beneficial uses have *not* been exhausted, then it must not do so unproblematically.

In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss the pastoral as a possible point of departure for a literary discussion of

the relationship between identity and landscape. Following this, I draw upon the writings of the young Marx, as well as Barthes' early work on myth, in order to develop a critical vocabulary and theoretical framework suitable for the task of assessing the contemporary discourse on nature and its relationship to a nationalist, and potentially racist, myth-making system. Marx and Barthes suggest similar means of attacking this system which 'naturalizes' hegemonic cultural presumption; what they say is essential to an understanding of contemporary uses of landscape and the pastoral form to express frustration with the current national ideal.

Why Pastoral?

I have chosen to call In the Skin of a Lion and Whylah Falls 'transformed pastorals'. The term is appropriate, I think, because it not only acknowledges their reconstruction of a specific literary form possessing a well-established, if disputed, tradition, but also because it recognizes their general contribution to that tradition as the infusion of material transformation into what is normally a static pastoral landscape. The contours of this argument will become more apparent following the sections on Marx and Barthes. In the meantime, it is necessary to establish what one normally means by the pastoral, and examine its relationship to collective identity so that its reformulation in Ondaatje and Clarke acquires the appropriate significance.

Most recent discussions of pastoral, as both noun and

adjective, acknowledge its categorical elusiveness. Paul Alpers, in his polemical essay, "What is Pastoral?", surveys the crowded field of pastoral definition, noting that it has been variously explained as a paradigm for the antithesis of Art and Nature (Kermode), of town and country (Gransden), of experience and innocence (Poggioli); that it is a paradigm of aesthetic Platonism (Cody), and embodies the search for a Golden Age (Greg, Williams). My own reading suggests that it is essentially concerned with "Time and Nature," that it has been called a "landscape of the mind," "the art of the backward glance" (Mirinelli), the "process of putting the complex into the simple" (Empson), and a "deceptive and prescriptive" "political description of past and present" (Sales). Added to these broad thematic prescriptions, pastoral writing usually contains, in various combinations, certain formulaic elements: shepherds or their social equivalent, a verdant landscape, music, a sense of *otium*, and an exchange of gifts, to name only a few.

No specific form or content fully defines pastoral; nor, as an event, are its examples structurally homogenous.[5] And yet the term 'pastoral' has semantic force : this becomes especially obvious when one replaces the question of 'what pastoral is' with a consideration of 'what it *does*,' or, as is often pointed out in the case of pastoral, what it fails to do.

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[5] Roger Sales refers to what he calls the "famous five Rs:refuge, reflection, rescue, requiem, and reconstruction" (15). However, he does not suggest that this order is always respected, or that the absence of one or two of these elements would prevent the object from properly being called pastoral.

No doubt, all the preceding definitions reflect, in their own way, some 'truth' about the pastoral or pastoralism in general. (In fact, I will be returning to many of these definitions as this thesis progresses.) But it is equally certain that a prescriptive list of possible components will miss the crucial fact that pastoral is didactic and functional. More than anything else, pastoral is an argument in favour of something as opposed to something else; and possibly more than any other literary form, it has been used to present 'the good life'.

Because the pastoral is normally precipitated by its narrator's abandonment of an alienating, over-sophisticated and artificial urban setting for the (usually) bucolic splendour and simplicity of a rural landscape and community, it has been regarded by many as escapist, politically naive, or, at worst, "counter-revolution[ary]" (Sales, 21). This view of pastoral has persisted and is not without merit, for pastoral is always selective in its search for positive human values. Annabel Patterson, in Pastoral and Ideology, suggests that the genesis of the modern pastoral, most often associated with Wordsworth, is decidedly post-revolutionary. As such, it betrays a sense of the futility of political action, suppresses social conflict, and is aggressively individualist (264-267).

This is certainly one tenet of the pastoral, one that exhibits a severe divergence from its roots in Theocritus and Virgil. In The Country and the City, Raymond Williams argues that the "real social conditions of country life" (17), the "living tensions" of agricultural labour present in the writings of these early poets, are "excised, until there is

nothing countervailed, and selected images stand as themselves: not in a living, but in an enamelled world" (18). Lawrence Buell fully concedes that the retreat from and avoidance of social problems is characteristic of much pastoral art, but contends that this action is usually performed self-consciously so that it enacts a social critique:

> The retreat to nature can be a form of willed amnesia...but it means something different when held up self-consciously...to appeal to an alternative set of values over and against the baleful and dominant one. (19)

It would be a mistake, then, to assume that the pastoral is essentially apolitical; in it criticism is inherent. Whether it wants to or not, pastoral signifies the world that has been excluded from its content. It is always symptomatic.

As early as 1906, W.W. Greg noted that "the pastoral, whatever its form, always need[s] and assume[s] some external circumstance to give point to its actual content" (in Mirinelli, 12). Concurring, Annabel Patterson traces this tendency back to Virgil's Eclogues: "Virgillian pastoral refer[s] to something other than itself, and specifically to the historical circumstances in which it was produced" (3). As a consequence, pastoral is particularly responsive to the demands of the culture in/for which it was composed. This explains, in part at least, why it has been difficult to define pastoral: it is always changing, adapting to the new philosophical and historical circumstances of its production.

Change occurs within the semi-strict confines of the

genre, however. It would be pointless to call something pastoral if it did not adhere to what Paul Alpers calls its "central fiction"--a cluster of images, motifs, and symbols orbiting a principle theme or "representative anecdote" (457). Again, the central fiction of pastoral is a matter of great contention; for Alpers, it is about "the ways in which shepherds are representative of [all] men" (460). After adding 'and women' to this claim, I would like to point out that Alpers' essay takes specific aim at those pastoral theorists who cite the rendering of a rural landscape as the form's central fiction. As a result, he minimizes one of the pastoral's chief activities which *is* the description of landscape. Following Thomas McFarland who writes, "A certain social interaction is necessary to the pastoral; the natural landscape is merely the arena for the interplay of a group" (14), I would like to take up a medial position between Alper's insistence on shepherds' lives and an equally dogmatic assertion of the importance of landscape. In so doing, what pastoral does should become a bit clearer.

Pastoral negotiates the individual's interaction with a populated landscape against a social background that invests the rural experience with authenticity and value. It is therefore a helpful object of study to those interested in landscape, cultural presumption about which types of people belong in which environments, and the relationship between collective and individual identities.[6] Because the pastoral contains shepherds, or peasants or agricultural wage labourers,

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[6] The term 'place', actually summarizes all of these points.

it lends--usually implicitly, rather than explicitly--an interesting class element to these various interactions.

Pastoral is about community. McFarland, in his essay, "Romantic Imagination, Nature, and the Pastoral Ideal" notes the uneasy relationship between Romanticism, represented in his study by Wordsworth, and the pastoral. "The problem of solitude in Romanticism seems at odds with the pastoral desire for community" (13), and yet, "pastoral does not loom large on the surface of Romanticism; just below the surface it is everywhere" (6). Pastoral, even in its more Romantic formulations, contains an attempt to engage with a social group, or failing that, with a representative of a group that is also a recognizable social *type*. Hence, the very strong relationship between pastoralism and 'the idea of the Folk,' an essentializing discourse that has ben imposed on the rural poor. As Ian McKay explains in The Quest of the Folk, the Folk are a race of people,

> regarded as the epitome of simple truth, work, and virtue, and the antithesis of all that [is] over-tired, conventional and insincere. The Folk were closer to nature...and could respond more spontaneously to 'natural music.' (12)

Mckay's emphasis here on the opposition between nature and culture, on simplicity and hard work, and even the allusion to the organic music of the Folk, will sound strikingly familiar to the reader of pastoral. The positive attributes assigned to the Folk do not differ from those normally assigned to the shepherd in traditional pastoral writing.

Throughout his book, McKay is at pains to emphasise the extent to which the Folk are seen to be 'in tune' with their surroundings. The Folk only appear in certain landscapes. Their environment must be "picturesque" and must constitute, seemingly in itself, a rejection of urban and industrial life and all its problems. Clearly,

> [l]andscape is an ideological concept. It represents a way in which certain classes of people have signified themselves and their world through their imagined relationship with nature, and through which they have underlined and communicated their own social role and that of others with respect to external nature. (Cosgrove, 15)

In relation to the Folk, and so in relation to pastoral too, the landscape itself begins to set limits on who--or what--the Folk can be. Simultaneously it attests to the 'naturalness' of what is, in reality, motivated and constructed.

Because "a working country is hardly ever a landscape" (Williams, 120), transformative labour is generally excluded from the pastoral narrative. This fact has certain consequences not only the for representation of work in the pastoral, but also for the workers themselves. Pastoral features the agricultural poor, a working poor who have been charged with transforming nature into what someone else will admire as agrarian scenery, but who seem to exist in a landscape not of their own making. In pastoral, the setting always precedes the action, and there is no action performed *on* the setting, only *in* it. Consequently, the pastoral character,

which we can now safely call one of the Folk, is denied those characteristics deemed ill-suited to the pastoral landscape he or she occupies: "[t]he Folk did not belong to political parties or read newspapers or mount labour protests. They were the passive recipients of tradition, not its active shapers" (McKay, 21). What the Folk cannot be, of course, is political. As Roger Sales pointed out above, the pastoral carefully weeds out all political strife; it remains there only implicitly as the initial impetus for the 'return to nature'.

Raymond Williams begins his study on the pastoral with a reminder that "country" signifies both the countryside and the nation to which the land belongs (1). Similarly, in his discussion of the "pastoral myth," John Rennie Short remarks that "in most countries, the countryside has become the embodiment of the nation" (35). It is not surprising, then, that the characters who populate pastoral country--which is tamed, but still 'natural'--should likewise become emblematic of the nation as a whole.

> The usefulness of the idea of the Folk for bourgeois nationalists has long been clear. The Folk, transcending and preceding all divisions into classes, testify to the imagined organic unity of the nation, and the cultural phenomena associated with them are indispensable for the purposes of symbolic identity. (McKay, 16)

The Folk 'precede' class because they have been aligned with a nature that appears similarly divorced from history and politics. In effect, the Folk belong to a different time as

well as another place. Primordial, they have kept all the authentic values that history, in other places, has swept away.

One of the pastoral precepts I noted above stated that the pastoral is obsessed with Time and Nature. One escapes from the former into the latter: the spatial displacement of moving from city to the country is also a movement in time. The past *is* a another country and they *do* do things differently there. Through its association with a timeless place and people, nationalism girds itself in the unchallengeable, nature. If Anthony Smith is correct in asserting that national identity is secured and maintained through the collusion of "Poetic Spaces" (symbolic landscape) and "Golden Ages" (Edenic past), then pastoral would appear to be valuable indeed to the nationalist enterprise, for its Arcadia gathers together both landscape and a superior, though ill-defined, socio-historical situation.

This said, I would now like to turn to a few poems by Archibald Lampman, possibly the most famous of the Canadian Confederation Poets[7], likely the most accomplished of the group, in order to elaborate these claims as well as to provide some concrete examples of a pastoral acclimatized to suit the 'Canadian experience'. In focusing on some of his most heavily anthologized poems, I hope to engage with the tradition of Canadian poetry he helped inaugurate. To a great extent, these

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[7] So called because the members of the group came of age around the time of confederation and began publishing poetry in the 1880s and 90s. The group is usually seen to consist of Archibald Lampman, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, Bliss Carman, and Duncan Campbell Scott. The term 'Confederation Poet' originates from Malcom Ross's influential anthology, Poets of the Confederation, but indicates, as well, the extent to which their efforts were considered as a foundation to a national literature.

poems have been anthologized and read because they answered a need, a nationalist need for an indigenous voice that could picture a Canadian landscape and so help forge a nation. Until the poetic colonization of the North in the decades to follow, the images and ideas of these poems formed the basis of the 'Canadian imagination'.[8] In so doing, however, they paradoxically helped perpetuate a belief in the countryside and its peoples as essentially non-political.

Seeing Through Lampman

Early critical treatments of Lampman, such as Carl Connor's Archibald Lampman: Canadian Poet of Nature (1929), tended to cast him as strictly a nature poet, a good observer of country life in the pretty Ottawa Valley, but a man not especially tuned to social reality. This, of course, is a falsehood, as many commenters have since pointed out. Lampman was, in fact, a socialist, a member of the Fabian Society, and was aghast of the technological changes transforming his city. It is true, he turned to nature, his "Mother," in preference to city life, but the city remains in even his most celebratory

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[8] Influenced by the sublime northern landscapes of The Group of Seven and the modernist writers who followed suit (A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott, for example), the North has become the biggest and most frequently visited reservoir of Canadian-ness. In contrast, the pastoral landscapes of the earlier Confederation poets, Lampman in particular, were seen to be both parochial and imperialist--too exclusively regional in focus and uncomfortably English in style. The North however, never completely obliterated these more homely images. Since Canadian federalism is tempered with an equally competitive regionalism, regional landscapes are still relied upon within the Nationalist discourse, and are still subject to/subject of endless re-evaluations of that discourse.

hymns to nature as the place to which he must inevitably return, rejuvenated.

Roger Sales, in his English Literature in History: Pastoral and Politics, while largely critical of the pastoral project, also acknowledges that "reconstruction"--of a non-alienating moral order--is essential to the form's discourse. Historically, of course (since at least the seventeenth century) the proposed moral order has tended to enforce a system of values counter-productive to a class-based emancipatory politics. Be content, sing in your chains. This need not be the case, however, as my readings of In the Skin of a Lion and Whylah Falls will demonstrate. While many writers, Lampman among them, have used the pastoral to articulate a social critique, a responsible pastoral idiom cannot exist until the opposition of nature and culture, the basis of the great divide between country and city, is problematized. But Lampman does try to couch a legitimate protest against society from within the strictures of the pastoral form; this has too often been overlooked.

For Lampman, pastoral logic manifests itself as a great divide between the poetry of nature and that of the city. Alienation exists; it is real, but is an urban problem. Nature is a lesson, a guide to a better way that must be adopted in the social (read: urban) world. Lampman's nature poetry is not consciously pastoral in conception or execution, but avails itself of enough of its conventions and philosophy to earn the designation. His city poems provide a striking contrast; explicitly political, they embody most of his anxiety about

what he terms "the dark march" of time. His attempted reconciliation: nature poetry that is also overtly political, expressing as it does the poet's conception of 'the good life,' is clearly intended as pastoral. Following a brief comparison of the nature and city poems, I will present a similarly brief reading of Lampman's ultimately unsuccessful attempt to bring these cosmologies together.

In "Among the Timothy," the speaker has retreated to a *locus amoenus*, a privileged site where he can be still and his mind can wander.

> Long hours ago, while yet the morn was blithe,
> Nor sharp athirst has drunk the beaded dew,
> A reaper came, and swung his cradled scythe
> Around this stump, and, shearing slowly, drew
> Far round among the clover, ripe for hay,
> A circle clean and grey;
> And here among the scented swaths that gleam,
> Mixed with dead daisies, it is sweet to lie
> And watch the grass and the few-clouded sky,
> Nor think but only dream. (Gnarowski, 47)[9]

The reaper, reminiscent of Marvell's mower, is the pastoral figure[10]. While physically absent--accommodating the Romantic's need for solitude--he is nonetheless implicated by his act of generosity, having provided the poet the perfect spot for his reveries. The speaker's tone is established

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[9] All Lampman quotations, unless otherwise stated, are taken from Archibald Lampman: Selected Poetry, edited, introduced and annotated by Michael Gnarowski.

[10] In fact, "mower" was substituted for "reaper" in Duncan Campbell Scott's 1900 edition of The Poems of Archibald Lampman (Gnarowski, 107).

immediately, to be expanded and reworked as the poem progresses: no pressure, no need to think, but only dream "sweet[ly]." Even the imagined labour that preceded the poet's arrival is performed "slowly," as tranquil and undemanding as the speaker's cloud-watching.

The *otium* is, of course qualified by the presence of the "dead daisies" and the tree stump, reminders of the mutability of all things, of death and decay. As Roger Sales notes, "[t]he pastoral idiom affects a reflective melancholia at the transitory nature of life, but tries to locate and isolate still points of permanence" (16). This "reflective melancholia," already present in the opening stanza, is later directly attributable to the speaker who pines, "And those high moods of mine that sometime made / My heart a heaven... / Were all gone lifeless now like those white leaves / That hang all winter, shivering dead and blind" (47-48). Far from undermining a potential pastoralism in the poem, the focus on death and the awareness of time is carefully circumscribed within a circular cosmology, so that a pastoral organicism takes precedence. The juxtaposition of high summer and "dead" winter connotes a seasonal movement; and a cyclicality and permanence is, paradoxically, further derived from the reaper's "circle clean and grey" and the stump itself. The speaker is literally in a charmed circle where he is aware of and yet safe from the change and decay he describes.

If the above suggests that the poem is a pastoral, the following stanza confirms it. The poet

> came hither, borne on restless feet,

Seeking some comfort for an aching mood.
Ah, I was weary of the drifting hours,
The echoing city towers,
The blind grey streets, the jingle of the throng...
(47)

In the city, the hours "drift," dissipate, rather than enter into a movement with nature, the "valiant whole." The streets are grey, like the mowed circle, but, as their linearity attests, partake of all the inevitability of death and little of the potentiality for rebirth that the colour connotes in the first stanza. Also, the sounds of the city, the "echoing" towers, the "jingling" of the crowd, are a far-cry from the "changing breaths of rhyme" of the "sweeter world" the speaker will describe in the third stanza.

"Among the Timothy" concludes much in the same vein as the first stanza, except now, at twilight, the speaker's "over-tasked" brain has been sufficiently soothed by nature's music to allow for a transcendental union with the source of all life:

And hour by hour, the ever-journeying sun,
In gold and shadow spun,
Into mine eyes and blood, and through the dim
Green glimmering forest of the grass shines down,
Till flower and blade, and every cranny brown,
And I are soaked with him. (49)

A visionary poetics is not necessary to the pastoral, but is not uncommon in Romantic redefinitions of the form. Though the landscape is picturesque middle-country, the speaker's response to it attains a certain sublimity. This has some import for an

evaluation of Lampman's pastoralism as social critic for it has been noted that the Romantic treatment of landscape implicitly attacks technology and capitalism while also confusing practical responses to the ownership and exploitation of land and its people.

"Heat," easily the most studied of Lampman's poems, reaches a similarly visionary climax within an essentially pastoral framework. It is helpful to present the poem in its entirety.

From plains that reel to southward, dim,
    The road runs by me white and bare;
Up the steep hill it seems to swim
    Beyond and melt into the glare.
Upward half way, or it may be
    Nearer the summit, slowly steals
A hay-cart, moving dustily
    With idly clacking wheels.

By his cart's side the wagoner
    Is slouching slowly at his ease,
Half-hidden in the windless blur
    Of white dust puffing at his knees.
This wagon on the height above,
    From sky to sky on either hand,
Is the sole thing that seems to move
    In all the heat-held land.

Beyond me in the fields the sun
    Soaks in the grass and hath his will;
I count the marguerites one by one;
    Even the buttercups are still.
On the brook yonder not a breath

Disturbs the spider or the midge.
The water-bugs draw close beneath
The cool gleam of the bridge.

Where the far elm-tree shadows flood
Dark patches in the burning grass,
The cows, each with her peaceful cud,
Lie waiting for the heat to pass.
From somewhere on the slope near by
Into the pale depth of noon
A wandering thrush slides leisurely
His thin revolving tune.

In intervals of dreams I hear
The cricket from the droughty ground;
The grass-hoppers swim into mine ear
A small innumerable sound.
I lift mine eyes sometimes to gaze:
The burning skyline blinds my sight:
The woods far off are blue with haze:
The hills are drenched in light.

And yet to me not this or that
Is always sharp or always sweet;
In the sloped shadow of my hat
I lean at rest, and drain the heat;
Nay more, I think some blessed power
Hath brought me idly wandering here:
In the full furnace of the hour
My thoughts grow keen and clear. (45-46)

Once again, the reader is presented with a Romantic figure in an appropriate setting. The wagoner is literally part of his landscape, "[h]alf hidden in the windless blur / Of white dust puffing to his knees." The speaker's attention moves from

the wagoner's progress up the hill to an assessment of the flora and fauna of the area in such a way that the wagoner, while not absolutely equated with the nature that surrounds him, remains something of a 'natural' curiosity for the speaker. At the very least, the cart to which he is metonymically associated is 'tied in' to a natural cycle. Lampman focuses specifically on the *wheels* of the hay cart which share the natural cyclicality of the "revolving tune" of the thrush and the "spin[ning]" sound of the grasshoppers.

Though at work, the wagoner is "slouching slowly at his ease," sharing with the "waiting" cows and the "wandering" thrush the "peace" and "leisure" of a hot summer afternoon. His cart, whose wheels are "idly clacking," "steals slowly" up the hill. Lampman's presentation of work in "Heat," and earlier in "Among the Timothy" is significant. The speaker, who has "wander[ed] idly" to this place, must cast all he sees, including the wagoner's labour, as equally free and relaxed in order to achieve the sense of solidarity with nature and the Folk that pastoralism seeks. As William Empson and others have noted, pastoral "though 'about' is not 'by' or 'for'" (6) the Folk it represents. Given this, it takes precise machinations for the proper feeling of 'connectedness' between the speaking authority and the world of the inarticulate pastoral figure to happen.[11]

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[11] D.M.R. Bentley's indispensable two part study "Watchful Dreams and Sweet Unrest: An Essay on the Vision of Archibald Lampman" covers much of what I have to say about "Heat", though his focus is decidedly apolitical and his mention of pastoral cursory and dismissive. Bentley writes: "In his search for a comprehensive vision of a unity that includes man (the 'wagoner' and the poet

Paradoxically, a close reading of "Heat" reveals that the speaker's attempt at a symbolic union with nature is constantly undermined by his own desire to respect the conventions of landscape description. As a whole, "Heat" is extremely concerned with perception and its limits. Many critics, most notable among them D.M.R. Bentley, have perceived the definite lack of focus with which the poem begins ("dim" plains "that reel"; "seems to swim"; "Upward half way, or it may be / Nearer the summit"; "windless blur") and the speaker's intense clarity of vision at other points ("I count the marguerites one by one"). Likely, this blurring effect is intended to soften a schism between subject and object as well as temper the cleavages ("not this or that / Is always sharp or always sweet") the poet admits at the poem's end. But, the speaker betrays a desire to fix and place objects spatially that is just as intense. With the exception of the last stanza--where, importantly, the speaker finally abandons sight for thought--every section begins with a preposition: "From," "By," "Beyond," "Where," and "In," all draw attention to the speaker's relationship to a landscape. And it *is* a landscape, requiring on the part of the speaker a degree of "separation and observation" (Williams, 120) that the wagoner himself does not experience, at least not in the same way. The countryside is his place; and as Denis Cosgrove observes, "[t]o apply the

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himself), Lampman must seek in the particulars of the world evidence of the (cyclical) design of his cosmos" (191, information in parentheses is Bentley's own). I am in great disagreement with Bently on a number of points, not least of which is his tacit acceptance of the existence of a classless and united object called "man".

term *landscape* to their surroundings seems inappropriate to those who occupy and work in a place as insiders" (19).

Landscapes are made to be consumed just as the idea of the Folk is meant to be consumed, and so the "insiders" of pastoral, as *products* intended for a particular reading public, are rarely represented with their own needs in mind. Needless to say, 'consumption' does not figure in these nature poems, at least not on the surface. But these poems were portraits about a people and a place where consumption was thought not to work its evil magic and, as such, were in demand by the people in the places where it did. The city thus presents itself to Lampman as a complex problem in need of a solution.

In contrast to the cyclicality and wholesomeness of the nature poems, Lampman's city poems abound in linear images which attest to the estrangement and dissolution of spirit that characterizes the modern urban experience. In the sonnet "The Railway Station," the speaker homes-in on another 'significant spot' as a backdrop for a nightmare vision of urban life. In stark contrast to the diurnal and seasonal framework which guides human activity in nature, the train station never sleeps:

> The darkness brings no quiet here, the light
> No waking: ever on my blinded brain
> The flare of lights, the rush, and cry, and strain.... (64)

Whereas the lone pastoral figure of the nature poems implies a community of like-minded souls, the press of the crowds in the train station only serves to remind the speaker of the utter

lack of same in the city: "I see the hurrying crowds, the clasp, the flight, / Faces that touch, eyes that are dim with pain." There is an attempt at contact, but it is both furtive and unfulfilling. The speaker attempts to participate in the soul-clutching to which he is witness, but the experience is visibly unsatisfying: his

> eyes that watch grow fixed with dreams and guesses;
> What threads of life, what hidden histories,
> What sweet or passionate dreams and dark distresses,
> What unknown thoughts, what various agonies!
> (64)

As far as Lampman was concerned, life in the city *was* agonizing and irredeemable.

It was so for a number of reasons, not least of which was that in the city, in culture, the passage of time seemed more pressing than in the countryside. History, for Lampman was both teleological and destructive. Like the "great train / [that moves] labouring out into the bourneless night" he describes in "The Railway Station," history did not seem to know where it was going, but went nonetheless, faster and faster. Lampman thought he knew where it was headed: the "City of the End of Things," his name for everything he saw wrong with his society: greed, dehumanization, materialism, lack of vision. As the name itself suggests, Lampman is generally compelled to contemplate the historical within an urban setting.

In the dystopic "City of the End of Things,"

> no thing rests and no man is,

And only fire and night hold sway;
The beat, the thunder and the hiss
Cease not, and change not, night or day. (84)

The same disrespect for natural rhythms that characterizes "The Railway Station" is here, too, protracted to sublime proportions to reflect a future age of total mechanization where "[f]lit figures with clanking hands / Obey a hideous routine." All are alienated, which for the vision-obsessed Lampman, translates into an attack upon the capacity for sight: the men in this city-come-factory "see not with the human eye." Vision is further hampered by the perpetual "night," of the "murky streets," which bring to the city an opaque indeterminacy startlingly different from the gentle familiarity expressed in the nature poetry.

The City of the End of Things is fatally preoccupied with *things*, not material life so much as material objects adored for their own sake. But the poem also foresees the end of this crude materiality; the city carries with it the seeds of its own destruction. Eventually, "[t]he fires shall moulder out and die," to be replaced with the "light" and "fair voices" and "pride" of the past. Formally, the poem exhibits a tripartite structure: an imminent future (which implies a foreteller rooted in the present); a remembered past; and a more distant future that is a return to that past. The pattern is cyclical (birth, decay, rebirth) and so Lampman's socialism is revolutionary in the most literal (as opposed to actual) sense. It is telling that memory should play this significant role, for memory is both a consciousness of time, but also a means of

circumventing the linearity of historical progress. With this emphasis on memory and its manifest preference for the ways of the past, "The City of the End of Things" sets the stage for the return of the pastoral as a reconciliation of city and nature.

"The Land of Pallas," as suggested by Michael Gnarowski, takes its name from "the Arcadian Hero of that name who founded the city of Pallantium" (110). An Arcadian city-builder seems something of a contradiction in terms, but from the outset reveals Lampman's intention of synthesizing his nature and urban poetics. The poem, like "City of the End of Things" is presented as a dream, but a dream of what the world might be like after the fall of that great city: "Me thought I journeyed along ways that led forever / Throughout a happy land where strife and care were dead" (90). Though Pallas himself founded a city, the focus is chiefly on the *land* of Pallas, "[o]f limitless fair fields" of "kindly tillage and untroubled meads," of "golden calm" and "fretless feet." That the Land of Pallas exists in Golden Age is doubtless. Lampman's avoidance of the pastoral trap of "imply[ing] a beautiful relation between rich and poor" (Empson, 11) is laudable. The lands of his Arcadia are communal: "all the earth was common" and "all the store of each man was his own."

Though little-mentioned, the cities of Pallas are equally hospitable; in them "there was neither seeking / For powers of gold, nor greed or lust." But on the outskirts of Pallas is a "mighty city" full of "baser men" still under the sway of "the curse of greed." Though Lampman seems capable of imagining a

good city, he is unable to conceive of corruption outside an urban setting. In any case, the pastoral precept of reconstruction demands the lessons of nature be applied to the city, not a neighbouring farm. True to pastoral form, then, the speaker tries to share with the inhabitants of the city the knowledge of the 'better way' he has known:

> And tides of deep solitude and wondering pity
> Possessed me, and with eager and uplifted hands
> I drew the crowd about me in a mighty city,
> And taught the message of those other kindlier lands.

But the people in the city are unresponsive, the propaganda machine too strong: "the powerful from their stations / Rebuked me as an anarch."

"The Land of Pallas" is particularly helpful in disclosing the relationship between a community and its landscape. This relationship is implied in "Heat" and "Among the Timothy," but whereas the Folk is represented in these poems by a single individual, "The Land of Pallas" is more self-consciously pastoral in its portrayal of the daily lives of a group of men and women. What the poem, for all its socialism, has to say on this count reveals the extent to which the pastoral is always at risk of being a vehicle of reaction.

> At morning to the fields came forth the men, each neighbour
> Hand linked to other, crowned, with wreaths upon their hair,
> And all day long with joy they gave their hands to labour,
> Moving at will, unhastened, each man to his share.

At noon the women came, the tall fair women, bearing
Baskets of wicker in their ample hands for each,
And learned the day's brief tale, and how the fields were faring
And blessed them with their lofty beauty and fair speech.

The first passage resembles "Heat" in that it advocates a work ethic that is bizarrely both tasking and leisurely. (This may be the price one pays in casting Georgic activities (farming) in an ambience one normally associates with the Idyls and Eclogues which were concerned with the more ambulatory work of shepherding.)

Just as important, however, is the manner in which the men and women are portrayed as a community close to nature. Hand in hand, the men descend upon the fields; later, the women arrive as a group with food and drink. As opposed to the city folk, where the men and women are all "fatness and fine robes," the men and women of Pallas are simply dressed. Moreover, their *accoutrement* is meant to reinforce the naturalness of their lives. The men wear wreaths; the women carry wicker baskets. All engage in "the priestless worship of the all-wise mother" (94). Because this is an ideal and a dream, their characterization represents what is, for Lampman, the 'good life'. Some readers may be somewhat suspicious of the sharp division of the sexes that Lampman advocates--a 'natural' division, of course. The naturalness of the poem's gender roles are in fact reinforced by the speaker's report that in The land of Pallas "there are no bonds of contract, deed, or marriage." Lampman is liberal enough, though, to say that the

women "[s]tood equal with the men."

Since the pastoral is as concerned with the presentation of a Golden Race, as much as a Golden Age, there are racial elements here as well. The women are "tall and fair," the men "goodlier of stature." "Fair" is repeated twice more in "But all that wise fair race" (92) and "All the men and women of that land were fairer / Than even the mightiest of our meaner race can be" (92). Though fair can mean just or kind, its other meaning is blond or light-skinned. For the most part, in the context of the poem, both these meanings are conflated; implicitly, the beautiful men and women of Pallas are white, as are the wagoner and mower in "Heat" and "Among the Timothy." There are limits to which the Folk can represent a pluralistic society; the Folk are an 'origin' and, as such, are restricted by the singularity of that term. The representation of the pastoral community of "The Land of Pallas" therefore perpetuates the exotericism that always surrounds the discourse of the Folk.

As a return to the past, then, "The Land of Pallas" provides a genealogy for its wished-for race and gender relations. It likewise essentializes those relations through its return to nature and an abandonment of the artificial strictures of civil society. Though it is apparent that "The Land of Pallas" was designed as an attempt to bridge the evident schism in his poetry between nature and city, the poem falls heavily on the side of nature.

Considering what Kenneth Burke has called the "synecdoche" of person and place, the poem's idyllic landscape is

transformed in into an emblem of the types of people that belong in it. The same may be said for "Heat" and "Among the Timothy," for it is plain that no dissonance exists between the Romantic figure and the landscape he inhabits. The only tension is between the speaker himself and the landscape, a problem which is normally resolved by the poem's end. As Malcolm Ross suggests, "Lampman is not so much 'in search of himself' as engaged strenuously in the creation of self" (xi). The same, I think, can be said for the pastoral in general, with the added consideration of the larger social collectives within and without the privileged place. Thus the self that Lampman creates must cast its Pastoral Others as fully at peace with themselves and their world. The experience of conflict in relation to, or on the part of, the pastoral character would entirely undermine the essential movement of the poem towards the speaker's unity with the natural landscape and its equally 'authentic' population.

If conflict is to be found in Lampman's poetry, it is to be found in "The City of the End of Things." It is present there as an awareness of one's historical existence, in the realization that others often control our destinies, in the battle between human and machine. No such drama unfolds in the nature and pastoral poems, though Ottawa and its regions was still, at that time, the centre of the Eastern forestry industry. Lampman refers seldom to the areas many saw-mills, and when he does it is from a fair distance, the workers themselves unseen. Lampman's failure to introduce history and social strife into the lives of the Folk is largely due to his

inability to endow the labour of his pastoral characters with social importance, in the sense of adding to, transforming, or rising above nature.

John Rennie Short has remarked that the "countryside has become a refuge from modernity" (34), and Ian McKay argues that "[t]he Folk were less people in their own right and more incarnations of a certain philosophy of history" (14). The philosophy of history McKay speaks about is one that operates in accordance with essences and universals; it is the same philosophy of history which, in a Rousseau-like fashion, casts the non-urban and primitive as altogether preferable to the 'false' reality of culture. At the basis of both these comments lurks the antimony of nature and culture; the idea of the Folk and the tradition of landscape description are, in the most profound sense, metaphysical. The pastoral, which relies on both a country landscape and a 'simple' race of people within it, is in the position of confronting this antimony directly. Should it do so--and I will argue that it does in Clarke and Ondaatje--the extent to which the pastoral "speaks on behalf of, or to silence...other, less privileged social groups" (Patterson, 10) will be greatly qualified.

I now turn to a reading of The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts and The German Ideology in the light of Barthes' Mythologies (1957). Marx's and Barthes' emphasis on nature as the *site* of history (as opposed to its escape) is essential to any pastoralism that wishes to resist bourgeois manipulations of landscape, the image of nature. Importantly, the methods which they propose for reading history back into nature cut to

the heart of recent attempts in Canadian writing to dismantle--or at least attack--the ways in which pastoralism dictates normative assumptions about 'belonging'.

CHAPTER 2

THE TRANSFORMATION OF MYTH

> As the evidence of a deep-rooted instinct for perfection, pastoral will survive even in this age of unthought-of horrors, perhaps flourish because of it. The descent to an age of plastic was something not contemplated by the ancients, who stopped at iron.
>
> --from Pastoral by Peter Mirinelli

Nationalism is one type of 'belonging'. So are ethnicity and race. The three differ; they often overlap; they sometimes conflict; but basic to nationalism, ethnicity and race is a *process* of inclusion or exclusion and a *rhetoric* of membership that oversees these workings and polices the boundaries they must draw.

> National identity can take many forms.... [It] is inflected by other kinds of cultural identity, of class, gender, race and religion, and by other forms of cultural-geographic identity, of region and locality....While most nationalist recognize several representative histories and geographies, all, by definition, reject others, including those of those of people dwelling within their own national borders. The very process of exclusion is integral to the nationalist enterprise. (Daniels, 4-5)

The goal of each community is to establish itself as anything

but political, arbitrary or temporary.[12] As such, each exist in the public discourse as a type of "myth." For Barthes, myth is a "type of speech," a "mode of signification" which "transforms history into nature" (127). By 'nature' Barthes means both type of speech and a sphere of experience--thoughts as well as actions--that are "innocent," "depoliticized."

Myth resembles ideology in that its significations appear as common sense. The movement of the subject's thought from the mythical object to the mythical concept appears, above all, as a natural one. No leap of logic or even of imagination is required for its accomplishment. Of course, as Barthes makes explicit, myth relies on pre-established trains of association, on the presumption and expectations of ideology, in order to not appear as contrived and orchestrated.

Myth is linguistic, but also material. It builds its system out of "language object[s]": "images," "caricatures," "pastiches," "symbols," and other "things" which it appropriates so that its desires might have a concrete form. Myth is really speech *about* these objects, but it seems to come *from* them. It is "second speech," a metalanguage. Myth is material because it is the materiality of its objects that it attempts to erase. Their real, physical, meaningful presence is turned into a mere shadow of the mythical signification; they become the glass through which the intended concept may be discerned, unimportant in themselves except for their

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[12] Class, too, is a type of community. But whereas racial, ethnic, and national communities think of themselves--or are made to think of themselves--as somehow natural, class-based ties are essentially and unavoidably contingent and political.

transparency. Thus the power of myth--its effect--is experienced materially as the loss of materiality.

Though myth has "at its disposal an unlimited mass of signifiers" it is particularly fond of natural objects. The image of nature is a model mythical language object because, for reasons that will soon become apparent, nature is especially vulnerable to symbolic redefinition. For the time being, the interdependence of 'the natural' and nature itself is at least suggested by Barthes' choice of examples:

> A tree is a tree. Yes, of course. But a tree as expressed by Minou Drouet is no longer quite a tree, it is a tree which is decorated, adapted to a certain type of consumption, laden with literary self indulgence, revolt, images, in short with a type of social *usage* which is added to pure matter. (109)

Myth is therefore "intentional"; its objects are "directed," subject to endless redefinitions in a myth-making process that hopes to freeze social relations at a point beneficial to the bourgeois public.[13] The appropriation of the language object is specifically its transformation along these lines: "The world enters language as a dialectical relation between activities between human actions; it comes out of myth as the harmonious display of essences" (142). Because "myth does away with all dialectics" (142), in myth the meaning of the world is

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[13] Barthes suggests that the 'bourgeoisie' actually "merges into the nation", the only difference being that "nation" is depolitized; it appears innocent, while "the bourgeoisie" appears political, entailing the ideas of conflict, opposition, violence, and even revolution (142).

"impoverished," "put at a distance," put at the "disposal" of politics. In myth, history is destroyed.

Though myth is, for Barthes, explicitly a linguistic problem, it is worth remembering that the "natural objects" to which it lays claim exist as a physical presence, even a means of survival, in the lives of the men and women who work in/on the pastoral landscapes that have come to be regarded of the perfect embodiment of nature and the natural. However, the implications of Barthes' analysis of myth on the *language* of the Transformed Pastoral are literally groundless without an understanding of the significance of the *physical* transformations the genre must describe. For this, we must look to Marx who attempts to relate nature and history dialectically and materially such that the antimony between nature and culture, upon which all myth depends, is deconstructed.

In his own time, Marx recognized the repressive power of so-called 'natural' facts. To some a degree, both The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and The German Ideology[14] are motivated by his frustration with the Young Hegelians who looked to 'Nature' for proof of their dubious philosophical suppositions. In their writings, Marx argues, nature takes the form of an unreal and nebulous 'prehistory' where philosophers can hide from the "crude facts" of actual human history.

Even Feuerbach, whose materialism Marx was in some agreement with, did not realize that nature "is not a thing

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[14] Hereafter, EPM and GI, respectively.

given direct from all eternity, remaining ever the same, but the product of industry and the state of society"(GI, 170). Marx finds fault with Feuerbach because he relies on a concept of "external nature" that "has not yet been subdued by men" (168). As for all those other German idealists, they accepted Bruno Bauer's belief in the "'antitheses in nature and history' as though they were two separate 'things' and man did not always have before him an historical nature and natural history" (GI, 170). In The German Ideology Marx writes: "[T]he real production of life seems to be primeval history, while the truly historical appears to be separated from ordinary life, something extra-superterrestrial. With this the relationship of man to nature is excluded from history and hence the antithesis of nature and history is created" (165). Marx's response to the supposed antimony of nature and history is to reconfigure this *antimony* as a *contradiction* to be dialectically resolved by the transformative labour of men and women.[15]

History belongs to humanity. So does nature. Human practice bridges the two spheres, putting them in a constant dialogue with one another. Nature is Man's "inorganic body." It is "the material, the object, and the instrument of his life activity" (EPM, 76). History begins with an appropriation of nature, namely, the turning of raw material into the means of future production:

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[15] G.A. Cohen writes: "The relationship between man and nature is 'mediated' by the social form: it does not occur outside. The development of nature, described in socio-neutral terms, is therefore an abstraction" (97).

> But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. (GI, 156)

Through his sensuous, practical activity, man works up organic nature, "creat[es] an objective world," and "proves himself a conscious species being" (EPM, 76-77). In this world of human artifice, this "second nature," Man can see himself mirrored. Nature is a space within which he can flex the muscles of his subjectivity, where he can develop his humanity by exercising his power to change, to build, and even to destroy. "Nature as being in itself must be transformed into being for man" (Clark, 251). In Marx, history manifests itself as a process: history is the transformation of nature; the nature of history is transformation.

Because Marx's philosophical approach is essentially a practical one, 'nature,' is an abstraction--likely meaningless, possibly dangerous--unless it is put into a relationship with human beings who form or shape its matter in some way.[16] It is important for Marx that 'Nature' as a concept not be divorced from 'nature' as a thing or a set of things; it must not be separated from the men and women who unleash its potential, who

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[16] While Marx will often use the term 'natural' to describe economic relations whereby a commodity's use-value takes precedence over its exchange-value--where 'natural' is meant to indicate both concreteness (as opposed to abstraction) and wholesomeness-- 'the natural' generally indicates, as I use it here, the non-human, the elements, that part of empirical reality (to paraphrase Lovejoy) still unaffected by human interaction.

develop their powers, cultivate their capacities, expand their subjectivity, who, in short, enact their *history*, only to the extent that they transform 'nature' into 'artefact'.

To a certain extent, Marx reproduces the 'classical' attitude to nature which, in the words of John Short, sees "[t]he creation of livable places and usable spaces [as] a mark of civilization" (6). Like Marx, the ancients believed that "[h]uman use confers a meaning on space" (6). Short contrasts this view to that of the Romantics for whom "untouched spaces have the greatest significance; they have a purity which human contact tends to sully and degrade" (6). While these two perspectives on nature share a belief in nature's lack of history, they differ radically in their understanding of what, exactly, that history might be.[17]

Like the ancients, Marx's conception of history is progressive, but unlike the ancients, history is conceived not as a collection of things denoting a material culture, but production of material life itself. "Men have history because they must produce their life, and because they must produce it moreover in a certain way" (GI, 158). The production of life is the destruction of nature; to speak of nature and history as separate things which oppose one another without change is, therefore, to speak falsely. Constantly appropriated and used

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[17] Contrasting the 'classical' and 'Romantic' attitudes to nature, Short notes "an associated difference in attitudes to time" (6). What he does not say is that the Romantic attitude to nature does not hesitate in its attribution of ontological properties to nature, while the 'classical' perspective is more restrained in this regard. To that degree, nature is positively defined in Romanticism but negatively defined in the classical and Marxist tradition.

by human beings, the attenuation of nature is the fundamental basis of human history. Human production is a transformation; history is its trace, the scar upon the face of nature.

Marx attempts to politicize nature by recognizing it as raw material whose consumption fuels human history is reproduced on the level of language by Barthes. "If myth is depoliticized speech," writes Barthes, "there is at least one type of speech that is the opposite of myth: that which remains political" (145). Barthes suggests that the most political language is the language of "man as a producer":

> whenever man speaks in order to transform reality and no longer to preserve it as an image; whenever he links his language to the making of things...myth is impossible. (146)

The language of production "aims at transforming, of [myth] at eternalizing" (149). Once this idea of nature as disconnected from culture is demonstrated to be false, myth can no longer claim the status of a 'natural' phenomena. Or, rather, it is shown to be no more or less natural than other modes of speech. Transformative language destroys myth because it reveals history and nature to be connected via labour. The producer, the user of nature, sees that nature and history are not mutually exclusive spheres of experience, they are inseparably linked: the latter relies upon the former for its existence; the former anticipates the latter, acquires meaning by its transformation. Historicized in this way, myth discovers it has been abandoned; the objects which had given it form have left its sphere of influence to reclaim their full former

meanings.

Barthes offers the experiences of a woodcutter as illustrative of potential benefits of transformative language:

> If I am a woodcutter and I am led to name the tree which I am felling, whatever the form of my sentence, I 'speak the tree,' I do not speak about it. This means that my language is operational, transitively linked to the object; between the tree and myself there is nothing but my labour, that is to say an action. This is political language: it represents nature for me only inasmuch as I am going to transform it, it is language thanks to which I 'act the object'; the tree is not an image for me, it is simply the meaning of my action. (146)

Barthes suggests that the connection, via labour, between the wood-cutting subject and the tree endows both the subject and his spoken product (the felled tree) with meaning. This meaning, acquired only at the point of transformation, is both material and historical, subjective and objective and, for these reasons, unlikely to be put at myth's "disposal."

"Speaking the object" means for Barthes, as it meant for Sartre before him, that the worker's "permanent contact with things" causes him to naturally develop a working "dialectical 'materialism' [which] signifies that he envisages the social world in the same way as the material world" (Sartre, 36). It is this materiality which he opposes to the unreal, nebulous, hazy "condensation...of a certain knowledge" (Barthes, 122) that marks myth.

Admittedly, there exists a certain incompatibility between the work of Marx--and even that of Barthes--and a discussion of the pastoral. Marx is notoriously unfair to the 'peasant experience,' and a certain romanticization of rural labour exists in writings of Barthes. Given this, their comments on nature must be qualified to a certain extent.[18] These problems are the focus of the following section. I proceed from the idea that Marx and Barthes' injection of transformation (material and linguistic, respectively) into the discourse on nature poses a serious challenge to the dominant assumptions that operate in the pastoral, and in bourgeois manipulations of the image of nature in general. The principle of transformation is essential to what I am calling the 'transformed pastoral'. But the genre demands more; it demands that nature not only imply history, but that nature itself be treated as an historical construct. Failing this, the 'transformed pastoral' recognizes the perils of maintaining nature's immunity from determination by culture.

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[18] John Berger, perhaps art criticism's most vocal spokesperson for pastoralism and the peasant ways of life has been faced with this problem: "There is, it seems to me, a huge, huge lacuna in Marxist theory vis-a-vis the countryside and peasants" ('Images from a Peasant Woman's Memory: 'If Each Time'", 5). These words, spoken, at a symposium entitled Peasants and Countrymen in Literature (Roehampton, 1981), prompted a response from Teodor Shanin who suggested one "look at Marx's writings in the late 70's and 80's, and you will find the exact opposite" (22). There is no doubt that Marx's comments on peasantry underwent a dramatic change sometime after The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte at which time he still considered them a force for reaction. Notwithstanding the essential ambiguity of Marx's attitude to the countryside and agrarian labour, I am most concerned here with showing how an otherwise revolutionary sociology can have an incompletely examined concept of nature to allow for its manipulation by myth.

A close look at Marx's comments on nature in The German Ideology and in The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts reveals that though Marx attempts to expose 'the natural' to be a fetish, he never fully historicizes nature. Barthes contends that Marx means for "the most natural object [to contain] a political trace, however faint and diluted, the more or less memorable presence of the human act which has produced, fitted up, used, subjected or rejected it" (144). Marx is not entirely successful on this count. While it is true that Marx was opposed to most notions of 'nature-in-itself' and attempted to show that "every new invention, every advance made by industry, detaches another piece from this domain" (GI, 168), it is also true that he reserved the right to speak, at certain times, of an untouched unpoliticized nature--even if it "no longer exists anywhere" except "perhaps on a few Australian coral islands of recent origin" (GI, 171).

Thus, Marx maintains, numerous statements to the contrary not withstanding, a concept of nature as distinct from culture and therefore supposedly free from historical (read: ideological) determinations of any kind. Rather than accepting that nature will "always-already" be culturally coded, Marx attempts to undermine the ideological use of nature by vacating it of *any meaning whatsoever*. He creates his own version of Bauer's antitheses, placing a wall between nature and history, a semi-permeable wall that lets nature pass through, as artefact, into the realm of history, but which prevents history from contaminating nature.

In defiance of a Romantic sensibility which would

attribute to nature an ontology, Marx denies nature any social or historical worth. He reconfigures history as a process which involves, at its most basic level, the conversion of nature into a human product and places himself in a discursive position from which he may grant or deny historical meaning to the various objects by which he is confronted. Nature is endowed with historical character only when it enters the relations of production by virtue of its emergence from a process of conversion as either a commodity or a component of the means of production. *Prior* to this activity, nature lacks both meaning and value. Though nature is pure absence, it is nonetheless named and present in Marx's writings. It is "nothing for man" but is, simultaneously, man's "body." As we shall see, these conflicting conceptions of nature operate in an uneasy tandem in Marx's thought. Their incongruity creates a space wherein nature is--contrary to Marx's stated intention--vulnerable to ideological infiltration such that it becomes a symbol in a Bourgeois myth system.

Because human labour is necessary to bring about nature's conversion, commodities are endowed, in Marxist economics, with 'value'. Insofar as value is derived from human labour which is, in turn, the name we give to the appropriation of nature for human need, and this appropriation is the very essence of history, then 'value' would seem to be the very mark of historicity. It follows that those objects to which Marx attributes value also bear the imprint of history, that being 'valuable' they have entered an historical condition which they may not renounce. The transformation from tree to lumber is

unalterable; once the product of human intentions and labour, lumber may not shirk its 'historical' character just as it remains valuable, not in terms of exchange, but in terms of the labour that was once required for its production.[19] This relation between value and historical meaning (for the subject) is sufficiently clear in Barthes's parable of the woodcutter.

It follows, counter-intuitive though it may seem, that nature has no value per se. It is simply a condition for labour necessary in the *production* of value. Valueless, it nevertheless has a use-value. In Marxist parlance, one could say that nature is in a relation of surplus to itself, which is another way of saying that from nature you get something for nothing. Like the empty hat from which some magician produces a rabbit, nature is a cypher, a vacancy whose only significance is its potential for producing value. If nature 'in-itself' can be said to exist at all, it must be "grounded in itself" (Schmidt, 166).

Marx makes history, not nature, the 'all' of human existence. Having done so, he can only define nature, paradoxically, in terms of its lack of meaning. Ying, to history's yang, the significance of nature becomes evident at the instance of its disappearance. Opposed to history and value, it is neither, yet necessary to both. The dualism is not static; it is dynamic, dialectical: presence is constantly generated from absence, form from shapelessness, meaning from

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[19] In the *EPM* value is imagined in terms of the 'essence' which the worker invests in the product of his labour. Later, Marx conceived of the objectification of labour in terms of time consumed.

senselessness, value from non-value. Fuelled by the practical human activity of labouring individuals, the process may be intelligible at the level of rhetoric but it is visible in the fields and factories where this activity occurs.

Marx's focus on 'nature-for-us' rather than nature-in-itself is exemplary of the 'this-sidedness' of Marxist philosophy, its epistemological insistence that the world can only be assessed historically, from the perspective of human society and human intention. A "constitutive element of *human* practice," (Schmidt, 166, italics mine) nature only matters when *we* are doing something with it. Explicitly, this-sidedness requires that the 'other' side remain just that, the Other, that against which human history defines itself, that which is denied the form, value and significance of 'this' side prior to being changed at the hands of a labouring subject.

Consciously "undermin[ing] any tendency towards fixing extra-human reality in an ontological fashion" (Schmidt, 166), Marx attempts to deny nature its authority over human affairs. His take on nature-in-itself follows his critiques of religion and commodity fetishism: since nature cannot generate its own meaningful content, this content must have been attributed in a process of socialization. Thus empowered, nature exercises control over the very culture that gave it its authority in the first place. Social relations are thereby sanctioned in a sphere that *seems* divorced from history and politics but which is, at base, essentially political. By exposing the idea of a nature divorced from human society as illusory, by furnishing 'the natural' with a material reality that constrains its

usage, Marx hopes to weaken the social relations that illusion supports.

But here, where one fully expects Marx to allow that to confront nature is to come face to face with something *already* appropriated in some way, Marx does not take the necessary next step. Both his emphasis on appropriation as a physical act--and an entire theory of history based on this assumption--compels Marx to leave nature forever un-historical--at least, until it is humanized, at which point it is no longer nature.[20] In one sense, Marx "admit[s] no absolute division between nature and society" (Schmidt, 49), because nature is materially and dialectically involved with human culture. In another sense, nature and culture are absolutely distinct, the former lacking value, the latter typifying it.

Given this, it follows that the realization of value in nature, as nature (i.e. *before* its transformation) would disastrously undermine the whole structure of Marx's dialectic. Should this happen, the nature/culture opposition, which is intended to be a conflict between absence and presence, would degenerate into the non-productive opposition of two presences. The result: a debilitating stasis rather than the fruitful kinetics of history and life.

Phyllis Zuckerman provides an excellent demonstration of

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[20] In "The Antimonies of Postmodern Thought," Jameson warns that freezing a dialectic risks turning an opposition into an antimony. There is no doubt, however, that Marx envisages history as the constant transformation of a sphere that gets quantitatively smaller while remaining qualitatively the same. There must, therefore, be a real antimony between man and nature lurking in his dialectic.

this problem in her essay, "Nature as Surplus: The Work of the Text in Marx." Zuckerman contends that Marx himself undermines his own attempts to keep nature free from social meaning when he attributes to nature a gendered identity. She suggests that at the root of Marx's many comments describing nature as both "mother" and "virgin" is a system of values, a social code which genders a space that Marx insists is free from such designations.

> Thus the term which appeared to be identical to itself, prior to the differentiations that form the basis of the production of value, is already marked by family structure which seems to organize the other oppositions in the system, between economy and nature, form and matter, value and virgin soil, surplus and its absence. (103)

At this point it becomes clear that Marx's solution to the idea of nature in-itself is also his problem. Having defined nature spatially as a bounded collection of things (earth and trees and rocks, for instance) to which he denies both value and meaning, Marx inadvertently creates a 'moot space' that is open to ideological infiltration. Because its encroachment is not resisted by a resident content, ideology--just like the hermit crab that occupies the emptied shell of its prey--can take its place in nature where it is disguised and protected.

Zuckerman argues that "[n]ature functions as a plenitude in contrast to which useful labour can create a system of value, but it fulfils this function within a cultural tradition" (104). Weirdly, it could be said that when value is

attributed to nature in the Marxist system *history precedes itself*, for "the production of value" and "cultural tradition" both indicate the workings of history. In this case, nature reveals itself to be historical (reflects a "cultural tradition") *prior* to the process ("useful labour" creating "a system of value") by which we come to have history in the first place.

The above example reveals the interesting double-bind in which the conception of nature held by Marx is caught. In order to deny nature its authority in matters political, Marx vacates nature of any ontological essence that could conceivably legitimize social relations. The 'this-sidedness' of Marx's dialectical play becomes its own handicap, however, when dominant culture, playing on the play, loads nature's moot space with ideological content. Ostensibly meaningless in this equation, ideology-in-nature (patriarchal social relations, for instance) does not appear to Marx as a political problem. In fact, ideology *does not appear*, but remains nonetheless performative. *Theoretically*, nature is devoid of meaning; *practically*, it reinforces dominant thinking--and Marx seems to endorse the Feuerbachian position he originally attacked.

It might be argued, *contre* Zuckerman, that this slippage only occurs when one forgets the practical aspect of Marx's dialectic, when one forgets that their interaction is not so much the conflict of philosophical categories as a material transformation occurring in practical reality. Such a claim itself fails to realize that historical materialism does not make a choice between the philosophical and the material: it

conflates them. In fact, the double bind I describe is possible precisely because of nature's dual character as both a set of objects in space and a conception of those objects as, objectively, meaningless.[21] Because nature is not here an abstraction, because it never loses its identity as earth and rocks and trees, the ideas it is made to 'contain' attain a physicality unlikely in more speculative conceptions of nature. Attributed to nature, value causes nature to 'stand in' for a set of ideas. Nature becomes, in effect, a symbol.[22]

For our purposes, the 'pre-signification' of nature--its transformation into a symbol--is abundantly clear in the manner in which the myth of pastoralism is operative in his treatment of agrarian labour and life. Because Marx, like Lampman, is unable to find in natural labour any signs of estrangement from self or society, Marx romanticizes country life to such an extent that it is removed from the plot of human history.

His view of industrialization as a temporarily injurious but ultimately redemptive process biases Marx towards evaluating labour in terms of technology and science. Alienation is the precondition for a class-based identity which is, in turn, the only means to overcoming alienation. Since

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[21] Opposed to value, nature lacks form but possesses a content which remains unintelligible. Opposed to artefact, nature possess form but lacks intention which can be understood as a type of content. Marx runs both these definitions simultaneously; it is inevitable that they eventually conflict. Nature never loses its concrete appearance though; Marx always uses 'nature' in such a way that an image can be supplied for it.

[22] In "Myth Today," Barthes is emphatic about myth's dependence on visible, tangible forms. When nature becomes symbolic, it fulfils this function.

the source of alienation is labour, and Marx defines labour in an industrial context, certain types of work do not lead to alienation and, therefore, cannot lead to political emancipation and fully human social relations. It is not surprising, then, that in Marx the peasantry, divorced from industrial labour, but deprived of political power, is caught between its conception as a force either reactionary or revolutionary (Rose, 155). Romanticization appears, in the case of Marx, as the other side of demystification. In order to bring the peasantry and country workers into the fold of modern society so that they may acquire the political consciousness of an urban, industrial proletariat, Marx must first characterize work in nature as 'natural' and wholesome--if backward.

In The German Ideology, he remarks that the relations of production in agricultural society have "retained [their] patriarchal tinge" (182); they are less exploitive and are to that extent less conducive to the estrangement that signal alienation. Farm work, lacking any real division of labour, does not even impose a separation of mind and body: "average human common sense is adequate--physical activity is as yet not separated from mental activity" (GI, 189).

From these comments it is apparent that the countryside exists as a sphere of pre-bourgeois activity in a bourgeois world. Marx was confident, however, that as capitalism reproduced itself at higher and higher levels, country life would eventually succumb to the effects of capitalist rationalization. Until that time, however, the historicity of

agricultural society is never quite established. Agricultural life, associated with landed property, is based on a system of "natural capital"; it is more 'organic' and therefore less likely to form the basis of a revolutionary consciousness. The presence of the pastoral myth in Marx's early writings works against his statements about value; transformed nature seems in some instances not to have been transformed enough. What in the first instance is described as a dualism becomes, in the next, a spectrum in which farmland acquires the residual effects of pure nature. It becomes partially dehistoricized, partially immune to the effects of history. Country life makes itself ready for a myth-making process.

A similar problem manifests itself in Barthes' Mythologies. Unlike Marx, Barthes' structuralism manages to view "appropriation" as a linguistic rather than physical act. But, like Marx, he is unclear about nature's status before this all-important act of possession. Plugging nature into his formula for myth ("[myth] transforms history into nature"), it follows that nature must have been historical in the first place. Barthes either fails to recognize or wilfully ignores this fact. While his whole project can be summarized as the attempt to expose myth as the motivated attempt to naturalize certain historically-constituted ideas, Barthes does not sufficiently interrogate the idea of nature itself. He fails to extend the notion of "cultural tradition" back to nature, saving it for myth alone. Nature thus exists in his system as a *non*-historical space which, paradoxically, is nonetheless

susceptible to the *de*-historicizing effects of myth. As a result, nature is permitted by Barthes to exist as an 'origin': it is the stage upon which an ideologically intentional discursive enterprise called myth is enacted, but is itself not part of the show and is free from all ideology.

At the root of nature's transformation in a myth-making system from the state of "pure matter" (109) to a perceived "naturalness" which is in fact "artificial" (118), is a conception of that nature as *natural* prior to that process. Like Marx who saw the making of history as a process with distinct and unretraceable steps (first nature, then history) Barthes also imagines the making of myth as the movement from one state of being to another. He conceives nature as somehow more real, more meaningful, in short more *authentic*, prior to its reconfiguration as something "artificial."

Again the roots of this problem go back to a notion of nature as "grounded in itself." That Barthes accepted this precept is abundantly clear in the tautology which begins his discussion of Drouet's tree: "A tree is a tree." True, the dispelling of the myth that this particular tree is made to support (nationalism) involves remembering the tree as something that "was made." But the 'making' of the tree refers only to Drouet's poetic activity; it does not extend beyond that point to see that Barthes's own conception of the tree, as *just* a tree, is equally invented.

Barthes's other examples, such as the picture of the "young Negro in a French uniform" suggestive of French imperiality, seem to consciously acknowledge their political,

that is to say, constructed character. Nature, on the other hand, is reserved as a special category. It is not made or constructed; it simply is. One may well ask when a tree is ever just a tree? Musn't it always have been something for somebody, even he who transforms it? One may well ask, also, whether all transformation is the same? For instance, is there a difference in the cutting down of trees to make textbooks for children and the same action to make crosses to burn on someone's lawn? When the object being acted upon is nature, Barthes notion of "speaking the object" neglects the historical circumstances which surround that transformation.

Barthes accepts Marx's belief in history as nature's transformation; work in nature, it is clear, is the paradigm of historical activity. The creation of an ideal situation invariably tends to undermine any subsequent efforts to follow the simple and truthful Sartrian dictum that the meaning of all human intention and action is "situational." Barthes's elevation of work in nature, such as the woodcutter's, to the level of paradigm forgets for a moment the "situation" of the woodcutter's action.

The tree which the woodcutter fells is not an artificial "image"; it is "the meaning of [the woodcutter's] action" (146). The woodcutter functions in Barthes's thought as a guardian, who, through his destruction of nature, prevents it from becoming a mythical language object and a counterfeit itself. His action thus acquires the authenticity and reality that nature possessed before he went to work on it. Barthes romanticizes the woodcutter.

Because he fails to consider the circumstances that surround that transformation, there is little in the woodcutter's action that could prevent *his* work from itself becoming a static symbol in *somebody else's* speech. Granted, the woodcutter speaks the tree, but who speaks the woodcutter? Barthes's emphasis is properly this-sided: meaning is always *meaning for* a subject, but to what extent can the woodcutter really own the meaning of his labour when it has been cut off from culture, when his own labour becomes a symbol that can be elevated to the status of myth?[23] Unless nature itself--in addition to 'the natural'--is shown to be meaningful only within culturally determined modes of perception, and work in nature is treated no differently than other material transformations, then the woodcutter's attack on myth either belongs to him alone, or belongs to the bourgeois mythographers who appropriate it and turn it against him.

The efforts made by Marx and Barthes to maintain a definition of nature as absence (of value, hence historicity) and the facility with which this absence can always be turned into an unexpected and unwanted presence (of ideology)--captures nicely the essential workings of the image of nature in bourgeois society. My reading of Marx and Barthes has demonstrated that even a language of transformation can have a 'blind spot' that harbours an authenticating idea of the natural when that language does not interrogate the idea of an

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[23] For instance, Pope's "Windsor Forest" abounds with images of transformation, but nevertheless succeeds in signifying English nationalism.

untainted 'nature in-itself'. Their criticism, effective in so many ways, must be shorn of its rather idealist belief in a nature existing independent of culture; it must acknowledge that nature is always a presence in time and space and has value for somebody. By the mythical use of the image of nature we are not presented with the question of how a "social usage is added to pure matter" for that question is moot; rather, we are faced with the slightly more incriminating question of how one social usage replaces another.

SOME (PER)VERSIONS OF PASTORAL:

The preceding pun on Empson's Some Versions of Pastoral is not without purpose, for the idea of the Transformed Pastoral begs the question as to whether any version of the pastoral can exist in the absence of the nature/culture opposition. I think it can--and must, if it is to avoid the trap into which many of its purveyors have fallen. The Transformed Pastoral begins with Luckacs' belief that nature

> is a societal category. That is to say, whatever is held to be natural at any stage of social development, however this natural is related to man, and whatever form his involvement with it takes, i.e. nature's form, its content, its range and its objectivity are all socially conditioned. (234)

As opposed to Marx, Lukacs rejects a definition of nature as 'absence'--meaningless space--for such a designation is always an invitation to exploitation. On the other hand, he accepts

that the Romantic idea of nature as *meaningful* in and of itself is equally fallacious, in that it fails to see that whenever nature 'speaks' it is in actuality a case of cultural ventriloquism.[24] Ironically, it is from Marx that Lukacs retrieves this piece of information; the idea of an 'always-already' coded nature is present in his earliest comments, but never comes to full fruition.

The question of whether to keep these two terms, "culture" and "nature," as even tentative and contingent categories, is one that must, ultimately, be faced. In "The Antimonies of Postmodern Thought," Jameson warns of the mess "in which we are plunged by the disappearance of one of the terms of a formerly functioning binary opposition" (28). I would argue that this binary has never really functioned in the way we hoped it might. I am equally aware, however, of James Applewhite's prediction of dire consequences following the merger of the nature/culture opposition under the banner of the latter term.[25] Following Jameson, he holds that postmodernism is

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[24] In Marx, one perceives the enlightenment desire to overcome nature in the name of 'civilization'; Lampman advocates the opposite belief in the sanctity and intrinsic value of nature. As Godamer observes, "[Romanticism] shares the presuppositions of the enlightenment and only reverses the evaluation of it" (844). Ultimately, both Romanticism and early Marxism end in the mythification of nature because neither position sufficiently questions the nature/culture opposition. The Transformed Pastoral is firmly rooted in culture alone in its dealings with history and myth.

[25] Marx himself anticipated and welcomed the disappearance of nature, but his own philosophy was ill-prepared for either that eventuality or the discovery that nature is a myth. In any case, he could never have represented the disappearance of nature, any more than he could represent the loss of its other, history. This explains, in part, why Marx's descriptions of a future communist

trying to do just that: "It is an art and a theory without a valid second term, a superstructure without a base, an angel emancipated from the machine, to flutter in the void" (15). I will deal with the issue of postmodernism in a moment; right now, I would simply like to suggest that this sort of formulation has a tendency to deny "culture" the polyvalency it possesses in actuality. Within that single term there are an infinite number of possibilities, an infinite number of other terms, from which a dialectical system might be fuelled. To accept this is to take a significant step toward representing peasant life in all its fullness and contingency while simultaneously undermining the means of its mythification.

In illustrating this, I must return, briefly, to Marx. If, as Marx suggests, the first historical act is the production of the means to satisfy material needs, and history proper is the continuance of that process (nature's transformation into culture and value and the conflicts that arise from this transformation) then it follows that nature, prior to this act of attenuation, would appear to be lacking in both conflict and history. This is a useful point; it goes a long way to explaining the constant depiction of the natural world in transhistorical, timeless and harmonious terms. The utility of this mechanism is not lost in the shadow of the "denial of nature," however. There is no use in refuting the existence of natural--that is to say, non-synthetic--things. Lovejoy's definition of nature still has validity. There is,

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society and the fully humanized nature upon which it depended were so unsatisfying.

though, sufficient reason to question the understanding of that nature as something other than material for human use. Having redefined nature here as another form of culture, Marx's comments are still helpful in that they provide a means of assessing different attitudes to time based on different relations to nature as a resource.

"When I speak of 'place,'" writes Joseph Flay, "I do not mean space, but rather space-time; for both space and time taken by themselves are abstractions. Every concrete, lived space is temporally located; and every concrete lived time is spatially located" (469). Flay suggests, as well, that space and time are mutually determining; this is the essential fact which we can extract from the above abbreviated version of Marx's theory of history. It is essential to any discussion of the pastoral which even hopes to render peasant or rural worker lives responsibly. Berger is very clear on the point that the perceived cyclicality of the seasons does frame the rural worker's experience of time: "Not everything is cyclic but there are things which are cyclic. Life, death, seasons...they enter into history and yet they escape history" (21). By this, Berger does not mean to say that peasant life is not historical, but merely that there are always points of resistance to the linearity of progress that are worth keeping in mind.

As Lukacs remarks in "Reification and Consciousness of the Proletariat," the progress of capital and wage labour has the effect of transforming the relationship between time and space: "it reduces space and time to a common denominator and degrades

time to the dimension of space" (89). For this reason, the peasant/rural experience is illustrative of the possibility--the necessity--of resisting that eventuality. The transformed pastoral combats the reification of time and of nature by exposing both as dependent upon the cultural bodies (political/economic structures and modes of representation) through which they are experienced. The responsibility the transformed pastoral shows to the rural worker's experience is both other-motivated and self-interested because, as Teodor Shanin puts it, "I think the main reason why peasant experience in literature is so important...is the enrichment through seeing a world which is lost and which is introduced through it, and therefore enables us to see we live in" (in Berger, 22).

I have already stated that the renewed interest in nature, via its portrayal in the pastoral or as the image of nature in landscape painting, has been prompted by a concern for the politics of representation. I have also suggested that this issue has been grounded in a discussion of the relationship between place and identity. Marx, with Barthes, has demonstrated the link between labour and nature allowing us to reject a notion of nature and peasants as unhistorical. Marx also furnishes the means for representing 'place' with the greatest integrity, which involves accepting that one's experience of time differs according to how one produces one's life, and where.

I have also been speaking about non-oppressing ways of "representing" rural experiences, perhaps raising the question

of realism--a major problem with regard to pastoralism. Representation also has something to do with literary postmodernism, which I have avoided until now. Ramen Selden, in "Realism and Country People," distinguishes between semiotic and mimetic approaches to the pastoral. The mimetic approach, with which he associates Raymond Williams,

> would embody 'lived experience' and would expose the exploitive social relations upon which rural economies have been based; it would embody forms of representation capable of giving us the perceptions of peasants and country people and also of rendering the conditions of their material life. (39)

The semiotic perspective, championed by William Empson, would conclude that

> The pastoral has no essentially mimetic function, but rather a semiotic potentiality; it is a formal pattern which, in various guises and in various epochs, may be made to produce a certain complex of meanings. (40)

My personal feeling is that the semiotic approach seems to defuse the political issue at stake in the pastoral by eliding the question of appropriation. On the other hand, the mimetic approach is faulty in that it supposes the pastoral is always intended as a realistic portrait of working people, which it obviously is not. Still, I lean toward the latter with one strong qualification: 'realistically' representing the "material conditions" and "lived experience" of rural characters will necessarily require exposing the role of those

modes of signification which have secured the exploitation of the country and its workers. Thus, the Transformed Pastoral must abandon realism in order to more realistically represent the pastoral character. As Shelley Clemence states in Clarke's Whylah Falls, "Every word, every word, / is a lie. But sometimes the lie / tells the truth" (150).

To that extent, my approach is both semiotic and realistic. And since I have argued that the content of the Transformed Pastoral incorporates the notion of material transformation so as to undermine the nature/culture opposition, I must extend the notion of materiality to the *form and language* of the Transformed Pastoral as well. Barthes has already prepared us for the materiality of signs; his transformation is a linguistic action performed within a discursive myth-making system. Following Monique Wittig, who argues eloquently for the materiality of language in general and of new literary forms in particular, I would contend that language is most powerful when it highlights its own materiality by questioning the transparency of its signs. She writes: "This, then, is writer's work--to concern themselves with the letter, the concrete, the visibility of language, that is, its material form" (67).

Transformative language is therefore language which asserts its own materiality by refuting the idea of words as mere vehicles of communication. Material language imposes a self-referentiality upon itself that asserts the opacity and essential arbitrariness of sign-making. It may seem, therefore, that all creative language might be transformative,

hence oppositional, in this respect. But since, "language at any historical moment is riddled with styles, rhetorics, 'ways of speaking' which impose a specific social position, a definite view of the world" (Coward and Ellis, 79), truly material language will expose and disrupt specifically the patterns of Bourgeois speech. It is worth adding, that it is doubtful that linguistic self-consciousness can have a practical effect in the absence of a thematic content which makes its transformation explicit.

This is not to say that Whylah Falls and In the Skin of a Lion, as instances of the transformed pastoral, are "committed texts," in the sense of being manifestos for any cause or causes. As Wittig observes, "committed literature....[is a] mythic formation and function[s] like myths, in the sense Barthes gave to this word" (69). Just as myth requires its language objects be treated as clear windows to the mythical concept, committed literature is logocentric, treating language as a transparent medium for the exchange of ideas. Neither In the Skin of a Lion or Whylah Falls commits this fallacy. As Clarke writes, "The text is open" (133). Both books are genuinely concerned about a class of people that have been overlooked in the histories, as well as the geographies, of Bourgeois nationalists. Their textual openness is an element of their desire to make sure, as John Berger puts it in the quote that open's Ondaatje's book: "Never again will a single story be told as though it were the only one" (vii).

Rhetorically, the Transformed Pastoral emphasizes the gap between signifier and signified--as opposed to their unity; the

arbitrariness of allegory takes precedence over symbolic organicism. Thematically, the genre recognizes conflict (between classes, nationalisms, ethnicities) as essential to the construction of identity. Nor is the subject ever a given, an origin, but is herself the locus of conflicting tendencies; she must constitute herself in personal and public languages that are every bit as contingent as her speaking self, understood *as* self. Because In the Skin of a Lion and Whylah Falls are acutely self-conscious works that question their own use of language, and their relation to previous texts, operating allegorically rather than symbolically, they could be called postmodern. But I do not think they are postmodern in Jameson's negative sense of exhibiting the "antimonies" he associates with late capitalism. Contradiction, not antimony, is the engine of the Transformed Pastoral. Rather, I consider In the Skin of a Lion and Whylah Falls to be positive responses to certain problems in contemporary society, not least of which is, as Jameson argues, the perversions wrought by the annexation of (what was once thought to be) nature by capital.

CHAPTER 3

"Mouthing out the exotic": Class, Identity, and The Transformed Pastoral in In The Skin of a Lion

> There is a town in north Ontario
> with dream comfort memory to spare
> and in my mind I still need a place to go
> all my memories were there.
> --from "Helpless" by Neil Young

In 1991 George Elliott Clarke published an essay on the works of Michael Ondaatje. Beginning with Dainty Monsters (1967) and concluding with Secular Love (1984), his analysis focuses specifically on the complicated and often contradictory relationship between myth and history and, in turn, the responsibilities of the artist to each. In Ondaatje's poetry and prose, Clarke argues, this problematic is raised to the level of an explicit theme. Clarke further suggests that Ondaatje's "*oeuvre* constitutes a mythology which dramatizes the creation and dissolution of myths" (18) and that he manufactures a "private mythology" that "redeems contemporary history" (19). He concludes: "From Monsters to Love, Ondaatje conveys the ambiguous effects of his constantly thwarted desire with metaphor which, producing myth, is obsessively dramatic" (19).

Conspicuously absent from this study is any mention of In the Skin of a Lion published in 1987, four years prior to the appearance of Clarke's essay. As Clarke's analysis proceeds from the point of view of Ondaatje's poetic evolution, dealing

chronologically with the author's work in poetry and in prose, there is no apparent barrier to its inclusion in the essay. I would like to suggest that there are some important reasons for excluding In the Skin of a Lion from a study about myth, especially one seeking to prove Ondaatje's wilful extension of its jurisdiction.

Explicitly, In the Skin of a Lion marks a departure from Ondaatje's earlier efforts in that it does not so much create new myths than destroy old ones. And not just the myths themselves which, one suspects, sanction "contemporary history" as much as "redeem" it, but the very means by which myths are made possible in the first place. To this end, the technique employed involves the pastoral, that peculiar artistic form in which we find a collusion of landscape and population, of retreat and protest, and especially, of the autonomous subject and the sometimes protective, often threatening, social collective.

Ondaatje's familiarity with the pastoral form has already been noted by Janet Giltrow and David Stouk in their reading of Running in the Family as an instance of "postmodern pastoral":

> The narrative in pastoral describes a retreat in time and place to an enclosed green world, a retreat expressing the human dream of a simplified, harmonious existence from which the complexities of social ills...and natural process...are eliminated. (164)

This is the pastoral, the postmodern version of which, Giltrow and Stouk suggest, turns from the spatial quest for Arcadia as

place to the regretful, isolated (and non-oppositional) consciousness in regress: "The term pastoral is used here not to indicate a rural subject, nor a genre or convention of poetry, but rather a mode of art based on memory" (164). The postmodern pastoral therefore appears as an extension of the "pastoral of the mind" popularized by Andre Gide. For this reason, it fails to challenge the dubious tendency shown by pastoral to cast social problems as somehow inevitable and permanent.

The "postmodern pastoral" is worth keeping in mind as we examine the possibilities of the transformed pastoral, though, because it is obsessively preoccupied with the problem of identity. As Giltrow and Stouk put it: "In [postmodern] pastoral, language is haunted by the crisis of identity and absence" (165). Again, the "crisis of identity" is not at all new to the genre. The pastoral site (traditionally, Arcadia) notes Peter Mirinelli, is "a place for Becoming rather than Being, where an individual's potencies for the arts of life and love and poetry are explored and tested" (37). This study is likewise concerned with identity, but emphasizes the social dimension of its formation, and the resultant collective identities which are necessary for challenging the cultural and political hegemony of the bourgeois public.

If Running in the Family is a "pastoral of the mind," that "pictures others, but ultimately reveals the self" (Clarke, 17) and, as Clarke further suggests, participates in a myth-making process, then In The Skin of a Lion extends the traditional pastoral's quest for a physical geography of fulfilment while

it honours others as essential to the formation of self. As pastoral, In The Skin of a Lion preserves the relationship between place and identity, and emphasizes the importance of landscape to the creation and sustainment of individual and collective identities[26], but rejects the utopian belief in Arcadia as an escape from history. By introducing the issues of ownership, exploitation and work to the discourse on nature, In the Skin of a Lion questions the nature/culture opposition implicit in the very idea of pastoral while remaining sufficiently connected to the genre. Therefore, the note of dissatisfaction with and protest against the *status quo* that motivates pastoralism is not lost either.

Linda Hutcheon has noted that postmodern art "installs and then subverts" (3) generic conventions in order to dramatize the relationship between power and language. In the Skin of a Lion is fully demonstrative of this tactic; Ondaatje works from within the pastoral form in a telling and original fashion. Mirinelli remarks that Wordsworth, having acclimatized the pastoral to Northern England and adopted the "real" rural character in preference to the faceless and formulaic shepherd of old, "draw[s] a line, apparently for ever, between the classical and the modern pastoral". In the Skin of a Lion, the transformed pastoral, inaugurates pastoral's third phase.

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[26] In fact, "Place *is* identity" (6, emphasis added), asserts Paul Turner, unveiling a mechanism whose effects are as visible at the level of the individual as at the "grand scale [of] national identity and even...imperial patriotism" (Norcliffe and Simpson-Housely, 5).

Comprised of a series of episodes, In the Skin of a Lion employs pastoralism in a likewise episodic fashion, so that it becomes a significant motif in the narrative. The book begins in a natural setting, in the small village of Bellrock, "pale green and nameless" (11) in Patrick's school atlas. Patrick shares a small cabin with Hazen Lewis, his "abashed" and mostly uncommunicative father who makes his living as a farm hand and later as a dynamiter.

In this setting, where "day was work and night was rest" (23)[27], Patrick is surrounded by a natural world. Nightly, he is visited by insects attracted to the lighted windows of the cabin: "Bugs, plant hoppers, grasshoppers, dark-rust moths. Patrick gazes on these things which have navigated the warm air above the surface of the earth that have attached themselves to the mesh with a muted thank" (9). Though he feels he has some bond or connection with these "prehistoric" (10) creatures, their company is insufficient:

> He knows the robust calls from small bodies of cicadas, but he wants conversation--the language of damsel flies who need something to translate their breath the way he uses the ocarina to give himself a

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[27] Traditionally, the pastoral celebrates the diurnal and seasonal movements of nature, lending to work its cyclical character. In opposition to a capitalist ethic which removes time's qualitative and variable character, Ondaatje preserves the notion that place and time are mutually dependent concepts. Compare this to the conditions in the city: "Night and day. Fall light. Snow light. They are always working" (26). Ondaatje does not, however, claim that the country spares its inhabitants from the effects or experience of history, a concept related to the 'natural' experience of time likewise celebrated by the traditional pastoral.

> voice, something to leap over the wall of this place. (10)

"This place" is, for Patrick, "his mind race[ing] ahead of his body" (22), a limit to his participation in the heroic world of "his favourite history book" (21). Like Bellrock, he is alive but undiscovered.

There are others, though, for whom "this place" is not a burden, but a "Tabula Rasa." Strangely, it is Bellrock's unwelcome immigrant workers who embody the potential flexibility of belonging. Crouched in darkness, a young Patrick watches, mesmerized, as a wondrous scene takes place on the frozen river near his home. Finnish loggers, flaming cattails in hand, play tag on skates the have fashioned from "old knives": "Skating the river at night, each of them moving like a wedge into the blackness magically revealing the grey bushes of the shore, *his* shore, *his* river" (21). Presented with the freedom and *foreignness* of the spectacle before him, Patrick's immediate response is to think of the land, not in terms of scenery or setting, but explicitly as property. His possessive attitude suggests that ownership carries with it a set of unconscious parameters for behaviour that are made manifest only when they are transgressed. Given this, the caution of the loggers who reach out to touch the cows "without any sense of attack or right" because "[t]hey do not own this land" (7) is understandable.

Patrick's possessiveness contradicts Ralph Waldo Emerson who, in 1836, wrote: "The charming landscape which I saw this morning is indubitably made up of some twenty or thirty farms.

Miller owns this field, Locke that, and Manning the woodland beyond. But none of them own the landscape" (363). The problem is, of course, that people do own landscapes: camping grounds, summer cottages, parks, play grounds and penthouses with a view. As seasonal labourers without any legal or historical claim to the land they work on, the loggers, many of them "strangers of another language" (22), exist on the margins of the small community of Bellrock. They are perpetual outsiders, "sleep[ing] in the shacks behind the Bellrock Hotel," with "little connection with the town" (8).

Within this underprivileged space there can be little room to romanticise the landscape upon which they exercise their labour. Patrick is able to read the conflict between differing perceptions of the landscape, symbolic of a broader class-based struggle, in the wallpaper of the Bellrock Hotel:

> Flowers, vines, now and then an English pheasant in the foliage, now and then a rip caused by a drunk logger in other times trying to get out of the room, unable to find the door. He sat looking at that landscape in front of him. (98)

This passage reflects both the repressive force of the pictured English pastoral and the violence which it invites from the loggers whose reality it does *not* reflect. The "rips" in the mural represent the real struggle being fought in the woods by the loggers against their "English" bosses. It is for his part in this struggle that Cato is eventually "execute[d]" (155).

The relationship between work and the pastoral is, at best, problematic. Virgil's Georgics are essentially concerned

with the vicissitudes of agricultural life, but the socio-economic aspect of agricultural production was gradually suppressed so that even Wordsworth's "hard" pastoral, more or less original (after Crabbe) in its emphasis on the *hardships* of work in nature, posits no explanation for the difficulties of the peasant worker save the weather (Patterson, 281). Though concerned with country life and work, pastoralism tends to depict nature as a *final product*, excluding the process by which the land is transformed so that the class conflicts for which the land is "both setting and cause" (Turner, 158) are likewise obscured.

The exclusion of politics from the pastoral is fully appreciable in its resistance to work, most especially wage labour, the penultimate symptom of modern capitalist culture. Emerson, who originally claimed that the aesthetics of landscape transcended such a vulgar consideration as ownership is unable to enlarge this view to include work:

> Yet this may show us what discord is between man and nature, for you cannot freely admire a noble landscape if labourers are digging in the field hard by. (Nature, 377)

The bourgeois appreciation of landscape rarely involves an acknowledgement of the men and women who played an active, physical role in transforming the wilderness into the picturesque scenes that seem to merit their attention. The implications of Ondaatje's attempt to include work in his nature aesthetic are now perhaps more clear. More subtle than the actual physical conflicts between capitalist and worker,

this other battle is not entirely separate from them, revealing the presence of a class factor in even our modes of aesthetic appreciation.

The episode which most obviously demonstrates the role art has played in defining the natural, to which, ironically it is held up as nature's antithesis, must surely be "The Garden of the Blind." At first, the scene appears to follow the typical pastoral formula:

> In the Garden of the Blind, on Page Island, a stone cherub holds out a hand from which water leaps up into the air. A tree full of birds spreads itself high over the southern area of the lawn. There is a falling of sounds--bird-calls like drops of water--onto the blind woman sitting there. Seeds float down onto the gravel borders, a sound path for those walking without sight. Patrick sits reading a newspaper. (167)

The garden is literally a refuge for Patrick, who is wanted by the police for the "wilful destruction of property" (170). There, in the company of Elizabeth, a blind woman who 'shows' him the smell of the flowers, he is cautioned not to "resent [his] life" (170). Memory, an important pastoral ingredient, is indulged when Patrick recognizes in the blind eye of Elizabeth his childhood companion: "Her green eye echoes somewhere within him. *Aetias Luna*--and its Canadian name, *papillon lune*. Lunar moth. Moon moth" (171). "[A] preparation for engagement with the world of reality" (Mirinelli, 46), Patrick's pastoral moment is where and when he can recuperate,

and gather strength for his eventual confrontation with the embodiment of the corruption and excess of capitalism, Commissioner Harris.

But, the scene is qualified, its evident pastoralism re-evaluated. Patrick reads a newspaper, an intrusion of the public and political world into Elizabeth's Eden. Significantly, the scene occurs on the imaginary "*Page* Island," emphasizing the pastoral moment as a set piece, a literary convention, a myth. The metafictional self-consciousness of The Garden of the Blind reminds the reader that perception, the way we see things, is conditioned by literary practice. Earlier in the novel, Patrick remarks "If you can't see, you can't control anything" (96). In The Garden of the Blind, the reader is faced with the more important question of 'who controls what we see, and by what means?'[28]

As Marx has shown, work in nature is violent. Something must be destroyed in one form in order to be recreated in another. History does not exist in the absence of conflict. James Turner explains that the seventeenth century saw landscape imagery depopulated of its working class and transformed into "a defence against the violent world of men" (185) that is generally reproduced by the pastoral motif to

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[28] According to Rosemary Sullivan, the character of Elizabeth is based on Elizabeth Smart (By Heart: The Life of Elizabeth Smart, 369). It is interesting to note that Smart (most famous for her poetic novel By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept) was a fanatical gardener and naturalist. It is even more interesting to discover that Smart cultivated these skills (no pun intended) on a hundred acre "mountain" a gift from her father when she was a teenager.

this day. In other words, workers can be denied the rights that come with a recognizable history when the site of their violent history-making is redefined as essentially (and naturally) non-violent. Christian Bok, in "Destructive Creation," argues that Ondaatje's later texts "begin to reevaluate the ethics...of violence and suggest that it must ultimately serve a socially responsible end" (109). One of the ways in which this is achieved in In The Skin of a Lion is through the undermining of the dominant discourse of nature as a safe-haven from violence, especially that which is politically motivated.

Like the wallpaper in the room of the Bellrock hotel, then, the rural landscape of eastern Ontario becomes a setting for violent action. Hazen Lewis blows a log out of the water "side-swiping a man, breaking his chest" (17). Patrick sets fire to the Muskoka Hotel and bombs its wharf (167). Cato, "cutting a hole in the ice at Onion Lake" is murdered by the strike busters "who ride out of the trees" and bury him in the "thin ice of a shallow river" (156). By figuring *social* violence in a rural setting, Ondaatje not only reflects a historical reality, but subverts the mechanism by which the political issues of rural societies have been excluded from the mainstream.[29] It is precisely the act of historicizing a

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[29]Certainly, the literature of the Canadian landscape is no stranger to violence, but as Atwood argues in Survival, it is Nature itself that has been, for the most part, responsible for the dispatching of humans ("Monster Nature", 47-67). In the Skin of a Lion, which conspicuously situates in nature violent conflicts between *men* that revolve around the distribution of the profits of nature, presents itself as a counter-narrative to the Canadian tradition of 'Nature as Monster'.

region and a people that "did not appear on a map until 1910" (10) that legitimizes the apparent valorization of violence in In the Skin of a Lion.

"[A]mong the most powerful ideologies in our own century has been the position that literature, the pastoral in particular, is or should be nonideological" comments Annabel Patterson in Pastoral and Ideology. At the root of this assumption is the false belief in the mutual exclusiveness of nature and culture, of country and city. Ondaatje brings the political oppression which occur in the countryside alongside those of metropolitan Toronto thus exposing the complicitous relationship between these radically different landscapes. Hazen Lewis dies in a cave-in, "buried in feldspar" (74); Patrick later discovers that Commissioner Harris' desktop is inlaid with feldspar (235). The trees that float down 'Patrick's' river become lumber used in the construction of the bridge. The cow that Patrick and his father save ends up in the slaughterhouse of the tannery in which Patrick will eventually work (129). Clearly, Ondaatje argues that within a capitalist system there can be no safe-haven. Simultaneously, he describes the process which underlies the history of both cities and rural landscapes but which has been obscured in the latter through the romanticization of nature.[30]

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[30] Interestingly, the Bloor Street Viaduct is designed by an architect named "Edmund Burke," (49) coincidentally the same name as the author of The Origin of Ideas of The Beautiful and Sublime which inaugurated "the prevailing literary mode in Nature poetry in the late eighteenth century" (Atwood, 49). One recalls Marx insisting that the "celebrated unity of man and nature has always existed in industry" (170).

The fusion of rural and urban, of natural and artificial, is prevalent throughout the novel, often attaining bizarre, if not horrific, proportions. Al, who comes to Caravaggio's aid, is enamoured with a spot in which "engines hung from the trees" (182). As Patrick digs, mules are lowered into the unfinished intake tunnels of the water filtration plant, "braying[ing] madly, thinking they were being buried alive" (108). The tunnels are equally unsuitable for human workers, whose bodies are no more knowledgeable "than the brain of the mule" (108). At the Kingston penitentiary, the thief Caravaggio is painted blue, the sky, the roof and the man blurring into each other. Having become invisible, Caravaggio literally achieves Patrick's dream of "leaping over the wall of this place" and escapes into the night.

The most blatant example of capital's ability to appropriate and pervert 'the natural' is to be found at the Toronto Yacht Club where

> In each set of trees was a live monkey, never able to reach the diners because of a frail chain. The animals had to dodge the champagne corks aimed at them--if you hit a monkey you were brought a free bottle (221).

The point of these scenes is not to re-establish a rigid distinction between the natural and the artificial, for it is this very condition that has allowed the pastoral to be seen as an apolitical sphere outside the bounds of history's concern. Rather, it is symptomatic of a postmodern attitude which "rejects the possibility of an intrinsically healing

relationship between the individual and the world prior to some act of attenuation or distortion of that environment" (Nelson, 6). No relationship, even one with nature, is unmeditated and without its political determinants. To disrupt the normal pattern of art's intercourse with the natural is to question and challenge those determinants.

By distorting the natural and historicizing the rural, In the Skin of a Lion confounds the hegemonic discourse which transposes a dominant ideology on the landscape, an ideology summarily expressed by Anne, the "neighbour," who declares to Caravaggio: "I love this place. It can heal you if you are here alone" (187). While this may be true for an obviously well-to-do woman spending a few weeks away from her husband and son, a woman who does not need to work and who can afford a country place, it does not reflect the reality of many--most--others. This is not to say that Ondaatje refutes the possibility of 'nature as healer' altogether, but simply that it must be qualified with the stories of those who "arrived in winter and disappeared into shanty camps, walking twenty miles into land they did not know" (16).

Ondaatje's Transformed Pastoral resonates well beyond class politics and contributes as well to a redefinition of Canadian identity. According to Stephen Daniels,

> National identities are co-ordinated, often largely defined, by 'legends and landscapes,' by stories of golden ages, enduring traditions, heroic deeds and

> dramatic destinies located in ancient or promised homelands with hallowed sites and scenery. (5)

The connection between natural imagery and a nationalism that, despite its official rhetoric, is aggressively prohibitive of other cultural minorities is evident in the title of Arun Mukherjee's essay "Ironies of Colour in the Great White North." Mukherjee explains that the juxtaposition of "an affectionate appellation used by Canadians to denote the long, wintry face of Canada" with the word "colour" and its attendant significations "creates ironic speech about race" (70). While not establishing itself within an ironic framework, In The Skin of a Lion similarly provides the reader with new legends and new landscapes, tools with which to re-tailor Canadian identity in such a way that it reflects its hitherto unacknowledged immigrant and working class histories.

Landscape "changed nothing but it brought rest, altered character as gradually as water on a stone" (126) remarks Patrick. Ironically, Patrick finds both solace and a new sense of self within the transposed immigrant landscapes of Toronto. "He was always comfortable in someone else's landscape" (138). Having spent his childhood dreaming of foreign places he will never see, "*mouthing out the exotic. Caspian. Nepal. Durango*" (9), Patrick will eventually live with the populations who have left these places to come to "Upper America." From them he will discover the incompleteness of his knowledge of Canada, the insufficiencies of his childhood maps and novels and the "headlines of the day" (145). Though "[h]e is the one born in this country who knows nothing of this place" (156-157); he

will eventually discern "a wondrous night-web--all of these fragments of a human order" (145).

Ondaatje, while undermining the idea that nationality is a landscape into which one is born, and exposing the use of landscape as a political tool, also acknowledges the importance of present or remembered landscapes for a sense of identity:

> [Patrick] watches each of her friends and he gazes at the small memory painting of Europe on the wall--the spare landscape, the village imposed on it. He is immensely comfortable in this room. He remembers his father once passing the foreign loggers on First Lake Road and saying, "*They don't know where they are.*"... Patrick smiles to himself at the irony of reversals. (133)

The "memory painting" is basically a pastoral conceit in that it recalls a place where one felt 'at home' with the environment and with others. Patrick's feelings for these people, working day and night to build a landscape in which they may never feel part of, attests to the possibilities of genuine social bonds despite geographical displacement.

Likewise, Alice's character will evolve within the context a new human geography. Unlike Patrick, however, her dramatic transformation has a specific locus, taking place in the Ohrida Lake Restaurant, where she "turn[s] from her image" (38) and "becomes in that minute before she is outside" what "she will become" (41). As a space for the articulation of self, the Ohrida Lake Restaurant is exemplary of the generative possibilities of the transformed pastoral. In the restaurant,

which is like an "orchard" (39), "A South River parrot [hangs] in its cage by the doorway" (35); and Alice realizes that "the darkness represents a Macedonian night.... A violin. Olive trees" (37). Having made this connection, Alice discovers that "the parrot has a language" (37). She too discovers a language in the Ohrida Lake Restaurant; the speechless, nameless nun that enters with the injured Temelcoff is left behind with the remnants of her habit.

The pastoral has long been employed in literature as a space for the articulation of self, but it differs here from Anne's lakeside chalet in that it exists in the middle of urban Toronto and is markedly 'foreign'. The fact that the Ohrida Lake Restaurant is a place of business draws attention--in a way that cottage country does not--to the fact that landscape imagery, deployed within a capitalist system, can be bought and sold and can be as exclusionary as it can be inviting. Thus the transformed pastoral distinguishes itself from its historical antecedents by foregrounding its political context.[31]

Throughout the novel, Ondaatje compellingly demonstrates that landscape is a tool which can define and police the parameters of identity, but a tool that is itself tooled by our politically determined modes of perception. That the reappropriation and redirection of the pastoral motif and

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[31] Among the 'pastoral moments' that occur outdoors, many are qualified in a similar manner. Cato and Alice make love "against the thick stones of the railway embankment" (150); they are simultaneously below and "against" the supreme symbol of Canadian unity, the railway. Likewise, Patrick and Alice make love outside in a clearing with "country houses on the periphery" (160).

landscape imagery occurs within a work that is itself emblematic of a larger movement seeking readjustments to the Canadian national ideal is no accident.

Caravaggio is mistaken when he asserts that "The only thing that holds the rich to the earth is property" (223). In The Skin of a Lion demonstrates that people, dominant or 'Other,' are held to the earth by many things: their children, their friends, their politics, and importantly, their personal vision of that earth. Caravaggio's comments do allow for a better understanding of landscape appreciation as ideological practice, however: since the scenery that seems to attest to the reality and necessity of nature is in actuality owned, possessing a market value, the very idea of 'nature-in-itself' is severely undermined. The assumptions about who belongs and who does not which accompany every landscape are consequently exposed, losing their 'natural' character. As a result, place itself becomes less restrictive, and the way is opened for persons like Nicholas Temelcoff, "mercury slipping across a map" (35). And so to come to know oneself in a landscape of one's own choosing, and then to act on that knowledge, is central to In The Skin of a Lion. Doubtless, this is a perilous journey. Though there are many turns on the road from Toronto to Marmora, and many reversals in the tale Hana "gathers" as she travels it, there is a single condition: "*the countryside is unbetrayed*" (1).

CHAPTER 4

Blood Spattered on Pines: Whylah Falls

Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and all we behold
From this green earth....
--William Wordsworth

The foregrounding of ownership in Ondaatje's treatment of the landscapes of In The Skin of a Lion and his subsequent exposure of the complicity between city and country constitutes a serious challenge to a belief in the sovereignty of nature. In opposition to the classical or Romantic pastoral, Ondaatje's text shows that the threat to 'pastoral community'--if it is really a threat at all--does not come from without, but arises from the very economic structure of rural societies. Simultaneously, Ondaatje extends the pastoral's potential for 'becoming' to the city itself, undermining the philosophy of 'primitivism' that girds much of our understanding of subjectivity.

George Elliott Clarke's Whylah Falls approaches the pastoral from a similar perspective. Like In the Skin of a Lion, Whylah Falls deals with 'Otherness' and marginalization. Its principal characters are African-Canadians living in a small rural community in Jarvis County, Nova Scotia. Like Ondaatje, Clarke posits locality against the totalizing and

superficial narrative of Canadian multiculturalism. Nationalism is addressed in the text via a re-evaluation of pastoral landscape. The pastoral's inability to accommodate racial 'Otherness' is clearly exposed. Nonetheless, the text preserves many of the hallmarks of pastoralism; it constitutes not a rejection of the pastoral, but its transformation.

Essential to this transformation is a self-conscious exploration of the text's own means of expression. Whylah Falls is a fractured, contradictory and troubling book. But its form, most comfortably described as pastiche, reveals the conflict at the heart of all pastoral, but which is usually hidden under a placid surface. The struggle between the speaker and the landscape evident in Lampman's pastoral poetry is preserved in Whylah Falls, but it is the engagement itself, rather its transcendence, that the text ultimately seeks. Integral to the text's praxis is the subversion of the traditional pastoral's ossifying effect on the landscape and the people it describes. As a consequence, Whylah Falls implicates the reader in the conflicts in which it is itself embroiled.

With a mixture of dismay and delight, guiltily favouring, perhaps, the former, early reviewers of George Elliott Clarke's Whylah Falls threw up their hands, unable to classify its genre. "I'm not actually sure *what* this book is," writes Phil Hall in Books in Canada:

> a poetic novel, a lyric drama, a receptacle of working class history, an epic blues ballad, a murder

> legend, the story of an exile's return, an allegorical appeal on behalf of the last vestiges of beauty in the world? (43)

Clarke, himself not unaware of the desire on the part of readers and critics to categorize works of literature, only increases our frustration with his own ironic meta-commentary on the writing of Whylah Falls, "Discovering Whylah Falls." Organized under a series of subtitles: "To the Reader"; "The Intentional Fallacy"; "A Defence of Poesy"; "The Anxiety of Influence"; "The Death of the Epic"; "Tradition and Individual Talent"; "General Principles of Harmony"; "Seven Types of Ambiguity"; "The Bush Garden"; and "Discography," Clarke's poke at literary theory and his self-conscious breech of authorial etiquette seems intended to discourage serious critical attention to his work. If so, the attempt has failed; Whylah Falls is being taken very seriously; it has been embraced, deservedly, by students of Canadian literature and is now being taught in Canadian universities at the graduate and undergraduate levels.

Even so, no one seems to know what to *do* with it, aside from placing it on a syllabus an example of Canadian "minority writing." Clarke writes what M. Travis Lane calls "maximalist" poetry; his language seems fuelled by its own excess, his forms held together by the force of sheer will-power, the plot (if you can call it that) carried by the charismatic bravura of his larger-than-life characters. At the very least, "Discovering Whylah Falls" acknowledges the very wide net its author has cast, and, as such, warns the potential critic that the text to

which it refers, while containing "Arguments,"[32] cannot itself be reduced to a single argument or bone-to-pick. Given this, short of cataloguing the contents of Whylah Falls, which, in any case, would succeed in describing the ingredients but not the dish, no single chapter could make pronouncements on the text's 'meaning,' or hope to place limits on its relevance for readers in any way, shape or form. This said, certain patterns do emerge from the playful, if bizarre, "Discovering Whylah Falls" that will ultimately assist in our turning to Whylah Falls as an example of the transformed pastoral.

It is clear from "Discovering Whylah Falls" that the pastoral ideal is never far from Clarke's mind, emblematic of the poetic idiom on the grand scale:

> [T]he poem remembers the quick freshes of its origins in song and in the Eden of the erotic and the morbid. A stubbornly anti-modern artifice, the poem never, ever, accepted the twentieth century. It revolted against the Industrial Reaction. Though it altered its diction and its appearance, the poem insisted on recalling Arcadian pastures.... (82)

Accordingly, in his list of forms and devices which have made their way into Whylah Falls, Clarke cites, among others, "the Georgic," though not the Eclogue. It is fitting that Clarke include the former at the expense of the latter, for in the

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[32] Phil Hall notes Clarke's use of this more or less obsolete poetic device: "There are "Arguments" here--as in, what and whom to expect when you read further. Most of these I have loosely thought of as 19th-century devices and am please to see them used to effect here."

Georgics "the principle of toil...rules the world" (McFarland, 13), whereas the Eclogues tend to portray life as splendorous and leisurely. Like Ondaatje, Clarke's pastoral is 'hard'. Juxtaposed with descriptions of the 'natural' beauty of the Annapolis Valley is the story of Saul Clemence, who "spent all he is gouging gypsum from a hillside, so his lungs are silver coated with sickness and his heart dries now to the bone and his conscience is rusted metal" (35). Whylah Falls is a place "where dreamers, to live, gut fish, saw pine, skin mink, pick apples, or stook hay" (72). Clarke's focus vacillates between the dreaming and living (and dying) of his characters.

Importantly, as Whylah Falls is a book 'about' rural Blacks in Jarvis County, Nova Scotia, the 'living' of the text's personalities necessarily involves racial experience, that is to say, the impact of racism, its presumptions, distortions, stereotypes, and apologies. Clarke, like Ondaatje, acknowledges the class element of racial marginalization as a fact--not a necessity, but a tradition or history. Whylah Falls contains many photographs whose role is not always clear (the 'fact' of the photograph, its referent-meaning, does not always coincide with the 'facts' of the literary text), but one photograph in particular provides a context for the narrative as a whole, despite the fact it does not seem to reflect any character or situation contained within the narrative. The photograph in question features in the distant background a vista of farmland and orchards, while in the foreground farm labourers pull potatoes from the hard ground. Some of the workers are white; the majority are black.

A white man with a walking stick looks on (128).[33]

Yet, the text insists that this is only half the story. There is 'life' and then there are the things that life dreams. In this respect, Whylah Falls is true to pastoral form. Loosely structured as a seven act play, "The Scene," writes Clarke, is "Acadia" (ix). It is not entirely coincidence that the historical place-name "Acadia" recalls *Arcadia*--nor do the similarities end with mere pronunciation; Clarke's Acadia (he sometimes refers to it as "Africadia") is initially presented as a lover's paradise, a characterization that--though ultimately salvaged--will undergo some revision as the story progresses. Whereas pastoralism is an important motif in In the Skin of a Lion, Whylah Falls is pastoral through and through. It is Arcadia, really, that X, the text's principle narrator, has come home to rediscover: "I came here to Milkland, Honey Country, Beauty Town, to drown in a baptism of fulfilment" (145). For the Reverend F.R. Langford, Whylah Falls is, not surprisingly, Eden: "And I emerge from the scripture's Annapolis Valley meadows, streams and mountains, always reborn, knowing that every word is a bible, bearing the lightning of genesis and the thunder of revelation (122).

"Look Homeward, Exile," the text's introductory poem,

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[33] In relation to the pastoral, this photograph is telling indeed. Similar labour as witnessed in the photo's foreground may be occurring in the picturesque looking background, but distance makes this impossible to judge. Nor does the photograph seem to insist on the pleasure of country life and a harmonious relationship between the rich and poor. Following Emerson, the scene is, strictly speaking, not pastoral; yet pastoralism lurks in the eyes' obstinate attraction to the photo's background, where everything could--must--be different.

anticipates X's return to Whylah Falls. In true pastoral fashion, it is a return to the place of one's childhood, one's 'roots,' that precipitates the narrative that will follow. Nor is it uncommon to discover in the pastoral that the protagonist's return is motivated by his pleasant memories of that sacred place: "I can still see that soil crimsoned by butchered / Hog and imbrued with rye, lye, and homely, / Spirituals everybody must know" (10). It is telling that X's reminiscences of Whylah Falls should begin with a meditation on the earth before expanding to incorporate the community that has given the "soil" its fertile significance.

Besides 'the return,' 'the land,' and 'community,' there are other elements in this first poem which confirm the story's pastoralism. Most notable among these is the prominent place given to music, which, after, landscape description, constitutes the text's essential idiom. To a great extent, the community of Whylah Falls is held together by these "homely spirituals everybody must know." The musicians in the text--there are many of them--realize an important social function: along with the Reverend Langford, they articulate the values and codes through which the community may recognize and define itself. They are the resident historians and folklorists. But unlike the professional and semi-professional pursuers of 'the Folk' by whom many rural communities in Eastern Canada have been besieged, the representations of the story-tellers and musicians of Whylah Falls are not constrained by a desire to fix 'their people' as an essential type. As Ian McKay observes, 'the Folk' is a social category intended to enclose

the Folk as a stable 'Other,' a point of origin against which the rest of society might measure its progress or decline (32). As a result, the Folk are denied any dynamism whatsoever. If the rest of the world is dialectical, they are not. They are "antimodern."[34]

Contrasted to this are the songs of Othello and Puskin Clemence, Skelley's brothers and protectors, whose music partakes of a rich cultural heritage that transcends the isolation and insularity that supposedly defines the Folk: "After Howlin' Will Shakespeare, Blind Jack Milton, and Missouri Tom Eliot, I'm just one more dreamer to hoist a guitar and strum Sixhiboux Delta Blues. Oh Yes" (53). The singers of Whylah Falls are not meant to be over-shadowed by this tradition, however. Their eclectic pilfering of themes and ideas from sources as commonplace as the Bible, as pop-cultural as the blues of Robert Johnson, and as worldly and literate as Yeats and Eliot, is aimed at justifying their place within that canon, as well as to provide a much-needed "blanket against the world's cold cruelty" (85).

The book is itself a kind of security blanket. About a Black community, it is not 'about' racism, not political in that sense. But it does mobilize an oppositional heritage against an ostensibly unified Nova Scotian or even Canadian (though multicultural) one. With the exception of Jack Thompson--politician, cannery owner, and pastoral antagonist--

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[34] McKay does observe, however, that Nova Scotia blacks have been largely ignored by the Folklore enterprise that has helped shape both the tourist's view and of the native inhabitants themselves.

Clarke portrays an exclusively non-white universe, a world-of-colour. Against the generalizing tendencies of nationalist or proto-nationalist identity, Clarke indulges the particularity and locality of Whylah Falls which, in its own multiplicity, tempers the tendency to see opposition itself as wholly unified or homogenous. "[T]he expression of oppositional demand is likely to involve a struggle over the right to, meaning, and public status of existing traditions" (266), observe Bommes and Wright. Since difference is more or less tolerated in the private ('What you do is your own business. I just don't want to hear about it'), Whylah Falls elevates these concerns to the level of public discourse to which literature belongs. The songs of Othello and Pushkin Clemence, while privately significant and appreciated within the limited confines of Whylah Falls, demand entrance into the public sphere as an expression of an oppositional tradition.[35]

Though a lover of music, it is the landscape of Whylah Falls to which X is most attracted. He writes to his beloved Shelley of his imminent return: "I have been gone four Springs. This April, pale / Apple blossoms blizzard. The garden flutes / E-flats of lilacs, G-Sharps of lilies. / Too many years, too many years, are past...." (14). The Wordsworthian tone is a clue to X's attitude towards Whylah Falls: it is his Tintern Abbey, a timeless and unchanging country where he can

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[35] Basically the process of inclusion and exclusion to which I am referring can be summarized by X's comment, "[Shelley's] been schooled that her hotcombs and dented teapot and black woodstove are backward, backwoods and unbecoming. But I love here bluebell-brilliant earth, her tired tractors put out to pasture..." (24).

contemplate the aging he has suffered elsewhere. X wants desperately to cling to his Romantic outlook: he arrives at the train station with "seven books of the elegant verse that perished in the slaughter of the Great War" (12). Still, his memories of Whylah Falls at least attempt an even-handedness, accepting as fact the "folks who cracked or broke like shale":

> Pushkin, who twisted his hands in boxing,
> Marrocco, who ran girls like dogs and got stabbed,
> Lavinia, her teeth decayed to black stumps,
> Her lovemaking still in demand, spitting
> Black phlegm--her pension after twenty towns,
> And Toof, suckled on anger that no Baptist
> Church could contain, who let wrinkled Eely
> Seed her moist womb when she was just thirteen. (10)

X, however, gives to this events and characters a patina of charm that some critics have treated with suspicion, though the character himself anticipates this by confessing; "I'm just a Romantic fool in the wrong century for adoration" (20). And so it is "Beauty" that X mostly sees:

> In freight trains snorting in their pens, in babes
> Whose faces are coal-black mirrors, in strange
> Strummers who plucked Ghanaian banjos, hummed
> Blind blues--precise, ornate, rich needlepoint,
> In sermons scorched with sulphur and brimstone,
> And in my love's dark, orient skin that smelled
> Like orange peels and rum, good God! (10).

X's effacing Romanticism is greatly checked by the sober realism of his lover Shelley and her mother Cora, who says of

her irresponsible husband Saul, "He don't seem to 'preciate that fields / can't bloom with blossoms / forever and forever and forever" (44). Similarly, X's every Romantic thrust is parried by Shelley's cold scepticism:

> You come down, after
> five winter's, X,
> bristlin' with roses
> and words words words,
> brazen as brass.
> Like a late blizzard,
> you bust in our door,
> talkin' April and snow and rain,
> litterin' the table
> with poems--
> as if we could trust them!

Gradually, X's perspective is modified, his pastoralism expanded to accommodate the lived experience of the inhabitants of Whylah Falls. This shift is signalled by a change in his language: "My colleged speech ripens before you, / Become's Negro-natural, those green, soiled words / Whose roots mingle with turnip, carrot, and squash, / Keeping philology fresh and tasty" (55).

Simultaneously, certain events and scenes, culminating in the murder of Othello Clemence, begin to impinge on X's utopian vision of Whylah Falls. There is the Sixhiboux River itself, "rusted by stones and sewage" that "pours brown into the blue bay" (24). Saul's sexual relationship with his stepdaughter, Missy, as well as X's own affair with Shelley's sister, Selah,

teaches X "the fragility of desire" (35). But it is Othello's murder at the hands of Scratch Seville and Seville's subsequent acquittal that most profoundly affronts his belief in the "Beauty" of Whylah Falls.[36]

Before Othello is shot, X has already foreseen his "martyrdom." Preceded by a quote from St. Augustine, "Ecce ipsi idiote rapuint celum ubi / Nos sapientes in inferno mergimur," X writes in "A Vision of Icarus":

> Moonlit, glimmering like each mortal dream,
> Othello tries the air with patchwork wings,
> Plummets through vast nightmare, then smacks the chill
> Channel of black, thrashes in amnesia,
> Flounders encumbered by eels and current.
> *Andreynten*, he becomes our Icarus,
> Ravelled by lilies, laved by the river,
> His auburn ankles shackled by sawgrass.
> .....
> We'll comb the periwinkles from his bleached hair,
> And pick the early pearls from his bared ribs.
> Those who wing with angels do often drown. (91)

Contrasted to this imagined Romantic demise is X's report of the actual death:

> A bootlegger blasts. Othello's life shines.
> It sputters free in red, blubbering air.

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[36] Othello is, in fact, 'set-up' by Jack Thompson, white local politician and cannery owner, who tells Scratch that Othello has been "man[ing] his wife" (98).

His giant hands palm crimson misery,
Try to patch his stomach....
.....
His history
Giddying through a gyre, a puckered hole
In his stomach, stops on bloodied gravel
While silence whines in the legislature. (100)

Now, X can write, "[n]o death is neutral anymore" (107). The adverb "anymore" would seem to indicate that a shift has occurred within X's belief system. Certainly, his conviction that manhood "is not the dumb flexing of muscles, but the impassioned sharing of love in fighting injustice" (58) is confirmed.

It is no accident that at this point the text as a whole begins to re-evaluate the Romanticization of landscape in general. The abundant (and questionable) fusions of the human body and the 'image of nature' that dominate the text prior to Othello's murder are greatly qualified in such a way that 'nature' and 'humanity' can no longer be viewed as neutralities whose interaction is without consequence. Significantly, Othello is killed in Shelley's Garden, "a patch of earth reddened and enriched by rusted metal and rotted wood" (138)[37],

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[37] Paul De Man has suggested that the garden is allegorical, in that it foregrounds its artificiality, accepting the temporality and contingency that the organic symbolism of 'pure nature' attempts to suppress (187-228). On the other hand, the garden, "smell[ing] of history, the new becoming old, the old becoming new" may represent a ruin, which, as Bommes and Wright argue, confuses the relationship between nature and history, concretizing the latter, which is really a *process*, and fixing the object within an organic cycle of decay and regeneration. This opposition is largely the difference between the Transformed Pastoral and the

where he "crawled, bowed over, like a dog" (107). "There's a Shotgunned man moulderin' in petals" (108). Suddenly, the landscape is "traumatized" (101).

Accompanying the two poems entitled "The Lonesome Death of Othello Clemence" (100, 111) is a photograph of a dead Black man. It is not entirely clear if the photos are of the same corpse; in the first, the man lies on his back, in second, on his side. In both photographs the body is nearly obscured by the foliage and small shrubs into which, it appears, it has been dumped. As in In the Skin of A Lion, the overt violence that these photographs represent undermines the dominant pastoral philosophy of 'nature as healer'. Importantly, as the photographs are not accompanied with explanatory text, the implications are both particular and universal, speaking to a tradition of intolerance in Nova Scotia where "racism is as Nova Scotian as the Blue Nose" (Bortolotti, 20).

> Founded in 1783 by African-American Loyalists seeking Liberty, Justice, and Beauty, Whylah Falls is a village in Jarvis County, Nova Scotia. Wrecked by country blues and warped by constant tears, it is a snowy northern Mississippi, with blood spattered, not on magnolias, but on pines, lilacs and wild roses. (vii)

This text is placed outside the body of the narrative, and summarizes as fact what the reader gradually discerns in a

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traditional pastoral. In this instance, Clarke's intention is not entirely clear, but the text as a whole rejects a symbolic attitude to nature.

process of discovery: that a change in landscape, despite the rhetoric of 'pastoral nationalism,' does not necessarily save one the hatred and violence that often transcends nationalist borders; and that Beauty may survive despite this, not via an acquiescence to the pastoral ideal, but by way of exposing its principles so that Beauty is not a fact, nor a delusion, but a struggle. "X, we are responsible / for Beauty" (150), writes Shelley, in "Absolution" her last words in the story.

The pictures of the corpse(s) are not the only photographs in Whylah Falls, but they retroactively endow the others with a significance that can only now be specified. As demonstrated in Lampman, the pastoral posits an organic unity between a people and a land that can be shared by the nation as a whole. The general, as Marx himself has argued, is always the dominant, the bourgeois. The Aryan figures of the Canadian pastoral are not quite the common denominator they purport to be. The landscape and the Folk are representative symbols supposedly transcending the superficial and meaningless divisions of class and region. Their failure to fully accomplish this--as well as the dubiousness of the attempt--is made explicit by the pastoral's manifest inability to sufficiently generalize race. Race remains stubbornly particular, and in relation to nationalism, political.

It seems reasonable that the pictures of the body or bodies, discovered by Clarke in the archives of the Department of National Defence, were taken in Nova Scotia. The violence surrounding their presence in the text cannot be divorced from the colour of the dead man's skin. As I stated above, the

tension between the 'naturalness' of the scene and the hostility of the act betrays the ideology of the suppression of conflict which surrounds the 'image of nature'. In a similar fashion, the pastoralism, *as pastoralism*, of the photographs featuring women posing among the pines (21), and tall grasses (43, 143, 151) of a typical Nova Scotian landscape is mitigated by the racial 'Otherness' of the participants. The logic of traditional pastoral is unable to accommodate or explain why the exchange between the landscape, the figures in the landscape, and the (white) reader-observer is not frictionless. Whylah Falls demonstrates that national or proto-nationalist landscape constitutes a limited semiotic field in which certain representations cannot be sufficiently transformed by the pastoral mechanism, the essential means national landscape is made meaningful in the first place.

In "Absolution," Shelley protests, "Nova Scotia! Nova Scotia! / Our country is more than poverty grass, / our lives are more than yellow and white earth" (150). She explicitly challenges the synonymousness of 'place' and identity, or, rather, she contests the immobilization that descends upon an identity somehow derived from landscape. Whylah Falls makes explicit the demands of the 'idea of the Folk' which, like its twin, the mythologizing proto-narrative of pastoral, is a "publicly instituted structuring of consciousness" (Bommes and Wright, 266) that demands the reification of the relationship between a people and 'their' 'natural environment'. Ian McKay, in The Quest of the Folk, terms the denial of history-as-process (dialectical and conflict-based) and its substitution

in the 'Bourgeois system of communication' by a defanged, united and continuous spectacle of natural harmony "antimodernism." The Folk are denied the privileges of a 'living' culture; they *are* the past, an object that can be displayed, a museum piece with working parts.

Essential to the "rural song" (145) that Whylah Falls relates, is the deconstruction of the 'idea of the Folk' that is structured along the lines of the pastoral ideal. McKay notes with some alarm that, often, the 'native' inhabitants of small communities are themselves willing participants in this activity. In the prose piece, "Hejiras of Pablo" Clarke acknowledges this, but not without a note of dissenting irony:

> Now, in his journey's from Halifax to Yarmouth, Pablo explores always the artists' utopia of Crow River. There he crams the suitcase in his trunk with suttle sweaters, silk scarves, and postcards whose Kodachrome tints are so incandescent, they seem to leak their pictured rivers. To live, he vends these riches to the Folk of Whylah Falls and all the other anti-twentieth century gardens of the Annapolis Valley. Watercolour country. (72)

That Pablo, "[t]o live," must traffic in these tourist trinkets, gestures outside Whylah Falls to draw attention to a market demand for 'authentic' folk productions. The text, however, emphasizes the unnaturalness of these representations ("Kodachrome tints," "incandescent"); the rivers are "pictured," not 'captured' or 'mirrored' as the rhetoric of photographic realism might put it. In the context of the

narrative, "anti-twentieth century gardens" and "watercolour country" can only be read as the ironic appellations of someone who knows otherwise. It is especially difficult to take the stated anti-modernism of this piece at face value when the facing page carries a photograph of an automobile moving on a road that seems to have been carved through the middle of farm country. In the public discourse of the Folk, the black heritage of Whylah Falls is deemed 'childhood,' 'innocence,' 'unhistorical,' 'unmodern'; the people of Whylah Falls are not allowed to grow up.

I began this chapter by noting the confusion that surrounds the form of Whylah Falls. I also stated that Clarke has helped foster this environment with his playful commentary "Discovering Whylah Falls." In the passage I quoted, Clarke writes that the poem is "an anti-modern artifice" that "has never, ever, accepted the twentieth century" (82). Given the philosophy of "antimodernism" that affixes itself to the idea of the Folk, and the rejection of history implicit in the very idea of the pastoral, these comments give pause. Is the poem inclined to perpetuate a tendency to 'naturalism'? Clarke seems to suggest that it is; he writes: "Whylah Falls [is]...an attempt to improvise a myth" (81). What sort of myth can he mean, given the generally deconstructive, linguisticly self-conscious text he has written? Barthes suggests that attention to language on the material level of the word significantly undermines a text's potential for myth. How to reconcile these opposed ideas?

It may be that Clarke heeds William Empson's suggestion that the only means to combat the myths of dominant culture is "to produce a rival myth" (16). By this, Empson seems to install myth as the only means of articulating identity within the public sphere: "the point is not that myths ought not to be used but that their use in proletarian literature is not as simple as it looks" (16). The problem with Empson's suggestion is, of course, that it fails to account for the fact that 'minority' myths are accepted only "at the expense of their transformation," (Bommes and Wright, 261) if they can gain access at all. There is no guarantee that the myth which gains access to the public realm will have its intended effect.

As I have argued, the Transformed Pastoral aims at attacking not particular myths so much as the mechanism of myth-making itself. Barthes and Marx have suggested that material transformation is key to this attack. Monique Wittig has emphasized the materialism of the use of "non-transparent" or self-reflexive language. Clarke's "open text" highlights language as a necessary but imperfect medium; it reflects a community that works upon its landscape yet which is compelled to sell postcards obscuring this fact; it draws attention to the narrative and institutional structures which prevent certain 'heritages' from being recognized. Is it mythical? No. Whether Clarke is aware of it or not, his text actually subverts the myth-making process which has helped secure the 'subjugation' of his characters and of his fictional community.

Extending this to the domain of Canadian literature--which is an institution, and operates by inclusion and exclusion--

Whylah Falls works to gain access to the canon on its own terms:

> Finally, Leadbelly bays at the moon and Buck splashes in from the corner of the page, yelping for attention. Jack leaves, slamming the door. And this song is Canadian literature.

As Benedict Anderson has aptly demonstrated, a nation imagines itself into existence, into perpetuity, by a number of means, chief among which is a "print-language" that "lays the bases for national consciousness" by "creat[ing] unified fields of exchange and communication" (44). Whylah Falls leaps into the "language field" of Canadian literature with a new imagining, or, as Clarke might put it, a new dream.

CONCLUSION

Straddling the nature/culture opposition, the pastoral has often served a nationalist discourse wherein its 'naturalized' images have been mobilized against the representations of oppositional or 'minority' heritages. Though the manifestations of 'minority cultures' are usually tolerated in private, their political efficacy--the redefinition of the national ideal--depends upon their elevation to the public sphere. As Bommes and Wright have argued, however, public inclusion may come at some cost to the 'oppositional' groups themselves whose images and symbols can be appropriated and transformed in a myth-making process.

This thesis has relied heavily upon the writings of Marx and Barthes which provide an excellent theoretical foundation for addressing this problem. Most importantly, Marx and Barthes propose a means of resisting the reifying tendencies of myth. Myth depends on a categorical confusion between 'natural' and 'artificial' (cultural or historical) ideas and representations. By showing that culture and nature are, in fact, dialectically linked and mutually dependent, the hegemony of myth--coded as 'nature'--is severely undermined. Marx and Barthes propose materialism, in fact and in language, as the discourse which reveals the inseparability of nature and culture. Marx argues that the appropriation and attenuation of nature *is* culture. Barthes extends this reasoning to a semiology of so-called 'natural' representations, suggesting that a language which seeks to transform reality is less likely

to succumb to the ossifying effects of myth. Both Marx and Barthes contend that it is the *production* of culture, rather than its objects or images, which must be regarded as historical.

I am, however, somewhat critical of Marx and Barthes, finding in The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, The German Ideology and Mythologies an insufficiently examined notion of 'nature.' In the face of their own logic, both Marx and Barthes cling to an idea of the 'natural' whose dangers far outweigh its benefits. Following Lukacs, I suggest that 'nature' is, itself, a cultural construction. In the absence of the nature/culture opposition by which its operations are supported, the myth-making process ceases to function.

Because the pastoral embodies the nature/culture opposition, it has purveyed certain myths while entrenching the myth-making mechanism in the 'language field' of literature. Pastoral is particularly efficacious at articulating a national ideal. Describing a primitive and wholesome Folk and the landscape to which they organically belong, it provides the major symbols upon which nationalism has traditionally relied. In the pastoral, the Folk and the landscape are made meaningful in the context of the limited semiotic field of pastoral-nationalism. As such, they express--seemingly in themselves--a dominant version of the 'good life' that is explicitly exclusionary of racial or ethnic minorities and the working class.

The Transformed Pastoral addresses these issues from the other side of the antimony between nature and culture. Fully

entrenched in culture--and highlighting its own textual contrivance--it pushes the pastoral to its philosophical and aesthetic limits. Following Marx and Barthes, the writers of the Transformed Pastoral demonstrate their awareness of the injurious effect of 'natural' significations. The Transformed Pastoral rejects the organic for the arbitrary, the natural for the historical. The form's defense of history-making, as well as particular histories, is clearly evident in its assault upon the conventions of classical and Romantic pastoral. Whereas the traditional pastoral shies away from depicting transformative labour, the Transformed Pastoral indulges in it. Whereas landscape exists as a static spectacle in the traditional pastoral, it is represented as dynamic, changing, in the Transformed Pastoral. Whereas the Folk of traditional pastoral are an objectified, unified and homogenous 'race,' the characters of the Transformed Pastoral are engaged in a struggle to define themselves; conflict, rather than unity, characterizes their personal and collective identities.

In the context of Canadian nationalism and literature, this means that the Transformed Pastoral adopts, as Tom Marshall puts it, a "shifting, multiple perspective" (179) that, in conception and execution, endeavours to be politically multicultural and textually polysemous. Against a critical tradition which has sought out and constructed the continuous and unconditional Canadian subject, writers of the Canadian Transformed Pastoral, like Clarke and Ondaatje, produce a contingent and practical poetics of disparity.

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