

PASTORAL AND ANTI-PASTORAL ELEMENTS
IN
SELECTED TRAGEDIES OF SHAKESPEARE

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I wish to place on record the debt of gratitude I owe to my supervisor

Dr I J Avin

DECLARATION

I, Thribhawardutt Ramnath Audan, (Registration Number 981209656)

hereby declare that, unless otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other tertiary educational institution.

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All textual references to the plays are from The Arden Shakespeare

ABSTRACT

While a good deal of attention has been paid to pastoral and, less frequently, to anti-pastoral elements in Shakespeare's comedies and romances, the same does not hold for his tragedies. Granted, pastoral features, as one would expect, are not conspicuous in the tragic plays, but even their anti-pastoral ones have not received extended treatment. That is, they have not received extended treatment as *anti-pastoral manifestations*. So, for example, the furious tempest in *King Lear* has frequently been seen as a cataclysmic perturbation of Nature, and/or as an expression and reflection of Lear's condition, but only rarely as an anti-pastoral phenomenon. That is a gap this thesis seeks to fill.

In treating of pastoral and its opposite in the three plays selected for study – *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Othello* – we have not been bound by a literal understanding of the genres in question. A broad interpretation has been preferred, in keeping with recent trends. Consequently, shepherds and shepherdesses will not be in evidence in the ensuing pages. Instead, the terms 'pastoral' and 'anti-pastoral' are understood to refer to such categories as setting, mood and attributes. Thus, for example, we spotlight the pastoral-like ambience of Macbeth's seat at Inverness when Duncan arrives there. The term 'pastoral' further implies attributes such as simplicity, innocence, honesty, forthrightness, naturalness, loyalty, trustworthiness, trustfulness, decency, kindness, serenity, and a natural dignity, courtesy and modesty. The term 'anti-pastoral' implies a checklist of contrary qualities, few, if any, of them coloured by rural associations linked to the subgenre's historical development as a riposte to what was seen as pastoral's idealising falsification of the true conditions of rural life.

Following an introductory chapter that offers a historical and theoretical sketch of the pastoral genre and the anti-pastoral reaction to it, each of the selected plays is accorded a close reading in terms of the pastoral and anti-pastoral criteria adumbrated above, with the emphasis falling, naturally enough, on anti-pastoral manifestations.

INTRODUCTION

My intention in embarking on this research project based on a relatively fresh dimension in the study of Shakespeare's tragedies is to show that elements of both pastoral and anti-pastoral are discoverable in the plays. While it is a commonly accepted fact that Shakespeare used the pastoral mode in the comedies, I advance the thesis that he also made use of pastoral devices (as well as of anti-pastoral ones) in the tragedies.

Pastoral is an ancient literary genre, and over the centuries it has received generous treatment from both scholars and practitioners alike. The literature on the genre is voluminous and theories about it are many and varied. Its reception has at times been cold, even hostile, at other times warm and marked by esteem. The nineteenth century critic Edmund Gosse regarded it with disdain, referring to it as 'cold, unnatural, artificial' (in Congleton, 3), while in the twentieth century writers such as Helen Cooper accorded it great respect for its 'remarkable symbolic richness'(1). These clashing views occupy positions at opposite ends of a continuum. Most of the opinions on pastoral fall somewhere between them.

Shakespeare's use of pastoral is not in dispute. He used it in the comedies and romances where scholars and critics have accorded it a fair amount of attention, but the use of pastoral in the tragedies has not attracted anything like the same interest – perhaps because pure pastoral, with shepherds and shepherdesses reposing in serene glades, is not a visible feature of the tragic plays as it is of plays such as *As You Like It*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. (Although, in *As You Like It*, Shakespeare

subjects the convention to an acid test, demonstrating that a pastoral setting (the Forest of Arden) is not without imperfections and that even there anti-pastoral forces are at work.

In this study I propose to show that both pastoral and anti-pastoral elements may be found in Shakespeare's tragedies. I have selected for analysis three plays which together furnish a body of evidence sufficient for the substantiation of my thesis. The plays are *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*

In these dramas there are no shepherds or shepherdesses; nor will one find the tree-shaded, brook-fed meadows that traditionally adorn the pastoral scene. The pastoral evocations are produced instead by references (rather glancing, in many cases) to the countryside and by pressing into service accepted pastoral referents which find expression in the utterances of some of the characters that are brought to life on Shakespeare's tragic stage.

Pastoral was a popular mode of literary expression in the European Renaissance. It 'gave the poet a relaxed atmosphere in which he could explore love and various philosophies of life independent of immediate existential reality' (Johnstone, xlii).

As a vehicle for the expression of philosophies of life, the pastoral mode is, in principle, attuned to tragedy, perhaps even more than to comedy. Profound truths and lofty thoughts can be dissipated in the often rowdy atmosphere of comedy, but in tragedy, where seriousness of focus is the rule, room exists for the philosophical strain in pastoral to be heard.

A common theme of pastoral is love. James Smith argues that ‘a “tragic note or undertone [was] ...inseparable from pastoral” because an essential focus was on the question of love’ (in Johnstone, xlii). *King Lear* and *Othello* explore this theme of love that brings with it both joy and torment. And, certainly, Othello’s earliest exchanges with Desdemona contain, in their freshness and fullness of joy, a pastoral echo.

At the outset of the three tragedies under consideration, each of the protagonists enjoys a state of relative contentment. The forces, unleashed in part by their own mistakes, which operate to destroy their contentment and, in the end, their lives, may legitimately be viewed as anti-pastoral manifestations since the characteristics of which they are composed – betrayal, duplicity, violence, malice, dissimulation, disloyalty, cunning, cruelty – so conspicuously run counter to the pastoral values of sincerity, naturalness, openness, honesty, kindness, trustfulness, innocence, tranquillity. In the analysis of the three tragedies conducted in the pages that follow, both pastoral and anti-pastoral tendencies will be brought under scrutiny; however, since we have to do with tragedy, the disruptive and destructive tendencies of anti-pastoral will naturally command most attention.

My method in this thesis is to consider under separate main headings the pastoral and anti-pastoral strains in each of the chosen plays. Each of the main headings is further subdivided into numbered sections, each of which scrutinises a particular pastoral or anti-pastoral manifestation.

The opening chapter is a contextualising one. The history of pastoral, characteristic features of the genre and the devices used in its composition are discussed. The history of the genre from its classical origins in Greece and Rome to the present in Europe and England is briefly traced. Definitions of pastoral are considered, as well as the changes they have undergone at the hands of critics and practitioners through the ages, from Virgil to John Fletcher, Samuel Johnson, Alexander Pope, and the moderns William Empson and Sukanta Chaudhuri. Also considered is the attack mounted on the pastoral doctrine of suppressing harsh reality and stressing pleasant fantasy by writers like Stephen Duck, Oliver Goldsmith and George Crabbe who felt that pastoral's distortion of the real conditions of rural life masked important truths that needed to be disclosed. Historically, this assault led to the emergence of the anti-pastoral orientation which has been brought to bear on the three plays dealt with in this study.

Chapter 2 is an analysis of *King Lear*. Maynard Mack, David Young and Nancy R Lindheim claim that the play contains both pastoral and anti-pastoral elements and I attempt to trace these. In this play Shakespeare exploits and subverts the pastoral genre, converting what could have been a conventional pastoral romance into a tragedy with both pastoral and anti-pastoral resonances. Some parallels are drawn between *King Lear* and *As You Like It*, a pastoral comedy. But in the former the anti-pastoral forces triumph as the harsh truth of reality mocks and defeats a few short-lived and delusive pastoral interludes.

In Chapter 3 I analyse *Macbeth*. Pastoral aspects are noted, beginning with Duncan's characterisation as a pastoral king and moving through the symbolic use of trees, birds and landscape. The affective accessories of pastoral such as trust, nostalgia and

contentment are examined. Countering the presence of the pastoral elements are the anti-pastoral forces embodied, for example, in the witches, who are instruments of evil, and in Macbeth himself, as he falls so tragically from grace through overweening ambition.

Chapter 4 is a study of *Othello*. The protagonist is seen as a rather simple pastoral-like character and Desdemona as an innocent pastoral-like heroine. Parallels are drawn between what happens in *Othello* and what happened in the Garden of Eden to highlight pastoral and anti-pastoral elements in the play. The initially blissful world of Othello and Desdemona is penetrated and then destroyed by an evil force in the person of Iago, even as the blissfulness of Adam and Eve was shattered by the wiles of Satan. Disguise, in Shakespeare's romantic, pastorally-tinged comedies, a purely external and always benign device, is replaced in tragedy by the noxious character dissimulation of Iago, clearly an anti-pastoral embodiment.

In the Conclusion I offer a digest of the principal conclusions arrived at in the preceding chapters in which the argument is made, in detail, that pastoral and anti-pastoral elements or 'strains' are embedded, and discoverable, in three of Shakespeare's major tragedies.

Chapter 1

PASTORAL AND ANTI-PASTORAL

A LITERARY AND HISTORICAL SKETCH

In this Chapter I shall attempt to place the pastoral genre in perspective by briefly tracing its origins, the literary theories relating to it and the criticism that it has invited over the centuries. I shall further attempt to specify identifying characteristics of the genre as outlined by critics, scholars and practitioners of pastoral. My procedure in this largely theoretical chapter will be to cite critical opinions rather than actual examples of pastoral writing. The materials will be treated under the following headings:

- Origins
- Critical Theories
- Identifying Characteristics
- Pastoral Devices
- Anti-Pastoral

Very briefly, pastoral strictly defined has to do with the lives of shepherds. Its focus is really the idealisation of a shepherd's life, creating an image of a peaceful and uncorrupted existence, a kind of pre-lapsarian world (Cuddon, 686). It is an attempt to create an imaginary world free of the troubles that irk man and to celebrate the joys of a happy, contented life in that imagined world tacitly understood to have no counterpart in 'real life'.

While the definition appears simplistic, it will become clear later, that the term embraces a far more complex idea. The shepherd, belonging as he does to the human community cannot be dissociated from the normal life of monarchs, noblemen, rulers

or servants. The shepherd is basically associated with his occupation of tending his sheep, singing love songs and laments, all of which are common to humanity. He is susceptible to normal human feelings and emotions, pain and pleasure, love and rejection, life and death, catastrophic experiences of life, the admixtures of comedy and the intensity of tragedy. This means that tragedy is a basic appendage of the human condition, and so long as there are people (and shepherds), the tragic element in life will be there. The fact that the germ of pastoral is the shepherd does not weaken its tragic dimension. On the contrary, coupled with pastoral, the intensity of tragedy is heightened.

A. ORIGINS

1. GREECE

The ethos of the pastoral world as we know it is deeply rooted in the bucolic writings of antiquity. But even before bucolics were written, the Grecian bard Homer

semi-consciously perhaps, ... [was] already drawing a distinction between the physical labours of country life and its spiritual nourishment... Homer's pastoral scene... is already making instinctive use of that way of life to moral ends... Already, therefore, in the pre-literary era of the oral tradition, what we may call the pastoral ethic is at work, though not yet codified. A range of values is appreciated, and openly recommended in the set terms of the oral tradition – in this case, of the epic. The meaning of pastoral in literary terms had been realised; other singers and writers would keep the primitive flame alive, but it was Theocritus – early in the third century B.C. – who would endow the genre with a more than rudimentary form.

(Holden, 9-10)

Holden's point is that the pastoral was not initially written according to prescription.

Homer wrote poetry that was simply about the 'physical labours of country life and its

spiritual nourishment'. However, it was really Theocritus who set the pastoral on its way to development as a genre in its own right.

As Theocritus (c316 – c260 BC) was Sicilian by birth, it

is reasonable to suppose that he was familiar with the songs of Sicilian shepherds and rustics and that he took from them some of his themes, imitating their singing matches, dirges and love laments.

(Cipolla, 4)

Some scholars attribute his knowledge of pastoral to pastoral poets on the Island of Cos which he apparently frequented (Cipolla, 2). Commenting on the pastorals that Theocritus wrote, Holden writes:

He could afford to make use of obvious devices – the refrain, the singing match, dialect, the formula poem – because he made them his and pastoral's own. And so his quality is not merely the accidental advantage unique to the pathfinder, but an awareness of this and a deliberate control of it. Theocritus' achievement lies in the variety of pastoral he creates, proving that he was aware even at that early stage of the dangers of formulaic poetry, and was himself of sufficient Alexandrian discrimination to sidestep them.

(20 – 21)

The pastoral, even at this early stage of its existence, had begun to develop. The shaping of the pastoral according to the needs of the writer became characteristic of the genre throughout its history. By definition, pastoral creates a world of bliss and tranquillity. This would rule out any form of pain or sorrow, but pastoral has the power to recreate and assuage whatever is not desirable. For instance, Theocritus' *Idyll 15* is a lament for Adonis, the youthful lover of Aphrodite. Indeed, an interesting aspect of the pastorals of Theocritus is a kind of preoccupation with the melancholic. For example, Chloe was married to a shepherd, Daphnis, and was killed by Aphrodite

for being faithful to his wife (Cuddon, 686). It is clear that even at this early stage of its development, the pastoral contained undertones of tragedy, a note that would persist in certain pastoral modes, as well as in anti-pastoral.

Theocritean literary influence was bound to flow across the Mediterranean Sea and reach the shores of Italy, where Virgil, modelling his *Eclogues* on Theocritus' poems, captured the essence of the 'Golden Age' in which shepherds lived in blissful harmony.

2. ROME

Publius Virgilius Maro was born at Andes, a village near the city of Mantua in 70 B.C. He read Greek literature widely and came under the strong literary sway of Theocritus. With the publication of his *Eclogues* probably in 39 B.C., Virgil's literary pre-eminence was firmly established. Cipolla writes :

He was hailed as the 'Roman Theocritus', not only because his poems were so closely modelled upon the *Idyls* but also because of their poetic quality which no pastoral poet since Theocritus had matched.

(21)

The Virgilian influence on the literature of Europe can well be attributed to Roman expansion which was a part of the Empire building strategy of the Romans. The Latin vernacular in which Virgil wrote his pastorals subsequently became part of the Humanistic heritage of Europe and England, immensely influencing the insular and the continental writers and critics of pastoral. Virgil's reputation in the Middle Ages largely rested on some memorable lines in the *Fourth Eclogue* which were interpreted

as a prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, the advent of Christ. This was bound to have some influence on the concept of pastoral and the pastoral life. Christ was considered the shepherd, his congregation, the flock. In later centuries the adulation of Virgil energised the Renaissance revival of the pastoral genre in England and in Europe :

The influence of Vergil upon subsequent ages was understandably very great and it is to him rather than to Theocritus that the long popularity of the pastoral tradition may be traced. His *Eclogues* were the principal source of inspiration for all later writers of pastoral poetry.

(Cipolla, 22)

Critics, theorists and practitioners have paid particular attention to the definition of, and the theories relating to, the genre. A brief survey of the various attempts made to define the genre and to formulate theories about its composition and character follows.

Over the centuries the genre developed into an important literary mode of expression especially during the Renaissance period in England when writers used it as a vehicle to expound their philosophies relating to nature and the city, to discuss aspects of love in terms of the usually contented life of the shepherd, and to comment tangentially on politics and religion (Walter, 1).

B. CRITICAL THEORIES AND DEFINITIONS

The critical output on the theory and practice of pastoral is voluminous. Over the centuries attitudes towards the genre have varied, ranging from Edmund Gosse who considered the pastoral to be

cold, unnatural, artificial, and the humblest reviewer is free to cast a stone at its dishonourable grave.

(in Congleton, 3)

to Helen Cooper who writes that the

idea of pastoral no longer needs any justification; a recognition of its remarkable symbolic richness has generally replaced the condemnations of it as artificial or escapist which prevented a proper appreciation of it...

(1)

Most of the theories and definitions of pastoral occupy the space between these two poles. A brief survey of the critical theories and definitions pertaining to the genre will help to place pastoral in perspective.

In 1609 John Fletcher, the English dramatist who wrote *The Faithful Shepherdess*,

defined pastoral as a

representation of shepherds and shepherdesses, with their actions and passions...

(in Loughrey, 35)

The definition focuses on the pastoral as a work about shepherds and shepherdesses.

Many later critics merely echoed Fletcher's definition. René Rapin (1659), in his *Dissertatio de Carmine Pastoralis*, considered the 'manifesto' of the neoclassical school of pastoral criticism, crystallised the neoclassic doctrine and defined the pastoral as

The imitation of the Action of a Sheppard, or of one taken under that character.

(in Congleton, 157)

This definition opened the door, though grudgingly, to contemporary writers who had taken some liberties in the composition of their pastoral works. Writers such as Sannazaro, Fletcher, Drayton and Browne

pushed the genre beyond the confines of the pastoral world by introducing such characters as nymphs, fishermen, and seamen. They chose to entitle their poems *eclogues*, feeling that they could retain the pastoral idea of tranquillity and close contact with nature and avoid the objection which the term *pastoral* would cause.

(Congleton, 8)

Having formulated his definition Rapin turned to the classics, to Aristotle, and Vergil himself, for direction. But the regard Rapin had for the Ancients was not readily accepted by Bernard le Bouvier de Fontenelle (1688) who felt that the pastoral's focus on rural matters was not as appealing as the mood of serenity and pleasure that setting engendered:

... what makes this kind of Poetry [Pastoral] please, is not its giving an Image of a Country Life, but rather the Idea which it gives of the Tranquillity and Innocence of that Life.

(in Loughrey, 47)

Charles Batteux (1761), like Fontenelle, adopting a more permissive stance than the champions of the Ancients, concludes that

Pastoral poetry may be defined as an imitation of rural life represented with every possible attraction.

(in Congleton, 147)

The 'attraction' refers to aspects of rural life such as peace, tranquillity and serenity that soothe the spirit and please the senses, while glossing over the inconveniences of that mode of life.

Viewing the pastoral from a neoclassical perspective, the Augustan poet Alexander Pope (1704) wrote a concise exposition of both the content and the purpose of pastoral poetry in his treatise *A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry*:

A Pastoral is an imitation of the action of a shepherd, or one under that character.

(in Butt, 119)

Pope acknowledged that he followed Rapin, for both place stress on imitation while extending the scope of pastoral to allow for characters other than the shepherd. Pope goes on to describe what the content and the purpose of the pastoral should be :

We must therefore use some illusion to render a Pastoral delightful; and this consists in exposing the best side only of the shepherd's life, and in concealing its miseries.

(in Butt, 120)

Significant is the pointed reference to 'illusion' and the deliberate attempt to highlight the good and suppress the bad in the shepherd's life.

Thomas Purney (1717), a practitioner and theorist of pastoral, defines it in terms of Aristotle's divisions. He considers pastoral as an imitation of the lives of shepherds, broadly under the headings of fable, characters, sentiments and language, much as Rapin does. The aim of pastoral is to arouse the reader's pity or his joy. The new

element added to the definition is the way in which, through imitation, the various aspects of the composition combine to evoke a feeling of pity or joy.

In 1712 Abbot Fraguier formulated his definition in Platonic terms. Like Purney and Rapin, he underlined the importance of the imitation of shepherds' lives in pastoral poetry. An important point in his definition was that pastoral poetry need not be limited to the truth, but should accommodate what was considered to be the ideal truth. This ideal is the appendage that pastoral has carried over the centuries and frequently involves the notion of an idealised nature. This development broadened the scope of the pastoral. The genre now had a loftier purpose than being merely a record of shepherds and shepherdesses engaging in simple activities; pastoral in Fraguier's view could be a vehicle for reflection, tangential rather than direct, on the serious issues of human existence.

To Dr Samuel Johnson (1750), finding the neoclassic view too restrictive, the pastoral was a

[P]oem in which any action or passion is represented by its effect upon a country life. Whatsoever, therefore, may according to the common course of things, happen in the country, may afford a subject for a pastoral poet.

(*Rambler* No 37, in Loughrey, 69)

Johnson goes on to qualify his definition, especially as it bears upon the hitherto privileged figure of the shepherd :

Pastoral admits of all ranks of persons, because persons of all ranks inhabit the country.

(in Loughrey, 69)

So the characters of pastoral can come from any walk of life. This was an important innovation in the development of pastoral theory because it opened up the potential of pastoral as an expressive medium embracing ranks and occupations other than a shepherd's.

In 1780, the author of the *Mirror* posed a critical question :

May we not be permitted to ask why a species of poetry should be appropriated to one particular profession or occupation, in contradistinction to all others. What is there in the life of a shepherd to distinguish it from that of the other inhabitants of the country, or to mark the peculiar style of those verses which are employed in describing it ?

(No 79)

These sentiments plainly echo those of Samuel Johnson. But earlier in the century the scope of pastoral had already been tested by so deviant a work as John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, aptly described as a 'Newgate pastoral' (Lonsdale, 168).

In considering the intrusion of characters other than shepherds into pastoral, writers and theorists seem to have in mind the dynamics of a developing society where a new epoch created new points of reference. Shepherds were confined to the countryside.

That both shepherd and countryside could be superseded is a point made by Marinelli :

...we have begun to transfer the aspects of the pastoral golden age into the time of innocence that every individual can remember, and to speak of a pastoral childhood. Either the machines have come into the garden, or the world of adult experiences casts its long shadows; in any case, it is a long time since the shepherds have all departed, leaving no address.

(4)

In terms of this account, pastoral forsakes its association with a particular occupation, and is redefined with reference to a particular phase of life – childhood. To William Empson (1935) pastoral is any writing that has to do with the ‘[p]rocess of putting the complex into the simple’ (23). The thrust of this position is the ability of the pastoral to explain and simplify the complex and express it in terms of the simple in the same way as ‘literature simplifies the complexities of experience’ (Loughrey, 21 – 22). The point is discussed by Congleton (4 - 5): while society is regarded as complex, the shepherd’s life is seen as emblematic of a simple existence, and it is that simplicity that people yearn for, with its promise of recovering a happier time (Congleton, 163). In Empson’s definition, ‘the simple’ implies that the simple life can be ‘that of a shepherd, a child or a working man, and it is used in an oblique way to criticise the class structure of society’ (in Abrams, 128).

Each critic and theorist has stressed different aspects of the genre or identified new ones, making a single, succinct definition almost impossible. Congleton states that ‘no genre is more difficult to define than the pastoral’ (4), and quotes Greg’s definition (which is similar to that of Empson) as generally accepted :

... a constant element in the pastoral as known to literature is the recognition of a contrast, implied or expressed, between pastoral life and some more complex type of civilisation...

(4 – 5)

Sukanta Chaudhuri more recently (1989), in introducing his treatise on the pastoral, tidies up many of the attempts at defining the genre, and frames a definition which encompasses all pastoral, and, I think, sufficiently covers its major attributes:

It selects details from that [pastoral] life, adds to them, and reorders them to create a world of the imagination, invested with urban longing for an ideally simple life in nature. In other words, it is subtle and sophisticated, exploring the gap between the complex existence of poet and reader and the designedly naïve dream of rural simplicity. All pastoral implies this duality, this awareness of two opposed worlds: country and city, simple and complex, imaginary and real.

(1)

But Chaudhuri (1) qualifies his definition by saying that in the final analysis, the dividing line between the country and the town tends to blur because the rural world, being the creation of an urban imagination, tends sooner or later to have the town ‘rub off’ on it.

Historically considered, there appear, in broad terms, to be three schools of thought on the pastoral. The neoclassicists lean heavily on the Ancients, on Aristotle’s *Poetics* and Vergil’s *Eclogues*. Some of them argue that rural life should be presented in as attractive a manner as possible, intentionally disregarding reality. The realists’ stress is on a non-idealised representation of country life and labour (an emphasis which opens the way to anti-pastoral). The Romantics generally avoided defining the pastoral, but the few who did felt that pastoral poetry should be based on direct observation and that the characters should be neither too vulgar nor too refined in their dialogue (Congleton, 160). Vulgarity would probably be distasteful to the reader and too much sophistication coming from country folk would sound a false note.

C. IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PASTORAL

It is difficult to separate out the elements and attributes of pastoral because in pastoral writing they are usually combined or elided. Consequently, a discussion of the

identifying characteristics of pastoral under separate heads is bound to be both somewhat artificial and to involve a degree of overlap.

1. Nostalgia

Nostalgia is a sentimental yearning for an irrecoverable past. It is perhaps the single most important distinguishing characteristic of the genre as the past always seems to have an enchantment that cannot be matched by the present or the future. Lerner considers it 'the basic emotion of pastoral' (41), citing as an illustrative example Vergil's *First Eclogue*. To Lerner, it is longing that makes art a reality (52) and he uses the novelist Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* to support the claim that nostalgia 'is the same as saying that longing is what gives sense to living' (52).

Much pastoral is written with the express purpose of reminiscing about an ideal and innocent past world in a setting adapted to reflective withdrawal. This setting is often an enclosed garden, the *hortus conclusus*. The world of innocence is beyond reclamation because it is in the past and is imaginary. But the very existence of nostalgia in pastoral helps to sharpen the contrast that must necessarily arise from a comparison between the often harsh reality of the present and pleasant reminiscences about a perfect but irrecoverable past. On this point, Marinelli states:

Essentially the art of the pastoral is the art of
the backward glance, and Arcadia from its
creation the product of wistful and melancholy
longing.

(9)

Marinelli also observes that the escape from the present extends even into 'some indistinct and redeeming future' (9). A principal attribute of the pastoral then is the

expression of a longing for a simple way of life, remote and different from the complexities of the present. It is a search for the pristine innocence and serenity of a bygone condition :

All pastoral is in search of the original splendour,
but the different ways in which it conceives of that
splendour are the grounds of its multiple variations.

(Marinelli, 11)

What gives pastoral its literary (and human) appeal is its yearning for a past when the world was in a state of innocence, in its original condition, uncorrupted by man. The idea of uncorrupted origin connects with the concept of literary primitivism, which extends the scope of the pastoral as it involves nostalgia for a primitive or pre-civilised way of life. It holds that man is aware that his roots reach back to a paradisaic age and this in itself is a sufficient reason for an intense desire to return to it. And so pastoral comes to have added within it an unrealisable yearning for a state when man would have been 'As free as Nature first made man' (Cuddon, 743). This would be the ideal existence, and as it is illusory, it is aptly described as a 'mythical state of well-being' (Cuddon 743).

2. Innocence

Innocence implies the state of being sinless, free of moral wrong, and even being ignorant of the existence of evil. The child, who in sentimental pastoral writing often replaces the shepherd as an alternative pastoral protagonist (Loughrey, 21), is traditionally regarded as being born in a state of natural innocence, but liable to corruption when he enters the adult world. The corruption of innocence is a pastoral concern as is the quest to recover the lost innocence, the lost Paradise. As we generally

yearn for the innocence of childhood, nostalgia enters the picture, forcing a comparison between the innocence of childhood and the lost innocence of adulthood. This spotlights the role of contrast as a basic device of pastoral – comparing what was and has been lost, with what has taken its place.

When pastoral becomes entwined with classical mythology it comes unavoidably to be linked with the myth of the Golden Age, becoming ‘an elegiac lament for a lost age of innocence’ (Loughrey, 9). In this context the term ‘innocent’ acquires a meaning different from the one generally accepted, that is, being without guilt and sinless. Says Loughrey: ‘Man was most innocent when pursuing untrammelled instinctual gratification’ (13). He goes on to qualify the point: before the Fall the act of love was totally innocent. So in the Garden of Eden there occurs the supreme paradox of a ‘happy couple liv[ing] in a state of married chastity’ (Loughrey, 13).

3. Simplicity

The idea of simplicity in the pastoral sense derives from the kind of life the shepherd, on whom the genre is based, lived :

...a shepherd reclining under a spreading beech
and meditating the rural muse, or piping as though
he would ne'er grow old, or engaging in a friendly
singing contest, or expressing his good or bad fortune
with a lovely mistress, or grieving over the death of a
fellow shepherd.

(Abrams, 127)

The life of the shepherd was characterised by a natural simplicity, removed from the complexities of urban life, which magnify the attractions of a simple, rural existence. The shepherd's simplicity is traditionally augmented by the happiness resulting from a carefree way of life. ‘Complexity’ in its pastoral signification refers to a life fraught

with stresses and strains, with vexation and emotional turmoil. Pope states that simplicity makes a pastoral feel natural (in Butt, 120), and cautions that simplicity that is spontaneous does not strain for effect, but pleases and delights (in Butt, 120).

Thomas Tickell regards simplicity as an ‘established nature in the pastoral’ (in Loughrey, 54), meaning that writers could not compromise on this aspect, as it was from the earliest times regarded as fundamental to the genre. It is in the nature of pastoral, with its valorisation of simplicity, to be in direct contrast to the complexity that Empson speaks of. The simplicity pastoral valorises is one that engenders a happy and serene life.

Concerning the issue of style, in relation to simplicity, Pope says:

As simplicity is the distinguishing characteristic
of pastoral, Virgil has been thought guilty of too
courtly a style: his language is perfectly pure,
and he often forgets he is among peasants.

(in Loughrey, 57 – 58)

In this regard, writers seem to have experienced difficulty in hitting on the language register proper to pastoral characters. Shepherds have been observed to speak in sophisticated language and to write poetry, vividly illustrated by the rustic characters in *As You Like It*, for example. With respect to the pastoral, this is incongruous, given the rustic character of the interlocutors. But as the pastoral universe is in its nature mostly imaginary and illusory, it requires the suspension of disbelief. If writers of pastoral, in an attempt to be ‘authentic’, made it their business to be deliberately ‘simple’, the result might well be lumpish and off-putting, robbing the reader of pleasure, if not of instruction.

4. Nature

The pastoral is concerned with the world of untouched Nature. Consequently the country, pure and untainted, stands in opposition to the city, spoilt by man. Kermode views the tension that exists between the country and the city as the seed of the pastoral. He regards this tension as ‘the social aspect of the great Art-Nature antithesis which is the philosophical basis of pastoral literature’ (37), a matter to be discussed later. In his interpretation of Marvell’s *The Mower Against Gardens*, Kermode characterises Nature as ‘the uncultivated, the pure, the untamed, uncorrupted fields; and the world of Art, the civilised, the cultivated, the sphere in which men had meddled with Nature’ (37). This point is particularly significant because it focuses on untainted Nature as the setting within which man was placed to live his life. But this condition did not prevail for long. Driven by greed and the desire for power and self-aggrandisement, man has tampered with and corrupted this innocent world. And then, realising that the innocent natural world has been tainted irrevocably, man comes to reflect on what he has forfeited and the price he has paid for his erring ways. The pastoral looks at untouched Nature as the vessel of a glorious bygone age when man was satisfied with living in an innocent and uncomplicated world.

5. The Myth of the Golden Age and The Garden of Eden

The essence of the pastoral is a melancholic remembrance of a glorious past and the yearning for its restoration. The myth of the Golden Age was used as a vehicle for the expression of this longing. The Golden Age existed when human history began. Saturn and Astraea, the virgin goddess of justice, cohabited in the fields of Hesperia. Life was simple and blissful. No one needed to work as the earth abounded in fruits,

and nectar was in abundance. There was no desire to venture out and there was no war or commerce. Life was leisurely and love was free. The very nature of this freedom implied the absence of female coyness owing to 'honour', nor was there any shame in the indulgence of love. The bounteous climate made for eternal spring. Man existed in perfect harmony with nature (Marinelli, 15). Nobody was ambitious and nobody aspired to greater heights than his neighbour. The atmosphere was one of innocence and happiness. The essence of the Golden Age was captured by Ovid in Book I of his *Metamorphoses*. But this paradisaical condition was not to last. Degeneration set in and the bubble of blissful life soon burst with the advent of greed, lust, ambition and war. Many pastoral works capture the mood of the Golden Age (as Shakespeare does in the Forest of Arden), even where they dispense with the details.

The Golden Age forms 'an important parallel to the Judeo-Christian story of the Fall from Paradise' (Hollander and Kermode, 19). However, unlike the degeneration of the Golden Age, which was gradual, the Fall from bliss in the Garden of Eden was abrupt. Recognising the closeness of the parallel between the Golden Age and the Garden of Eden, Marinelli refers to Eden as 'the Golden Eden' (20), reflecting a fusion of two parallel myths. Christianity takes the standpoint that human nature was created perfect but lost that perfection through the Fall. Marinelli summarises the change that took place after the Fall:

Death enters the world of creation, and the oneness of man with Nature in perfect obedience to the Creator is lost through the irruption of a rooted concupiscence. ... The consequence is exile from the pastoral garden, exile to a world of toil and labour, and the eternal regretful backward glance of which pastoral is the result.

(20)

In Christian religious philosophy the Fall is regarded as the greatest loss of all, prompting the perpetual desire to recover the lost Garden. Seen from this perspective, the Fall serves as a necessary condition for the existence of pastoral poetry. It is common, almost natural for human beings trapped in the complexities and the annoyances of the present to yearn for a past that was blissful and pleasurable. And the pastoral muse carries the heights and depths of tragedy, where the dichotomy heaven/hell holds good for the tragedies to be examined.

Writers of Christianised pastoral often portray the Garden of Eden as the Christian equivalent of the pagan *locus amoenus*, the ‘pleasance’, itself a derivative of Golden Age mythologising. The formalised constituents of the ‘pleasance’ offer a kind of template for the pastoral setting. Ernst Curtius lists the constituents of the pleasance as

a beautiful natural shaded site...compris[ing] a tree
(or several trees), a meadow, and a spring or brook.
Birdsong and flowers maybe added. The most elaborate
examples also add a breeze.

(195)

6. Peace, tranquillity, serenity

Elizabethan England read in the pastoral a positive ideal which was the ‘state of content and mental self-sufficiency which had been known in classical antiquity as “*otium*” ’ (Smith, H, 2). To find leisured contentment one retreats to an idealised rustic world which is contrasted with the vexatious life one is fleeing from. Such a contrast inevitably exalts the attractions of the idealised retreat bathed in the peace, tranquillity and serenity that in classical and neo-classical pastoral characterise the shepherd’s way of life. In Kermode’s words , the idealised shepherd enjoyed

a deliciously idle life...whil[ing] away the

time playing a pipe. He became the type of the natural life, uncomplicated, contemplative, and in sympathy with Nature as the townsman could never be.

(16)

The shepherd's life was therefore considered a paradigm of contentment and tranquillity. This ease of life comes not from the false refinement of the bustling city and court, but from the peace and serenity of the unspoilt countryside (Kermode, 17).

7. Happiness

Living a life of ease, without stress, promoted internal harmony, emotional stability and mental composure. It was thanks to this state of internal repose and equilibrium that one could achieve happiness. On the subject of happiness, McFarland says that 'the bucolic fantasy corresponds to childhood's happiness' (30). It is significant that happiness is aligned with childhood experience, as the emotion is especially unadulterated and pure in a child, as it would rarely be in an adult. Renato Poggioli writes that

[T]he psychological root of the pastoral is a double longing after innocence and happiness, to be recovered not through conversion or regeneration but merely through a retreat. By withdrawing, not from the world, but from 'the world', pastoral man tries to achieve a new life in imitation of the good shepherds of herds...

(in Loughrey, 98)

In these terms, withdrawal from the busy, vexing, emulous world of city or court ('the world') to a pastoral retreat is seen as a precondition for happiness. Poggioli (in Loughrey, 98) also recognises as a pastoral impulse imaginative rather than physical withdrawal – in which case daydreaming becomes the vehicle for transition to happiness.

8. Refuge and retreat

Roger Sales (15) lists 'refuge' as one of the elements of the pastoral. It represents the wish to escape from the complexity and vexation of the town to the simplicity of the country. This forms a parallel to the desire to escape from the experience of adulthood to the innocence of childhood: 'Pastoral is the great escape from adult experience to childhood innocence' (Sales, 15).

Marinelli points out that entry into sexual life is entry into the world of adult experience: 'The experience of sex separates the child from the man' (79 – 80). Once this threshold is crossed, the world of innocence can only be recovered (if at all), through retreat into the world of the 'backward glance'. The reference to retreat is apt because pastoral tempts the person seeking refuge with the offer of a retreat to an original innocent state.

The question that will arise from this argument is whether the pastoral as a refuge from the torments of the world can accommodate the adult escapee from the experience of sex to a pre-lapsarian condition of innocence, considering that pastoral invites and promises the person a return to his original state. Like any experience, the sexual experience cannot be reversed, but pastoral, being an imaginary retreat, will give him that refuge. As it exists only in the mind, refuge becomes both attainable *and* accessible. Marinelli sums up the point:

The peculiar value of Arcadia is that it never existed. It was, from its very first appearance, a literary creation, a projection of the mind...

(56)

With this qualification in mind, the claims regarding the power of pastoral in the literary sense become justifiable and credible.

9. Contemplative Life

The shepherd, living as he does in pleasurable idleness, has enough time to engage in reflection. Developing from this seed, pastoral in a more general sense invites musing on aspects of life in the business of day to day living. It is this contemplation that sharpens one's awareness that the stresses and strains of living in the present are a far cry from the joys of the imagined stress-free world of an idealised past. Broadly considered, pastoral deals with the 'contemplative and the recreative' life rather than with the active one. The activity of contemplation in the pastoral universe counts as a pleasurable experience even as it was in the Golden Age (Marinelli, 17). Such was the condition called *otium*, reflective leisure that was happy and serene (and in no way connected with the vices of inertia or sloth). It was a wholesome and pleasurable pastime, in direct contrast to the concept of *negotium*, a condition in which all mercenary-minded people, like the merchant and the sailor, found themselves (Poggioli, in Loughrey, 102). In a pastoral setting, contemplation facilitates a happy, calm and contented life. Marvell's *The Garden* is a poem that demonstrates how contemplative *otium* may be enjoyed within a context of the 'recuperative powers of nature' where pleasure is achieved 'not through sexual indulgence but through a withdrawal from the world of the senses towards a *hortus conclusus* of repose' (Loughrey, 13 – 14).

10. The tragic undertone in pastoral

The pastoral world is the product of an illusion. Supposedly, it focuses only on the brighter side of life, concealing its sorrows. However, in his essay on *As You Like It*, a pastoral comedy, James Smith raises the issue of a tragic element in pastoral: 'A tragic note or undertone is ... inseparable from pastoral, and if subdued is only the more insistent' (18).

As he sees it, the tragic undertone is a permanent contrast to happiness. Running counter to, but at times entwined with, the simplicity, serenity and happiness of pastoral, then, is a tragic vision. However, death and grief are palliated under the pastoral dispensation and their impact is weakened. Such a lessening of emotional pain was 'a commonplace of the pastoral tradition' (Cipolla, 10). McFarland gives Plotinus's view of the significance of death in the pastoral:

Plotinus emphasises that death loses its sting when subsumed under the human reality of play. He thereby provides a key to the significance of the intrusion of sadness and death into the world of the eclogue. For where comedy turns its back on death, pastoral, though it represents a state of youth and happiness, has from its earliest beginnings recognized the fact of death.

(32)

Though death is a reality that cannot be ignored, pastoral helps to lessen its devastating effect and to make it more bearable. It alleviates the pain that death causes by transforming the lament for the deceased into the hope of a blissful life in paradise. Death in the pastoral is not the end but the means to a greater end, paradise. The pastoral considers death but as a precursor of the renewal of life. Milton's *Lycidas*, for

example, is a pastoral elegy which sees the death of Edward King not as a terminus but as a prelude to resurrection and renewal of life in a different form.

D. SOME PASTORAL DEVICES

Devices in the literary sense are the techniques by means of which a text's communicative and expressive purposes, as well as its tone, mood and character, are achieved and conveyed. To express itself effectively, pastoral relies on a cluster of specific and characterising devices. The principal ones are the following:

1. Contrast

The purpose of pastoral is to valorise the virtues of a blissful bygone age by implicit and sometimes explicit comparison with a complex, troubled and corrupt present. Hence a system of contrasts is an integral part of pastoral composition. Kermode maintains that '[T]he first condition of pastoral is that there should be a sharp difference between the two ways of life, the rustic and the urban' (14). By its very nature, pastoral makes comparisons between two worlds and this entails laying bare the defects of one to show why the other is preferred. While pastoral celebrates the virtues of the 'great good place', ordinarily located in the past and in the country, there is always an implicit (and sometimes explicit) inferior here and now which does not escape the mind.

Contrasts, according to Toliver (in Loughrey, 125), are an important feature of the pastoral. He lists a number of these: nature and society, nature and art, idyllic nature

and anti-pastoral nature, and earthly nature and the celestial paradise. He points out, however, that any contrast will 'elicit different potentials from the pastoral setting according to how it is opposed' (in Loughrey, 125). In effect, according to Walter, this means that the concept of nature can be seen as

honest and simple when it is opposed to a corrupt court, as violent and rough when it is opposed to divine order or refined courtly order, as offering licence when it is opposed to oppressive constraints, and as a place of lechery when it is opposed to virtue.

(5 – 6)

2. Satire

Pastoral uses the unsatisfactory present as a point of departure for visualising an ideal world where, implicitly, the inadequacies of the present one are held up for critical scrutiny. Pastoral can thus become satirical, in particular when applying stringent standards in scrutinising and evaluating the defects of the (invariably urban) here and now. As Cooper notes: 'the contrasts between the ideal and the actual are an obvious source of satire' (87). On occasion, the commentary on the religious, moral and political shortcomings of contemporary society takes on a caustic tone. For instance, in his pastoral elegy *Lycidas*, Milton's tone turns acerbic and satirical as the lamentation modulates into a diatribe against the shepherds of the Church (custodians of the Christian faith) who neglect their ecclesiastical duties.

3. The Art-Nature binary

Pastoral makes up vicariously for the blemishes of the natural world and in this sense Art is superior to Nature, simply because Art can be manipulated by the imagination to create a world free of vice and taint. Kermode argues that 'the social aspect of the great Art-Nature antithesis...is philosophically the basis of pastoral literature' (in

Loughrey, 93). The pastoral world, a construct of Art, is a contrast to the real world and its function is to show up the latter by projecting it against the backdrop of an idealised past time and place. On this point Cooper says: ‘ The shepherd world, if it is used to comment on life at all, is set against the real world in an artistic contrast’ (5). Arguing along similar lines, Marinelli holds that the world of Fallen Nature, that is, the world and woes that Adam inherited after the Fall, can only be changed by Art:

Art is superior to it [Fallen Nature] because it is capable of rectifying it. It is capable of taking a brazen world and rendering a golden one in return. In this sense, Art creates a new Nature; the felicity at which it aims involves transcendence.

(22)

Art, then, has the power to take an existing unhappy situation and transform it into a world of imagined happiness. In that context, the mental flights of Lear, Macbeth and Othello enable them to escape, momentarily, from a world of torment into a world of illusory consolation.

4. The pathetic fallacy

The term was invented by John Ruskin in 1856 in his work *Modern Painters* (Vol III, Pt IV). This is another pastoral device. It is a literary trope ascribing human feelings to the inanimate world (Loughrey, 26). It is regarded as an established technique of the pastoral elegy (Lerner, 30). Kermode says that the shepherd exists in sympathy with Nature, and when, in his contemplative or melancholy moments, ‘he weeps, the Nature with which he lives in such sympathy weeps also’ (16). This may appear contradictory to the claim that Art is superior to Nature. Kermode’s observation is also a product of the manipulation of art to create a nature that seems to be in sympathy with those who dwell in it. The shepherd lives in harmony with his environment. An

example is the joyous feelings which the shepherd experiences when the spring rains and the summer warmth provide a lush grazing for his sheep. There is abundant water and warmth to stimulate growth. Nature becomes alive and with it the shepherd exults in the glory of growth and the joys of living. With winter comes withering and death in Nature. There is no readily available grazing, water becomes scarce and the shepherd does not really enjoy the season. Nature 'dies' and the atmosphere is benumbed, not unlike the shepherd who is accustomed to frolicking in the sunny glades of summer. This does not mean that Nature is in sympathy with the shepherd. It is merely a perception which emanates from our observation of Nature. It is obvious that Nature, being inanimate in the literary sense, cannot align itself to the shepherd's feelings and emotions.

Ruskin, however, meant the term to be derogatory as it applied not to the 'true appearances of things to us', but to 'extraordinary, or false appearances, when we are under the influence of emotion of contemplative fancy' (in Cuddon, 692). The 'pathetic fallacy' is of relevance to the pastoral whenever it turns into an attempt to idealise or sentimentalise an unhappy situation or occurrence for the factitious satisfaction of the reader. However, the pathetic fallacy can be put to comic uses too, as Sidney does in his 1598 folio volume of *Arcadia* and *Astrophel and Stella*. In the conclusion to poem No. 5, *Astrophell the Sheep-heard, his complaint to his flocke*,

the identification of the shepherd's emotions with his pastoral environment, a stock feature of the mode, is used for comic purposes. The complaints of the shepherd-lover are whimsically identified with the bleatings of his sheep.

(Smith, 22)

5. Pastoral/anti-pastoral hyperbole

The hyperbole is a ‘bold overstatement, or extravagant exaggeration of fact’ (Abrams, 77) that ‘appeal[s] to the imagination rather than to understanding’ (Ogilvie and Albert, 117). The pastoral hyperbole is, by extension, a hyperbole in the context of the pastoral language of expression. It is used to underscore or emphasise a pastoral (or anti-pastoral) fact, truth or idea for effect. Abrams (77) illustrates the use of the trope from Shakespeare’s *Othello*: ‘Iago says gloatingly of Othello (III, iii, 330 ff) :’

Not poppy nor mandragora
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
Which thou ow’dst yesterday.

An example from *Macbeth* is seen in Macbeth’s reaction after he murders Duncan:

Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

(II, ii, 59 – 62)

Both these examples can be interpreted in the context of pastoral and anti-pastoral: Iago, an evil force that may be regarded as an anti-pastoral figure and Macbeth an anti-pastoral exemplar, have destroyed the pastoral contentment of Othello and Duncan irretrievably.

E. ANTI-PASTORAL

Writing in 1713, Thomas Tickell, literary executor of Joseph Addison and Augustan essayist of repute, declared that ‘There are some things of an established nature in pastoral, which are essential to it, such as a country scene, innocence, simplicity’ (in Loughrey, 54). However, it increasingly became a problem for poets and critics to

accept such a view of pastoral. It was too remote from the realities of the 'here and now'; and not just in the city, but in the countryside as well. So it is not surprising that in the latter part of the eighteenth century poets began to reconsider the traditional view of the pastoral as positing a rural refuge, apt for the easing of stress and sorrow.

Looking with new eyes they noticed harsh realities which earlier pastoral had ignored. New perceptions challenged and then displaced the simple idealisation of pastoral life. They took account of the real life lived by country folk. To conceal this behind the rhetorical idealisations of neo-classical pastoral no longer seemed possible. The acknowledgement of the existence of the harsh realities of life in the countryside forced a development and extension of the pastoral into what came to be known as the **anti-pastoral**, in which a conscious attempt is made to see and present rural life as a condition having little in common with the serene, peaceful and uncomplicated existence postulated by the traditional pastoral constructs.

The term 'anti-pastoral' came to express an attitude towards literature that either explicitly or implicitly rejected pastoral conventions and refused to idealise country life:¹

An anti-pastoral attitude marks a commitment
to talk about man as he is and not as he might
be in some perfect moral state either in the past
or in the future; and for an English Renaissance
Christian this commitment leads to the insistence

¹ There is, however, some debate about whether the label 'anti-pastoral' is not just another name for 'pastoral' viewed under a different aspect: I ought to acknowledge that what I am calling "anti-pastoral" ... might as easily be called "pastoral" properly defined. In opposing what they saw as the implicit escapism of prior pastoral writing, Sidney, Shakespeare, and, in his special way, Milton also were insisting upon pastoral's ability to picture our present life in small. They were returning to the conception of pastoral shared by Theocritus and Vergil and using the pastoral mode, not to express nostalgia for a better time and better place, but to comment upon life both within and outside Arcadia. They were driving a wedge between pastoral Arcadia and customary conceptions of the Golden Age and Eden (with Milton viewing his Paradise more as version of an anti-pastoralist's Arcadia than as a typical Eden). (Lindenbaum, 21)

that man, while obligated to alleviate the burdens
imposed upon him by original sin, cannot and
should not ever lose sight of his fallen condition.

(Lindenbaum, 17)

The move towards an expression of realism was fast becoming a focal point in the debate about pastoral in the later 18th century. George Crabbe and Oliver Goldsmith emphatically drew attention to the aspects of realism and indeed, pessimism in their revision of pastoral presuppositions. In his poem *The Village* (1783), Crabbe ‘insists that the pastoral vision distorts, and that the agricultural labourer is brutalized and impoverished (Barrell and Bull, 377), and in Goldsmith’s *The Deserted Village* (1770), ‘the labourer is presented as having been in recent times contented and dignified, in something like a Golden Age, but one which has been destroyed rather than created by the advance of the mercantile spirit in agriculture’ (Barrell and Bull, 377). Stephen Duck, ‘the thresher poet’, also contests the vision of the literary pastoral

in its conventional form. In his poem, *The Thresher’s Labour*, he outlines the life of the agricultural labourer in the light of his own experience :

But when the scorching Sun is mounted high,
And no kind Barns with friendly Shade are nigh;
Our weary scythes entangle in the Grass,
While Streams of Sweat run trickling down apace.

(lines 108 – 113)

To Duck, the employer was not a friendly man who would welcome his labourers warmly. Theirs was a sorry plight:

Nor is the labourer free from toil while he sleeps,
for his nights are full of disturbed dreams of his
Herculean labours. The seasonal cycle so dear
to writers of Pastoral, of birth, maturity, death and

rebirth, becomes for Duck simply the hopeless
inevitability of continual work.

(Barrell and Bull, 378)

What the three writers have in common is their rejection of the illusion and deceit
perpetuated by the traditional pastoral's denial of the real hardships of the common
country man. Both Duck and Crabbe refused

to pastoralise, to idealise, the agricultural labourer
in any terms; for both men it is in the nature of farm-
work to be unrewarding, and for Crabbe the question
of whether there can ever have been a Golden Age was
an academic one.

(Barrell and Bull, 379)

In arguing against a literary tradition, Crabbe argues against the deliberate idealisation
of the English labourer. His verse annals are excellent examples of his realistic
treatment of countryside scenes. In anti-pastoral, country people do not just tend the
fields or rest in them; they work the fields and the aspect of their economic
dependency upon a master is underscored, whereas in conventional pastoral it is
ignored, as are most things economic. What in pastoral is viewed as 'sufficiency' is
transformed in anti-pastoral into deprivation, even destitution. Goldsmith captures this
shift of perception in these lines :

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
When every rood of ground maintained its man;
For from light labour spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life required, but gave no more:
His best companions, innocence and health;
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.

But times are altered; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land and dispossess the swain;
Along the lawn, where scattered hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth, and cumbrous pomp repose;

And every want to opulence allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.

(from *The Deserted Village*, lines 57 – 68)

In 1800, Wordsworth, that giant of the Romantic Age, published *Michael*, a poem that examines the real life of a shepherd. He was well aware that pastoral tradition called for a depiction of the simplicity and innocence of country life, but what *Michael* shows is family sorrow and the privations of a shepherd's life. The copy of *Lyrical Ballads* which Wordsworth presented to the Whig leader Charles James Fox in January 1801 included his comments on *Michael*. There he writes that he had attempted to 'draw a picture of domestic affections as they exist' (Wordsworth, 427). It is a sad poem with a tragic undertone, not dissimilar to Goldsmith's performance in *The Deserted Village* published 30 years before.

By the beginning of the 19th century, the anti-pastoral had become a sub-genre in its own right. The voices calling for a representation of rural life as it really was, rather than as it should be, were loud enough to be heard, considered and taken seriously. But even before such voices made themselves heard, an anti-pastoral current existed.

Shakespeare's tragedies, for example, contain a marked anti-pastoral resonance, well before anti-pastoral, called by that name, had ever been thought of, much less theorised. The anti-pastoral strain in Shakespearean tragedy is something we shall be concerned with in the ensuing chapters.

In the context of Shakespearean tragedy, 'anti-pastoral' need not have reference either to the city or the countryside. It is rather to be conceived of as a disruptive, sinister,

destructive force, embodied sometimes in nature, sometimes in human (or sub-human) beings, that attacks, subverts, destroys the equilibrium, the peace of mind, the happiness of a person or even society. The forces that operate in the plays under discussion are not merely 'bad' characters that launch a campaign of assault on the 'good' characters. The evils they unleash emanate from a complex set of values that are not consistent with our value systems. The tensions that are created in the plays are not between good and bad, but the embodiment of these traits that develop in the minds of different forces at work. Edmund, Goneril and Regan, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, and Iago are human beings in the first instance. Their characters develop and change from good to evil (Goneril, Regan, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth), from evil to good (Edmund). Iago is consistently evil. At the end of the plays, we see the complex make-up of these characters. We are left thinking about the pain, suffering and destruction that they have caused and in contemplating on the tragedies that they initiate and execute, we ourselves seek refuge in a pastoral retreat, 'enjoying' the fact that we are exempt from the tragic consequences of the villains' actions, and wondering what might have been the case if there was no Iago, Edmund, Goneril or Regan, no Lady Macbeth in the plays. The obvious answer to this would be that there would not have been a tragedy in the first place and no one would have been hurt creating an ideal that is characteristic of pastoral.

In these terms, the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth* constitute an anti-pastoral embodiment, even as Macbeth himself does when the dark forces inside him, once aroused, unleash themselves upon those around him. Similarly, in *Othello*, Iago is an anti-pastoral force,

while in *King Lear* the same is true not only of the violent tempest but also of those humans of whose character and conduct the tempest is emblematic.

In the context of Shakespeare's tragedies, anti-pastoral elements intrude where there is harmony and bliss, creating a violent upheaval of tranquillity and serenity. Lear experiences a storm, Macbeth suffers the consequences of paranoiac desire for kingship and Othello's blissfulness is destroyed by a Satanic presence. Violence, turbulence and sinisterness are the essence of anti-pastoral.

Conclusion

From the attempts various critics have made to define the term 'pastoral', and in the light of the Latin word 'pastor', meaning shepherd, it is clear that the term is rudimentarily defined with reference to a shepherd's life and doings. So pastoral began as a rather simple literary work depicting the simple lives of shepherds in the country. But it was, from the beginning, a product of city-dwellers who re-invented the countryside in the image of their yearning for a life more simple, less harassed than that of the city. Accordingly, the pastoral 'formula' postulates a peaceful country life remote from the complexities and the attendant corruption of city and court. The central concern of pastoral becomes then, the search for a simple life 'away from the court and town, away from corruption, war, strife, love of gain... In a way it reveals a yearning for a lost innocence, for a pre-Fall paradisaic life in which man existed in harmony with nature' (Cuddon, 689).

While the 'script' of pastoral offers relief from the corruption of the real world, it is not necessarily an evasion of what goes on in the real world. By contrasting the real

world with an idealised one, pastoral is able to suggest a criticism of the real world, and that criticism can acquire a satirical edge if it is sharp enough.

Over the centuries, critics have attempted to define the pastoral. Neoclassical critics like Fletcher and Pope felt that the genre must keep to the original models of Theocritus and Vergil. However, focussing on shepherds alone would exclude the greater part of life that even the countryside was home to. Dr Johnson, in the mid 18th century, observed that the countryside was home not only to the shepherd. Indeed, the shepherd by then was not a principal feature of the English countryside any longer. The developing principle is that the pastoral should be brought more into line with the circumstances of the age in which it was written. Still, for pastoral to be recognised as such, its basic characterising oppositions would need to endure, behind a possibly altered façade. The oppositions that characterise the pastoral and the anti-pastoral are the simple versus the complex, innocence versus corruption, nature versus artifice, pleasure versus pain, happiness versus heaviness of spirit, serenity versus vexation, ease versus toil, immersion in the world of ‘getting and spending’ versus withdrawal from it.

Writers like George Crabbe, Oliver Goldsmith and Stephen Duck who felt that the image of happiness, innocence and simplicity offered by pastoral writing was illusory and deceitful because it did not take into account the harsh reality of the life lived by country people, took a stronger line. Their rejoinder to conventional pastoral writing added a new dimension to the genre: the anti-pastoral, which some would see as a genre in its own right rather than as a sub-class of pastoral. Over the centuries, pastoral has developed into a malleable and versatile instrument whose modifications of both

form and content have permitted it to emerge as an effective medium for the treatment of a wide range of themes and concerns.

The next chapter undertakes an analysis of *King Lear* as a tragedy containing elements of both pastoral and anti-pastoral, but chiefly the latter.

CHAPTER 2

King Lear

Introduction

The idea that *King Lear* is a tragedy with pastoral ‘resonances’ is not common because pastoral conventions do not overtly present themselves in their content and organisation. Young correctly points out that

we cannot expect to discover *King Lear*’s relation to the pastoral simply by appealing to the tradition. Its use of pastoral is submerged, eccentric, and in no way bound by conventions.

(75)

In this Chapter I shall try to trace pastoral and anti-pastoral elements in *King Lear*.

The claim that *King Lear* has characteristics of pastoral and anti-pastoral has been made by Maynard Mack (1965), David Young (1972) and by Nancy R Lindheim (1974).

Maynard Mack (*King Lear in Our Time*) points to pastoral romance as a “source” of *King Lear*, citing the heath scene, and ‘disguises which actually deceive those who might be supposed most capable of seeing through them’ (63). In Mack’s words

King Lear alludes to the patterns of pastoral romance only to turn them upside down. It moves from extrusion not to pastoral, but to what I take to be the greatest anti-pastoral ever penned.

(65)

Nancy Lindheim also cites the resemblance between *As You Like It* and *King Lear* to show that its ‘germinating impulses’ lie in pastoral: ‘*King Lear* derives its resemblance to *As You Like It* and to pastoral romance from something which is basic to its conception.’ (169)

David Young, also citing *As You Like It* as a parallel to *King Lear*, observes that

there has been no attention to *King Lear*'s curious and extensive relation to the pastoral. The reason is not far to seek. Few, if any, surface details in the play are related to the conventional trappings of pastoral, with the result that the investigator hardly feels pressed to pursue the grotesque possibility that tragedy and pastoral have been combined.

(74)

In analysing *King Lear* I shall focus on characteristics that are common to both pastoral and tragedy basing much of my argument on Young, and on Lindheim's view that

...Shakespeare could have considered the combination of pastoral and tragedy a viable paradox. The combination is viable because pastoral too deals with fundamental questions about man.

(168)

King Lear is fraught with questions about the nature of man in relation to his fellow men. Its characters are set in the midst of a violent social and moral upheaval. It is from the depths of such a fierce drama of human emotions and passions that questions pertaining to man and his environment emanate.

Source

The source of the main plot was the old version of *King Lear*, titled *King Leir*, which had a happy ending, with the king who was ill-treated by his elder daughters whom he had favoured, restored to his kingdom by the grace of his youngest daughter whom he had wronged and banished.¹ But Shakespeare rejected the happy ending probably

¹ The pattern of usurpation, banishment and restoration suggests a parallel to *As You Like It*.

because after Lear underwent such torment and suffering, a glib restoration to the throne would not be convincing (Muir, 12). A tragic ending to such a concatenation of events seemed to be more appropriate because Shakespeare was concerned with reality rather than fancy. This predilection accounts for the many anti-pastoral sentiments that the play contains.

Shakespeare drew his subplot (Clark and Wright, 758) from Sir Philip Sidney's pastoral work, *Arcadia*, which contains a tale about how the blinded King of Paphlogonia, corresponding to Gloucester, is reinstated on his throne and his two sons reconciled. The drama ends happily, according to the conventional romance ending. The horror of the king's blinding in *Arcadia* is kept to a minimal four words reporting the deed.

The general configuration of *King Lear* has the characteristics of pastoral romance which

begins with one or more groups of characters who leave the normal world, usually from necessity, to take up residence in a rural or wilderness setting, and ends with their restoration and return.

(Young, 20)

Structurally, both the main plot and the sub-plot of *King Lear* follow the broad pastoral sequence of banishment, sojourn and return, a sequence one finds in both *As You Like It* and *The Tempest*, which are, among other things, specimens of pastoral 'green world' romance in which the plot is 'assimilated to the ritual theme of the triumph of life and love over the waste land' (Frye, 182). In *King Lear* this victory is absent: life and love do not triumph over the waste land. To this circumstance a good part of the

play's anti-pastoral character is attributable.

Shakespeare exploits the pastoral genre, converting the conventional pastoral romance into a pastoral tragedy or, more accurately, a tragedy containing both pastoral and anti-pastoral elements. While banishment is not in principle part of the pastoral pattern, Lear's banishment serves to create a situation where longing for a past time and space is engendered, where an escape from the pressures of the moment becomes desirable. These impulses beget a few rather fleeting pastoral episodes in the play.

As there are both pastoral and anti-pastoral elements in the play, I find it most convenient to set out the elements in these categories under numbered sub-headings so as to avoid blurring of focus. The play will be examined under the following sub-headings:

PASTORAL ELEMENTS

1. Pastoral landscape
2. 'Extrusion'
3. Refuge
4. Reunion
5. Simplicity
6. Reduction
7. Pity and compassion
8. Nature
9. Death in *King Lear* – pastoral treatment

ANTI-PASTORAL ELEMENTS

1. Anti-pastoral setting
2. The storm
3. Alienation and reconciliation
4. Superfluity
5. Disguises
6. Clothes, sophistication
7. Contemplation
8. Anti-pastoral nature

PASTORAL ELEMENTS

1. Pastoral landscape

Describing the kingdom he is about to distribute to his daughters, Lear says:

Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,
With shadowy forests and with champains rich'd,
With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,
We make thee lady.

(I, i, 62 – 65)

The kingdom has pastoral features: it has trees ('shadowy forests'), broad meadows ('wide-skirted meads') and open country ('champains') enriched ('riched'), with many rivers ('plenteous rivers'). The pastoral imagery of richness and fertility, abundance and plenitude is captured in this description. Brooke comments on these lines saying that they demonstrate 'The spacious royal rhythm, carrying imagery of rich and fertile nature...' (19).

Stressing the amplitude of his kingdom, Lear asks Cordelia :

... what can you say to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters ?

(I, i, 84 – 85)

The preamble to this is Lear's

Now, our joy,
Although our last, and least; to whose young love
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy
Strive to be interest'd;

(I, i, 81 – 84)

The reference to 'vines' and 'milk' imparts a sense of richness² and has pastoral echoes.

² Dyer (6) and Edwards (32) both point out that these words give an idea of richness and fertility, rather than imparting agricultural information. Edwards draws attention to the Song of Solomon 5:1, as a possible source for the reference to 'vines' and 'milk'.

In describing his kingdom in terms of images of abundance, Lear is really sketching in a pastoral backdrop. It is against this backdrop that the drama of the rest of the play takes shape. To begin with, the imagery of plenitude and fertility is almost immediately shattered by the staccato lines of Cordelia ('Nothing, my lord.' and 'Nothing' I, i, 86 – 88), lines that prefigure the transformation of Lear's pastoral kingdom into its opposite (a point that will be discussed later), for Lear, who enjoyed reigning over his well-stocked kingdom, is soon to be denied its pleasures and expelled from it.

While the pastoral resonances of Lear's dedication of land to Cordelia are easily discernible in his description of the portion allotted to her, his actions may be regarded as fundamentally non-pastoral. Lear's description of his kingdom is given in pastoral rather than in legal or mathematical detail. The overwhelming concern becomes the description rather than the act of division. And in keeping with the pastoral convention, Lear demonstrates his unconditional trust in the spoken word :

Lear's absolute trust in his and other people's 'word' is an outmoded social habit, but one entirely appropriate to his rank and style.

(Colie in Colie and Flahiff, 194)

Further, the language used by Cordelia in response to her father's question, though it has the sincerity appropriate to pastoral, has associations with contract and legality. Seen against the background of the changing attitudes of parent-child relationships during the Renaissance, these non-pastoral actions and legal terminology become justifiable. Colie writes:

In spite of marked deference shown parents by their children in England, it is clear that over the century and a half of the Renaissance, fathers lost their unquestioned authority in the disposition of their children's lives and fortunes. Legal requirements came to protect, particularly, daughters.

(*King Lear* and the 'Crisis' of the Aristocracy in Colie and Flahiff, 189)

2. 'Extrusion'

Extrusion in the pastoral sense is the withdrawal of a character from a society beset with a malady. Some characters withdraw in appearance only, for example, Kent, who returns to serve his master in disguise. Others, like Lear, leave their society and enter another world, usually the country, either in their thoughts or in person. Young defines the concept:

...extrusion from society – the characters choosing disguise and a rustic existence until justice and equilibrium are restored – which was to become the basis of English pastoral drama.

(15)

Much like the pastoral romance, *King Lear* deals with the expulsion from a society of the protagonist (Lear) who then experiences a sojourn in a natural environment. During his stay there he reviews his position in the world and a process of self-evaluation takes place necessitating a 'psychological adjustment' (Young, 76). Over and above 'psychological adjustment', the old king and Gloucester, whose parallel stories follow a pastoral-like trajectory, undergo a cathartic process: both are deceived by their offspring, and belatedly, under conditions of banishment in open country, they realise their errors of judgement.

In pastoral romance the protagonist is eventually reconciled with the society (now morally renovated) whence he had been ousted. In *King Lear*, however, reconciliation, on the one hand, between Cordelia and her father, and, on the other, between Edgar

and Gloucester, ends on a tragic note for in neither case is an opportunity given to the participants to savour it. (Of course, there is no reconciliation between Lear and his daughters, Goneril and Regan, nor is there a reconciliation between Edmund and his father, Gloucester.) The sense of tragedy permeates these events with telling force, investing *King Lear* with the characteristics of both pastoral and tragedy.

3. Refuge

Turned out of their palaces by his daughters Lear seeks refuge outside, that is, in nature, which by pastoral convention offers a place of retreat to the troubled and the vexed. However, what ought to give relief to Lear in pastoral terms does not materialise. He experiences the wrath of the elements, thereby taking away the calming effect of the natural world outside the court. The natural refuge is presented not seldom as a 'pleasance', a *locus amoenus*, whose classic features are identifiable only in flashes and glimpses in *King Lear* where the storm transforms the ordinarily hospitable countryside into an arena stripped of pastoral associations. Even here, the storm, regarded as an anti-pastoral force, does in fact, despoil the pastoral landscape. Obviously, the storm, being inanimate, in the strictest sense, has no obligation to protect Lear. The landscape is simply devoid of pastoral associations. It is really the point of the play's entry into a world that borders on anti-pastoral. The tempest is indifferent to man, but it is not hostile to him (Young, 83).

Mack has the same view of Lear who sought refuge in the countryside:

Lear's heath is the spiritual antipodes of the lush romance Arcadias. Nature proves to be indifferent or hostile, not friendly – yet curiously expressive, as in romance, of the protagonist's mental and emotional states. The figures are not Arcadian, but the wretched fiend-haunted villagers of Edgar's hallucinations. The reflections of his condition that Lear meets are barrenness, tempest,

and alienation, the defenseless suffering of his Fool,
the madness of a derelict beggar who is “the thing itself.”
And though a “death” of sorts occurs at the close of
this anti-pastoral, followed much later by hints of
restoration and new beginnings when Lear is brought
onstage dressed in fresh garments and to the sound of
music, all that is won is no sooner won than snatched away.

(65 – 66)

(The effect of the storm in reversing the characteristics of the pastoral pleasance and
creating an anti-pastoral landscape will be discussed later.)

Rejected by his father through the intrigue of his half brother Edmund, Edgar seeks
refuge in a wood:

I heard myself proclaim'd;
And by the happy hollow of a tree
Escap'd the hunt.

(II, iii, 1- 3)

A tree in itself cannot be pastoral, but finding in it a refuge from a perilous onslaught
from the court, links it to pastoral.³ The contrast between the court and the country
comes through clearly. The hollow tree is a place of sanctuary for the harried Edgar
whose pursuit is likened to a ‘hunt’. In the guise of a mad beggar he intends eluding
the chase by finding shelter in the countryside :

The country gives me proof and precedent
Of Bedlam beggars...

(II, iii, 13 - 14)

Edgar can find a haven only in the countryside which was the home of wandering
‘Bedlam beggars’.

³ Towards the end of the play when the two warring camps assemble for a showdown, Edgar meets his
father and tells him : Here, father, take the shadow of this tree

For your good host. (V,ii.1 – 2)

By convention, the pastoral setting has at least a tree. ‘The *locus amoenus* (pleasance),... is ...a
beautiful, shaded natural site. Its minimum ingredients comprise a tree (or several trees)... (Curtius,
195). This tree is seen as a means of providing shelter for Gloucester, the shelter he needs for
protection from a war that is waged essentially from the court and is fought in the countryside which
it despoils.

Edgar's chosen refuge, however, also contains a glancing reference to the anti-pastoral element in the play: while the rural setting of pastoral affords a haven to the troubled, like Edgar here, he also refers to the fact that in his naked state he will be exposed to the fury of the forces of nature:

And with presented nakedness outface,
The winds and persecutions of the sky.

(II, iii, 11-12)

The word 'winds' carries the connotation of tempestuous winds, and the fury that the elements can unleash is summed up in the words 'persecutions of the sky'. The countryside can offer Edgar disguise and cover but not reposeful shelter as called for by pastoral convention. So the 'winds and persecutions of the sky', stripping the landscape of its pastoral status, is perceived as an anti-pastoral element foreshadowing Lear's anti-pastoral experience later on the heath.

Through the different uses and moods he imparts to the countryside, Shakespeare invests the play with both pastoral and anti-pastoral elements.

4. Reunion – a pastoral moment

In the final scene of the play, Lear is seen in the midst of an emotional and a physical upheaval. When he first meets with the daughter he has banished, he is overcome with grief. He tries to salvage something from the torment by imagining his, and Cordelia's life in a better place. The reconciliation with Cordelia that ensues is so complete and fulfilling that he foresees the rest of his life lived in blissful joy, even though they are captives. He sees in this future a consummate happiness as he imagines what their life

together could be like. In keeping with pastoral tradition, Lear seeks to avert his eyes from anything that might spoil his imagined happiness.

The final scene where Lear walks onto the stage with Cordelia's dead body is a grim reminder to the audience that any protection from the harsh eventualities of life is but fictional and illusory. But Lear, now seems to be in a pastoral world where, perhaps knowing the harsh reality, plays that reality down. It may be a curtailment of escapism for the audience, since they outlive Lear, but not for Lear himself, who makes a deliberate attempt to 'see' Cordelia alive. This point is discussed later under the heading 'Death in King Lear: pastoral treatment'.

Accordingly, his determination not to have his daughters within his sight is emphatic: 'No, no, no, no !' (V, iii, 8). Instead, he offers an image of happiness in a spirited rhythm which is in direct contrast to the agitated and agonised tone that has become characteristic of him since his humiliation by his elder daughters:

Come let's away to prison;
We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down,
And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,
Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out;
And take upon's the mystery of things,
As if we were God's spies: and we'll wear out,
In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones
That ebb and flow by th' moon.

(V, iii, 8 - 19)

In the face of their impending imprisonment, Lear considers the prospect of happiness away from the corruption of the court. The tenor of his description has much in

common with the atmosphere of the pastoral 'pleasance': there is the sound of singing and laughter; there is the happiness and well-being born out of the harmony between the quest for blessing and the joy of forgiving. The life imagined is carefree and is given a particular sense of gaiety by the reference to 'butterflies', insects traditionally associated with simple pleasure and joy.

Of particular significance is the reference to the corruption of the court, throwing into strong relief the pleasures of the imagined alternative. The term 'gilded butterflies' is a reference to gorgeously-dressed courtiers; 'poor rogues', literally prisoners, also connotes courtiers, whom Lear at this stage considers pitiable for their addiction to the less important things in life (Dyer, 90); and 'the mystery of things', in the context, is primarily a reference to court politics (Brooke, 50). The tone of these references suggests a denunciation of the court as an institution and strengthens the contrast between the corruption of the court and the pastoral-like alternative visualised by Lear. In setting up such a contrast, the passage aligns itself with the traditional pastoral opposition between the false sophistication and corruption of a court and the simplicity, naturalness and innocence of rural life.

5. Simplicity

Simplicity in the pastoral sense has to do with the simple ways of the shepherds and the kind of unpretentious lives they led. This modest life is based on honesty and sincerity, without the desire to be or have more than is necessary. Characteristic of the pastoral is the valorization of simplicity and the rejection of excess, ostentation and opulence. These concerns find expression in the play.

At the beginning of the action, when Lear goes through the exercise of distributing his

kingdom among his daughters, there is constant reference to abundance and amplitude. The court is the centre of this opulence. Lear refers to 'largest bounty' (I, i, 51), and 'this ample third of our fair kingdom' (I, i, 79). The note of ostentation is magnified by Goneril's exaggerated expressions of love:

Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter;
Dearer than eye-sight, space and liberty;
Beyond what can be valued rich or rare;
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour.

(I, i, 54 - 57)

Regan echoes these sentiments, reiterating the hyperbolic tone, and the scene becomes taut with excitement, as we await the profession of love by Cordelia to whom Lear says:

... what can you say to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters ?

(I, i, 84 - 85)

Cordelia's response is 'Nothing, my lord' (I, i, 86). The word 'nothing' is bandied about between Lear and Cordelia in the next three lines (87 - 89) and recurs throughout the play, reverberating with such force that the idea is etched in our minds, in strong contrast to the idea of abundance with which the play opens.

Cordelia's use of the word 'nothing' is really an affirmation of her sincerity in contrast to her sisters' ostentatious, but false, professions of love. Sincerity is a pastoral imperative, its building-blocks being simplicity, honesty, frankness, the absence of pretence.

Cordelia does not need to impress by outward show. To her father's offer of 'a third more opulent' she cannot engage in a profusion of words to express her feelings; she

can only utter with brevity her sincere love for her father :

I love your Majesty
According to my bond; no more nor less.

(I, i, 91 - 92)

In saying this, Cordelia establishes the point that having the capacity to love in this sincere way is the minimum required to be human. In pastoral terms, sincere love of this kind is both necessary and sufficient. Cordelia remains consistent in her love for her father, though misjudged and ill-used by him. The sincerity of her love is clearly seen in her words :

.... since I'm sure my love's
More ponderous than my tongue.

(I, i, 76 - 77)

The reward of her sincerity is banishment, but she knows that she has not compromised her integrity, as her sisters have.

Cordelia underlines the minimum that is required for humanity – disinterested love that one feels sincerely (rather than tongue-love). This is consistent with the nature of pastoral simplicity which can go as far as making speech redundant, since genuine emotion is sometimes felt rather than expressed.

6. Reduction

The bond between himself and Cordelia that Lear visualises at the end of the play is based on pure disinterested love which by its nature is able to transform their incarceration into something that the gods will bless and purify:

Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
The Gods themselves throw incense.

(V, iii, 20 - 21)

In referring to 'such sacrifices', Lear underlines the notion of reduction, on the one hand as it applies to his own reduction in both stature and property, on the other, as it applies to Cordelia's after her army's defeat.

For all its punitiveness, the stripped-down condition to which reduction leads can be said to have some connection with pastoral simplicity. Lear goes through a process of reduction so that he begins to realise what it is to be stripped of the trappings of kingship. The main reason he had given for sharing out his kingdom was

To shake all cares and business from our age,
Conferring them on younger strengths, while we
Unburthen'd crawl toward death.

(I, i, 38 -40)

Renouncing power, he reserves the trappings and honours of kingship:

Only we shall retain
The name and all th' addition to a king.

(I, i, 134 - 135)

But in fact he has begun the countdown for his own reduction, which culminates in his daughters reducing his train to nothing. Already reduced to twenty five by Regan, it is further reduced by Goneril:

Hear me, my Lord.
What need you five-and-twenty, ten, or five,
To follow in a house where twice so many
Have a command to tend you ?

(II, iv, 258 - 261)

The final reduction takes place when Regan in her typically curt manner retorts:

What need one ?

(II, iv, 261)

The relentless reduction of Lear's retinue which is the outward show of rank and power becomes symbolic. The numerical reduction bespeaks a metaphoric reduction of Lear's position in society, and the condition of near-nothingness to which he is finally reduced could be seen as an extreme version of pastoral simplicity and frugality. Much the same argument could be made with respect to Edgar: he takes on the aspect of

...the basest and most poorest shape
That ever penury, in contempt of man,
Brought near to beast;

(II, iii, 7 - 10)

We see him in a setting in the woods

...low farms,
Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills,

(II, iii, 17 - 18)

where he reduces himself to the ultimately frugal condition of a bodily frame covered by rags:

...my face I'll grime with filth,
Blanket my loins, elf all my hairs in knots,
And with presented nakedness outface
The winds and persecutions of the sky.

(II, iii, 9 - 12)

Both Lear and Edgar find themselves in the countryside where the conditions are far from what Arcadia purports to have. The Arcadian scene does not offer the sojourner what Tom gets :

Poor Tom; that eats the swimming frog, the toad,
The tadpole, the wall-newt, and the water; that in
the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats

cow-dung for sallats; swallows the old rat and the
ditch-dog; drinks the green mantle of the standing
pool;

(III, iv, 126 – 131)

This is the real world that Lear and Edgar survive in. Only the pastoral artifice can create an illusion that it does not exist. The conditions described here are a far cry from what Arcadia offers, and because the condition here (and in the storm scenes) is not created for Lear and Edgar in particular but exists in the real world as a normal occurrence, it is not a vindictive world outside but a natural world. And for the sake of convenience, it can be regarded as anti-pastoral, because it cannot compare with the normal trappings of pastoral.

7. **Pity and Compassion**

Reduction in the pastoral sense has to do with the removal or renunciation of trappings which are in excess of sufficiency. After a person loses his material possessions what remains are the intangible attributes of love, pity and compassion which distinguish him from the lower creation. Lindheim's comment on this is:

...impulses like pity, ...are normally pastoral expressions of
purified human nature...

(172)

The capacity to feel these emotions arises from a bond of sympathy between people. The exploration of the theme of pity and compassion forms the 'doctrinal heart of the pastoral examination in *As You Like It*' argues Lindheim, (172). Such emotions express themselves when one sees in other people's suffering the image of one's own, or when their suffering constitutes a violation of one's own sense of morals and human values.

Thus Celia's flight from the court is a demonstration of sympathetic friendship for Rosalind, and Phebe begins to pity Silvius because she has undergone pangs of love herself. These acts of compassion, which are certainly in tune with the desiderata of pastoral, nourish the roots of civilised humanity (Lindheim, 173).

These yardsticks may be applied to *King Lear*. From the moment Lear realises that he has lost what he felt was most valuable, he goes on a journey of discovery :

The art of our necessities is strange,
And can make vile things precious.

(III, ii, 70 – 71)

Once he demanded affection; now he begins to show it (Fowler, in Cookson and Loughrey, 106 – 107) and he not only empathises but also experiences the pangs of want :

Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
That's sorry yet for thee.

(III, ii, 72 – 73)

In the fury of the storm, Lear begins to reflect on man's real needs and his attention turns from his own needs to the needs of others:

O ! I have ta'en
Too little care of this. Take physic, Pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
And show the Heavens more just.

(III, iv, 32 – 36)

When Lear, bereft now of wealth, status and power, or the desire for them, compassionates the 'poor naked wretches' (III, iv, 28), he steps out of the stream of life to occupy a vantage point from which humanity is seen in quite a new light:

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,

That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these ? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this.

(III, iv, 28 - 33)

Such emotions can only arise when one is sufficiently sensitised. Lear's speech shows his deep moral awareness of the plight of his fellow creatures. He is overcome with pity and compassion for all homeless and unclothed victims of poverty and his tone suggests deep remorse. He is awakened to a moral intelligence of the plight of the poor, something he was not aware of while he was king. His confession is sincere 'O, I have ta'en /Too little care of this!' He realises that he is now in the world of 'unaccommodated' humanity, far from the comforts of the court. Those who live in courts are frequently under the illusion that all is well in the world outside. Here Lear's illusion of what the world is like is dismantled. The access of compassion that ensues bears the stamp of pastoral.

Lear, Cordelia, Gloucester and Edgar have all enjoyed the advantages of exalted birth. In the course of the play they undergo a kind of purging and are brought to understand that external privilege is not the ultimate in life. It is pity, love and compassion that reunite child with parent, parent with child. Cordelia's plea to the gods, invested with deep compassion for her ruined parent, can be viewed as a significant pastoral moment:

O you kind Gods,
Cure this great breach in his abused nature!
Th' untuned and jarring senses, O! wind up
Of this child-changed father.

(IV, vii, 14 - 17)

Similarly, pity, compassion and love all converge in the highly emotional scene where

Cordelia, in a tender moment of reunion, addresses her father in a gentle, soothing tone :

O my dear father! Restoration hang
Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss
Repair those violent harms that my two sisters
Have in thy reverence made!

(IV, vii, 26 – 29)

Set against the ingratitude of the other daughters, the theme of reconciliation based on compassion impacts the more effectively:

Come, let's away to prison;
We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down,
And ask of thee forgiveness:

(V, iii, 8 – 11)

The love that Cordelia has for the father who treated her unkindly, and the love that Edgar has for the father who treated him unfairly are based not just on a filial bond but on the core values of civilised humanity. They represent the basic minimum that distinguishes man from the brute beasts. And there is a minimum acknowledged by pastoral as well – tacitly, if not explicitly.

8. Nature

John Danby gives a perceptive analysis of the concept of 'Nature' particularly the way it is used in *King Lear*:

The words 'nature', 'natural', and 'unnatural' occur over forty times in *King Lear*... More significantly, however, two main meanings, strongly contrasted and mutually exclusive, run through the play. On one side is the view consciously adopted by Edmund, and tacitly assumed by Goneril and Regan. On the other is the view largely held by the Lear party.

(19 – 20)

In the play Nature is seen as ‘the shattering power of Thunder’ (Danby, 21). This is physical nature, as in *Mother Nature*, and as it shatters the tranquillity of the open countryside, it becomes an anti-pastoral force. Comparably, Lear’s mind is fractured when he is ill-treated by his daughters. Cursing Goneril, he says: ‘Hear, Nature, hear! dear Goddess, hear!/Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend/To make this creature fruitful!’ (I, iv, 273 – 275). Commenting on this use of the word ‘Nature’, Dyer writes: ‘Lear thinks of Nature here as the great creator, the universal mother (not Edmund’s Nature of natural impulses and desires, regarded as his god)’ (46).

‘Nature’, also refers to human nature – susceptible to corruption as is evidenced in the change in the characters of Goneril, Regan and Edmund. All suffer as a result of their heartless human nature which bears a clear anti-pastoral stamp. All is not lost though, as a balance is struck by the kind natures of Cordelia, Kent and Edgar whose virtues of compassion, love, sincerity and loyalty are consistent with the pastoral ethos.

Seen as a positive force Nature is benign or ‘green’ (Watts, 12), life-giving, creative and having a salutary effect on humankind. As it works in harmony with the dictates of virtuous living, it is pastoral in character. On the other side there is the malign or ‘red’ nature which is destructive, ‘violent and predatory’ (Watts, 12), associated with winter, death, tempests and ferocious animals like wolves and tigers (or their human counterparts, Goneril, Regan, Edmund and Cornwall). Inasmuch as it works against the good forces in life, it is anti-pastoral. This pattern reflects opposed camps in the human family, the virtuous and the vicious. The virtuous, loyal and caring represent the old order based on fidelity and fair dealing. Kent, Cordelia and Edgar belong to this group. Through suffering Lear and Gloucester become worthy of joining it. The

vicious subscribe to a moral code that does not conform to any accepted ethos of humane behaviour. Edmund, Goneril, Regan and Cornwall belong in this category. They trade in corruption, treachery and betrayal, and are ‘ “appetitive”, in the sense that they may be greedy for power or for illicit sexual pleasure’ (Watts, 12). The side of human nature represented by the last-named group will be further examined in the section on anti-pastoral.

9. Death in *King Lear* : pastoral treatment

Owing to its irreversible and tragic character, death, in principle, is out of place in the pastoral as it works in opposition to the serene and, usually, trouble-free life of the pastoral world. With death are associated emotional pain and grief. In accordance with the pastoral outlook, death is palliated⁴, as is seen in the final scene of the play when Lear appears with Cordelia’s body. Not accepting that she has died after all, he dwells in the delusion that there is still life in her:

Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little. Ha!
What is’t thou say’st ?

(V, iii, 270 - 271)

And not hearing anything from her, he thus accounts for her silence :

Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman.

(V, iii, 271 - 272)

His attempt to keep the harsh truth at bay flows from the delusion that he has saved Cordelia. His last sight of his dead child gladdens him as he reiterates the belief that

⁴ Death is also palliated by making it appear as close as possible to a celebration. McFarland states: ‘Funerals themselves, as a matter of fact, are attempts, with their flowers and mourning friends, to pastoralise and socialise the fact of death. Funerals are for the living, not for the dead... and are commonly concluded by a feast scarcely distinguishable, in resolute surface gaiety, from a wedding’ (34).

she is still alive:

Do you see this ? Look on her, look, her lips,
Look there, look there!

Lear dies

(V, iii, 311 - 312)

So for her father Cordelia's death is palliated and he, in turn, dies consoled. This turn of events has given rise to much critical commentary:

A C Bradley suggested (and many critics agree) that Lear thinks Cordelia is reviving; and dies, like Gloucester from excess of joy. However, this belief would be only the last of several illusory moments of conviction that Cordelia is alive (see V,iii,263 – 264, 266, 273) ...

(Dyer, 210)

The reference to Gloucester in the quotation puts us in mind that for him too the moment of death is palliated: he dies happy in the knowledge that he has been reconciled with Edgar:

...but his flaw'd heart,
Alack, too weak the conflict to support!
'Twi'xt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,
Burst smilingly.

(V, iii, 195 - 198)

While pastoral does not bar the way to death (think of the pastoral elegy⁵) it finds ways of alleviating its sting. MacFarland comments:

Plotinus emphasizes that death loses its sting when subsumed under the human reality of play. He thereby provides a key to the significance of the intrusion of sadness and death into the world of the eclogue. For where comedy turns its back on death, the pastoral, though it represents a state of youth and happiness, has from earliest beginnings recognized the fact of death.

(32 - 33)

The easing of death's sting finds expression in Edgar's line 'Ripeness is all' (V, ii,

⁵ MacFarland writes: 'In the very first idyll of Theocritus one of the happy shepherds, Thyrsis, sings a lament for the death of Daphnis; and in Vergil's fifth eclogue Mopsus sings of the death of Daphnis and the inscription on the tomb, while Menaclaus sings also of Daphnis: "These rites shall be thine forever." .' (33)

11). Edgar here voices opinion that readiness for death at the right ('ripe') time makes it more acceptable. In his interpretation of the line Brooke writes:

At its simplest, it ['ripeness'] means 'readiness', that men must be prepared to die. ... in contrast to Gloucester's word 'rot' it suggests the perfect maturity of fruit, a point of achievement at which death may be more appropriate than decay.

(49)

This interpretation offers the comfort of philosophy and underlines the pastoral associations of Edgar's words.

ANTI-PASTORAL ELEMENTS

1. Anti-pastoral setting

The countryside into which Lear flees is anything but pastoral. Gloucester, having gone out in search of Lear, describes the scene :

Alack! the night comes on, and the bleak winds
Do sorely ruffle; for many miles about
There's scarce a bush.

(II, iv, 298 - 300)

The description given here is in sharp contrast with the conventions of pastoral. The pastoral scene usually set in daylight, projects an atmosphere of cheerfulness. The time of the scene depicted here is night. The conventional pastoral setting has at least a tree, whereas here 'There's scarce a bush'. The mood of pastoral is ordinarily serene, but the heath is tumultuous as 'the high winds/ Do sorely ruffle'. All these features engender an anti-pastoral atmosphere and foreshadow other anti-pastoral elements that become conspicuous later in the play.

Fleeing his daughters' cruelty, Lear seeks refuge in the open countryside of a kingdom

he had earlier described in pastoral terms. He finds that the countryside is not what he imagined it to be. The idealised countryside of Act I, Scene i, shrinks into a barren heath with no 'shadowy forest' to protect him from the storm. This is an inversion of the pastoral convention: when the storm erupts the country offers neither solace nor protection. According to pastoral convention, the elements are supposed to be sympathetic and kindly. Nothing could be less true of the storm that assails Lear and the other homeless creatures marooned on the heath.

2. The Storm

In Shakespeare's plays the storm has a particular significance:

Storms occur from *The Comedy of Errors* all the way to *The Tempest*. We need only think of the storm that rages off the coast of Illyria, or the one that occurs off the coast of Bohemia; or the storm that surrounds Macbeth's castle, or the one that harrows Othello's passage to Cyprus. As a persisting symbol of the harshness of reality, and also as a convenience for the dramatist who can utilize the fortuitous separations and reunions incident to storms, the repeated use of tempestuous weather is a fitting adjunct to Shakespeare's dramatic art, both comic and tragic.

(McFarland, 157)

By pastoral convention, Nature, as seen in the countryside serves as an aide to one's well-being. Having this quality, it invites the distressed person to enjoy its benign influence. But when that same Nature becomes harsh, as we see in *King Lear* with the winds blowing and the tempest raging, the faith of the sojourner is lost, because it cannot give him any solace that Nature is reputed to give to the vexed. In pastoral terms, then, the Nature that gives no relief becomes anti-pastoral. What one gets from

the pastoral countryside depends on either the natural workings of Nature, or from the manipulation of Art which exists only in the mind.

In *King Lear*, Shakespeare uses the storm to demonstrate two things: the destructive power of aroused nature and the emotional and mental tempest by which Lear is assailed. The latter is a metaphoric extension of the former, and both are anti-pastoral in character. I propose to consider first the physical storm as an anti-pastoral manifestation, and thereafter the metaphorical tempest within Lear.

The storm Lear rushes into, after forsaking Gloucester's castle in rage and despair, is described vividly by a Gentleman, one of Lear's followers, in reply to Kent's question 'Where's the King?' (III, i, 3):

Contending with the fretful elements;
Bids the wind blow the earth into the sea,
Or swell the curled waters 'bove the main,
That things might change or cease; tears his white hair,
Which the impetuous blasts, with eyeless rage,
Catch in their fury, and make nothing of;
Strives in his little world of man to out-storm
The to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain.

(III, i, 4 - 11)

The wind, the rain and lightning unleash their wrath on the land and all upon it, as Lear, ranting and raving, competes with the perturbations and force of the elements. Nothing could be further from the serenity, harmony and tranquillity of the conventional pastoral 'pleasance' than the chaotic violence of the tempest that assails the defenceless king and all living things on the heath. But for the old king, driven by rage despair and perturbation of mind, the storm is not fierce enough. He calls upon the elements to work themselves up into a fury capable of undoing the original Creation. This famous speech may be viewed as the ultimate anti-pastoral pronouncement:

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!
You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o'th' world!
Crack Nature's moulds, all germens spill at once
That makes ingrateful man!

(III, ii, 1 – 9)

For all that, Lear insists that the physical tempest, which 'Invades us [but] to the skin' (III, iv, 7), pales by comparison with the tempest inside him. He says to the disguised Kent:

Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee;
But where the greater malady is fix'd,
The lesser is scarce felt.

(III, iv, 6 – 9)

Referring to the 'tempest in my mind', Lear declares that it 'Doth from my senses take all feeling else/Save what beats there – filial ingratitude!' (III, iv, 13 – 14).

Given the link that Lear establishes between the external and internal tempests, it may be argued that the latter is a reflection, a metaphorical extension, of the former. 'The storm in *King Lear*,' writes McFarland, 'serves to underscore, in a macrocosm/microcosm correspondence, the tempestuous emotions in King Lear's heart' (157). It is, however, possible to reverse the relationship between the physical storm and the one in Lear's mind, viewing the former, the physical storm, as a reflection and an expression of the latter. In that case we have an instance of 'The Pathetic Fallacy' (discussed in an earlier chapter), in terms of which the moods and behaviour of external nature take their cue from the emotions of a human subject.

Whichever way one looks at it, of one thing there is no doubt: the mental suffering Lear endures as a result of 'filial ingratitude' is intense and acute. As such it is an anti-pastoral manifestation wholly at odds with the conventional emotional 'palette' of pastoral where the prevailing mood is set by qualities such as contentment, composure, serenity and tranquillity. Gloucester, too, endures mental anguish, and his bodily suffering is more extreme than Lear's. The tortures inflicted on his body are as foreign to pastoral as wild beasts of prey are. It is evident, then, that Gloucester's afflictions intensify the anti-pastoral 'timbre' of the play. But to return to the old king's afflictions.

His anguish arises from his daughters' unnatural hardness and ingratitude:

In such a night
To shut me out? Pour on; I will endure.
In such a night as this? O Regan, Goneril!
Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all, -

(III, iv, 17 – 20)

The terrible violence of the storm is not as unkind as his daughters' unkindness, for the elements owe him nothing; he has no claim upon their consideration, as he has upon his daughters'. Accordingly, he calls upon the elements to do their worst, masochistically entreating them to intensify his pain:

Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout, rain!
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:
I tax you not, you elements, with unkindness;
I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,
You owe me no subscription: then let fall
Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak, despis'd old man.
But yet I call you servile ministers,
That will with two pernicious daughters join
Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. O, ho! 'tis foul!

(III, ii, 14 – 24)

Finally, his wits give way, but it is precisely when they do so that he sees most searchingly. For example:

Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
Arm it in rags, a pygmy's straw does pierce it.

(IV, vi, 163 – 165)

Well does Edgar say, 'O! matter and impertinency mix'd,/Reason in madness!' (IV, vi, 172 – 173).

While Lear's mental affliction reaches a climax at the end of the tragedy, when he returns to the stage bearing Cordelia's dead body, it is experienced in an unrelievedly intense and acute fashion throughout the storm episode. At the beginning of the play, the old king, having decided to step down, foresees for himself an easeful, pastoral-like retirement – summed up in the word 'Unburthen'd' (I, i, 40). What he gets is the very opposite, and he gets it mainly in the storm scenes. By pastoral convention, physical nature gives refuge and solace to the troubled. In *King Lear* it functions to aggravate the old man's plight and to mock his frailty and vulnerability. The forsaken king's encounter with Nature and the elements is a relentless, humbling and anti-pastoral ordeal.

3. Alienation and Reconciliation

In pastoral romance the alienation between characters (where it occurs) ends with a happy reconciliation: Sidney's pastoral romance, *Arcadia*, shows the brothers in the story of the Paphlagonian King reconciled; a positive relationship is restored between Duke Frederick and his banished elder brother, Duke Senior, at the end of *As You Like*

It; and the abandoned Perdita is reunited with her father Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*. In contrast to the pastoral convention, reconciliation in *King Lear* is either impossible, or is achieved only momentarily before being swallowed up in tragedy.

The brothers Edmund and Edgar cannot be reconciled after Edmund's treachery against Edgar and his father, Gloucester, who dies at the very moment of his reconciliation with Edgar. Lear's exalted reconciliation with his daughter Cordelia is brutally cut short by the gratuitous tragedy of her execution. There is no place in pastoral, a genial and expansive genre, for the agony and finality of Lear's cry over Cordelia's body:

Thou'lt come no more,/ Never, never, never, never, never!

(V, iii, 306 – 307)

While the tragic dimension of this heart-rending scene is easily seen, its tragic impact is softened by the way in which Lear wishes to see his daughter, alive, and dies with that happy image of his daughter in mind. Pastoral accommodates tragedy as is manifest in this scene. The possibilities of the pastoral encompassing tragedy are expressed by Young:

...the association of tragedy with pastoral is scarcely surprising if we consider that the funeral elegy is among its most fundamental traditions and that the famous motto, *Et in Arcadia ego* refers to death "as a law of nature";

(Poggioli, in Young, 74 – 75)

4. Superfluity

Superfluity, the flip-side of simplicity, is an important theme in the play and has to do with having more than one really needs. On the point of necessity and superfluity, Traversi says:

The conception of 'necessity', of the difference between 'true need' and that which passes for such in the accepted currency of society, has for some time been taking shape in the old man's [Lear's] distraught mind... The opening protest against the kind of 'reason' which his children have just turned upon him merges immediately, with a consideration of what is 'true need', into the social contrast which is one of the main features of the storm scenes. The true 'nature' of man, so Lear argues, requires 'superfluity', is distinguished by it from the beast, whose subjection to mere necessity is a sign of the cheapness of its life.

(152 – 153)

Desiring more than is necessary is not consistent with pastoral, even if it conforms to the true nature of man. But Lear, after all, has been a King, and so his perception of what is necessary is shaped by the kind of life he has been used to. When he realises that his daughters are bent on systematically reducing his train from a hundred to zero, his response is:

O! reason not the need; our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous:
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life is cheap as beast's.

(II, iv, 262 – 265)

Inasmuch as Lear argues against bare necessity, his standpoint is consistent with pastoral which advocates not penury but 'sufficiency'. Inasmuch as he argues for 'superfluity', his standpoint, being inconsistent with the notion of 'sufficiency', is inconsistent with pastoral.

5. Disguises

Disguise is a common feature of the pastoral romance, producing ironic situations and taunting lines. In a pastoral romance such as *As You Like It*, Rosalind who has been banished by her uncle, Duke Frederick, is accompanied by her faithful cousin, Celia,

Duke Frederick's daughter. To avoid the dangers of journeying into the Forest of Arden as women, they disguise themselves as men. A host of comical situations, involving misidentifications and mis-wooing, ensues. In pastoral romance (as in comedy), disguise tends to be chiefly an external, material phenomenon involving a change of clothes and identity and having a benevolent intention.

There is much disguise in *King Lear*, some of it having a benevolent intention, some of it functioning as a survival strategy. Kent, for example, plays out much of his role disguised as Caius, intending, under cover of the disguise, to serve his king loyally. Edgar assumes the disguise of Poor Tom as a survival strategy and, later, the disguise of the unnamed knight in order to be avenged upon Edmund. By and large, however, disguise in tragedy has a malevolent intention and is much more tangible than it is in comedy or romance, being less a matter of externals than of morality and psychology. Thus, in *King Lear* the hypocritical deceit, of presenting a false front⁶, bulks large and it bespeaks an anti-pastoral tendency. Goneril and Regan, therefore, being false, insincere and treacherous, represent an anti-pastoral attitude. They have nothing to offer their father other than their false declarations of love, and they begin to assume animal characteristics as soon as they are granted their inheritance. Once he has gained insight into their true nature, Lear uses the imagery of vicious animals and birds in referring to them: 'sea-monster' (I, iv, 259), 'wolvish visage' (I, iv, 306), 'vulture' (II, iv, 132), 'serpent-like' (II, iv, 158). The references to these predatory animals strike an anti-pastoral note, their attributes being the very reverse of the innocence, timidity and gentleness of the lamb, a staple of the pastoral scene.

⁶ Goneril, Regan and Edmund are villains who 'can conceal their true identities under masks of obliging friendliness' (Edwards, 12).

6. Clothes, sophistication

Battered by the storm, Lear, gazing at 'Poor Tom', asks 'Is man no more than this?' (III, iv, 100 - 101) and answers the question in the next few lines 'thou art the thing itself' (III, iv, 104). In this speech, Lear uses a portentous word in relation to pastoral, the word 'sophisticated' ('Ha! here's three on's are sophisticated' (III, iv, 103 - 104)). Its meaning in a pastoral context has to do with the debased elegance of a society on the threshold of decadence. It suggests in the first instance that external trappings can adulterate and deceive. Oswald, for instance, is a character whose baseness is camouflaged by his finery. Not that Kent is taken in by him for he says to Oswald 'A tailor made thee' (II, ii, 52 - 53), enforcing the point that Oswald is nothing but what his clothes make him. Clothes then, are deceitful trappings. The theme is explored at a more profound level by Lear when he refers to his clothes as 'lendings' and tears them off. In doing so Lear implies

that clothes are deceptive and meaningless trappings,
concealing from men what their real nature is. He tries
to emulate Poor Tom, becoming in his own person
'the thing itself'.

(Dyer, 112)

In comparison to the Bedlam beggar, Lear, Kent and the Fool are sophisticated and, even adulterated. For court sophistication is corrupt, and so the term 'sophisticated' is associated with false urbanity and dissimulation, in direct contrast to Poor Tom who represents simple, 'unaccommodated' man:

Tom is the representative natural man, 'the thing itself'.
If man in a state of nature is a 'poor, bare, forked animal,'
clothes are mere 'lendings' that offer no defence against
the tempest.

(Charney in Colie and Flahiff, 79)

In *King Lear* the references to clothes and sophistication enlarge the themes of superfluity and disguise, discussed above. Clothes offer the dramatist a vehicle for implicit comment on the pastoral desiderata of simplicity and naturalness. When used in an honest way, that is, when used to serve the basic needs of the body, clothes do not contradict the pastoral ethos. But when used for ostentation or to deceive, they do, introducing an anti-pastoral note into the composition.

7. Contemplation

Contemplation is a characteristic feature of the philosophical pastoral. In the meditative space opened up by pastoral, the subject, normally in a state of solitude, muses on life. His thoughts turn out often to be a commentary on man and his actions, a feature which, according to Lindheim (170), Shakespeare exploited: ‘The connection between social or political commentary and pastoral, available at least since Vergil’s *First Eclogue*, was one that Shakespeare apparently found useful.’

Lear’s escape from the court that has caused him pain is, on the face of it, a pastoral move. However, the countryside he flees to is no *Arcadia*, but its direct opposite. Pelted as he is by the storm, Lear cannot at first give his mind to contemplation:

This tempest will not give me leave to ponder
On things would hurt me more.

(III, iv, 24 – 25)

Later, however, he has the leisure to reflect on things that ‘hurt more’, and these reflections have a decidedly anti-pastoral ring. Whereas pastoral reflection is serene and restorative, Lear’s is painful and disintegrative. His wits scattered by suffering, his reflections are by turns anguished, embittered, sardonic, even debased. Consider this outburst:

Behold yond simp'ring dame,
 Whose face between her forks presages snow;
 That minces virtue, and does shake the head
 To hear of pleasure's name;
 The fitchew nor the soiled horse goes to't
 With a more riotous appetite.
 Down from the waist they are Centaurs,
 Though women all above:
 But to the girdle do the Gods inherit,
 Beneath is all the fiend's: there's hell, there's darkness,
 There is the sulphurous pit – burning, scalding,
 Stench, consumption; fie, fie, fie! pah, pah!

(IV, vi, 117 – 128)

A little later in the same scene we come upon the following passage:

Lear : ... A man may see how this world
 goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears: see how
 yond justice rails upon yond simple thief. Hark, in
 thine ear: change places, and, handy-dandy, which
 is the justice, which is the thief? Thou hast seen a
 farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

Gloucester : Ay, Sir.

Lear : And the creature run from the cur? There thou might'st behold
 The great image of Authority:
 A dog's obey'd in office.
 Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!
 Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;
 Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind
 For which thou whipp'st her. The usurer hangs the cozener.
 Thorough tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;
 Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin in gold,
 And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
 Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.
 None does offend, none, I say, none; I'll able 'em:
 Take that of me, my friend, who have the power
 To seal th'accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes;
 And, like a scurvy politician, seem
 To see the things thou dost not.

(IV, vi, 148 – 170)

Here the anti-pastoral note is more ambiguous. If the sardonic tone of the lines is anti-

pastoral, their satirical thrust is not necessarily so. As we noted in the preceding chapter, a satirical edge is not incompatible with pastoral. Moreover, the content of the passage, which unmasks hypocrisy and presents authority as a matter of external trappings, is certainly in keeping with pastoral's inveterate impulse to expose the hypocrisy, deceit and sham of the sophisticated life of court and city in order to valorise, by contrast, the simplicity and honesty of rural life.

8. Anti-pastoral Nature

Edmund's first words in the play refer, significantly, to the allegiance he owes to the depraved version of nature that appears to be his ally and benefactor:

Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? Wherefore base?

(I, ii, 1 - 6)

In his opening speech, Edmund presents a view of nature that differs from that of Lear, Cordelia and Kent who consider it natural for a child to love and respect a father, and for a subject to show loyalty to a sovereign. Edmund's Nature, by contrast, allows - indeed, encourages - a man to put into action the desires bred by evil inclination. His reference to 'My services are bound' shows that he serves his malign goddess in the way a servant does a master or a peasant a feudal lord. It goes without saying that his belief in an amoral Nature that encourages and abets evil-doing represents a wholly anti-pastoral position.

One has to admit that the malignant Nature Edmund worships appears to triumph. This

is seen in the many acts of cruelty and treachery perpetuated by Edmund, Cornwall, Goneril and Regan that they seem to get away with. Edmund succeeds in vitiating the relationship between his brother Edgar and their father, Gloucester. He is instrumental in the death of Cordelia; he engages in sexual liaisons with both Goneril and Regan, engendering discord between them. For their part, the degenerate sisters betray their father's trust; they commit adultery with the same man (Edmund), betraying each other until they are both consumed by their jealous passion that ends their lives. And the villains appear to believe that Nature smiles upon them, favouring their machinations. That belief is not without its logic: if Nature were not on their side, why is it that their villainies prosper? In working against decency and humaneness, the depraved Nature Edmund and the other villains worship, offers a direct challenge to pastoral's view of Nature as beneficent, as favouring – and nurturing – innocence, trust, harmony and decency. At the close of the play, to be sure, Edmund realises the fallacy of his loyalty to a goddess who fails him in the end. This perhaps helps to restore in some measure a belief in a beneficent Nature and in the ultimate triumph of pastoral values over anti-pastoral ones. On the other hand, the pain and suffering caused by the villains' actions cannot be undone. If anything has been gained at the end of *King Lear*, it has been gained at the cost of much suffering and loss of life. Anti-pastoral echoes continue to reverberate in our minds long after the play has ended.

Conclusion

The pastoral model conventionally offers refuge and relief to the troubled and the grief-stricken. In *King Lear* the characters suffering affliction do not (except momentarily) find such consolation. Even the renunciation of extraneous trappings

does not insure against suffering. The play in general works against pastoral values and conventions.

In Young's words:

Shakespeare is attacking the pastoral values and the guarantees of convention, but he supplies nothing in their place. To do so, indeed, would vitiate the quality of his achievement, trading one set of consolations for another.

(92)

Here, as in the romances, Shakespeare makes use of the pastoral as a genre, but demonstrates that the illusions of pastoral are overridden by reality. In doing so he challenges the basic assumption of pastoral that there is essentially a harmony between man and nature. Shakespeare presents the reality of the human condition in *King Lear*. The sinners' ways succeed, temporarily anyway. Loss is experienced, 'feelingly' (IV, vi, 147). Characters suffer, they undergo agonising torments. To what end? Considering the pain and suffering we witness in the play, contemplating the dead Lear and his daughter at the close, we feel bound to echo Kent's question:

Is this the promis'd end?

(V, iii, 262)

The damage done by the villains is irrevocable. What mitigates it for us, the readers or spectators, is the tragedian's poetic art.

CHAPTER 3

Macbeth

There are traceable elements of pastoral and anti-pastoral in *Macbeth*. In this chapter I shall examine the play in terms of these two broad categories, subdivided as follows :

PASTORAL ELEMENTS

1. Duncan as a pastoral king
2. Trust as a pastoral tenet
3. Imagery of planting and growth
4. Trees as pastoral furniture
5. Nostalgia
6. Happiness arising from a carefree mind
7. Contentment
8. Pastoral setting

ANTI-PASTORAL ELEMENTS

1. The Image of the child as an anti-pastoral motif
2. Anti-pastoral setting
3. The Weird Sisters
4. 'Horrible imaginings' - an anti-pastoral manifestation
5. The withering of contentment
6. Lack of sleep as an anti-pastoral influence
7. Ambition – an anti-pastoral phenomenon
8. Macbeth as an anti-pastoral exemplar
9. Lady Macbeth as an anti-pastoral exemplar
10. Anti-pastoral bird life
11. Disguise as an anti-pastoral device

PASTORAL ELEMENTS

1. Duncan as a pastoral king

That the characterisation of Duncan has a pastoral resonance is proposed by Maynard

Mack (*Killing the King*):

Duncan, developed in a way dramatically reminiscent of Gaunt and old Hamlet, is more idealised than they, pastoral images of natural growth ... replacing Gaunt's images of vigorous control and old Hamlet's images of Olympian authority.

(149)

Although Duncan occupies a small proportion of the play and speaks fewer lines than

many of the other characters, he is a central figure in the play. His reign is evidently a happy and a peaceful one apart from the civil uprising waged by the Thane of Cawdor which is easily quelled by his trusted generals, Macbeth and Banquo. Duncan learns from the bleeding sergeant that

... brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name),
Disdaining Fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
Which smok'd with bloody execution,
Like Valour's minion carv'd out his passage,
Till he fac'd the slave;
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,
Till he unseam'd him from the nave to th' chops,
And fix'd his head upon our battlements!

(I, ii, 16 – 23)

Thankful that Macbeth's victory has cleansed his kingdom of the evil of rebellion and civil strife, Duncan cries out in relief 'Great happiness' (I, ii, 59). Stress and anxiety relative to life and death issues, which have no place in a pastoral world, evaporate when Duncan learns that Macbeth has helped to restore the realm to peace, a precondition for a pastoral dispensation.

The key pastoral paradigm here is the trustingness of the King and the answering trustingness and loyalty of his generals. The mutual loyalty that binds king and generals is a pastoral characteristic contributing to the code of positive values that nourishes the ideal of a peaceful and harmonious life. King Duncan, indeed, embodies the positive values that Malcolm enumerates in his conversation with Macduff:

... the king-becoming graces,
As Justice, Verity, Temp'rance, Stableness,
Bounty, Perseverance, Mercy, Lowliness,
Devotion, Patience, Courage, Fortitude...

(IV, iii, 91 – 94)

Duncan's relations with his liegemen in the opening scenes of *Macbeth* has parallels

with *As You Like It*, where a deep sense of loyalty and trust surfaces when the exiled Duke Senior addresses his company as ‘ my co-mates and brothers in exile’ (II, i, 1). Banished to the Forest of Arden , Duke Senior uses endearing words to describe the loyalty of his subjects in an easy, informal style befitting that kind of relationship. Such discourse generates an atmosphere of peace and harmony.

2. Trust as a pastoral tenet

To Duncan, Banquo’s acknowledgement of allegiance is a ‘positive ideal, [engendering]... the state of content and mental self-sufficiency’, (Smith, H, 2). This state of contentment, free of ambition and greed, is Duncan’s world, and it is a pastoral one. He praises Macbeth for having defeated his once trusted general (Cawdor) with his exclamatory ‘O, valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!’. He is a ruler who trusts, thanks to his confidence in others. But his trust in Cawdor -

He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust.

(I, iv, 13 – 14) -

was requited by betrayal. So Duncan has something in common with the pastoral type who is rather naïve, rather unworldly. The possibilities of sinister and evil machinations are not part of his pastorally –complexioned régime of trust:

There’s no art
To find the mind’s construction in the face:
He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust -¹

(I, iv, 11 – 14)

¹ Sanders disputes the imputation of political naïveté to Duncan:

Duncan is trust incarnate, and this trust is neither something arbitrarily ‘given’, nor an insensitivity to human deviousness, but a necessary expression of royalty. Unless we are to take it [‘There’s no art... An absolute trust’] as an example of culpable political gullibility (and the tone of saddened realism makes that impossible), this must be seen as a necessary and open-eyed commitment to ‘Trust’. There is no such art and Duncan knows it. It is simply and insolubly difficult to find a human foundation for ‘an absolute Trust’. (257)

The pastoral world is free of betrayal, distrust, dishonesty, and suspicion. A citizen of this world, Duncan has been unsuspecting and guileless, and, to his cost, continues to trust. He is ready to bestow his trust on Cawdor's conqueror, Macbeth, whose affirmation of loyalty reinforces his trust and his belief in his own ideal of government, one that depends on loyalty freely offered by subjects to their king:

The service and the loyalty I owe,
In doing it, pays itself. Your Highness' part
Is to receive our duties: and our duties
Are to your throne and state, children and servants;
Which do but what they should, by doing everything
Safe toward your love and honour.

(I, iv, 22 – 27)

Macbeth's words instil in Duncan a sense of confidence in his subjects and kingdom, and he is reassured of the kingdom's well-being. Though Duncan is refined and gentle, trusting and noble, he is not weak. His virtues have a pastoral coloration, but he unfortunately finds himself in a world of intrigue, violence, perfidy and betrayal. Rather like Othello, he is apt to think of others as being like himself – and, as such, committed to the standards of honesty, loyalty and decency that he himself believes in. Thus the betrayal of Duncan both by Cawdor and Macbeth become monumental against the background of the unconditional trust that he had placed in both of them. That trust relieves Duncan of the cares and stresses of a statesman and King. Trust rightly belongs in the pastoral world, and even though it is between king and soldier, it is intrinsically a faith that one nurtures in a trusted person. And when that faith is shattered, the bond of love, friendship and dutifulness all disintegrate. Trust is based on simplicity and if that simplicity is a noble simplicity, it is a pastoral attribute.

Macbeth is fully aware of the trust reposed in him by Duncan:

He's here in double trust:
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself.

(I, vii, 12 – 16)

This we hear from a Macbeth contemplating treason against a king who feels that he is safe and secure in the hands of his hosts. With the murder of Duncan and the betrayal of trust, the brief pastoral interlude of I, vi, is engulfed by its opposite.

3. Imagery of planting and growth

In welcoming Macbeth after the battle, Duncan has recourse to the imagery of growth and fertility, pastoral attributes:

Welcome hither:
I have begun to plant thee, and will labour
To make thee full of growing.²

(I, iv, 27 – 29)

Duncan expresses his appreciation in terms of a standard that he honours – that of growth, generation and harvest. And the pastoral imagery of planting and harvesting underscores his characterisation as an idealised king. Seizing hold, significantly, of his sovereign's imagery, Banquo responds in kind : 'There if I grow,/The harvest is your own' (I, iv, 32 – 33).

At the end of the play, Malcolm, the king-elect, uses the imagery of growth in anticipation of a rich harvest when he announces his intention to call back all those who had fled the tyranny of Macbeth:

² This bears comparison with Lear's references to 'shadowy forests...champains rich'd...plentuous rivers and wide-skirted meads' (I, i, 63-64).

What's more to do,
Which would be planted newly with the time,

(V, ix, 30 – 31)

This will herald the beginning of a new season – spring, with its characteristic freshness and abundance. It is significant that Malcolm, a branch of his father's tree, reverts to his dead father's idiom in speaking of 'planting'. In doing so he closes a circle, imparting to the ending a reminiscence of the pastoral note heard in I, iv and I, vi.

4. Trees as pastoral furniture

Grieving for Scotland and on the alert against Macbeth's machinations, Malcolm is visited by the fleeing Macduff. As his father's trust in Macbeth was betrayed, he is suspicious of Macduff's appearance in England. In welcoming Macduff he says:

Let us seek out some desolate shade, and there
Weep our sad bosoms empty'

(IV, iii, 1–2).

This is in fact a pastoral invitation. Tree-shade is a traditional pastoral setting, and the expectation that it can offer relief to the heavy-hearted is a pastoral one. Later, in the countryside near Birnam Wood, Malcolm assembles his army in preparation for the onslaught on Macbeth's castle:

Siward : What wood is this before us?

Mentieth : The wood of Birnam.

Malcolm : Let every soldier hew him down a bough,
And bear't before him: thereby shall we shadow
The numbers of our host, and make discovery
Err in report of us.

Soldier :

It shall be done.

(V, iv, 3 – 7)

Done it is, as we see in the next scene, a plain outside the gate of Macbeth's castle at Dunsinane where Malcolm again refers to his military strategy, driving home the point that he has used nature to outwit the enemy :

...your leavy screens throw down,
And show like those you are.

(V, vi, 1 – 2)

Commenting on this, Rackin says :

Like Macbeth earlier, Malcolm must screen what he is doing, but instead of the darkness that symbolises evil and death, he uses the green boughs that symbolise Scotland's restoration to the world of life and nature.³

(120)

In ordering that the trees of Birnam Wood be cut down to make a screen, Malcolm makes use of an element in Nature for an ultimately healing purpose, the overthrow of Macbeth. Given the goal, we may characterise the camouflaging trees of Birnam wood as pastoral adjuncts.

Glimpsing that the witches have betrayed him, Macbeth is angry with the messenger who tells him that Birnam 'wood began to move' (V, v, 35):

If thou speak'st false,
Upon the next tree shall thou hang alive,
Till famine cling thee:

³ Along similar lines, the Third Apparition summoned by the Witches shows Macbeth 'A child crowned, with a tree in his hand' (IV, i, 86 – Stage Direction). This is a pastoral image of regeneration and growth. Rumboll (*Macbeth*) comments: 'The intimation is that the bloody and unnatural disorder of the realm cannot be cured until the sovereignty is given to innocence of heart in harmony with that living and growing Nature symbolised by the tree, which is divinely designed : the child's hand clasping the tree must displace all the evil hands that we have seen in distorting the kingdom.' (98)

In this case, the tree, viewed as a gibbet, well reflects the character and deeds of the person who speaks of it. A gallows-tree is antithetical to the pastoral symbolism normally associated with trees. Just as trees can operate as pastoral adjuncts, they can also acquire an anti-pastoral coloration when a malign function is assigned to them.

This goes to show that a pastoral or anti-pastoral scenario sometimes has less to do with objects as such than with the uses and functions they serve.

5. Nostalgia

Nostalgia, the yearning for a better but irrecoverable past is central to the pastoral mode. The longing for a better past becomes especially painful when one realises that that past can never be regained.

After the assassination of Duncan, Macbeth expresses in fits of depression and reflection his desire for something that has been lost for ever. He berates himself for destroying his pastoral-like king who becomes

[T]hrough the perspective glass of Macbeth's
unavailing anguish ... 'the gracious Duncan',
the sweet sleeper in an untroubled grave.
There is no need for a putative supernature
infusing Duncan's human nature ... to account
for the haunting compulsion of the image: it is
haunting because it is lost.

(Sanders, 258)

The nature of nostalgia is that it haunts because something is irrevocably lost. Macbeth's nostalgia stems from the fact that he has 'uncreated something which it is not within his powers to recall to life either in Duncan or in himself' (Sanders, 258).

In an impassioned declaration of regret Macbeth expresses a longing for a past time, a

time prior to the King's murder:

Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had liv'd a blesséd time; for, from this instant,
There's nothing serious in mortality;
All is but toys: renown, and grace, is dead;
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of.

(II, iii, 89 – 94)

Some critics believe that this is hypocrisy and that Macbeth is only trying to conceal his guilt, but I tend to agree with those who hold the view that even in seeking to deceive his listeners, Macbeth is still being sincere (Rumboll, 52; Watkins and Lemmon, 86; Eddy, 44; Peskin, 41). At this point he really does regret his deed, the more so because he now realises the enormity of his crime. To totally reject his speech as a hypocritical sham is to ignore his initial reluctance to kill the king and the tormenting conflict he experienced when meditating Duncan's assassination.

Discussing this point, Rumboll notes that critics are divided in their views of the speech, and he cites that of Bradley, who disputes the attribution of hypocrisy:

This is no mere acting. The language here has none of the false rhetoric of his merely hypocritical speeches. It is meant to deceive, but it utters at the same time his profoundest feeling.

(52)

Macbeth's yearning for a 'blesséd time', that is, the time prior to the king's murder, when he could still have viewed his life as stainless and innocent, carries a strong pastoral resonance. In Rumboll's view, Macbeth's reaction to his crime is a 'frantic longing for past innocence and security' (44), the retrieval of past contentment. If that is an idealised view of his earlier life, it is his later misery that prompts him to survey the past through an idealising lens. His greatest regret is that he cannot undo his

heinous crime and bring Duncan back to life. The loss of his innocence cannot be made good because time is not reversible, so he can only yearn for his earlier state of innocence, retrieving it, if at all, only in imagination.

Just before the single combat with Malcolm, realising that hope is all but lost, Macbeth longs for the repose and contentment of a meritorious old age, while implicitly recognising that by his own actions he has destroyed the possibility of achieving it:

... my way of life
Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf,
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have; but in their stead,
Curses, not loud, but deep, mouth-honour, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.

(V, iii, 22 – 28)

Here Macbeth is, in part, living in an imaginary world, in which he compares the harrowing present to a present that might have been had he not destroyed it. The attributes of honour, love, obedience and friendship that he should enjoy in old age are pastorally-complexioned ones, and he realises that he cannot hope to enjoy them. They give way instead to 'curses', an anti-pastoral 'sentence' which he must now endure as a consequence of his crime.

For all her steeliness of will in the earlier acts of the play, Lady Macbeth acknowledges soon after Duncan's murder her regret at having been an accomplice to it. Her backward glance leads her to a lament for the loss of her happiness:

Nought's had, all's spent,
Where our desire is got without content:
'Tis safer to be that which we destroy,
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.

(III, ii, 4 – 7)

She acknowledges that she had erred in her actions. She envies the dead Duncan whose murder she had planned in the grandiose expectation of being Queen of Scotland. At that time she had felt 'The future in the instant' (I, v, 58), visualising the happiness of power and position, but now she envies the dead Duncan whom she helped destroy. She realises that the joy of being Queen rests on very dangerous ground for she and her husband are in constant fear of discovery and disaffection.

In the sleep-walking scene Lady Macbeth's lines suggest a yearning for a time before she was stained by crime and racked by guilt and fear. This longing backward look is a pastoral gesture. Even as she seeks to be cleansed of crime and guilt by the application of perfumes, Lady Macbeth knows that '...all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand' (V, i, 47 – 48). She realises that what she has done is as irreversible as time itself ('What's done, cannot be undone' (V,i, 64)). And she tries, unsuccessfully, to end her despair and remorse by going to bed, anxiously repeating the instruction to do so, as if the power to cure her malady lies in it:

To bed, to bed, to bed.

V, i, 64 - 65

6. Happiness arising from a carefree mind

Happiness in a pastoral key comes from enjoying freedom or relief from cares (Smith, H, 11). In the play Duncan demonstrates a relieved happiness when he learns that the rebellion in his country has been quelled. He exclaims, 'Great happiness' (I, ii, 59).

Later Rosse reports:

The King hath happily receiv'd, Macbeth,
The news of thy success;

(I, iii, 89 – 90)

Relieved of his fears and anxieties, Duncan's reaction to the arrival of the victorious Macbeth and Banquo abounds in pastoral images of growth and fertility, as discussed above. His gratification at the victory and the arrival of the generals who gained it, produces visible joy:

My plenteous joys,
Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves
In drops of sorrow ...

(I, iv, 33 – 35)

It is in the joyous mood brought on by his release from anxiety that Duncan decides to visit Macbeth's Castle : 'From hence to Inverness' (I, iv, 42). Freed of the anxieties produced by the threat to the state, the king savours a pastoral moment.

7. Contentment

When Duncan sees Macbeth for the first time after the battle against the treacherous Thane of Cawdor, he cannot contain his words of appreciation for his service:

O worthiest cousin !
The sin of my ingratitude even now
Was heavy on me ...
More is thy due than more than all can pay.

(I, iv, 14 – 21)

Macbeth's spontaneous response is :

The service and the loyalty I owe,
In doing it, pays itself. Your Highness' part
Is to receive our duties; and our duties
Are to your throne and state, children and servants;
Which do but what they should, by doing everything
Safe toward your love and honour.

(I, iv, 22 – 27)

These words plainly show the satisfaction Macbeth derives from serving the king. Although he is conflicted, having already entertained thoughts of killing Duncan, his words of allegiance cannot be viewed as insincere at this stage. Indeed, even after being swayed by Lady Macbeth in favour of murdering Duncan, he backs away from the idea when projecting it against the backdrop of his recent honours and general contentment as a loyal subject of his king :

We will proceed no further in this business:
He hath honour'd me of late, and I have bought
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
Which should be worn in their newest gloss,
Not cast aside so soon.

(I, vii, 31 – 35)

Contentment is a pastoral attribute and Macbeth shows that so far he is (or can be) satisfied with his life. He has been praised by Duncan who holds him, as all do, in high esteem.

Macbeth's duty requires him to protect his king, country and people, much like the pastoral duty of the shepherd which included protecting his flock from danger. Apart from enjoying repose, singing, engaging in love affairs with shepherdesses, and writing love poems, he faced the 'occasional necessity of fighting off a lion or other beast intent upon attacking the sheep ...' (Stephen and Franks, 89).

Macbeth does qualify as a pastoral figure in this sense, being the 'shepherd' who protects his country and king against the danger of the lion, the Thane of Cawdor. For his success in this enterprise, he is held in high esteem by his king and country, but even as he savours the moment, he risks forfeiting esteem, contentment and peace of mind by yielding to the

...suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs

(I, iii, 134 – 136).

8. Pastoral setting

Before entering Macbeth's castle, Duncan describes the pastoral scene outside :

This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.

(I, vi, 1 – 3)

The setting and the atmosphere are reminiscent of the pastoral pleasance. The mood here, as in the rest of the brief scene, suggests harmony, the exchange of courtesies gesturing towards the richness of life, human warmth and loyalty. Walker comments:

Outside Macbeth's castle nature reigns, the country is pleasant and the air sweet. Duncan's gentle nature praises the sanctities of nature, and Banquo's assent echoes the sanctities of nature, and rejoices in the creative life symbolized by the birds that sport freely about the stronghold.

(in Rumboll, 28)

The 'birds that sport freely about the stronghold' are martlets whose vivifying presence is noted by Banquo:

This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here: no jutting, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendant bed, and procreant cradle:

Where they most breed and haunt, I have observ'd
The air is delicate.

(I, vi, 3 – 10)

The atmosphere created by this reference to the martlet is pastoral. The season, the air, the image of growth and innocent love - all pastoral elements – are knitted into a single image that enhances the pastoral effect of the scene and makes Macbeth's castle seem inviting and wholesome:

As they approach Macbeth's castle, Duncan and Banquo remark on the beauty of its location, the freshness of the air and the presence of house martins nesting everywhere on the building. They delight in this harmonious interaction between the human and the natural world.

(Wilson in Cookson and Loughrey, 45)

In the pleasantness of the summer season the martlet chooses for its home the church, where it builds its nest under every convenient ledge ('jutting, frieze, Buttress, ... coign of vantage'). The presence of the martlet does not make the setting pastoral as does the fact that it does catch the eyes of the beholders. The zooming in on this relatively insignificant aspect of the castle appearance makes it a focal point which invites special attention. It is more the function of the bird in that setting that lends the pastoral touch. Here the martlet has favoured Macbeth's castle, lending it an even more inviting aspect. Banquo refers to the image of growth and procreation ('but this bird/Hath made his pendant bed and procreant cradle'). The gentleness of the atmosphere invites the martlet to breed. Nature is presented as a harmonious ensemble, at whose centre is the 'procreant' martlet.

ANTI-PASTORAL ELEMENTS

1. The Image of the child as an anti-pastoral motif

Though the child is a symbol of innocence, tenderness, new life and a tangible expression of the regenerative powers of human creation, and wanting protection, especially in the context of pastoral, allusions and references to children in the play go against the accepted norms of pastoral. Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, at least in their imagination, speak cruelly about them. Even though Lady Macbeth appears as a manifestly evil character, despoiling the charm of the pastoral, she did at one time love the baby at her breast with maternal tenderness ('I have given suck, and know /How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me.' (I, vii, 54 – 55). This change in her composition brings into sharper focus her presence in the pastoral world, and her subsequent appearance as an anti-pastoral figure.

Scenes in the play present children in disturbing ways. For instance, in the last encounter with the witches Macbeth is shown the Second Apparition, 'A bloody child' (IV,i, 77). The materialisation of this image becomes Macbeth's final nemesis. From Macbeth's perspective, the child, traditionally standing for hope, innocence and new life, *becomes* a symbol of false assurance which spells his doom. The apparition is born not out of love, but out of the witches who trade in lies, equivocation and evil, all of which have no place in the pastoral world. In the real enactment of events in his life, the child represents Macduff who, being born by caesarian section, is technically not 'of woman born'.

Macbeth had trusted the equivocation of the witches thinking that he had a charmed life but their prophecies turned out to be facts shrouded in double talk.

The Third apparition is '*A child crowned, with a tree in his hand.*' (IV, i, 86). This is a reference to the young Malcolm who finally outwits Macbeth by ordering his troops to camouflage their numbers by using the branches of trees. It becomes an invitation to war and again gives Macbeth a false sense of security, when he asks the rhetorical question:

Who can impress the forest; bid the tree
Unfix his earth-bound root?

(IV,i, 95 – 96)

The image of the child and the tree, both pastoral accoutrements, are now associated with war and since war has no place in pastoral, it takes on an anti-pastoral aspect, particularly so because of its association with evil which Macbeth has been dabbling with all along. In the conversation with Lady Macbeth just before the assassination, Macbeth uses the image of a newly-born baby:

And Pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast,

(I, vii, 21 –22)

A tender and vulnerable being like a baby is conjured in such rough terms that it becomes repulsive:

This is a mental earthquake – Macbeth is torn apart by conscience and his harrowing is enacted in the surreal metamorphoses: a new-born baby who suddenly gains the muscular power to ride astride the wind;

(Gearin-Tosh, in Cookson and Loughrey, 12)

Although pity is a pastoral-like emotion, its being coupled with a baby in the

circumstances envisioned by the image, lends both these items an anti-pastoral colour.

Later Macbeth hears his wife say:

I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn
As you have done to this.

(I, vii, 54 –59)

The thought of committing such violence against a defenceless baby just to show the intensity of her desire to gain power as Queen, endorses the anti-pastoral underpinning of her determination.

The combination of maternal love, playfulness and affectionate teasing that characterises the conversation between Lady Macduff and her precocious son (IV,ii) has a pastoral-like glow about it. In these terms the sudden entry of Macbeth's hired assassins is obviously an anti-pastoral eruption. The hideous massacre they then perpetrate is an assault both upon the pastoral-like harmony of family and the generative power of children. On the connotations of the murderer's language in this scene, Wilson says :

He [the murderer] expresses his scorn for the diminutive size of the child who dares to oppose him by calling him an 'egg' and 'fry'. Yet these words also have positive associations, for it is the egg from which life comes and 'fry' – as well as meaning the eggs or recently hatched young of fish may simply mean offspring, a man's children. The insult carries an implicit acknowledgement of the child's worth.

(in Cookson and Loughrey, 37)

In his lament for the loss of his family the bereaved Macduff dwells on the extinction of childhood innocence:

All my pretty ones ?
Did you say all ? O Hell-kite! All ?
What, all my pretty chickens, and their dam,
At one fell swoop ?

(IV, iii, 216 – 219)

These lines amplify the play's anti-pastoral resonance, even as they put us in mind of extinguished pastoral possibilities.

2. Anti-pastoral setting

The play begins with the ominous presence of witches on a heath in the countryside. This spectacular opening goes right against the grain of pastoral. When Macbeth first encounters the witches, they are on a 'barren heath', (I, iii) and there is thunder and lightning. This is countryside but there is no peace and serenity in it. The trees characteristic of the pastoral setting are absent and what we have is a barren heath, wild and inhospitable. Adding to the anti-pastoral atmosphere are the thunder, lightning, and rain, so reminiscent of the heath on which Lear defies the elements. And then there are the Weird Sisters with their sinister incantation. In a word, all that we associate with a pastoral setting – orderliness, tranquillity, harmony and benignity – is inverted in Act I, Scene i of *Macbeth*, and the result is an anti-pastoral ambience that shadows the play from its inception.

It is here, on the blasted heath, that the seeds of the destruction of the pastoral world of Duncan's kingdom begin to germinate. Macbeth's first words in the play echo the very words that the witches had used earlier: 'So foul and fair a day I have not seen' (I, iii, 38). Though he is not yet possessed by evil, base ambitions begin to stir in him. All

these anti-pastoral elements are thrown into strong relief when contrasted with the pastoral images of I, iv and I, vi.

Macbeth describes the countryside as 'this blasted heath' (I, iii, 77). The phrase has several connotations, all with an anti-pastoral resonance: it is weather-beaten, cursed, decayed and withered.

3. The Weird Sisters

The calm of the atmosphere is further shattered by the insistent rhythm of the baleful prologue:

Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
(I, i, 11)

This short scene has a strong rhythmical pulse, a doggerel grotesque and sinister, never laughable, which is sustained against the violence of the backstage noise. The words of the witches emphasise this violence and spring from it, and they reach their climax in that utterance of incantatory unison which is the first suggestion given to us of an upsetting of the moral order.

(Watkins and Lemmon, 36)

The scene ends with the words 'Hover through the fog and filthy air.' (I, i, 12). The atmosphere created by these words is in strong contrast to the wholesome pastoral atmosphere that prevails when Duncan arrives at the castle of Macbeth. To the turbulence of the storm is added the vociferous cries of the cat familiar to witches, 'Gray-malkin' and the croak of the 'paddock', the toad (Watkins and Lemmon, 36). The familiar of the Third Witch is the owl, whose presence further emphasises the anti-pastoral atmosphere. The owl is a bird of ill-omen, and creates a mood of eeriness at the moment of Duncan's murder.

The Witches are palpably anti-pastoral figures. Act I, Scene iii brings them into sharper focus. The scene is again the open countryside. In pastoral the delights of the natural setting are appreciated and rejoiced in, and the natural setting itself is not tampered with or altered.⁴ But the witches intervene in nature and derange it, causing tempests to occur. Because the First Witch was refused chestnuts by a sailor's wife, they join to punish her husband, 'master o' th' Tiger' (I, iii, 7):

2nd Witch : I'll give thee a wind.

1st Witch : Th'art kind.

3rd Witch : And I another.

1st Witch : I myself have all the other;
And the very ports they blow,
All the quarters that they know
I' th' shipman's card.
I'll drain him dry as hay:

Sleep shall neither night nor day
Hang upon his penthouse lid;
He shall live a man forbid.
Weary sev'n-nights nine times nine,
Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine:
Though his bark cannot be lost
Yet it shall be tempest-tost.

(I, iii, 11 – 25)

The reference to sleep deprivation (lines 19 – 20) echoes throughout the play with anti-pastoral associations, particularly as it pertains to Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. This aspect will be discussed later under the head 'Lack of sleep as an anti-pastoral influence'.

⁴ The altering of Birnam Forest through Malcolm's order to his soldiers to cut down trees for camouflage, is a beneficent action working towards the restoration of law and order in Scotland. The nature-disrupting actions of the Witches are, by contrast, maleficent.

Apart from the thunder and lightning that shatter the peace of the countryside, the appearance of the witches creates an eerie atmosphere and transforms a neutral setting into a sinister and menacing one. The mist enveloping the witches makes visual discernment difficult. This is emblematic for it is in the nature of evil to conceal itself from the clarity of daylight. Looming through the mist, the Weird Sisters are thus seen by Banquo:

What are these,
So wither'd, and so wild in their attire,
That look not like th'inhabitants o'th' earth,
And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught
That man may question? You seem to understand me,
By each at once her choppy finger laying
Upon her skinny lips: You should be women,
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
That you are so.

(I, iii, 39 – 47)

The sinister, unnatural appearance of these beings renders them alien to the pastoral world. So do their dealings with evil, their revengeful nature and their malevolent designs.

4. 'Horrible imaginings' – an anti-pastoral manifestation

Macbeth's career in the play is strongly marked by 'imaginings' emanating from his highly-charged mind in which he discerns the gravity and the dangers of projected courses of action, or revisits the horrors of actions already done. Many of his musings are given over to evil thoughts and plans, unlike the musings of pastoral dwellers which, even when they are not entirely charitable (for example, where a rival in love is involved), are never criminal.

In his 'Is this a dagger...' soliloquy (II, i, 33 - 64), the dagger in his imagination and its suggestion ('Thou marshalls't me the way I was going' (II, i, 42)) bring on stress which has its roots in his 'heat -oppressed brain'. Such extreme stress - not to speak of the invitation to crime that accompanies it - is foreign to pastoral. As for the invitation to crime (an obviously anti-pastoral manifestation), that is foreshadowed when Macbeth first encounters the witches:

... why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings.
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of man,
That function is smother'd in surmise,
And nothing is, but what is not.

(I, iii, 134 - 142)

Macbeth's 'horrible imaginings' here are but the first of many to follow; from now on his musings dwell on frightening thoughts and tormenting feelings. They are as far as can be imagined from the mostly untroubled musings of the pastoral tradition.

5. The withering of contentment as an anti-pastoral motif

Duncan's joy and contentment after he receives the news of his victory over Cawdor, gives him a pastoral sense of fulfilment:

My plenteous joys,
Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves
In drops of sorrow....

(I, iv, 33 -35)

Macbeth, by contrast, cannot enjoy any happiness after Duncan's murder. His original happiness stemmed from his contentment at serving his king, pride in his achievements and gratification from the high esteem he is held in both by the king and the people of Scotland, as noted earlier. This deep sense of contentment is gradually undermined, initially, when he hears the prophecies of the witches, then when Duncan announces the heir to the throne; and his pastorally-complexioned world of contentment comes wholly to an end when he murders Duncan. From then on there is no rest in his life.

He speaks of his torment :

But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,
Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep
In the affliction of these terrible dreams
That shake us nightly.

(III, ii, 16 – 19)

So, far from ending after the murder of Duncan, Macbeth's cares only multiply when he expected them to be superseded by the happiness of his elevation to supreme power. The presence of Banquo and his son, Fleance, is perceived as a constant threat to his position as king and chafes his peace of mind.

He speaks about the 'torture of the mind' and 'restless ecstasy'. The oxymoron expresses poignantly his perturbation as he contemplates the threat posed by Banquo, while an image of extreme torment is captured in his anguished cry:

O! full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!
Thou know'st that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives.

(III, ii, 36 – 37)

But we are not long in discovering that the elimination of Banquo does nothing to restore his hoped-for peace of mind. On the contrary, since Fleance escaped his

father's fate, Macbeth's fears and discontents multiply. Discontent is not inconsistent with pastoral, but the total and irreversible withering of content that afflicts Macbeth is a plainly anti-pastoral manifestation.

6. Lack of sleep as an anti-pastoral influence

Strictly speaking, sleep is not a pastoral attribute as the province of pastoral is the waking hours. Nonetheless, insofar as restful sleep imparts to those waking hours serenity and easeful repose (*otium*), which are among the pre-eminent characteristics of pastoral, it may be viewed as a precondition for pastoral, as a pastoral adjunct, to put it another way.

With all the anguished longing of one who suddenly realises the full value of something now that it has been lost forever, Macbeth very precisely describes the role of sleep as a pastoral adjunct:

--- the innocent Sleep;
Sleep, that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great Nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast;-

(II, ii, 35 – 39)

Lady Macbeth echoes this idea later, when she tells her husband, after the débâcle of the banquet, that he 'lack[s] the season of all natures, sleep' (III, iv, 140).

Macbeth and his wife forfeit repose for a number of reasons, chief among them the guilt and fear (of discovery, disaffection, retribution) resulting from the initial crime. Insofar as sleep deprivation (or in Lady Macbeth's case nightmare-haunted sleep and

somnambulism) exacerbates the lack of repose, and magnifies the daytime cares and distress of Macbeth and his lady, it functions as an anti-pastoral influence.

7. Ambition - an anti-pastoral phenomenon

When we first see Macbeth he is a brave general helping to restore peace and quiet to the kingdom as the loyal subject of an ideal king. But he cannot rest content with the king's esteem or with the honours showered upon him. Spurred on by the Weird Sisters, who merely arouse what is latent in him, he becomes hostage to ambition, aspiring to something beyond his right, if not beyond his reach. Such ambition, Smith suggests, is anti-pastoral:

In order to respond adequately to the appeal of the Elizabethan ideal of the mean estate, content, and *otium*, it is necessary to feel the force of its opposite, a form of ambition which the sixteenth century called most commonly the aspiring mind.

(9)

Macbeth's ambitious career yields a momentary achievement when he assassinates Duncan, and replaces him as king, but his fall begins almost immediately after the regicide. This is pastoral's way of signalling its rejection of ambition. The 'central meaning of the pastoral is the rejection of the aspiring mind' (Smith, H, 10). On this point Marinelli observes:

That world of warfare, ambition, lust and fortune enters and either devastates or annexes the Arcadia of the poet's dreams...

(13)

Pastoral does not accommodate ambition within its ambit. Like war, it is destructive, and what is destructive goes against the grain of pastoral.

8. Macbeth as an anti-pastoral exemplar

By defeating the rebels Macbeth re-establishes legitimacy and concord in Scotland, clearing the way for an idealised king to reinstate a pastoral-like *status quo ante* in the land. On the way back to the royal seat at Forres, the successful generals encounter the Weird Sisters, initiating Macbeth's sinister connection with the powers of darkness. It goes without saying that anything sinister is foreign to the spirit of pastoral, and trafficking with the powers of darkness even more so. As noted above, the initial confirmation of the Witches' prophecy stirs into life ambitions until then dormant in Macbeth ('... why do I yield to that suggestion/Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair ... ?' (I, iii, 134 – 135)), and ambition, when it takes a destructive turn, as it does in Macbeth's case, is a palpably anti-pastoral phenomenon. His reference to the 'imperial theme' (I, iii, 129) implies that he is already attuned to the idea of undoing the legitimate succession to the throne, considered a divine arrangement in Elizabethan times. The half-hearted attempt he makes to counter temptation – 'If chance will have me King, why, Chance may crown me,/Without my stir' (I.iii, 144 – 145) – comes to naught in the face of his wife's chastisements and taunts.

Once Macbeth has assassinated Duncan, he is embroiled in a concatenation of actions designed either to conceal his guilt, cover his tracks or suppress any opposition that may threaten his reign. The initial murder is obviously an anti-pastoral action, and as further crimes become necessary in order to safeguard the gains of the first one, the

anti-pastoral complexion of the play intensifies. Wearing a fruitless and illegitimate crown, the new king is continually assailed by cares, suspicions and fears of discovery and retribution by enemies unknown or imagined. One of them is Banquo:

To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus:
Our fears in Banquo
Stick deep, and in his royalty of nature
Reigns that which would be fear'd...

(III, i, 47 – 50)

The prevailing mood of the personages of pastoral is sunny, carefree. Since honesty and candour are 'givens' of the pastoral set-up, there is rarely cause for suspicion. Projected against this backdrop, Macbeth's permanently careworn, suspicious and fearful disposition is clearly seen for the anti-pastoral phenomenon it is.

Driven by his fears and suspicions, Macbeth turns the pastoral-like kingdom he inherited from Duncan into an anti-pastoral wasteland swarming with spies and agents ('There's not a one of them [the Scottish thanes] but in his house/l keep a servant fee'd' (III, iv, 130 – 131). Macduff, a fugitive in England, reports on the Scotland he has left behind:

Each new morn,
New widows howl, new orphans cry; new sorrows
Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds
As if it felt with Scotland, and yell'd out
Like syllable of dolour.

(IV, iii, 4 – 8)

A little later in the same scene Rosse enters and, performing a function reminiscent of the choric commentary of Greek tragedy, he seconds Macduff's report:

Alas, poor country!
Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot
Be call'd our mother, but our grave; where nothing,
But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile;

Where sighs, and groans, and shrieks that rent the air
Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems
A modern ecstasy: the dead man's knell
Is there scarce ask'd for who; and good men's lives
Expire before the flowers in their caps,
Dying or ere they sicken.

(IV, iii, 164 – 173)

Against this image of Scotland, set Alexander Pope's of an England seen through an idealising pastoral lens. (Incidentally, the Stuart monarch – Queen Anne – referred to in the last line, is by legend a descendent of Banquo):

Not proud *Olympus* yields a nobler Sight,
Tho' Gods assembled grace his tow'ring Height,
Than what more humble Mountains offer here,
Where, in their Blessings, all those Gods appear.
See *Pan* with flocks, with fruits *Pomona* crown'd,
Here blushing *Flora* paints th' enamel'd Ground,
Here *Ceres'* Gifts in waving Prospect stand,
And nodding tempt the joyful Reaper's Hand,
Rich Industry sits smiling on the Plains,
And Peace and Plenty tell, a STUART reigns.

(from: *Windsor Forest*, lines 33 – 42, in Butt, 196)

The man who has turned Scotland into a 'grave' for its inhabitants is thus described by Malcolm:

...bloody,
Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,
Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin
That has a name;

(IV, iii, 57 – 60)

Though uttered by Macbeth's enemy, these allegations, on the evidence of the play, are true, and they make clear why Macbeth has to be viewed as an anti-pastoral exemplar.

9. Lady Macbeth as an anti-pastoral exemplar

Referring to a book *The Hammer of Witches*, published in 1486, Siddall writes :

This was a strikingly misogynistic work, implying that women are inherently more susceptible to evil than men, as shown when Satan, disguised as a serpent, first tempted Eve, who then tempted Adam. Shakespeare recalls this original sin when Lady Macbeth uses her sexual power over her husband, and persuades him to evil. She uses the image of a serpent hiding beneath a flower to encourage him into a performance of deceitful welcome which will disarm Duncan.

(73)

No serpent ever shadows a pastoral landscape, so Lady Macbeth's advice to her husband to be a deceitful serpent in and of itself betrays her anti-pastoral leanings. But these have sufficiently been on display from the moment of her first appearance on stage: when she hears from the messenger about the imminent arrival of Duncan ('The King comes here to-night' (I, v, 31)), her reaction has an undertone of sinister excitement. She exclaims: 'Thou'rt mad to say it' (I, v, 31), and there is a macabre grimness in her tone when she says of the messenger, 'He brings great news' (I, v, 38). Then her intention to annihilate Duncan and, with him, the pastoral dispensation he stands for, becomes clear:

... The raven himself is hoarse,
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements.

(I, v, 38 – 40)

It goes without saying that as an accessory to Duncan's assassination, Lady Macbeth, by definition, is an anti-pastoral figure. Her famous soliloquy, spoken after the messenger's exit, is replete with anti-pastoral reverberations:

Come, you Spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood,
Stop up th'access and passage to remorse;

That no compunctious visitings of Nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
Th'effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murth'ring ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on Nature's mischief! Come, thick Night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of Hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor Heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry, 'Hold, hold!'

(I, v, 40 – 54)

Lady Macbeth's anti-pastoral credentials are strongly marked in this speech. Unlike her husband, who is too full of the milk of human kindness, Lady Macbeth invokes the infernal spirits, entreating them to transform her into everything that goes against the grain of pastoral. She wants to become cruel, hard-hearted, remorseless. In calling upon the 'murth'ring ministers' to 'take [her] milk for gall' she desires to be unnatural and life-denying. Whereas pastoral is associated with daylight and brightness, Lady Macbeth summons 'thick night', 'the dunnest smoke of Hell' and the 'blanket of the dark' to keep Heaven from thwarting her murderous intentions.

Lady Macbeth has been unnatural from the beginning, and the chilling resolve she initially displays in planning and staging Duncan's assassination begins to falter in the face of its repercussions. Though leading the way at first she soon is unable to keep up with her husband's criminal exploits. Horrified by his 'deed of dreadful note' (III, ii, 44), thrown off balance by his changed personality and behaviour (as exhibited in the banquet scene), burdened by her own guilt, she sinks into a mire of depression, anxiety and listlessness. The sleepwalking scene enacts the culmination of her mental and emotional deterioration. The careworn, depressed, pitiful, haunted husk she turns into in the latter part of the play is as far removed as can be from the general sunniness and

optimism of the pastoral disposition. Not that the personages of pastoral are exempt from vexation and perturbation of mind. But their vexations are minor and, most importantly, are reversible; Lady Macbeth's, however, are of a quite different order: they are deep-seated, acute and irreversible.

10. Anti-pastoral bird life

The bird, which can be a pastoral presence signifying harmony and peace, (see above), can also function as a creature of ill-omen, antithetical to the pastoral atmosphere that Duncan registers when he arrives at Macbeth's castle. Lady Macbeth, confident about the success of her plan to assassinate Duncan, cries out boldly:

The raven himself is hoarse
That cries the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements.

(1, v, 38 – 40)

In pastoral it is less the bird itself that is responsible for a pastoral ambience than birdsong. Unlike the martlet that heralds Duncan's arrival at Macbeth's castle, the raven is a bird of ill-omen, whose hoarse cry is associated with doom and the devil.

The owl also makes its appearance at ominous moments in the play. At the moment of Duncan's murder 'It was the owl that shriek'd' (II, ii, 3). 'I heard the owl scream, and the crickets cry' (II, ii, 15) says Lady Macbeth, unsettled by the bird's shriek and by the strident cry of the crickets as they shatter the silence of the night, supposedly the time of repose.

Lennox reports that 'The obscure bird/Clamour'd the livelong night' (II, iii, 58-59), the Third Witch (IV, i, 3) refers to 'harpier' ('harpy') as her familiar, suggesting a bird of

prey, and the Old Man reports that 'A falcon, towering in her pride of place,/Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd' (II, iv, 12 – 13). These references point to a disturbed state of affairs whose anti-pastoral complexion is antithetical to the delicate harmony, enlivened by birdsong, of the pastoral setting.

11. Disguise as an anti-pastoral device

Pastoral disguise is external and benevolent in Shakespeare's comedies and in the romances. Viola conceals her female identity in *Twelfth Night*, Rosalind disguises herself in *As You Like It*, and Portia disguises herself as a lawyer in *The Merchant of Venice*. When they reveal their true identities, the revelation is an event both agreeable and positive in its consequences, affording an opportunity for joy and celebration.

Disguise in the tragedies is far more subtle, deceptive and maleficent as it arises ordinarily from base motives, twisted psychology and moral deterioration. Moreover, disguise in tragedy is rarely a matter of external trappings; most often it is a matter of dissimulation, the assumption of a false front. So it is that Iago destroys Othello under the guise of friendship, even as Goneril and Regan deceive their father through false appearances. And Macbeth conceals his treacherous intentions towards Duncan behind a false front of duty, loyalty and fealty. Rooted in base motives, employing insincerity and deceit, directed towards ill ends, disguise in tragedy, it is clear, is a wholly anti-pastoral contrivance.

Macbeth is especially rich in maleficent disguise. Not only does Lady Macbeth use the disguise of hypocrisy to deceive Duncan and his retinue, she also schools Macbeth in

the art of deception to hide their murderous intentions. Having resolved to assassinate Duncan when he visits her castle, she says to her husband:

To beguile the time,
Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue: look like th'innocent flower,
But be the serpent under't.

(I, v, 63- 66)

When Duncan's murder is discovered, Macbeth and his wife deceive their shocked guests so well that to begin with, none suspect them of the crime. Later Macbeth uses simple, ostensibly caring questions to establish the movements of Banquo and Fleance; his real purpose, of course, is to do away with both father and son:

Macbeth : Ride you this afternoon ?

Banquo : Ay, my good Lord.

(III, i, 19)

After a few more words, Macbeth asks, 'Is't far you ride ?' and a few words later he asks : 'Goes Fleance with you ?'. (III, i, 18 – 35). The unsuspecting Banquo returns simple, honest answers, deceived by the gloss of friendly interest disguising Macbeth's real intentions.

Later still, before the banquet, Lady Macbeth gives her care-worn husband the following advice:

Come on:
Gentle my Lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks;
Be bright and jovial among your guests to-night.

(III, ii, 26 – 28)

The façade of *bonhomie* she asks him to don evidently runs counter to the ethos of pastoral which is untainted by insincerity, hypocrisy and dissimulation.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis shows that elements of both pastoral and anti-pastoral are embedded in *Macbeth*. Characters, setting and elements of the landscape accord with many of the stipulations of literary pastoral and anti-pastoral.

The career of the villains of the piece shows how a world that had the potential to become a haven of pastoral-like contentment is transformed, through their own base choices and conduct, into the very opposite. Pastoral is, indeed, always in danger of sliding into anti-pastoral. When that happens, the lost pastoral world becomes, as Macbeth and his wife learn to their cost, the object of nostalgic reverie and futile regrets.

CHAPTER 4

Othello

Through the presentation of detailed evidence I have attempted in the preceding chapters to substantiate the claim that elements of pastoral and anti-pastoral are embedded, and discoverable, in Shakespeare's tragic drama. In this chapter I propose to argue the same case with respect to *Othello*. The argument is organised under the following heads:

Pastoral elements

1. Othello as a pastoral character
2. The pastoral strain in Othello and Desdemona's relationship
3. Desdemona: pastoral attributes

Anti-pastoral elements

1. Iago as an anti-pastoral figure
2. Othello's changing language 'profile' as an indicator of his deterioration
3. Contentment destroyed
4. Venice: anti-pastoral resonances
5. Disguise
6. The Fall

PASTORAL ELEMENTS

1. Othello as a pastoral figure

Othello is in some ways a pastoral figure living a normal soldier's life. In the main, he is presented as a simple soldier with

a simplistic warrior's vision of the world, which divided people into the righteous and the unrighteous, the friend and the enemy, and which could not deal with human complexity. His idealized vision of himself and his need to idealize all experience demanded that Desdemona be either angel or strumpet, ...

(Rackin, 83)

A soldier is not a pastoralist in the strictest sense of the word, but Othello's simplicity links him to the shepherd figures of conventional pastoral which luckily spares them any encounter with subtle and malevolent schemers like Iago. Othello, however, is not that lucky. If his simplicity suggests a link with the simple personages of pastoral literature, his soldierly profession distances him from pastoral, which bars the way to soldiers and warfare. Nevertheless, the uncomplicated, idealising cast of his mind finds expression in an unpretentious, straightforward code of soldierly honour. Thus, when Iago advises him to avoid an encounter with the enraged Brabantio, Desdemona's father, Othello will have none of it; his lineage and honour make slinking away unthinkable; he will confront the tempest staunchly and boldly:

Not I! I must be found.
My parts, my title and my perfect soul
Shall manifest me rightly.

(I, ii, 30 – 32)

In speaking of his 'perfect soul', Othello means his clear conscience, his conviction that in wooing, winning, and eloping with, Desdemona, he has done no wrong. The naïveté of his conviction has a pastoral resonance. Of Othello's conduct, both in his courtship of Desdemona and in his confrontation with her father, Gerard writes

Everything in his attitude shows that he is completely unaware of infringing the *mores* of Western society, the ethical code of Christian behaviour, and the sophisticated conventions of polite morality.

(in Muir and Edwards, 15)

Convinced both of his own innocence and of the dishonour of taking up arms against the old Brabantio, Othello commands his men to sheathe their swords: 'Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them' (I, ii, 59).

When Brabantio tries to arrest him, he again takes pains to avert an ugly scene, one

that would stain his honour:

Hold your hands,
Both you of my inclining and the rest.
Were it my cue to fight, I should have known it
Without a prompter.

(I, ii, 81 – 84)

Othello is a professional soldier; he does what has to be done. His conduct and bearing as a soldier are free of attention-seeking and self-aggrandisement. Holland maintains, indeed, that whenever Othello

speaks of war he speaks of it as a kind of romance
and in terms of his own romantic history... Othello's
essential quality is his great faith (or belief or pride)
in the validity and nobility of human action.

(203)

While Othello's being a soldier is at odds with the pastoral ethos, his restrained manner of being one is not. Nor is his 'faith ... in the nobility of human action'. For a low-key genre like pastoral, 'nobility' is a rather grandiose term; pastoral would feel more comfortable with a term like 'decency'.

Othello's 'faith ... in the nobility of human action' is the ground of his trust in humankind. Too prone to think others as honourable as himself, too prone to be taken in by the appearance of things, Othello trusts too readily – and pays dearly for it. The most acute insight into his too-trusting nature is Iago's :

The Moor is of a free and open nature
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so;
And will as tenderly be led by th' nose
As asses are.

(I, iii, 398 – 401)

Yet it is precisely Othello's trustfulness that connects him to the world of pastoral where trust and good faith are 'givens'. Therefore trustfulness is not a disadvantage in

a pastoral setting: it will not be betrayed. But in the sphere Othello inhabits, a sphere of sophisticated intrigue and subtle scheming where he is out of his depth, his too-trusting nature proves to be a decided disadvantage.

2. The pastoral strain in Othello and Desdemona's relationship

As long as Othello's faith and trust in Desdemona remain unshaken, their relationship exhibits a genuinely pastoral complexion. Consider the unselfconscious joyousness of their reunion in Cyprus: the passage is strewn with pastoral 'watchwords' – 'content', 'joy', 'calms', 'happy', 'comfort', 'loves':

Othello:

O my fair warrior!

Desdemona:

My dear Othello!

Othello:

It gives me wonder great as my content
To see you here before me! O my soul's joy,
If after every tempest come such calms
May the winds blow till they have wakened death,
And let the labouring bark climb hills of seas,
Olympus-high, and duck again as low
As hell's from heaven. If it were now to die
'Twere now to be most happy, for I fear
My soul hath her content so absolute
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate.

Desdemona:

The heavens forbid
But that our loves and comforts should increase
Even as our days do grow.

Othello:

Amen to that, sweet powers!
I cannot speak enough of this content,
It stops me here, it is too much of joy.
And this, and this the greatest discords be *They kiss*
That e'er our hearts shall make.

(II, i, 180 – 197)

At this point their union plainly exemplifies the pastoral quality of 'happy harmony' (Bayley, 203).

From these heights Othello is hurled into the depths of despair, bitterness, sexual jealousy, rage and hatred as a result of Iago's machinations, combined with his own gullibility. Interestingly, however, there are moments when he still glimpses Desdemona through a pastoral-like lens, despite his hostility to her. One such moment occurs just before he murders her:

...when I have plucked the rose
I cannot give it vital growth again,
It needs must wither. I'll smell thee on the tree;
O balmy breath, that does almost persuade
Justice to break her sword!

(V, ii, 13 – 17)

In these lines a series of linked images functions to produce a pastoral ambience: the rose, traditional symbol of love, is mentioned; there is the suggestion of fragrance, connected not just with the rose, but with Desdemona's 'balmy breath' whose evocation of sweetness and content calls to mind the pastoral character of the love she and her husband once shared.

3. Desdemona: pastoral attributes

It is hard to quarrel with Holland's estimate that the 'divine Desdemona, as she is called, seems a figure of perfect virtue, of perfect righteousness' (205). The personages of pastoral are not, however, expected to embody the perfection of virtue and righteousness; they are expected to be staunchly virtuous but not sublimely so. From the standpoint of pastoral, Salgado's assessment offers a better point of entry than Holland's: 'there is a shining innocence, even perhaps a quality of naïveté in Desdemona' (xxxvii). 'Innocence', 'naïveté' – these are recognisable pastoral

watchwords that stand opposed to the corruption, intrigue, deviousness, double-dealing and avarice conventionally associated with the court and the city, respectively the centres of power and of business.

For one raised in Venice, a byword for sophisticated vice in the eyes of Shakespeare's contemporaries, Desdemona is astonishingly innocent and naïve. A naïvely romantic curiosity informs her receptiveness to Othello's accounts of his travels and exploits in strange and marvellous places. As he tells it, she 'with a greedy ear/[Did] Devour up my discourse' (I, iii, 150 – 151).

That she fell in love with Othello 'for the dangers I had pass'd' (I, iii, 168), likewise bespeaks a naïvely romanticising bent. She is naïve in taking Iago into her confidence and seeking his advice after Othello turns upon her, calling her a whore (V, ii). And she is exceedingly naïve when, in the next scene, she enquires of Emilia:

Dost thou in conscience think – tell me, Emilia -
That there be women do abuse their husbands
In such gross kind ?

(IV, iii, 60 – 62)

That Desdemona finds it difficult to imagine wives playing their husbands false suggests not just naïveté but the kind of innocence that has much in common with her husband's. Just as Othello's nobility of nature inclines him to ascribe the same characteristics to others, so Desdemona's innocence leads her to believe others as innocent as herself, and thus incapable of doing anything she would not herself do. She applies this yardstick not only to wives but, most of all, to her husband. That is why the change in his behaviour so perplexes and bewilders her. In falling in love with Othello, she 'has fallen in love with an ideal,' argues Rackin, adding: 'and, like him, she is fatally ignorant of the person who embodies that ideal' (78). In the real world,

where snakes like Iago lurk, Desdemona's innocent trustfulness is self-delusive and self-imperilling, but in the idealised world of pastoral, where honour and integrity are 'givens', her attitude would be the normal one, indeed, the only admissible one. The personages of pastoral can, and do, act on the basis of innocent trustfulness because nobody in the pastoral dispensation expects good to be requited with ill. Viewed from the standpoint of pastoral, Othello's and Desdemona's misfortune is that they come to an anti-pastoral imbroglio with a pastoral mindset and then suffer the consequences of the mismatch.

Ascribing the best motives to others, and consequently believing that good will be requited with good, both favours and fosters generosity of spirit. That is the logic behind the generosity of spirit that by and large characterises the pastoral milieu (which eschews pettiness, churlishness, niggardliness and selfishness), and it is also the logic behind Desdemona's generosity of spirit. So this attribute of hers possesses a pastoral resonance.

The handsomest compliment to Desdemona's generosity of spirit falls from the lips of Iago:

She is of so free, so kind, so apt, so blest a disposition
that she holds it a vice in her goodness not to do
more than she is requested.

(II, iii, 315 – 317)

Iago speaks these words to Cassio, recommending that he turn to Desdemona for help in healing the late breach between himself and Othello. Cassio does so, and finds Iago's words fulfilled to the letter: Desdemona assures him that she will not rest until he is restored to his position and of her husband's favour; and she promises him a successful outcome in advance. Generosity of spirit shines through her lines:

...before Emilia here
I give thee warrant of thy place. Assure thee,
If I do vow a friendship I'll perform it
To the last article. My lord shall never rest,
I'll watch him tame and talk him out of patience,
His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift,
I'll intermingle everything he does
With Cassio's suit: therefore be merry, Cassio,
For thy solicitor shall rather die
Than give thy cause away.

(III, iii, 19 – 28)

Desdemona proves to be as good as her word, and is importunate to the point of being impolitic in pressing Cassio's suit. But she sets no high value upon being politic. Nor does pastoral.

We have already noted that harmony and concord are key features of the pastoral ethos. Consequently, Desdemona's constant efforts to avert strife and plant concord may justifiably be considered pastoral attributes. An early example occurs in the first Act, where even though she stands up to her father, refusing to show contrition or even to apologise to him for marrying Othello against his wishes, she still tries not just to avoid alienating him but even to win him over with a dignified speech designed to mollify while giving nothing away:

My noble father,
I do perceive here a divided duty.
To you I am bound for life and education:
My life and education both do learn me

How to respect you; you are the lord of duty,
I am hitherto your daughter. But here's my husband:
And so much duty as my mother showed
To you, preferring you before her father,
So much I challenge that I may profess
Due to the Moor my lord.

(I, iii, 180 – 189)

Her efforts, perhaps over-enthusiastic, to reconcile Cassio and her husband and to restore the dismissed lieutenant to his favour, likewise bespeak a nature bent upon healing strife and spreading concord. And rather than inflame Othello, after he has unjustly humiliated her in public by striking her, she prefers to yield and withdraw, pinning her hopes on a reconciliation: 'I will not stay to offend you' [Going] (IV, i, 246). Nor do further humiliations change her attitude: her willingness to confront or cross Othello springs not just from her love for him but also from the hope of restoring concord between them. She says to Emilia: 'Give me my nightly wearing, and adieu./We must not now displease him' (IV, iii, 14 – 15). And even with her dying breath she seeks to turn the blame for her death upon herself (V, ii, 122 – 123), so as not to make trouble for her husband.

Simplicity is another pastoral watchword. Desdemona's is a matter not just of her naïveté and innocence but also of her involvement in unpretentious domestic tasks, despite her aristocratic pedigree and her refinement. In Knight's view Desdemona's domesticity is a quality that renders her 'warmly human' (83). Othello, it appears, agrees. He spotlights it in his account of how the story of his adventures entranced her:

This to hear
Would Desdemona seriously incline,
But still the house affairs would draw her thence
Which ever as she could with haste dispatch
She'd come again, and with a greedy ear
Devour up my discourse;

(I, iii, 146 – 151)

Later, sporting with Othello, Desdemona seizes upon the language of domesticity for her banter:

Why, this is not a boon,
'Tis as I should entreat you wear your gloves,
Or feed on nourishing dishes, or keep you warm

(III, iii, 76 – 78)

Finally, her innate gentleness and natural refinement and dignity carry a pastoral reminiscence. Her father describes her as being 'Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion/Blush'd at herself' (I, iii, 96 – 97). Yet a still and quiet spirit need not imply supineness – as Brabantio soon discovers when his daughter stands up to him, rejecting his accusations and defending her marriage to Othello. But she does this with dignity (as mentioned above), and with a sense of the deference and courtesy due to a father. Indeed her natural refinement and courtesy are in evidence in every instance of personal contact with others, and even when she endures provocation, whether from father or husband. In reacting to the public humiliation Othello inflicts on her, she sacrifices neither dignity nor decorum (IV, i); the same holds true of her conduct in the next scene in which Othello accuses her of unchastity and calls her a whore. Nothing could be less in tune with her nature than to lower herself to his level. Even in the murder scene (V, ii), despite being terrified to the core, she protests her innocence and pleads for her life without losing her dignity and sense of propriety.

Even the 'aristocratic' shepherds of pastoral convention – the likes of Astrophel, Coridon, Meliboeus (as distinct from the homespun Cuddies and Hobbinols) – display a natural rather than a schooled dignity. Desdemona's natural dignity and refinement seem to be an echo of theirs.

ANTI-PASTORAL ELEMENTS

1. Iago as an Anti-Pastoral Figure

Iago may be regarded as an anti-pastoral figure as he goes against everything that is innocent, pure and virtuous. He is driven to destroy anything that brings harmony and joy to peoples' lives. The value-system he subscribes to rests on philosophical materialism, cunning, envy, spite, malice, ruthlessness and untrustworthiness, on an implacable will to destroy and to render unhappy. These vicious traits, whose anti-pastoral bearings are manifest, point to a link between Iago and Satan, the Evil One. My analysis of Iago as an anti-pastoral figure explores and develops this link.

The unfolding of *Othello* mirrors to a degree the story of Adam, Eve and Satan:

Genesis 1-2 recorded what God said; **now the serpent** (the devil, Rev. 20:2) spoke. The word of the Lord brought life and order; the word of the serpent brought chaos and death... Genesis 3:1 is connected with 2:25 by a Hebrew word play: Adam and Eve "naked" ('*arûmmîm*); and the serpent **was more crafty** ('*arûm* "shrewd") than all. Their nakedness represented the fact that they were oblivious to evil, not knowing where the traps lay, whereas Satan did and would use his craftiness to take advantage of their integrity. That quality of shrewdness or subtleness is not evil in itself... But it was used here for an evil purpose. The tempter was a serpent (Satan in the form of a snake), thus suggesting that temptation comes in disguise, quite unexpectedly,...

(Walvoord and Zuck, 32)

The parallels between the characters and the plots of the Genesis story and *Othello* are clear enough: in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve enjoyed a pastoral idyll characterized by leisured repose, freedom from care, order, mutual happiness and

mutual fulfilment. While leisured repose is in short supply for Othello and Desdemona, as is freedom from care (given their clandestine courtship), they do re-enact our First Parents' experience of mutual happiness and mutual fulfilment in the earliest days of their marriage. In shattering Adam and Eve's pastoral idyll, Satan can be viewed as an anti-pastoral figure. In doing the same to Othello and Desdemona's pastoral-like idyll, Iago, re-enacting Satan's role, likewise performs an anti-pastoral office.

Adam and Eve's 'nakedness' refers metaphorically to their innocence and integrity which Satan takes advantage of in order to destroy them. Similarly, Othello and Desdemona are 'naked' in the sense of being innocent and vulnerable. They are too naïve and too trusting to suspect that Iago has set traps for them. Their innocence and simplicity are matched by Iago's craftiness. And just as Satan conceals mischief and deceit behind a front of honesty and solicitude in executing his designs against Adam and Eve, so Iago, in executing his against Othello and Desdemona, conceals his true intentions behind a show of honest solicitude. The following soliloquy lays bare Iago's malevolence, craftiness and leaning to dissimulation:

He holds me well,
The better shall my purpose work on him.
Cassio's a proper man: let me see now,
To get his place, and to plume up my will
In double knavery. How ? How ? let's see:
After some time to abuse Othello's ear
That he is too familiar with his wife.
He hath a person and a smooth dispose
To be suspected, framed to make women false.
The Moor is of a free and open nature,
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly be led by th' nose
As asses are.

(I, iii, 389 – 401)

Iago takes advantage of his position of trust to further his malevolent plans. Referring

to Desdemona he says:

So will I turn her virtue into pitch;
And out of her own goodness make the net
That shall enmesh them all.

(II, iii, 355 – 357)

And he uses Cassio's goodness to undo him too:

He [Cassio] hath a daily beauty in his life
That makes me ugly;

(V, i, 19 – 20)

In gulling the naïve Roderigo, he says :

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse.
For I mine own gained knowledge should profane
If I would time expend with such a snipe
But for my sport and profit.

(I, iii, 382 – 385)

His success in luring Othello into a betrayal of the pastoral virtues he once upheld (love, trust, integrity, dignity, restraint) is vividly dramatised in Act IV, Scene i, where Othello exposes Desdemona to public humiliation as he brutally strikes and calumniates her. Astounded at the spectacle, Lodovico exclaims:

Is this the noble Moor whom our full Senate
Call all in all sufficient? This the nature
Whom passion could not shake? whose solid virtue
The shot of accident nor dart of chance
Could neither graze nor pierce?

(264 – 268)

Lodovico is describing a man whom Iago has turned into an anti-pastoral imitation of himself. Gratified by Lodovico's verdict, Iago coolly replies: 'He is much changed.'

(IV, i, 268).

As an anti-pastoral force, Iago takes delight, and is even flippant, in his onslaught upon all that is good. The pastoral values of love, harmony, integrity and innocence are an affront to him. On this point Scragg writes

... the ultimate motive for his hatred of Othello, Desdemona, and Cassio is his denial of the values they affirm, his fixed opposition to the virtues they represent. It is the hatred of Satan for the sanctity of Adam and Eve, the hatred of a being who is forced to recognize a virtue he cannot share and constantly desires.

(in Muir and Edwards, 59)

We have already pointed out that daylight is the proper sphere of pastoral. So when Iago seals his determination to undo Othello by invoking Night – ‘Hell and night/Must bring this monstrous birth to the world’s light’ (I, iii, 402 – 403) – he reveals his anti-pastoral colours. His words put us in mind of Lady Macbeth’s ‘Come thick Night/And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of Hell...’ (I, v, 50 – 51) – lines which as emphatically confirm her anti-pastoral credentials. It is easy to imagine Iago and Lady Macbeth joining hands with each other – and with Edmund in *King Lear* – to form a virulent and implacable anti-pastoral trinity.

Iago’s anti-pastoral complexion is demonstrated not through what he does and says, but also through the lewd fantasies and imaginings sprouting from what is really a pornographic sensibility. There is no place for lewdness in pastoral where love tends to have the character of play – in the form of flirtatiousness or of infatuation. Either way, pastoral lovers, for all their high--flown rhetoric of amorous devotion, remain a staunchly chaste band whose utterances are seldom translated even into a kiss. There is

no room in pastoral for sexual passion and that is why there is no room in it for lewdness.

Just how lewd Iago's imaginings are is made manifest in the gross animal imagery his mind seizes on : 'Even now, now, very now, an old black ram/Is tugging your white ewe!' he tells Brabantio (I, i, 87 – 88); and one detects in his diction a kind of lascivious excitement, as if he is endeavouring to picture the scene in his mind's eye – and to get Brabantio to do the same. A few lines later the animal imagery, again in a lewd context, reappears :

Iago : Because we come to
do you service, and you think we are ruffians, you'll
have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse;
you'll have your nephews neigh to you, you'll have
coursers for cousins and jennets for Germans!

Brabantio : What profane wretch art thou?

Iago : I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter
and the Moor are now making the beast with two
backs.

(I, i, 108 – 115)

Having inflamed Brabantio, Iago zeroes in on his real quarry, Othello, craftily inviting him to visualise a scene of lust between Cassio and Desdemona that he admits no eye-witness could corroborate. As before he enraged Brabantio not just with his information but with its lascivious embroidery, so now he does the same to Othello by calling to his aid, with a sensualist's relish, images of animal concupiscence:

It is impossible you should see this
Were they as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys,
As salt as wolves in pride,...

(III, iii, 405 – 407)

The same lickerish sensuality which, indeed, betrays the character of his own lewd fantasies, informs Iago's fabricated account of Cassio's dream:

In sleep I heard him say 'Sweet Desdemona,
Let us be wary, let us hide our loves,'
And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand,
Cry 'O sweet creature!' and then kiss me hard
As if he plucked up kisses by the roots
That grew upon my lips, lay his leg o'er my thigh,
And sigh, and kiss, and then cry 'Cursed fate
That gave thee to the Moor!'

(III, iii, 421 – 428)

Iago's lewd imaginings are a kind of anti-pastoral swill discharged upon the pastoral-like innocence and purity of Othello's and Desdemona's union.

2. Othello's changing language 'profile' as an indicator of his deterioration

We have already noted how Othello's brutal behaviour towards Desdemona - his striking and insulting her in public - betokens the abandonment of the pastoral-like ethos he once upheld and the embrace, in its place, of an anti-pastoral one. In behaving as he does, Othello turns himself into an anti-pastoral caricature of the man he once was. The valiant general who once put Venice's enemies to flight has dwindled into the physical and verbal abuser of his wife. But it is not only through his actions that Othello's deterioration is seen. What happens to his diction tells the same story.

When we first meet Othello, his mode of speech is dignified and lofty. His vocabulary includes words such as 'pilgrimage', 'redemption', 'prayer', 'faith', 'pity', 'and 'love'. His cosmic imagery draws in the moon, the sea, the hills, and heaven. His utterances are lucid, well-proportioned and well-constructed. However, as his mind is poisoned

and his 'free and open nature' (I, iii, 398) vitiated, he increasingly adopts the vocabulary and imagery characteristic of Iago. Rackin comments:

As Iago gradually destroys his faith in Desdemona, he also destroys Othello's noble vision of himself and of the world, and Othello gradually adopts the language of Iago's despairing cynicism.

(74)

And Iago is well aware of the change he has created in Othello:

The Moor already changes with my poison:

(III, iii, 328)

Harsh words, not heard from him before, begin to issue from Othello's lips once the 'poison' takes effect. Such words and phrases as 'Death and damnation', 'bloody thoughts', 'horrors', 'begrimed', 'monstrous', 'aspics' tongues', 'knives', 'hate', 'hell', 'fire', 'vengeance', and 'perdition' culminate in these emotionally charged lines:

Damn her, lewd minx! O damn her, damn her!
Come, go with me apart, I will withdraw
To furnish me with some swift means of death
For the fair devil.

(III, iii, 478 – 481)

The reference to 'lewd minx' is telling; it puts us in mind of Iago's lewd allusions, often employing the imagery of animal concupiscence, discussed above. What Othello's exclamation points up is the degree to which the distance between him and Iago has narrowed. And when, in Act IV (i, 263), he blurts out the phrase 'Goats and monkeys!', echoing Iago's '...as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys' (III, iii, 403), the signal is unmistakable: the distance between the two men has narrowed further. The vitiation of Othello's diction functions, then, as an indicator of the vitiation of his mind and character and, at the same time, as an indicator of his decline from pastoral-

like innocence, integrity and dignity to anti-pastoral grossness, brutality, intemperance and loss of dignity.

3. Contentment destroyed

Contentment, peace of mind, are key constituents of the pastoral ethos. Consequently, whatever seeks to undo contentment and peace of mind is anti-pastoral in its impulse.

In *Othello*, the anti-pastoral agent whose mission it is to destroy others' contentment is, as we have noted, Iago. The explanations offered for his maleficent bent are many.

This is Gordon's:

Iago grows steadily more bitter and revealing, and we begin already to suspect, what is indeed the truth, that quite apart from his specific grievance against Cassio and Othello, he *hates happiness*. Show him a successful and prosperous man, and his first thought is how delightful it would be to ruin him. Show him two people happy together, and his first idea is how enjoyable it would be to sow suspicion between them, to poison their bliss; and, best fun of all, to do it while passing as their friend.

(96)

It is mainly Othello's contentment that Iago is bent on destroying; however, granting Gordon's point that his hatred of others' happiness is 'constitutional' and universal,

it comes as no surprise to discover that whatever the opportunity to disturb others' repose is offered, Iago seizes upon it, and with relish. Hence the clamour and gusto with which he disturbs Brabantio's nocturnal rest in bringing him the news of his daughter's elopement with Othello (I, i); hence the excited relish he displays as he embroiders that news with graphic and lascivious detail: 'Even now, now, very now, an old black ram/Is tugging your white ewe!' (I, i, 87- 88). Next, he turns his attention to Cassio whose contentment arises from serving as Othello's lieutenant and enjoying his favour. 'With as little a web as this,' he crows, surveying Cassio's courtesies to

Desdemona, 'will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio. Ay, smile upon her, do: I will gyve thee in thine own courtesies...If such tricks as these strip you out of your lieutenantry, it had been better you had not kissed your three fingers so oft...' (II, i, 168 – 173). Iago then proceeds to get Cassio drunk and to engineer the brawl (II, ii), as a result of which the lieutenant is indeed stripped of his position, losing together with that, his reputation, his commander's esteem and, in consequence, his contentment. Endeavouring to recover his fortunes, Cassio is further entangled in Iago's web, being set up by him as a 'fall-guy', a mere instrument in the plan to destroy Othello's contentment by destroying its source, his conjugal happiness. Iago sets about ensnaring his principal quarry with a ruthless efficiency embroidered here and there with an artistic flourish – witness his sardonic use of musical imagery to forecast the undoing of the harmony between Othello and Desdemona:

O, you are well tuned now: but I'll set down
The pegs that make this music, as honest
As I am.

(II, i, 198 – 200)

In a sense Iago *is* 'honest': he proves to be as good as his word in untuning Othello and Desdemona's pastoral-like union. As he undermines the Moor's confidence in his wife's fidelity, he poisons the springs of his contentment: 'thou hast set me on the rack!' exclaims Othello, adding: 'I swear 'tis better to be much abused/Than but to know't a little' (III, iii, 338 – 340). The exchange continues as follows:

Iago : How now, my lord ?

Othello : What sense had I of her stolen hours of lust?
I saw't not, thought it not, it harmed not me,
I slept the next night well, fed well, was free
and merry;
I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips;
He that is robbed, not wanting what is stolen,

Let him not know't, and he's not robbed at all.

Iago : I am sorry to hear this.

Othello : I had been happy if the general camp,
Pioneers and all, had tasted her sweet body,
So I had nothing known. O now for ever
Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content!

(III, iii, 340 – 351)

Deprived of all content, seething with suspicion and sexual jealousy, Othello proceeds, in his turn, to destroy his wife's contentment, less through the public humiliation he visits upon her than through the calumnies he levels against her in their private exchange in IV, ii, where he labels her a whore – and a liar for denying it. Upon Othello's exit, Emilia returns to the chamber to find her mistress distressed beyond tears. The few hours that remain to Desdemona are comfortless, and Othello does not even allow her to compose herself for a final prayer before he murders her.

4. Venice – anti-pastoral resonances

Venice, the setting of the opening Act, frames 'an atmosphere of secrecy, distrust ... [it] is also a scene of accusation, counter-accusation and confusion' (Rumboll, *Othello*, 2) – all anti-pastoral characteristics. Yet Brabantio, disturbed in the middle of the night by Iago and Roderigo who have come to inform him of Desdemona's elopement, expostulates:

'This is Venice:/My house is not a grange.'

(I, i, 104– 105).

In speaking these words, he sets Venice apart from other places, as a place of sophistication and refinement, civilisation and law. His elevation of Venice above a

country dwelling ('grange') runs counter to the pastoral ranking. Brabantio's estimate of Venice was not, however, shared by Englishmen of Shakespeare's day. Its reputation as a centre of sophisticated vice made it a 'byword for sexual immorality among Elizabethans' (Colman, 22). Such a characterisation clearly has little in common with the pastoral ideal which knows nothing of 'sexual immorality', though it makes room for emotional fickleness which tends, however, to be viewed as playful and non-portentous.

Though in the service of the Venetian Republic, Othello the Moor is alien to it. His lack of sophistication, apparent in his conviction that to elope with Desdemona was no fault, and even more apparent in his over-trusting nature, stands in strong contrast to the urbanity of his employers and the sophisticated decorum of the Venetian polity.

Othello says of himself: 'Rude am I in my speech/And little blest with the soft phrase of peace' (I, iii, 82 – 83). Making allowances for a degree of strategic self-depreciation on Othello's part, it remains true that he *is* 'rude' (unpolished) compared to the sophisticated standards of Venice. Though Venetian sophistication is not in this play portrayed as corrupt (Iago is a villain not because he is Venetian, but because he is Iago), its sophistication alone suffices to impart to Venice an anti-pastoral tinge, for sophistication runs counter to the simplicity, naturalness and artlessness of the pastoral milieu.

5. Disguise as an Anti-Pastoral Device

In a pastoral comedy like *As You Like It* or a romance like *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare uses disguise as a device that tantalises and moves the action towards a dénouement that strips away its layers. This is relatively easy because the disguise is

usually external. Disguise leads to a happy outcome in the comedies; in the tragedies, where disguise is calculated to injure and undo, the reverse is true. Disguise in tragedy, rather than being external, operates on a more abstract level, the assumption of a false front. Iago, who dons this false front, is a master of disguise. Behind his façade of solicitude for Othello's interests, lie perfidy and malice, leading to the destruction of the loyal and faithful characters. It goes without saying that perfidy, malice and betrayal are cardinal anti-pastoral sins.

We first hear about Iago's recourse to disguise when he says to Roderigo that he is serving Othello 'not ...for love and duty/But seeming so, for my peculiar end,' (I, i, 58 – 59). In the same scene he comments further about his donning of a false front:

Though I do hate him as I do hell-pains,
Yet for necessity of present life
I must show out a flag and sign of love,
Which is indeed but sign.

(152 – 155)

Iago wears several layers of disguise, each expertly adjusted to the dupe of the moment. With each soliloquy he reveals more and more of the diabolical self (Roger, 214) he so skilfully hides when in the company of his dupes. By the end of the play he has destroyed the pastoral tenets of love, friendship, loyalty and respect. On the way there he creates an anti-pastoral world in which, for a while, he reigns supreme. Like Iago, Goneril, Regan and Edmund also put on disguises in order to attain their ends, in the process of doing which they likewise preside briefly over an anti-pastoral Gehenna. So do Macbeth and Lady Macbeth whose temporary success is built on a crime that disguises itself behind a façade of loyal hospitality.

6. The Fall

The introductory scenes of the play

disclose both beauty and deformity, heroic trust
and deadly malice, but still in such proportions
as Romance prefers. Evil is as yet but a shadow;
the serpent is there, but still outside Paradise.

(Gordon, 99)

By Act III the serpent, in the person of Iago, is ready to breach the defences of Othello and Desdemona's paradisaical union. In Act III, Scene iii, the pivotal scene of the play, the Fall is enacted. Beginning innocently enough, the scene as it evolves discloses how trust and innocence are betrayed. After trafficking in insinuation and innuendo, the scene concludes with torment and suffering. The pastoral attributes of innocence and happiness, which Othello brings to the scene at its opening, are assailed and overwhelmed by the malice, suspicion-sowing, duplicity and perfidy that Iago brings to bear.

The scene, significantly, is set in the garden of the citadel and, echoing its Edenic antecedent, is labelled the Temptation Scene by Rumboll (90). It opens with Desdemona and Cassio discussing his hoped-for reinstatement. The conversation is innocent on both sides. However, Iago, the lurking serpent, places a suspicious gloss on Cassio's rather hurried exit : 'Ha, I like not that' he exclaims (III, iii, 34), and with these casual words, the temptation – really the ensnaring – of Othello begins. The evolution of the scene bears some resemblance to what happened in the Garden of Eden when the serpent tempted Eve. The simple words uttered with deceptive nonchalance by Iago set in motion what will become a train of torment for Othello and Desdemona.

I know our country disposition well –
In Venice they do let God see the pranks
They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience
Is not to leave't undone, but keep't unknown.

(III, iii, 204 – 207)

That the highest conception of morality ('best conscience') in Venice consists not in abstaining from vice but in concealing it is a patently anti-pastoral doctrine and one that is alien to the Moor's honest and ingenuous nature. Yet it is not one that his suspicions, kindled by his ensign's innuendos, decline to feed on. And so Othello comes to see Desdemona's every action, however trifling, grounds for suspicion. As Iago well understands

Trifles light as air
Are to the jealous confirmations strong
As proofs of holy writ.

(III, iii, 325 – 327)

Racked by suspicion and doubt by the initial torments of sexual jealousy, torn between his desire to trust Desdemona and his inclination to believe Iago, Othello yields to pastoral's backward glance, idealising a simpler past to which he bids farewell for good:

I had been happy if the general camp,
Pioneers and all, had tasted her sweet body,
So I had nothing known. O now for ever
Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content!
Farewell the plumed troops and the big wars
That makes ambition virtue! O farewell,
Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,
The spirit-stirring drum, th' ear-piercing fife,
The royal banner, and all quality,
Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war!
And, O you mortal engines whose rude throats
Th' immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit,
Farewell: Othello's occupation's gone.

(III, iii, 348 – 360)

The repeatedly used word 'Farewell', tolls through the speech, reverberating with the recognition of better days now irretrievably lost. Othello's life with Desdemona was one of contentment and bliss. As much as he is bidding his career farewell, he is also looking back at that life that he had enjoyed. In this sense he is engaged in a typically pastoral reaction to the past – the backward glance. Macbeth finds himself in a similar position when he realises that he has forfeited all that makes life worthwhile, and is left without any compensating consolations :

my way of life
Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf;
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have; but in their stead,
Curses, not loud, but deep, mouth-honour, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.

(V,iii, 22 – 28)

When Othello finally recognises Iago for the villain he is, he says:

I look down towards his feet, but that's a fable.
If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee.

(V, ii, 283 – 284)

Othello's observation gestures to Iago's Satanic role in bringing about his downfall.

And so, at the end of the play, the link between the evil one and the Evil One is recapitulated. Scragg comments:

The myth of Satan depicts him as falling from heaven from a sense of being undervalued; he tempted Adam and Eve both because they were superior to him, and therefore an object of envious hatred, and because he desired to avenge a supposed injury. Iago's motivation is very similar. At the close of the play, when he has corrupted Othello's mind, destroyed both him and Desdemona, when, for them Paradise has been lost, Iago is dragged away to the torture that is his element. He does not die at the end of the play, he is not to be put rapidly to death.

He is to linger in pain like the powers of whom he is the instrument. Iago follows the pattern laid down in the Garden of Eden ... Antagonistic to all forms of virtue, obscurely envying a state he constantly denies, he is the inveterate opponent of virtue, the seducer of mankind, who reduces his victims by guile from their original state of bliss to grief, death and hell.

(in Muir and Edwards, 59)

Picking up the thread implicit in Othello's words to Iago, Lodovico refers to the Moor's having 'Fallen in the practice of a cursed slave' (V, ii, 289). The word 'Fallen' links Othello's fall to the original one in the Garden. Both events are self-evidently imbued with an anti-pastoral resonance. Pastoral knows nothing of the cataclysmic ruin suggested by 'fall', one of the most loaded words in the language. When pastoral man falls, the event is benign – he is 'ensnared' not by Satan, but 'with flowers', and he 'fall[s]' on the grass'(Marvell, *The Garden*, 295).

Conclusion

Othello is in the main a tragic love story. The protagonists, Othello and Desdemona, exhibit pastoral characteristics of love and simplicity, but a malevolent force, embodied in the person of Iago, works against these and undoes them. Under the weight of his afflictions – but also, be it said, during his courtship of Desdemona – Othello indulges the backward gaze of pastoral. For her part, Desdemona has a picture of the Othello that first stirred her emotions fixed indelibly in her mind. When she is accused of infidelity by her husband, when she is assaulted, and finally, when she is smothered by him, she holds on to that original picture. That, too, exemplifies pastoral's backward gaze.

Iago is viewed as an anti-pastoral Satan figure bent on laying waste the blissful garden of Othello and Desdemona's marriage. He succeeds, not only because of his own cunning and ruthlessness, but also because of his quarries' artlessness and innocence which leaves them wholly exposed to his onslaught. Given the world these two innocents inhabit, their very virtues become their enemies, and their 'vices' are but the excess of their virtues.

The tragedy of *Othello* confirms what the other two tragedies dealt with in this study show: namely, that the pastoral-like qualities and personages that make their appearance in the early scenes of the plays are easily overwhelmed and crushed by anti-pastoral forces, whether human, natural, or supernatural; and that those forces, after enjoying a temporary success, themselves come to grief at the end of the action, leaving the slate clean for the possibility of a new beginning.

CONCLUSION

From the standpoint of this study, the traditional pastoral setting of the shaded tranquil meadow fed by a brook, cooled by gentle breezes, echoing with birdsong and inhabited by leisure shepherds is not as important as the (mostly human) qualities that over time have come to be associated with that fabled Arcadian setting. These are qualities such as simplicity, innocence, peace of mind, sincerity, kindness, naturalness, openness. Accompanying the recognition that Arcadia is lost forever are the sentiments of regret and nostalgia. Similarly, what is significant for the anti-pastoral 'strain' explored in the preceding chapters is not the exposé, mounted by Duck, Crabbe and Goldsmith in the eighteenth century, of the real conditions of rural life, but rather the qualities, so conspicuous in the tragedies we have examined, that stand opposed to those making up the pastoral 'ethos'. These are qualities (scourges, rather) such as moral depravity, treachery, duplicity, dissimulation, cunning, unnaturalness, cruelty.

The three tragedies examined all contain pastoral and anti-pastoral resonances. In the hands of a skilled artist like Shakespeare, the conventions of pastoral are exploited in a number of ways. In a 'green-world' comedy like *As You Like It*, the Forest of Arden becomes a pastoral refuge for the characters escaping the intrigues and corruption of the court. In the tragedies there exist no such glades offering comfort and refuge to those fleeing the corruption of the courts. Upending pastoral convention in *King Lear*, Shakespeare turns the countryside into which the ill-used king flees, into a very emblem of anti-pastoral inhospitableness, danger and elemental fury. So the landscape Lear uses

pastoral language to describe ('shadowy forests...plenteous rivers...wide-skirted meads') when he sets out to divide it among his daughters, turns against him. So do his elder daughters and their hangers-on, and in doing so they disclose the anti-pastoral complexion of their characters.

When Duncan arrives at Macbeth's castle, he speaks in the pastoral language of planting, growing and harvesting. When the general he trusts betrays him, the anti-pastoral 'strain' takes over in the play. As the initial crime has to be safeguarded from exposure by the commission of further crimes, the worst anti-pastoral attributes come into view – violence, cruelty, ruthlessness. Nor do Macbeth and his wife gain joy and peace of mind from the crimes. On the contrary, their minds are assailed by a host of anti-pastoral demons: guilt, fear, suspicion, lack of repose. The pastoral-like benefits they had hoped for become merely the objects of nostalgia and futile regrets.

In *Othello*, an anti-pastoral force, embodied in Iago, works to undo the blissful union of the noble Moor and his innocent Desdemona. The role of Iago in destroying their marriage carries echoes of Satan's role in sowing discord between Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, even as the ultimate destruction of Othello and his wife contains echoes of the Fall itself. That such comparisons are possible suggests that Othello and Desdemona's marriage, unclouded and happy to begin with, has much in common with the untroubled contentment of the pastoral dispensation. Othello, moreover, has a simplicity, openness, trustfulness and sense of honour that link him to the traditional pastoral country-dweller. Desdemona's innocence, trustfulness, kind nature and fidelity

similarly suggest links with the pastoral world. On the other side, Iago's malice, ruthlessness and treachery, so reminiscent of Edmund's in *King Lear*, earmark him as an anti-pastoral exemplar.

From the analysis I have offered of the three tragedies, it is evident that Shakespeare extended the scope of pastoral well beyond its conventional limits. What is also evident is the degree to which the plays' tragic character is ascribable to the anti-pastoral elements they contain.

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