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The Pastoral Vision in Nineteenth-Century Canada

When Thomas Cary published *Abram's Plains* in 1789, he did so in the hope that his poem would be regarded as part of a colonial literature "emerging" as he states in his Preface, "from the closet to illuminate our horizon."¹ His nationalistic intent is clear from his choice of subject matter, but even more important to the literary historian than his poem is what Cary says in his Preface. In the Preface, Cary pays special tribute to the poet James Thomson who, he claims, stands unrivalled among the moderns as a descriptive poet. He goes on to acknowledge that he had also read Pope's "Windsor Forest" and Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" prior to the composition of his own poem, "with a view of endeavouring, in some degree, to catch their manner of writing" (18). These admissions are hardly surprising; the derivative and imitative quality of so much early Canadian verse — whether the imitation was acknowledged or not — has occasioned sufficient commentary from literary historians to make its repetition here unnecessary. The real import of Cary's Preface lies not in the poets he chose to emulate, but in the specific poems he turned to for his inspiration, Thomson's descriptive verse and two socially-oriented pastoral poems. Thomson's importance is metaphorical as well as actual, because he represents an incipient Romanticism which would redefine the pastoral poem as conceived of by Pope. Goldsmith is a transitional figure, both an unwilling disciple of Pope's conception of pastoral, and an unknowing precursor of Wordsworth's conception of pastoral. From the poetry of Thomson onward, the pastoral impulse, or a withdrawal from society in the direction of nature, would become a commonplace in English poetry, although the formal pastoral, embodying much the same movement, would almost completely disappear from the literary scene.²

In *To the Palace of Wisdom*, Martin Price describes "Windsor Forest" as a poem which "opens out from its pastoral landscape of art first into a pastoral vision where the energies of life are tamed into artistry, and finally into a messianic vision of a redeemed world with London as its New Jerusalem".³ It is, I submit, not coincidental that this

movement characterizes the progressive stages of the colonial experience as envisioned by a substantial number of Canadian poets well into the 1890's and after. These poets did not inhabit a land that could fairly be called a "pastoral landscape of art", but surprisingly they reacted as if they did. Their poetry could be dismissed as servile imitation of Pope or Thomson but, I suggest, their choice of specifically pastoral images requires further explication.

From the beginnings of English exploration in the New World, reports of an Edenic or paradisaical garden across the sea abound. These reports were generally exaggerated, to be sure, but so strong was the English public's willingness to believe in the infinite potential of the New World that realistic and unfavourable reports often fell on deaf ears.

The tendency to see the New World in Edenic terms continued in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when so much of the information about the New World had its source in those who had vested interest in the encouragement of colonization. However false or exaggerated these reports often were, they did provide poets with new metaphors, and with objective correlatives for old metaphors, not the least significant of which was that of a Golden Age. Sir Walter Raleigh, no stranger to the hardships involved in colonizing the New World, sincerely believed that the Terrestrial Paradise, or something akin to it, was to be found along the 35th parallel of north latitude, in that region now called North Carolina.⁴ In *De Navigatione* (1582), a poem published three years before Raleigh's first attempt to colonize North Carolina, Stephen Parmenius locates his hopes somewhat further north, and celebrates Sir Humphrey Gilbert's expedition to Newfoundland as another Argosy, one which will bring a Golden Age to war-weary England.⁵

It is in this context that one must view early works about British North American, such as Sir William Vaughn's *The Golden Fleece*, published in 1626. Vaughn spent three years as governor of the colony at Trepassy Bay, Newfoundland, and one can well imagine the hardships and privations to which he must have been subjected. But, nothing daunted by the rigours of the climate or the absence of European comforts, Vaughn wrote a fantastical allegory in which the golden fleece is rediscovered in Newfoundland. Vaughn's prose and verse allegory is prefaced with verses by John Guy, founder and governor of the settlement at Cupar's Bay, and with verses by John Mason, who succeeded Guy as governor. Although Guy quickly lost interest in the settlement he founded, he did predict from Newfoundland "A trade more rich than Jason brought to Greece."⁶ moulding his own sentiments to those of Vaughn. Robert Hayman, governor of the colony at Harbour Grace, echoes the sentiments of Vaughn and Guy in his verse miscellany, *Quodlibets*,

published in 1628, although his praise for the colony's potential is much more restrained. Hayman describes the island as wild and savage, but the climate, if not exactly tropical, is at least "wholesome", and "With little paines, lesse toyle, and lesser care,/ Exempt from taxings, ill newes, Lawing, feare," the prudent man can expect both health and wealth.⁷

The passage of time and the accumulation of more reliable information about British North America would soon curb these poetic excesses, but by no means would the colonial experience easily or quickly lay to rest the pastoral vision to which the colonization of the New World had given a renewed impetus. Initially seen as a source of wealth for Britain in terms of the fishery, furs, minerals, and timber, the British American colonies quickly acquire a worth of their own, a worth to be realized in the creation of permanent and self-sufficient settlements. Thus, the founding of Halifax in 1749 by Lord Cornwallis is indirectly celebrated in "Nova Scotia: A New Ballad", published anonymously in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in the following year.⁸ In strains reminiscent of Hayman, the ballad invites prospective colonists to Nova Scotia, "where Plenty sits Queen", noting further that

They've no duty on candles, no taxes on malt,
Nor do they, as we do, pay sauce for their salt:
But all is as free as in those times of old,
When Poets assure us the age was of gold.

One suspects that these lines might have come from the pen of some speculator, so close are they in spirit to the promotional literature which Susanna Moodie was to attack a century later in her Introduction to *Roughing it in the Bush*. If Mrs. Moodie's assessment is correct, the efficacy of such literature was tremendous:

Men who had been hopeless of supporting their families in comfort and independence at home, thought that they had only to come out to Canada to make their fortunes; almost even to realize the story told in the nursery, of the sheep and oxen that ran about the streets, ready roasted, and with knives and forks upon their backs. They were made to believe that if it did not actually rain gold, that precious metal could be obtained . . . by stooping to pick it up.⁹

Moodie's attack on the irrational optimism of many emigrants serves, in part, as a counterpart to such works as Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843), which satirize American Edenic myths. The viability of such satire is in itself an indication of the tenacity with which these myths had

taken hold of the popular imagination in Britain. As social and economic ills in England became less bearable, the idea of emigration to Canada became more attractive; in this context, visions of a pastoral society in Canada were more a reflection of social conditions at home than a realistic projection of the colonies' potential. Precisely for this reason, the initial experiences of settlers served as no deterrent to subsequent poetic visions of a new social contract. If the emigrant did not find the terrestrial paradise he hoped would await him on his arrival, he had only to apply himself, guided, as Price said of "Windsor Forest", by "a pastoral vision where the energies of life are tamed into artistry". And if his soul was poetic enough, he might also entertain the second phase of Pope's vision, "a messianic vision of a redeemed world with (a Canadian settlement) as its New Jerusalem". From Vaughn to the poets of the Confederation, (as Sandra Djwa has observed,) "the transformation of a rude landscape into a cultivated garden was a central preoccupation of English Canadian verse".¹⁰

The manner in which this transformation was celebrated varied in accordance with predominating literary tastes in England or, as was more often the case, in accordance with the tastes of a previous generation. Thus, while Cary praises Thomson as superior to Pope in descriptive ability and admires his use of blank verse, he writes his own poem in rhyming couplets. What remains constant in poetry from Cary to the Confederation period, however, is the pastoral vision, a vision of a society which has achieved as far as possible a reconciliation between art and nature, or is in the process of attempting this reconciliation. Combined with this vision of an emerging social order is the tendency to view the landscape in Romantic and picturesque terms, a tendency which gives the pastoral vision an added degree of resiliency in its confrontation with the ragged edges of the Canadian landscape. Through the Romantic looking glass, even the formal pastoral design of Pope and his literary mentors could be discerned in a landscape that much later poets would see primarily in terms of "Cedar and jagged fir/(Uplifting) sharp barbs".¹¹

In *Quebec Hill or Canadian Scenery*, written in 1797 by J. MacKay, the poet begins with a description of rural Quebec that combines formal pastoral elements and romantic sensibility:

The lawns of Virgil, and his sylvan shade,
 Tho' in the poets' choicest colours clad,
 Should here confess description more sublime
 Could my weak numbers emulate the clime.¹²

MacKay's rural landscape is essentially that of Virgils' *Eclogues*; in this landscape the Canadian Tityrus is bounded by the city, "cultures charms" on the one hand, and the vast tracts of forest. "Nature simple and sublime" on the other. The poet makes no attempt to disguise the fact that domesticated nature constitutes only a small portion of the landscape, and even in his description of the habitants' farms he seems aware of his proclivity for the picturesque:

Yet as the landscape, thus, in part pourtray'd
Admits of light, it will admit of shade:
Tho' gay the scene, with varied foliage shows
And, viewed from far, in richer verdure glows:
More near is seen, the harvest-choaking tare,
And pointed thistles on each hand appear. (56-57)

As in the prospect pieces of the earlier part of the century, MacKay's pastoral vision depends upon a view from a height where, "realized the ideal scene appears." When the poet descends from his height either literally or metaphorically, he points out that "dread diseases rise from foetid fens," that "savage beasts" and "savage nations" inhabit the hinterland and that, however Arcadian the rural setting may appear, "blind Superstition," "artful Priestcraft," and "papal mists obscure the peasant's mind." MacKay concludes by noting that Canada, like England, is being victimized by the "restless sons of strife." but that given the choice, he would rather retire to England.

A more committed and more optimistic observer was Cornwall Bayley, whose *Canada: A Descriptive Poem* was published in 1806.¹³ The emphasis of the poem is actually upon the history and customs of Canada, rather than upon its landscape, although it too begins as a prospect piece. As in MacKay's poem, the rural landscape is seen in pastoral terms, "the bloom of vales — the garniture of fields;" as in formal pastoral poetry, this landscape is bounded on either perimeter by the city, "the glittering spire — the ramparts' massy tower," and by the wilderness, "the wood primeval." Unlike MacKay's, however, Bayley's pastoralism is not simply the product of the distanced view but has, in fact, a social dimension. Especially significant are Bayley's reflections on the French Revolution and on American republicanism, and his certainty that Canada is free of these dangerous proclivities:

Yet wherefore thus th' unpleasing theme pursue?
Why bring such horrors to Canada's view?
Her crimes abjuring, guiltless of her shame,
She knows not ought of Gallia but the name;

Nought but the cheerful sunshine of the breast,
 The active labour or the wanted rest,
 The simple song - the pipe - the rural choir
 Charms that *once* bloom'd amidst the vales of Loire! (85)

This final image, of Canada as a place where the glory of Europe's rural past can be recovered, is especially important because, although Bayley resided in Canada for only three years, he hit upon an image that would become a prominent motif in Canadian literature for at least the next century. The vision of a lost rural innocence, as Raymond Williams points out, lies at the heart of the English pastoral poem from Goldsmith onwards, displacing from its position of prominence the idealized and formal landscapes of the pastoral poem in the Augustan period.¹⁴

The formal pastoral poem, as in the first version of "Windsor Forest" and as described by Pope in his "Discourse on Pastoral Poetry", is modelled on that of Theocritus, and has its impulse in the "unmotivated recommendation of simple, native virtues".¹⁵ This form was to die an unlamented death in the middle of the eighteenth century, attended by two important developments. The first of these was the renewed interest in physical nature, beginning with Thomson and Dyer and culminating in the Romantic movement. The second of these was the social upheaval occasioned by the parliamentary enclosures and the coincident advent of the factory system. These latter developments provided the impetus for Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*; and although Goldsmith was not entirely free of the follies he attacked in the academic pastoral, his poem was free of the besetting sin of the formal pastoral, its refusal to display a social conscience or even to address itself to the actual conditions of rural life. Ironically, as Crabbe was to make clear, Goldsmith also idealized rural life, imaging it in terms as unrealistic as those of Pope's "Discourse" or his early pastorals. The irony is compounded when one realizes that Crabbe, for all his seeming realism, falls prey to the same rural myth, and describes the pastoral in terms very reminiscent of Pope's "Discourse":

Fled are those times, when in harmonius strains
 The rustic poet praised his native plains:
 No shepherds now, in smooth alternate verse,
 Their country's beauty or their nymph's rehearse.¹⁶

Crabbe, like Goldsmith, accepts that the pastoral vision had an historical basis; Goldsmith's error, apparently, was not in idealizing village life, but in suggesting that he could recall that ideal life.¹⁷

At the heart of this pastoral vision is what Raymond Williams calls "the perpetual retrospect to an 'organic' or 'natural' society," a very powerful myth in which "the transition from a rural to an industrial society is seen as a kind of fall (from innocence), the true cause and origin of our social suffering and disorder."¹⁸ In the *Political Register* for March 15, 1806, for example, the radical journalist William Cobbett denounces the taxing and funding system which has "drawn the real property of the nation into fewer hands", and in February, 1807, he declared from the pages of his journal that even the face of honest poverty has been altered: "I wish to see", he states, "the poor men of England what the poor men of England were when I was born; and from endeavouring to accomplish this wish, nothing but the want of the means shall make me desist".¹⁹

When one considers the circumstances, social and economic, which prompted so many Englishmen to emigrate to Canada, the emergence of a pastoral vision in which a rural order defeated in England is revitalized in the Canadas becomes less difficult to apprehend. Perhaps even the imposition of a formal pastoral design on a rugged landscape becomes understandable as part of a process of idealization. Cobbett and his followers saw their salvation in "a retreat to a benevolently ruled peasant society devoid of machines".²⁰ Some of them believed, or at least hoped, that England could return to a cottage economy. Others, like Mrs. Gaskell in the conclusion of her novel *Mary Barton* (1848), seem to hold out little hope for a solution at home, and see emigration to Canada as the only recourse.²¹ Not everyone, as the writings of Cobbett clearly indicate, agreed with emigration as a specific, and not everyone who emigrated to Canada did so to escape the ills of industrialization.²² But, once they found themselves in the colony, a surprising number of poets would address themselves to these issues, whether they had been personally affected by them or not. The example of Cornwall Bayley, a graduate of Christ's College, Cambridge, is instructive. In praising the virtues of life in Canada, he employs a language which echoes almost exactly the tones of his contemporary, Cobbett. Here, again, is a passage from Cobbett, from the *Political Register* for March, 1806:

... from one end of England to the other, the houses which formerly contained little farmers and their happy families, are now seen sinking into ruins, all the windows except one or two stopped up, leaving just light enough for some labourer, whose father was, perhaps, the small farmer, to look back upon his half-naked and half-famished children, while from his door, he surveys all around him the land teeming with the means of luxury to his opulent and overgrown master . . .²³

Compare with these lines from Bayley's *Canada: A Descriptive Poem*, published in the same year:

Here persecution tempts not from his door,
 To seek a gentler rule the pious poor;
 No griping landlord with oppression's rod,
 Drives the poor tenant from his sweet abode;
 No wretch with one monopolizing hand
 Spreads crafty famine o'er a plenteous land;²⁴

Bayley is, of course, describing rural life in French Canada and contrasting it to social conditions in France. With true patriotic fervour and not a little delicacy, Bayley praises Britain and laments "Charms that *once* bloom'd amidst the vales of Loire." Clearly, however, his remarks are equally applicable to England, and most of his audience would see through to the thinly veiled attack. Some of Bayley's successors, most notably Alexander MacLachlan, would be less hesitant to point explicitly to social ills at home as counterpoints to their vision of the colony's potential. MacLachlan, however, would go on to attribute similar evils to Canada in his major work, and it would be more useful, at this point, to consider earlier poets, in whom the vision of a pastoral order is relatively pure.

When the Canadian Oliver Goldsmith published *The Rising Village* in 1825, his intention was to contrast the growth of a rural society in the Maritimes with the decline of rural society in England and Ireland as lamented by his great-uncle:

If, then adown your cheek a tear should flow
 For Auburn's Village, and its speechless woe;
 If, while you weep, you think the "lowly train"
 Their early joys can never more regain,
 Come, turn with me where happier prospects rise,
 Beneath the sternness of Acadian skies.²⁵

In the narrative that follows, Goldsmith traces the development of Acadia from its crude pioneer beginnings to an idealized present. Verbal and contextual echoes constantly remind his readers of his great-uncle's poem, using its nostalgic vision of vanished rural innocence as a dramatic counterpart to his own vision of a realized pastoral order:

Here crops of grain in rich luxuriance rise,
 And wave their golden riches to the skies;
 There smiling orchards interrupt the scene,
 On gardens bounded by some fence of green;

The farmer's cottage, bosomed 'mong the trees,
 Whose spreading branches shelter from the breeze;
 The winding stream that turns the busy mill,
 Whose clacking echoes o'er the distant hill;
 The neat white church, beside whose walls are spread
 The grass-clad hillocks of the sacred dead . . . (12)

In spite of this idealization, Goldsmith does not minimize the difficulties of the pioneering experience. Besides the physical hardships and the danger from "wandering savages, and beasts of prey," the emerging community must suffer the ministrations of a "half-bred Doctor," who "cures, by chance, or ends each human ill," and a school-master "Whose greatest source of knowledge or of skill/Consists in reading , and in writing ill." (6,7) These, however, are simply the vicissitudes of every infant culture, limitations which Acadia will overcome with as much alacrity as that displayed by Britannia in shedding the ignorance and superstition of its own "infant age," to become "the first and brightest star of Europe's clime." (13)

The apostrophe to Britain and Empire is a standard feature of nineteenth-century narrative poetry in Canada, and it points up the unconscious dualism of much colonial writing. Even Alexander MacLachlan, who had taken some part in the Chartist agitations preceding the First Reform Bill, and who might have had reason to regard his emigration with bitterness, expresses an intense loyalty to Britain in his poetry. But, as George Woodcock has observed in another context, "pioneer cultures are inevitably conservative; the continuity of values and forms must be preserved precisely because experience is changing."²⁶ Thus, Goldsmith nostalgically but grandiloquently praises the parent culture, firm in his conviction that Acadia can become great only through its continued connection with Britain. The social ills which inspired his great-uncle are momentarily forgotten; guided by the principles which made England great, Acadia will grow to be "the wonder of the western skies . . . Till empires rise and sink, on earth, no more." (14)

To some degree, Goldsmith's pastoralism, like that of some of his predecessors, is a function of diction, "the continuity of forms and values." On occasion, the Nova Scotian Goldsmith uses the heroic couplet to ironic effect, more in the manner of Pope than of the English Goldsmith. This is especially evident in his descriptions of the rude figures who gather to create the first pioneer village. In his descriptions of nature and of the rural scene, however, he is more reminiscent of eighteenth-century descriptive poets like Dyer, Thomson, or Cowper, as he is in the following prospect:

How sweet it is, at first approach of morn,
 Before the silvery dew has left the lawn,
 When warring winds are sleeping yet on high,
 Or breathe as softly as the bosom's sigh,
 To gain some easy hill's ascending height,
 Where all the landscape brightens with delight,
 And boundless prospects stretched on every side,
 Proclaim the country's industry and pride. (11)

Except for the reference to "warring winds" and the suggestion of vigour and newness in the last line, these lines might have come from Dyer's "Grongar Hill" or, in spite of the heroic couplet, from Cowper's "The Task." The language itself, in other words, creates the impression of a domesticated rather than a hostile landscape. But to focus only on the conventional diction would be to miss the point; all of the poets cited thus far have demonstrated that they can evoke the moods of a harsh environment. Even in a vigorous literary climate, a poetic diction changes slowly in ordinary circumstances; in colonial literatures one must focus not on the diction, but on the vision it serves. In Goldsmith and in subsequent Canadian narrative poets, the vision celebrates the imposition of a human form on the wilderness, and in this respect the use of language more appropriate to the domesticated landscape of England is quite appropriate. This is not to say that the diction of pastoralia was always wisely employed; one recoils in amazement when, in Joseph Howe's description, "the gay moose in jocund gambol springs, / Cropping the foliage Nature round him flings."²⁷ Lines like these, fortunately, are not representative, least of all of Howe's poetic ability.

In his narrative poem, *Acadia*, Joseph Howe's vision is very close to that outlined in *The Rising Village* and, in spite of the poem's incompleteness, it is in many respects superior to Goldsmith's poem. Goldsmith's design was dictated by his granduncle's concerns in *The Deserted Village*; Howe is also largely indebted to this latter poem but his debt is thematic rather than structural. Throughout *Acadia* Howe emphasizes the theme of exile. He applies it, in turn, to the first generation Canadian, who will never willingly abandon his native land; to the Indian, whose resistance to white settlement is seen as justifiable; to the pioneer, whose emigration is seen as the result of a crumbling agrarian order in Britain; to the Acadians, the memory of whose expulsion in 1775 moves the poet to cry for "the Bard of Auburn's melting strain;" and finally, to all other emigrants, the English and the United Empire Loyalists, who come to Acadia as to Canaan:

Here England's sons, by fortune led to roam,
 Now find a peaceful and a happy home;
 The Scotchman rears his dwelling by some stream,
 So like to that which blends with boyhood's dream,
 That present joys with old world thoughts combined
 Repress the sigh for those he left behind;
 And here the wanderer from green Erin's shore
 Tastes of delights he seldom knew before. (36)

Both Howe's sympathy for the exile, especially for the Indians and the displaced French Acadians, and his frequent verbal echoes of the elder Goldsmith, emphasize the social dimensions of his pastoral vision. His initial view of the Indians, for example, deliberately invokes the image of the noble savage, whose simple life and intrinsic virtue are viewed in what can only be described as aboriginal pastoral: "for sweet content/Which thrones have not, makes rich the Indian's tent." (24) The pioneer experience with marauding Micmacs will deflate this sentimental view later in the poem, but the deflation is as much dramatic necessity as historical accuracy. Just as Virgil's pastoral poems move from "The Dispossessed" to "The Golden Age Returns," so Howe's pastoral vision moves from "the discord and the fears/That soiled Acadia's infant face with tears" to a point in time when "Of scenes like these you now shall find no trace/On fair Acadia's calm and smiling face." (32, 35)

In spite of his vehemently imperial attachment to Britain, Howe does not shrink from condemning the "law's unequal weight," the "rival parties" and the "lordly churchman," whose conduct has necessitated emigration for many from England to Canada. For Howe, as for most narrative poets who succeed him, Canada is part of what William Wilfred Campbell would later designate "the vaster Britain." Canadian society, in other words, is not simply an alternate to British society but is an adjunct to it, a very special adjunct because of its regenerative power. Stephen Parmenius and William Vaughn saw Canada's potential in terms of material wealth; for Howe and his contemporaries this material wealth, inequitably distributed in England, has given Canada a very different role. In England, "the listless sons of wealth and pride repose/Nor heed the poor man's toil — the poor man's woes." (39) In Howe's Acadia, "Honest Industry" and "humble hopes" lead to "calm contentment." (36)

At the centre of Howe's vision of Acadia's potential is a sense of the balance between art and nature supposedly upset in Britain by the advent of the factory system. Howe addresses himself to this issue rhetorically:

But has not Time, that drowned the din of arms,
 Defaced Acadia's wild and simple charms,
 Broke the deep spells of woodland and solitude,
 And banished Nature with a hand too rude?
 Oh! no, together Art and Nature reign,
 Smile on the mountain top and deck the plain; (36)

The youth of the colony and the vastness of the physical environment contribute to this equilibrium and perhaps because of his place in history, Howe did not envision a situation in which this equilibrium would be shset. Although *Acadia* was composed in the 1830's, it was not published until a year after Howe's death in 1873. Even before Howe's death, the pastoral vision to which he had subscribed had undergone some dramatic modifications at the hands of other writers.

Between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the mid-1850's, almost a million people emigrated from Great Britain to British North America, tripling the British population in the colonies. Commenting on this influx in an essay published in Montreal in 1855, J. Sheridan Hogan makes these observations:

. . . the wrongs of Princes, and the poverty of Nations, have been the chief causes of settlement of (British North) America. Her prosperity is the offspring of European hopelessness. Her high position in the world is the result of the sublime efforts of despair. And he who would learn who they are who divide among them the splendid property created in Canada has but to go to the quays of Liverpool, of Dublin, of Glasgow, and of Hamburg, and see the emigrants there embarking, who knew neither progress nor hopes where they were born, to satisfy himself to the fullest. . . .²⁸

In 1840, the quay in Glasgow contained Alexander MacLachlan, who was leaving behind him Chartist embroilments and the life of a weaver to claim his emigrant father's farm in Peel County, Ontario. Unlike any of the poets described thus far, MacLachlan had little formal education; unlike them, too, he would not emulate the eighteenth-century genteel tradition in poetry. MacLachlan would speak, rather, with the voice of a Canadian Burns or, in his lectures to mechanics and tradesmen, with the voice of a Canadian Carlyle.²⁹

In the *Canadian Idylls*, MacLachlan celebrates the land of his adoption with a vigour hitherto unparalleled by an emigré. In these poems, he makes explicit his belief in the power of the new land to foster a new social contract, based on a genuine Christian humanitarianism. With Carlylean sonarity he denounces the worship of Mammon, insisting always upon the sufficiency of an agrarian life:

Up, be stirring, be alive!
 Get upon a farm and thrive!
 He's a king upon a throne
 Who has acres of his own! (201)

MacLachlan's moral energy never fails him, but his optimism, unfortunately, fades all too quickly. In grim contrast to this exhortation are the concluding lines of his major work, *The Emigrant*, published in 1861, in which he traces the changes wrought by three generations of pioneers. In a thinly disguised parable, one of the characters, an advocate of cooperative agrarianism, recalls the past in tones highly suggestive of Goldsmith's recollections of Sweet Auburn:

Yea, they were a happy band,
 Cultivating their own land;
 Herds and flocks did fast increase,
 And they ate their bread in peace.
 Now my inference is plain,
 What has been may be again.
 Just compare their simple ways
 With the doings in our days. (232)

As the last lines of this quotation suggest, this pastoral society has failed to survive, and in spite of the suggestion that it might be revitalized, the vision of a pastoral order is for MacLachlan simply a fond hope. What was in Goldsmith and Howe a matter of idealized conviction becomes with MacLachlan a nostalgic memory. The agrarian pastoral order envisioned by MacLachlan's spokesman is defeated in the poem by the historical process, more specifically, by the growth of competitive capitalism. *The Emigrant* concludes with an admission that the "simple honest ways" of the narrator's predecessors have been lost, that the country is now overrun by "swarms of public robbers, / Speculators, and land jobbers," and a multitude of others "on spoil intent." (256)

MacLachlan is almost the last Canadian narrative poet to entertain, however tenuously, the notion of a pastoral order as a social ideal. There would be those who, like Isabella Valancy Crawford, would still proclaim that "these wild woods and plains are fairer far / Than Eden's self."³⁰ But even in Crawford there is a change in key, a new temper which reduces the dimensions of Howe's vision from the social to the personal sphere. When, at the conclusion of *Malcolm's Katie* the heroine declares

I would not change these wild and rocking woods,
 Dotted by little homes of unbark'd trees,

Where dwell the fleers from the waves of want,
 For the smooth sward of selfish Eden bowers,
 Nor — Max for Adam, if I knew my mind! (190)

our new world Eve gives utterance to a social vision internalized, given credibility by its lyric intensity alone. Crawford herself is only too aware of the changes time has wrought in the young nation. The hopes of the early pioneers could be summarized in the image of

four walls, perhaps a lowly roof;
 Kine in a peaceful posture; modest fields;
 A man and woman standing hand in hand
 In hale old age, who, looking o'er the land,
 Say: 'Thank the Lord, it is all mine and thine! (160)

These modest expectations and simple virtues, however, belong to a pioneer past that is perceived, as early as 1884, as irrevocably lost. MacLachlan had seen the rural virtues fading and losing ground as early as 1861, and there is some evidence to suggest that Crawford was familiar with MacLachlan's work. In a passage which seems deliberately designed to evoke the figure of MacLachlan, Crawford comments on the figure of the lean weaver who, having left the loom behind, can look forward to "the ploughing of his fields,/And to the rose of Plenty in the cheeks/Of wife and children." (166) The passage ends echoing MacLachlan's favorite phrase, "Mine own!" and is followed by a passage which relegates MacLachlan himself to the pioneer past:

Then came smooth-coated men with eager eyes
 And talk'd of steamers on the cliff-bound lakes,
 And iron tracks across the prairie lands,
 And mills to crush the quartz of wealthy hills,
 And mills to saw the great wide-arm'd trees,
 And mills to grind the singing stream of grain; (167)

Crawford's narrative is subtitled "A Love Story," and not surprisingly these dark undertones give way to the power of love and to the heroine's vision of a restored Eden. Nevertheless, it is these undertones and the pessimism of the historically aware villain of the poem which give the poem much of its dramatic power.

Malcolm's Katie, published in 1884, is the last significant long narrative poem to appear in Canada until the emergence of E.J. Pratt as a narrative poet half a century later. Crawford's is also the last major poem in which the pastoral vision plays an important role as a collective ideal. Even so, the social orientation of *Malcolm's Katie* strikes an uneasy balance with the lyrical and the personal.³¹ In some ways, Crawford's poem contains a paradigmatic struggle between the public

and the private voice, with victory going to the latter. The long narrative poem, as it developed in Canada in the nineteenth century, was basically a vehicle for expressing what the poet conceived to be the national ethos. This could also be done in the political ode and the patriotic sonnet, but the shorter poem simply lacked the scope for giving expression to anything more than personal convictions or vague sentiments. This is not to say that the pastoral vision which has been the focus of this preview found its expression solely in the longer form, but only that it was most fully articulated in the longer form. The virtual disappearance of the long narrative poem after Crawford testifies to the inability of poets after Confederation to speak confidently with a public voice. The pastoral idealism of Goldsmith and Howe, of Crawford and MacLachlan, had been defeated by the rise of competitive individualism and the capitalist ethic, but not unaided by other factors. Eighteenth-century poetic diction, admirably suited to the idealism which saw rugged wilderness in domesticated terms, gradually gives way to the more strident diction of those who perceive Nature in increasingly Darwinian terms. The ordered world view of the Augustans, as typified in the metrical regularity and stylized vocabulary of Goldsmith or Howe, gives way to the more passionate, more individualistic language and vision of the Romantic poets. And finally, it was perhaps inevitable that men of learning would come to the realization that the pastoral vision was never more than a vision, that what had been celebrated was an *idea* of innocence and order as ephemeral, after all, as Goldsmith's Sweet Auburn.

As a socially cohesive vision, the concept of Canada as a restored pastoral society disappears from view, although elements of this vision will reappear in some of the emigrant literature in the pre-war decades of the twentieth century. At a personal level, however, the vision remains viable, not as a persuasive social myth but as an image that individual poets can use to test moral and artistic possibilities. In *Butterfly on Rock*, Doug Jones has explored at length what he calls the "Old Testament world" of Canadian literature.³² At the centre of this world is the figure of Adam in exile, variously perceived as a sleeping or dreaming shepherd, a "sleeping giant" who is "the personification of a world order, lost or as yet undiscovered." (15) Canadian literature, Jones declares, "exhibits not only a sense of exile, or alienation from a vital community, but also a sense of expectation, or restoration to that community," most frequently imaged as a garden. (15) Jones is concerned primarily with the literature of this century, and without an historical context his imposition of the archetypal patterns of the Old Testament on the literature may seem arbitrary. Even less acceptable than this arbitrariness, however, would be the notion that these images occur

repeatedly as the result of some extravagant and monumental coincidence. Neither attitude, I submit, is necessary if Jones's Old Testament archetypes are seen, at least in part, as a continuation of the attitudes and images originating in a pastoral view of Canadian society. In Archibald Lampman's poetry, for example, there is a marked ambivalence in attitudes to nature and to the city.³³ On the one hand, nature is a place of solace, a Wordsworthian retreat in which his world-weary soul regathers its dreams. On the other hand, nature is perceived as a wasteland, a "charnel solitude" which fails in its usual transcendental function. So too with the city; perceived from afar, it takes its place on "Earth with the glory of life on her breast, / Earth with the gleam of her cities and streams." Perceived from within, the city is a "furnace of care," inimical to beauty and to human life itself.

Underlying this ambivalence in Lampman is a tension which finds its positive resolution in dream or enchanted reverie, its negative resolution in nightmare. At the centre of Lampman's nightmarish vision is the industrial city and the despoilation of nature that it represents. But, as he points out in "The City of the End of Things:"

It was not always so, but once
 In days that no man thinks upon,
 Fair voices echoed from its stones,
 The light above it leaped and shone:
 Once there were multitudes of men
 That built that city in their pride,
 Until its might was made, and then
 They withered, age by age and died.

The city here, a medieval image which Lampman borrowed from the Pre-Raphaelites, represents a vanished, idealized order not unlike that lamented by MacLachlan or Crawford. This ideal order is at the centre of Lampman's positive vision, significantly apprehended by the poet in the dreaming state. In Jones's formulation, Lampman's persona is a "dreaming shepherd in whose faithful sleep the plenitude of Eden is preserved." We can alternately see Lampman's dreaming persona as a modern Meloebius, either recalling an ideal past in which the pastoral estate was bounded by the wilderness and the city, but in real danger from neither, or anticipating the recovery of such an ideal order. In either formulation, of course, he is an historical extension of the persona of MacLachlan's and Crawford's narrative poems.

A similar rural myth can be discerned in Duncan Campbell Scott's *In the Village of Viger*, in which the first story begins with the lines, "It was too true that the city was growing rapidly. As yet its arms were not long enough to embrace the village of Viger, but before long they would be, and it was not a time that the inhabitants looked forward to with any

pleasure."³⁹ In this and subsequent sketches, Scott repeatedly invokes Arcadian images, and stresses the village's idyllic setting. This volume, however, is a lament for, rather than a celebration of, village life. Through themes of war, mechanization, human greed and folly, Scott traces the disintegration of the once idyllic village. The ironic undertones in Scotts' treatment of village life become the major key in Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* and *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*. Douglas Spettigue has cogently argued that, viewed as complementary commentaries on Canadian and American Life, these two books provide us with a fable of identity in which Leacock questions "the value of our survival if to survive means only to become a Canadian Plutonia, and (defines) for us, as far as imagination can, what that small town nation was whose passing we may have to lament."³⁵ Leacock was not alone; his lament has been taken up in novels and essays by Frederick Philip Grove and Hugh MacLennan, Ernest Buckler and George Grant.

In poetry, the lost pastoral ideal has been evoked by a myriad of poets as different as P.K. Page and Al Purdy, but none, I think, are as succinct as Abraham Klein in his poem "Filling Station:"

With snakes of rubber and glass thorax,
like dragons rampant,
statistical, red with ambush,
they ambuscade the highway.

Only in the hinterland, and for neighbours,
the extant blacksmith drives
archaic nails into the three-legged horse.

But on Route 7
the monsters coil and spit from iron mouths
potent saliva.

(Beyond the hills, of course;
the oxen, lyric with horns, still draw
the cart and the limping wheels.)

For Klein, as for most Canadian poets, the symbols of industrialism continue to be monstrous, the "potent saliva" of the filling station notwithstanding. As a countervailing force, Klein offers us the images of a pastoral order, albeit one truncated by the incursions of the machine. The vision remains, however; the pressures of an industrial age have given the pastoral vision a crippling blow, but they have not managed to drive it out of the Canadian psyche.

Notes

1. *Three Early Poems from Lower Canada*, ed. Michael Gnarowski (Montreal 1968), p. 18.
2. Leo Marx, *The Machine in The Garden: Technology and The Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York 1964), p. 232.
3. Martin Price, *To The Palace of Wisdom* (Garden City 1964), p. 149.
4. Louis Wright, ed., *The Elizabethan's America* (Cambridge 1966), p. 1.
5. *The New Found Land of Stephen Parmenius*, ed. and trans. David Quinn and Neil Cheshire (Toronto 1972), p. 23.
6. Cited by David Galloway in *Literary History of Canada*, ed. Carl Klinck (Toronto 1973), p. 13.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
8. *Canadian Anthology*, ed. Carl Klinck (Toronto 1966), p. 3.
9. Susanna Moodie, *Roughing It in the Bush*, ed. Carl Klinck (Toronto 1965), p. xxii.
10. Sandra Djwa, "Litterae ex Machina," *The Humanities Association Review*, XXV (Winter 1974), p. 23.
11. A.J.M. Smith, "The Lonely Land."
12. *Three Early Poems*, p. 45
13. *Ibid.*
14. Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London 1975).
15. Anthony Holden, in his Introduction to *Greek Pastoral Poetry* (Harmondsworth 1974), p. 25.
16. George Crabbe, *The Village*, 1783.
17. For a fuller discussion of the transformations of the pastoral poem see Williams's "Pastoral and Counter-Pastoral" in *The Country and The City*, pp. 23ff.
18. Williams, p. 121.
19. Cited by Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth 1963), p. 32.
20. Richard Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas* (New York 1973), p. 90.
21. In *Culture and Society 1780-1950*, pp. 99ff, Williams points out that emigration is only one of a number of devices that writers like Gaskell, Dickens and Kingsley employed as *deus ex machinae* to resolve the difficulties in their industrial novels. Williams's point is that these writers had to go outside of the industrial situation to express their values.
22. Planned emigration had been advocated as a solution to economic ills in England from Malthus onward. For a discussion of the debate between its adherents and its critics see Williams's *Culture and Society*, pp. 91ff.
23. Cited by Williams in *Culture and Society*, p. 32-33.
24. *Three Early Poems from Lower Canada*, p. 90.
25. *Nineteenth-Century Narrative Poems*, ed. David Sinclair (Toronto 1971), p. 2.
26. George Woodcock, "The Journey of Discovery" in *Colony and Confederation* ed. George Woodcock (Vancouver 1974), p. 28.
27. Joseph Howe, *Acadia in Nineteenth-Century Narrative Poems*, p. 22.
28. J. Sheridan Hogan, "Canada: An Essay (1855)" in *The Frontier Thesis and the Canadas: The Debate on The Impact of the Canadian Environment*, ed., Michael J. Cross (Toronto 1970), p. 71.
29. Margaret E. Fulton, in her Introduction to *The Poetical Works of Alexander MacLachlan*, (Toronto 1974), p. XV.
30. *Malcolm's Katie*, in *Nineteenth-Century Narrative Poems*, p. 190.
31. Woodcock, p. 40
32. Doug Jones, *Butterfly on Rock* (Toronto 1973), p. 15.
33. In his discussion, Jones places Charles G.D. Roberts and Archibald Lampman on the periphery, "more distant in time and in connection with the Old Testament archetype," (p. 17) suggesting the degree to which Jones sees his thesis as applicable only to twentieth-century Canadian literature.
34. Duncan Campbell Scott, *In The Village of Viger and Other Stories*, ed. S.L. Dragland (Toronto 1973), p. 19.
35. Douglas Spettigue, "A Partisan Reading of Leacock" *The Literary Half-Yearly*, XIII (July 1972), p. 179-80.