

**north
american
pastoral**

**contrasting images of the garden
in canadian and american literature**

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The image of the garden, a metaphor for that cluster of thoughts and feelings expressing one of the deepest and most persistent of human motives, the return to idyllic innocence, to a condition of harmony between self and environment, may well have its root in the primal garden of infancy, when, as Paul Shepard reminds us, our first landscape was the body of the mother.¹ At its core, the garden image bears an archetypal significance that transcends national boundaries and cultural identities. Yet the myth of the garden has lent a specific definition to the American experience of the North American continent. The figure of America as garden, a virgin land but one characterized from the beginning by images of polarity (earthly paradise/howling wilderness, source of spiritual sustenance/matter to be subdued and conquered, nurturing earth mother/terrible tooth mother), imbues our pastorals with a tragic tension. If the myth of the garden lies at the heart of the American experience of the North American continent, an examination of another North American literature, the Canadian, reveals not only a sharp contrast in attitudes toward that myth and the pastoral experience itself, but suggests intrinsic differences in the Canadian and American identities. My purpose here is to explore the divergent treatments of pastoral in American and Canadian literature with the intent of disclosing two value-laden and culturally distinctive experiences of the North American garden.

Pastoral literature, regardless of period or culture, tends to follow

certain structural conventions. If the longing after innocence and primal integration of self and environment rests at its psychological center, the expression of that longing often figures as a movement from the city to the country, a retreat from the cares of an adult world to the idealized realm of childhood. This contrast in settings has historical roots, since, as noted by Renato Poggioli, "the birth of the pastoral coincided with the decline of the ancient *polis* or city-state and with the appearance of a quasi-modern metropolis. . . ."2 The city-dwellers' longing after greener pastures presupposes a new Edenic garden with its promises of erotic bliss, often a "private, masculine world, where woman is not a person but a sexual archetype, the eternal Eve" (OF, 16). But the pastoral ideal of restored innocence is not limited to the realm of private, erotic wish fulfillment. Often this animus translates into the realm of politics and the pastoral ideal promises a Golden Age, the restoration of political and social equilibrium to a community whose peace has been violated.

This very image of equilibrium summons its defining opposite to mind; and, indeed, pastoral is a genre structured upon contrasts which create its dialectical, tensive structure. In *Pastoral Forms and Attitudes*, Harold Toliver discusses the use of bipolar oppositions in pastoral, contrasts which "permeate the pastoral tradition from one period to another but tend to elicit different potentials from the pastoral setting according to how it is opposed."³ American Studies scholars are probably most familiar with these contrasts as they are set out in *The Machine in the Garden*,⁴ Leo Marx's classic study delineating the bipolar oppositions that occur in American pastoral. It is this conceptual structure of Marx's, which I label the pastoral continuum, that I would use as a touchstone for comparing the Canadian and American experience of the North American garden.

Briefly, the pastoral continuum is a range of land/values defined by three primary types of environments, each of which bears a cluster of associations reflected in American literature: nature (read that as wilderness or "undeveloped" nature) connotes not only a feminine realm of feeling and emotion but also childhood and anarchy; the urban (specifically the city of the industrial period), with its associations of artifice and technology, science and the arts, stands as a masculine region of rational intellect with resonances of adulthood and authority; the middle or pastoral landscape offers a ground for mediation between the opposing qualities of nature and the city, the Garden and the Machine. In the middle landscape, art tempers nature, feeling informs intellect, and androgynous harmony is attained, at least momentarily. Politically, the pastoral ideal of the middle landscape embodies the just resolution of anarchic chaos and authoritarian order, makes consonant the paradoxical pursuit of rural happiness by means of economic and technological development. Although this conceptual structure once described an existent American environment in the time of Jefferson, it is now descriptive of an "inner" land-

scape, a deep structure that permeates American thought and feeling and so governs our responses to nature and civilization.

For conceptual purposes the values described above are attributed to separate segments of the continuum; however, when they operate within the context of our pastoral literature, the associations clustering around one environment shape the perceptions and behavior of the character as he/she moves through the landscape. The journey myth so prevalent in pastoral literature (often a quest leading from the city toward not only wilderness and the middle landscape but also toward the values repositied in these landscapes) delineates an "inner" territory of the psyche. The hero's/heroine's movement through "outer" landscapes corresponds to changes within the self, revealing a process of individuation interdependent with land. Elements, that is, of the character's self often seek integration analogous to the mediation of values associated with wilderness and urban environments. The "inner middle landscape" of characters in American literature becomes that ideal ground for the sought-for-and-believed-to-be-achievable moment of psychic balance, androgynous harmony, and, often, political justice intrinsic to the American pastoral ideal.

The question of the relationship between land and patterns of human development has implications not only on the "microscopic" level of literary works within the two countries, but also on the "macroscopic" level of national character stemming from distinctively different cultural/historical interactions with land. In addressing this problem of the relationship of pastoral myth to the Canadian national character, Northrop Frye has developed a theory of the "garrison" mentality, a mind-set derivative of landforms, climate and a frontier experience quite different from that of Americans. As Frye and Marx note, until around 1900, American culture was mainly a culture of the Atlantic seaboard. Our frontier was irregular but moved steadily back until it reached the opposite coast. The very quality of frontier movement in the United States contributed to the character of our middle landscape: we actually had middle land, an American "garden" in the agricultural as well as mythical sense, midway between the wilderness and the Eastern cityscape.

Canada, by contrast, has no urban Atlantic seaboard and precious little "middle" or agricultural land. As Frye contends, "To enter the United States is a matter of crossing an ocean; to enter Canada is a matter of being silently swallowed by an alien continent."⁵ Once "swallowed," the Canadian embedded himself in "garrison" communities surrounded by a wilderness that not only separated him from civilization but created a psychological and physical frontier of vast, bleak, cold wild land that bespoke a denial of human moral values. Given these circumstances, the moral and social values of the garrison assumed the character of an unquestionable authority.

Frye's garrison interpretation of the pattern of Canadian pastoralism and the frontier poses interesting questions when considered as a

biological metaphor of human growth and development. The manner of continental penetration via the “swallowing” waterways of Canada and the subsequent “embedding” of garrison, womb-like communities within the wilderness frontier finds a correspondence in the cultural, political and psychic connection English Canadians have maintained with the mother country, a connection that may well be at the root of the self-proclaimed Canadian identity crisis and its contrasting North American gardens.

In viewing Canadian literary gardens, I have tried to keep a foot on each side of the border, to encompass the visions of pastoral in two national literatures. Since I have attempted to see Canadian literature as a Canadian might see it, my version of the Canadian garden is often consistent with the versions of pastoral found in their critical literature. At the same time, my perceptions have a vantage point in the territory of American literature and cultural criticism. One important point of difference in the Canadian and American views of their respective gardens rests in the regional as opposed to national emphases of our literary histories. Our upstairs neighbors have only recently come to view Canadian literature as worthy of critical appraisal; they still might not have done so had it not been for the demands made by their emerging political identity. Even today, Canada the nation is a political and ethnic mosaic of regions that are at best loosely bound and often chafing in their relationship to a central, unifying government. America, by contrast, early assumed a unified political identity that defied regional dominance. We even fought a war to prove this to ourselves. While our best literature has strong roots in the local, it voices a national identity to us rather than a strictly regional one, and this has long been the case. *Moby Dick* may be the product of a waning New England Calvinism, but it is a great American book. However, this tension between regional and national identity pervades Canadian literary criticism and shapes the perceptions of pastoral in Canadian literature.

Interestingly enough, even Northrop Frye, whose “garrison” theory seems to assume some sort of unifying force at work in the Canadian national imagination, sees American *and* Canadian writers as regional writers. In an article entitled “In Quest of Identity and Unity,” published in the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, February 20, 1971, Frye asserts, “American writers are, as writers, not American: they are New Englanders, Mississippians, middle westerners, expatriates, and the like.” Frye, of course, speaks in part of the need for all good literature to be rooted in the local imagination—and with that I would agree. But when Frye goes on to ask “what can there be in common between an imagination nurtured on the Prairie, where it is a centre of consciousness diffusing itself over a vast flat expanse stretching to the remote horizon, and one nurtured in British Columbia, where it is in the midst of gigantic trees and mountains leaping into the sky all around it, and obliterating the horizon everywhere?” I would contend that

Frye's perceptions are limited by the very split in the Canadian critical imagination that he addresses. For Frye maintains that identity, which is local and regional and rooted in imaginative and cultural works, is opposed to unity, which is "national in reference, international in perspective, and rooted in political feeling." He states that it is "the tension between the political sense of unity and the imaginative sense of locality" that "is the essence of whatever the word Canadian means," that to abandon this tension is to produce "empty gestures of cultural nationalism" or separatism. Frye has identified the Canadian dilemma, but I would argue there is a unity in Canadian imagery of the garden and that what this imagery expresses transcends the regional, that the structure of Canadian pastoralism, as revealed in comparative study, provides a key to the imaginative, psychological, and, by metaphorical extension, political character or identity of Canadians.

Consider the Canadian treatment of prairie fiction as a case in point. Canadian critics tend to regard their prairie fiction as a regionally distinct genre, one defined by a specific environment and shaped by images that bear some similarity to those of conventional pastoral. Laurence Ricou, writing in *Vertical Man/Horizontal World*, maintains that the "basic image of a single figure amidst the vast flatness of the landscape serves to unify and describe Canadian prairie fiction."⁶ True enough, prairie fiction is fraught with images of human isolation in an enclosing if not entrapping landscape; however, John Moss' study, *Patterns of Isolation*,⁷ indicates that, at least in English-Canadian fiction, the phenomenology of isolation is cross-regional and not confined to the prairie.

When Eli Mandel turns to comment on prairie fiction, he notes that the child figure is the primary image found in regional and prairie literature. The child is focus for a place that once was, a lost Edenic innocence. According to Mandel, the myth of childhood takes two forms in Canadian prairie literature:⁸ the comic, in which the child is identified with the land; and the tragic, in which the "child" (usually nearly grown if not adult) is alienated from the land and is partner to some generational conflict. Yet my reading of Canadian literature finds that the imagery of a garden forever located in childhood and a middle landscape marred by generational (and sexual) conflict is typical of a tellingly Canadian pastoral, one that transcends regional categories.

There are other prominent images in prairie literature that have received critical appraisal. Dick Harrison's imaginative yet scholarly treatment of prairie fiction, *Unnamed Country*, makes the provocative point that while early twentieth-century popular prairie fiction in Canada presents the West as a garden, novelists chose to ignore the American myth of the frontier.⁹ Harrison conjectures that this choice may result from Central Canada's decision to maintain its strong British character rather than to look to its advancing frontier as a source of cultural identity (UC 74). When analyzing Canadian and

American fictions of the West, he notes two contrasting visions of human order presented in Frontier and Garden myths: one American and inductive, generating order from the “immediate particulars of experience”; the other deductive, its order descending “logically from higher precepts to which the individual has no access” (UC 79). Thus the garden remains solidly British in most of the early prairie fiction, despite its increasing designation as Canadian.

Harrison identifies the Mounted Policemen, ministers, school teachers—images “suggestive of the secular, sacred and cultural aspects of the encompassing order”—as the figures consistently inhabiting the fictional gardens of the Canadian prairie (UC 85). And interestingly enough, when commenting on the minister in Ralph Connor’s *The Sky Pilot*, Harrison states “He is clearly all that is missing from the West in a broadly spiritual sense, all things aesthetic, ethereal, and somehow *feminine*” (UC 85, my italics). Here Harrison associates order and civilization with the feminine—an association that reappears frequently throughout Canadian fiction. My reading of Canadian literature, which is cross-regional as well as cross-cultural, finds the animus of this order, with its resonances of the feminine, to be containment of the wild, the anarchic, and by association within the literature, the masculine. The pastoral pattern in American fiction, by contrast, tends to seek resolution *not in containment* of disorder by order, not in the encapsulation of the masculine by the feminine, but in the *integration* of order and civilization with the chaotic and wild, with the attainment of a middle landscape ideal connoting psychosexual harmony if not androgynous balance.

Ours is a literature, and a culture, that would marry its oppositions. But, interestingly, Harrison notes that while in Canadian writers such as Nellie McClung and Connor “there is the implication that what is needed is a marriage of East and West, with the civilized east softening and humanizing the virile but intemperate West” (UC 86), such marriages or reconciliations of these oppositions are seldom convincing. Thus the garden in our literature functions as a ground for reconciliation, but the gardens of Canadian prairie literature act as one of the “*poles* of the prairie imagination” (UC 99, my italics).

While the popular, sentimental fiction of the early twentieth century easily incorporated the garden image, later prairie realism, according to Harrison’s reading, does not fall so readily into the conventional patterns of the garden. Instead, Canadian prairie realism expresses a complex alienation from the land, one in which land and woman are often identified as objects of subjugation by man. In this identification of land and woman as ground to be conquered and possessed, Harrison locates the origin of the sexual isolation that occurs in the agricultural middle landscapes of this regional literature. The image that dominates prairie realism, he observes, is not the garden but the house. This architectonic symbol, often imaged as unfinished or ruinous and frequently associated with visionaries or artists, embodies,

for Harrison, the failure of imagination in its struggle with a hostile prairie environment.

Still others have noted the prominence of the house image in prairie fiction. Susan Jackel's "The House on the Prairies"¹⁰ traces the use of the house as a symbol in prairie literature, focusing on its progression "in meaning from the moral significance of absorption in material possessions to an inquiry into the rights and responsibilities of individuals within the family" (HP 167). While Ms. Jackel explicitly limits her topic to the image of the house as a defining figure in prairie fiction, saying "the unanimity with which prairie writers interpret this symbol is one element of the 'regionalism' of their fiction" (HP 174), she uses the text of *The Double Hook*, a novel set in the Cariboo District of British Columbia, as a major illustration. Her impulse to reach beyond this regional genre in discussing the image of the house is, I think, correct, although she appears unable to account for the inconsistencies this novel introduces into her argument. While Jackel does not identify the house with the feminine principle in any inclusive way, she does recognize the feminine associations with the image, noting that in *As For Me and My House*, discussed later in this essay, Mrs. Bentley, the narrator, is recognized as the controlling power in the house of Bentley, and in *The Double Hook* the daughters engage in dispute over control of the house after their mother's death, while James, the son, is subject to the curse of a house that symbolizes the tyranny of his mother and sisters over him.

Although neither Harrison nor Jackel develops the connection between the image of the house, the myth of the garden, and the feminine principle in prairie literature, Robert Kroetsch touches upon their relationship in an imaginative fireworks entitled "The Fear of Women in Prairie Fiction: An Erotics of Space."¹¹ There Kroetsch locates the unresolved oppositions of masculine and feminine, wilderness and civilization in images of the horse and the house: the feminine is symbolized by the house; an enclosed space; the masculine by the horse: "to be *on* a horse is to move: motion into distance. To be *in* a house is to be fixed: a centering unto stasis. Horse is masculine. House is feminine" (FWPF 76). It is an opposition that Kroetsch contends finds resolution in the "horse-house" or whores' house of Western movies, not in Eden—at least not in prairie fiction, a genre he would make borderless. To establish his point, he compares Cather's *My Antonia* and Ross' *As For Me and My House*, finding that both novels illustrate the fear of feminine space connoted by the garden and the house. In so doing, Kroetsch confuses essential patterns of two distinct literatures—perhaps an error of projection, since his own novels embody the very fear of feminine space he locates in prairie fiction.

I would argue that *My Antonia* follows the familiar pattern of an American pastoral. Unlike Mrs. Bentley, the narrator of Ross' novel, Antonia is an androgynous figure. Although she is obviously female and feminine, Antonia is not content to live within the house, but pre-

fers to work in the fields like a man—in part because her sense of self-worth in a family that reveres the masculine demands she do such work, but also because she is strong and loves physical, outdoor labor. Antonia literally inhabits a middle landscape as well as the house. Moreover, Jim Burden's purpose in revisiting Antonia and the prairie is not possession in the sexual but in the psychic sense. He would return to the landscape of childhood to reexperience the prairie erotically and ideally, to embrace the feminine principle imaged by Antonia and the land as well as the feminine element within himself. In doing so, Cather's narrator finds that necessary integration of masculine and feminine, adulthood and childhood, civilization and wilderness so necessary for his wholeness as an adult. *My Antonia* and *As For Me and My House* are prairie novels, but the inner landscapes of their characters bear the impress of two radically different versions of the pastoral imagination.

In reading Canadian literature, I perceive that the image of the house as a feminine domain is phenomenologically linked to the imagery of the garden in the pastoral continuum of Canadian fiction. The house represents one extreme in the polarization not only of nature and civilization but the masculine and feminine characters of Canadian pastorals. The "resolution" of these oppositions in Canadian fiction, when it occurs, moves not toward integration of these oppositions but toward a reversal of imagistic roles, from images of a hostile wilderness tightly containing civilization to images in which civilization or its surrogates function as the container of wilderness and its hitherto threatening but now valued properties. The ensuing reading of texts is selective, though, I feel, representative. However, this essay is at best a prolegomenon to comparative work with the Canadian and American versions of North American pastoral. What follows can only delineate the major conformations of our respective gardens.

My "garden tour" of Canadian literature begins with what is generally acknowledged to be the first Canadian novel, Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague*¹² (1769). This epistolary novel traces the fortunes of several pairs of lovers but places its attention on Ed. Rivers and Emily Montague during their courtship in the wilds of Quebec and on their eventual marriage and return to England and civilization. Colonel Rivers, enamoured of Emily but too poor to return to England with a bride, sets out to purchase wilderness land from a French Canadian widow, Mme. Des Roches. His object is to convert the widow's wild land into a Canadian paradise where he and his Emily can live as an Edenic pair. Rivers eventually abandons the idea of creating a garden in the North American wilderness and for several noteworthy reasons. First of all, Mme. Des Roches has fallen in love with him, an emotion he reciprocates to some degree but wisely refuses to indulge since he realizes that two women, Emily and Madame, cannot share the territory of the same Kamaraskan paradise. Although attracted to the dream of Eden, to the sublime qualities of

the land, and to Mme. Des Roches (whose very name images the Canadian landscape), Rivers refuses to purchase land that would entail an indecorous relationship precluding the harmony of Eden. Rejecting the Canadian setting but not the myth of the garden, Rivers considers settling in the Lake Champlain area of New York, thus finding his Eden in America, but duty summons him away from North America and back to England where he must go to attend his ailing mother. In sum, Ed. Rivers, who is himself a middle landscape figure, possessing “the tenderness of woman with the spirit and firmness of man” (HEM 159), forsakes the North American garden to make a seemingly harmonious return to England, the mother, and a life of psychic and moral balance not possible in Canada.

Once in England, Rivers surveys his family’s estate, “revisiting those dear scenes of infant happiness,” especially the garden where he finds “not a tree, not a bush, which did not revive some pleasing soft idea” (HEM 234). There his “passion for the savage luxuriance of America” wanes to be supplanted by a restored taste “for the mild and regular charms of my native country” (HEM 23). When Emily and Ed. retire to the family estate to live, the setting for their new life is clearly pastoral, as rendered in a letter to their friend, Captain Fitzgerald:

My situation is a very fine one, though not like the magnificent scenes to which we have been accustomed in Canada: the house stands on the sunny side of the hill, at the foot of which, the garden intervening, runs a little trout stream, which to the right seems to be lost in an island of oziars, and over which is a rustic bridge into a very beautiful meadow, where at present graze a numerous flock of sheep. (HEM 266)

Emily busies herself in making the garden “a wilderness of sweets, a paradise worthy its lovely inhabitant,” while Ed. raises “plantations of trees” (HEM 266), a forest of oak to supply the British navy. Although Emily and Ed. recreate the wild garden of the Kamaraskas, it is within the setting of England’s “enamelled meadows” (HEM 235). Their life is artificial rather than real, a fact made apparent by Brooke’s introduction of a masque which Ed. and Emily attend costumed as fictional French peasant and shepherdess. In this novel, not only is the garden and all it suggests of sexual and psychic harmony incongruous in the Canadian wilderness, but its attainment rests literally on the return to mother and the civilized setting of the mother country, the embrace of the illusion rather than the reality of rural life.

Though very much a product of the eighteenth century, Brooke’s novel presents its readers with images of the garden and attitudes toward pastoral that reappear persistently in much of Canadian fiction written in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Her characters, though attracted to the sublimity of the Canadian wild garden, locate paradise elsewhere. Much of English-Canadian fiction is dominated by the unfulfilled expectation of finding another Eden on the North American continent, but the only harmonious return is that made to

the mother country. Early French Canadian fiction centers on the "myth of the land," an idealization of rural life that links the wresting of farmland from the wilderness to the virtues of Catholic religion and the preservation of ethnic identity. But the question which might be said to characterize this literature, beginning with Felix-Antoine Savard's *Menaud: Maître-Draveur* and running through Louis Hemon's *Maria Chapdelaine*, Ringuet's *Trent Arpents*, Gabrielle Roy's *Bonheur d'Occasion*, and Roch Carrier's *La Guerre, Yes Sir!*, is "Where is paradise?" What appears operative within so much of the fictive Canadian landscape is an unmediated opposition of nature and civilization, an exclusion of the garden or middle landscape experience as it appears in American literature. In its stead, the phenomenology of Canadian pastoral reveals a polarization of environments and of its masculine and feminine characters, all unmeliorated by the presence of a common ground.

Early nineteenth century Canadian literature abounds in diaries, travel journals and emigrant guides written by new settlers, but there is relatively little fiction. Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush*,¹³ the account of her emigration to Canada in 1832 and her subsequent years in the backwoods, demonstrates that early and unmediated opposition between the sometimes hostile void of wilderness and the constricting enclosure of domestic space found so often in Canadian pastoral of various periods.

Although Mrs. Moodie enters the continent with the expectation of finding paradise, perceiving Grosse Isle, a quarantine station for cholera-stricken immigrants, as a "second Eden just emerged from the waters of Chaos" (RIB 28), the Moodie family finds not Eden but a life of subsistence farming and debt. Nature persists in its aesthetic appeal for Susanna, however, and her descriptions of the Canadian landscape invoke the language of the sublime and the picturesque as she seeks to forget her troubles in the "rugged beauty of the wild landscape" (RIB 95). Yet, despite her obvious affinity to its natural beauty, a reader soon becomes aware of a growing skepticism in Mrs. Moodie's response to the Canadian environment, both natural and social. The bush that surrounds her clearing home isolates her from civilized society, while her rude Yankee neighbors consistently defy her sense of social conventions, her expectations of neighborly niceties. Susanna's world centers on her home and family, her irritations with frontier society, and her attempts to cope with the demands of a hard life alien to her upbringing as an English gentlewoman. In opposition to the domestic and social enclosure of the clearing stands a bush that is both rapturous in its beauty and threateningly hostile. Even in the most halcyon and pastoral of moments, there is treachery in the Canadian Eden as Susanna reveals in her account of canoe trips taken with her husband during that first spring in their new wilderness home:

These fishing and shooting excursions were delightful. The pure beauty of the Canadian water, the sombre but august

grandeur of the vast forest that hemmed us in on every side and shut us out from the rest of the world, soon cast a magic spell upon our spirits, and we began to feel charmed with the new freedom and solitude around us. Every object was new to us. We felt as if we were the first discoverers of every beautiful flower and stately tree that attracted our attention, and we gave names to fantastic rocks and fairy isles, and raised imaginary houses and bridges on every picturesque spot which we floated past during our aquatic excursions. (RIB 155)

This scene of idyllic solitude and Edenic enclosure is not interrupted by the sound of the machine entering the garden nor is it followed by recoil at the seductive embrace of nature. Instead, Susanna, an inveterate water-gazer, is moved to tell her reader a few pages later that these same "bright waters" have swept away "Alas! how many who were then young and in their prime. . . ." (RIB 160). Mrs. Moodie is all too aware that beneath the beguiling sublimity of the Canadian bush lurks a hostile and treacherous nature.

Susanna can find no middle landscape: there is a wilderness that is both sublime and treacherous, a community that offers neither the divine solace of nature nor the consolations of civilization. Instead, her encounters with a beautiful but amoral, if not treacherous, wilderness and an overwhelming dissatisfaction with the social isolation and rude companionship of life on the frontier usurp the middle landscape. While art has a way of meliorating the harsh circumstances of the wilderness by endowing it with aesthetic qualities, it cannot create and sustain a middle ground of psychic balance in a world sundered by these polarities. Rather than finding the imagery of the middle landscape of American fiction, what appears in *Roughing It in the Bush* are rhapsodic perceptions of a vast, sublime nature and an acutely painful awareness of a constricted, lonely, and unsatisfying social life on the frontier. Though there are moments when Mrs. Moodie expresses a love for her forest home, she draws her picture of life in the backwoods of Canada to reveal those "secrets of the prison-house" (RIB 237) that might prevent others from following her to North America.

In French-Canadian literature the opposition of nature and civilization, wilderness and the urban, are perhaps even more pronounced, the middle landscape more constrained than that of English-Canadian fiction. Louis Hemon's *Maria Chapdelaine*¹⁴ (1914), probably the most translated of French-Canadian novels concerned with the myth of the land, provides a preliminary insight into the non-English garden. The book's heroine, Maria Chapdelaine, lives with her family on the last of several bush farms her father has cleared during his lifetime in Quebec. Maria falls in love with Francois Paradis (French Paradise?), a spiritual descendant of the *coureur de bois*, whose life of sometimes illicit and always manly adventure in the bush stands in sharp contrast to the habitant's round of toil on the Quebec farm.

When Francois dies in a wilderness snowstorm while trying to reach Maria for a Christmas visit, the girl's chance for a romantic marriage comes to an abrupt end. Now she must choose to marry either Lorenzo Surprenant (whose name connotes the awe and surprise of the foreign), a man who has abandoned rural life for the more lucrative lure of the U.S. city, or Eutrope Gagnon (*The Good Life?*), a neighboring French-Canadian farmer who offers Maria a future much like her past. Maria meditates on her choices, responding to inner voices that assert the values of the land and its seasonal regeneration, the sweetness of her own language and the familiarity of Quebec place names, the traditional, familial concerns of woman—all of which are subsumed by the “voice of Quebec” that comes to her “with the sound of a church bell” (MC 159). Maria chooses to marry Eutrope Gagnon, to continue a rural life that mythically links the land to religiosity and ethnic preservation.

While the novel finds its focus in the real and mythic agricultural life of frontier Quebec, the characters inhabiting this setting are motivated by a quest for an ever elusive paradise. Maria, of course, had hoped to find the mythical Eden in a marriage to her own Paradis, Francois, but that wilderness which promised paradisaical delights kills her hopes and later appears to leap “toward her in menace, its inscrutable face concealing a hundred dreadful secrets which called aloud to her in lamentable voices” (MC 95). The austerity of this cold wild country lends appeal to Lorenzo Surprenant's courtship and his promise of a life in the city with its “never-ending spectacle of fine straight streets flooded with light at evening” (MC 113). Thinking of her future with Lorenzo in the States, Maria speculates, “A paradise surely it must be, this country to the south where March is no longer winter and in April the leaves are green!” (MC 117). Samuel Chapdelaine, Maria's father, has a passion for the making of land, the clearing rather than the tilling of the soil: “Five times since boyhood had he taken up wild land, built a house, a stable, and a barn, wrested from the unbroken forest a comfortable farm; and five times he had sold out to begin all over again further north, suddenly losing interest; energy and ambition vanishing once the first rough work was done, when the neighbours appeared and the countryside began to be opened up and inherited” (MC 23). Once Samuel has “made land,” created an agricultural middle landscape of sorts, he begins to “hunger and thirst” (MC 152) for some spot far removed from community. Instead of finding his paradise in the middle landscape of his creation, he detests the farm, “the fields, the fences, over to the rocky knoll that shuts us in” (MC 152).

The agricultural middle landscape, the Quebec garden, once located is too constraining, too tight in its embrace for men like Maria's father, but not for her mother who looks back to her life in “the older parishes where the land has long been cleared and cultivated, and where the houses are neighbourly—her lost paradise” (MC 22). When

Maria decides to marry Eutrope Gagnon after her mother's death, she chooses a complex of values that posits paradise beyond this life on earth. The priest had earlier advised her to quit her mourning for Francois Paradis, saying "The duty of a girl like you—good-looking, healthy, active withal and a clever housewife—is in the first place to help her old parents, and in good time to marry and bring up a Christian family of her own" (MC 103). Lorenzo Surprenant has described this life as one of slavery, where the land, the seasons, the crops, even the cattle are masters the farmer must serve. For Maria, it will be a life of isolation, hard toil and childbearing, "about her only the wilderness, the great pitiless forest, and to hold in the midst of it all an ordered way of life, the gentleness and the joyousness which are the fruits of many a century sheltered from such rudeness—was it surely a hard thing and a worthy?" (MC 154). Her answer is yes, even though the recompense for it is "after death, a little word of praise" (MC 154).

While paradise or the garden is never attained, even momentarily, in this life—and certainly there is little of the kind of psychic balance or androgynous harmony that characterizes the American middle landscape in *Maria Chapdelaine*—what does emerge is a sense of constraint and containment that both attracts and repels its characters. Francois Paradis is not a middle landscape figure but a trapper and woodsman who has "lived his life with other men, in a hard give and take, among the wild forests and on the snowy plains" (MC 57). Although Maria is attractive enough to make him promise to give up drinking and swearing, to save his money and return to her, it is Francois himself who is her paradise and not his adventurous way of life. Samuel Chapdelaine, as was noted earlier, may create a middle landscape but he resists living in it, longs to break free, to escape to create other potential Edens in the northern forests. Lorenzo Surprenant rejects the rural life completely. Only Eutrope might be said to accept and welcome the life of a bush farmer, but for him, and for Maria, it will only be life "on another half-cleared farm" (MC 121) and not entry into Eden. The male characters tend to move ever outward from the middle landscape toward wild country or the city, while the female characters live, and fantasize, within a constrained and static space.

With the exception of a romantic excursion to the blueberry patch with Francois, most scenes centering on Maria take place within an enclosed area, usually the house. The narrator tells us "the women of the Chapdelaine household had no part in the work of the fields" (MC 61), confining their energies to cooking, washing, and mending within the home, milking the three cows and caring for the hens in the barnyard. The weekly baking is done "twenty paces from the house" (MC 63) in a clay oven before which Maria passes her night vigil over the baking bread with dreams of Francois. The reader is told, however, that "simple they were, these thoughts of hers, and never did they travel far afield" (MC 63). This pattern of images of containment and radiating lines of flight sometimes bear sexual connotations in the middle land-

scapes of Canadian fiction. They also signal a psychosexual polarization of characters within the garden itself, imaged blatantly in works by Frederick Philip Grove, Sinclair Ross, Margaret Laurence, Alice Munro.

In *A Search for America*¹⁵ (1927) Grove openly questions the American promise of the garden or pastoral ideal. The protagonist of this semi-autobiographical novel, Phil Branden, comes to the North American continent with expectations that a sublime nature, replete with awesome natural monuments, will provide fertile soil for a great society, a promised land for the immigrant. Branden soon loses his innocence in Toronto where he is introduced to the petty graft and corruption that pervade his life as a waiter in a lower class restaurant. After a series of jobs that take him from Toronto to New York and the East coast, the narrator acknowledges that his young hero is suffering from a “geographical illusion” that gives a specific, American location to the pastoral ideal. But the illusion persists as Branden moves ever westward in quest of some real and spiritual ground that will lend his life definition, provide that necessary correspondence between self and world that informs the pastoral experience and lies at the heart of the mythic American garden.

Much of the American landscape for Grove is a garden of ashes, “an incomprehensible world” (SFA 193) whose lush greenness is marred by a smoke-blackened industrial landscape, whose promise harbors graft, cruelty and failure. Grove’s character/persona continues his search, however, tramping through the valleys of Appalachia, a young, passionate man who loves the countryside as he would a bride, “full of desires, seeking all things, accepting them, craving fulfillment of higher destinies” (SFA 238). Although his attachment to nature dominates much of the record of his trek west, Grove gives equal weight to that opposing field of force, the machine, powerfully imaged in the trainrides Branden takes on his way to find work on farms and in small towns of the middle west. The last leg of his journey to America’s agricultural heartland is spent “riding the rails,” an experience described as a kind of purgatory that leads the narrator to this realization:

It is characteristic of my essential youth at the time that I still believed a solution of the problems of the world to be possible of attainment through such a process as a recasting of values—in other words, through theories and the erection of ideals. It is also characteristic of the eternal egotism of youth that I should have felt myself to be chosen as the one to effect this revaluation of the values of life. *Ideals are the playthings of immature minds.* (SFA 342, my italics)

This insight, one which might be said to characterize the Canadian attitude toward the American pastoral ideal, is followed by Branden’s encounter with the reality of an immense American “garden,” the

Mackenzie farm—20,000 to 30,000 acres inherited and managed by a pleasant-faced “boy” who lives with his mother. Branden’s idealism undergoes a further dismantling as he confronts the image of this massive middle landscape, an unearned property whose presence causes Grove’s hero to feel “as if some uncomfortable facts, some disquieting realities were obtruded upon me, at variance with my last night’s mood” (SFA 345).

In the midwestern garden Branden continues to find the corruption and short shrift he experienced in the city, though in lesser measure. Eventually he recognizes that the ideal America is a province of the mind “to be realized in partial victories” (SFA 382). It is a recognition Grove shares as he remarks in a footnote, “I have since come to the conclusion that the ideal as I saw and still see it has been abandoned by the U.S.A. That is one reason why I became and remained a Canadian” (SFA 382).

Grove’s novel reveals a keen insight into the ironies of American culture, the play of the myth and the reality of the American garden. His book ends with a rejection of the geographic America as a promised land, a garden that will meet the immigrant’s expectations of a materially abundant life in a just and equalitarian society. But if Grove, like others, had expectations that went unmet by the reality of the American experience, his prairie novels set in Canada portray a continued, frustrated search for the values of the middle landscape ideal he attributed to America. *Settlers of the Marsh*, *Our Daily Bread*, *The Yoke of Life*, and *Fruits of the Earth* reveal an agricultural landscape beset with generational and sexual conflict, as fathers and sons, men and women, are divided against each other.

*Settlers of the Marsh*¹⁶ (1925) is both fairly representative of Grove’s prairie novels and important for what it reveals of those values and attitudes that cluster around so many of the middle landscapes of Canadian fiction. In this novel, Niels Lindstedt, a young Swedish immigrant, dreams of “making land,” living with a wife on a homestead wrested from the Manitoba wilderness. Even though Niels clears his land and gradually builds a prosperous farm, his vision of fulfillment, the dream of “a place of my own, with a comfortable house, with a living room and a roaring fire in the stove, and a good, bright lamp burning overhead, of an evening . . . sitting with a woman, my wife in the light of that lamp when the nightly chores were done; and we were listening to the children’s feet on the floor above as they went to bed; and we were looking and smiling at each other” (SM 104) is never achieved within the book. Naive and sexually inexperienced, Niels falls in love with Ellen whose neurotic fear of sex stems from watching her parents’ relationship during her childhood on the frontier. Having seen her mother turn to heavy manual labor to induce miscarriages only to have her father force himself on her, unwanted, with “vile, jesting, jocular urgency” (SM 112) during nights in the crowded cabin, Ellen has vowed not to relive her mother’s life. Even though she loves

Niels, and would live with him as a "sister," she will not be his or any other man's wife. Wounded by Ellen's initial rebuffs, Niels' house and land grow distasteful to him. When Sigurdson, an older neighbor dies, Niels questions the "dumb shifting of forces" (SM 101) that makes his environment and shapes his role, asking "He, Niels, a workman in God's garden? Who was God anyway?" (SM 102).

But the ideal, or need for it, persists only to be betrayed by Niels' sexual desires, a lust he is unprepared to understand or permit in himself, coupled with a naivete that leads to disaster. When Clara Vogel, a widow who later becomes the district whore, makes advances, Niels succumbs sexually only to follow the act by asking Clara to marry him. The ensuing years transform Niels into an angry, alienated, maddened man living a married life that consists of his sexual isolation and guilt and Clara's separate commitment to vengeance and her dissolution. Even the ending of the book can offer no more than a vague, distended promise of a harmonious relationship in the middle landscape, as Niels, having returned from prison where he has served ten years for killing Clara, visits an older and wiser Ellen. By this time Niels is quite ready to enter into "brotherhood" with Ellen simply to avoid losing her as an emotional force in his life. As they walk toward their old trysting place, "that natural bower in the fringe of the bush" (SM 214), Niels feels "incomprehensible waves of feeling pass to and fro between them: things too delicate for words: things somehow full of joy and disquieting though not unpleasurable expectation" (SM 215) as "light-green, virgin, the bush rears all about" (SM 215). Ellen, now middle-aged and aware that she has lived "under the shadow of my mother's life" (SM 217), wants to fulfill "destiny and my greatest need to have children . . ." (SM 217). The book closes as Niels and Ellen "an hour or so later . . . rise and walk home through the dusk" (SM 217). We are told "their lips have not touched" but "their arms rest in each other; their fingers are intertwined" and "as they go, a vision arises between them shared by both" (SM 217). Even though the book lapses into sentimental pastoral at its end, the dominant, believable passages are those that capture the pervading experience of alienation from the sexual element within the self and between the masculine and feminine characters. Grove emerges with some feeble semblance of the ideal, but it is not realized within the novel, only projected into some unachieved realm beyond it.

Another prairie novel, Sinclair Ross' *As For Me and My House*¹⁷ (1941), is a study of the relationship of a small town minister and his wife living in the prairie town of Horizon during the thirties. Though the town's name implies the boundaries and the boundlessness of their perceived space, it is populated by narrow, petty people, a locus of constraint and alienation that permeates the lives of Mrs. Bentley and her husband Philip, both of whom had earlier dreamed of careers as artists. Not only are their ambitions thwarted, but their love is stifled by the endless frustrations of poverty, dreary parsonages, Mrs. Bent-

ley's inability to bear children, her possessiveness and inability to possess Philip. Alienated from his wife, Philip engages in a guilt-ridden affair with Judith West who subsequently gives birth to his child. As the novel ends, the Bentleys have adopted Judith's and Philip's baby, are leaving Horizon and the ministry, hopeful of a new life. Images of the garden, the constricting force of the town, the tight containment and isolation within the house are woven into this simple narrative line of the novel to describe again the distinct and now familiar oppositions of Canadian pastoral.

Though the Bentleys share the same "small, squat, grayish" (AFM 13) parsonage, Philip keeps to his study where he writes and sketches. Mrs. Bentley, remembering times when "the silences were less strained, the study door between us less implacable" (AFM 14), wishes she "could reach him, but it's like the wilderness outside of night and sky and prairie, with this one little spot of Horizon hung up lost in its immensity" (AFM 25). Philip is her horizon, always beyond her reach, never within the defining compass of her ideal for their relationship. He, too, reaches, but beyond her and himself toward some form of separate fulfillment. Lonely, alienated from the town, cut off from Philip, Mrs. Bentley decides to have a garden, even though she knows "the way the wind keeps on, and all the signs for drought, it isn't likely anything will grow . . ." (AFM 43).

She "makes" a garden to make herself "straight again" (AFM 44), to escape the morbidity and depression of the wind's rattling against the house, a reminder that she cannot possess Philip, or have a child, or enter into the life of the town. As she contemplates seed packets in a store display, her mind goes back to an earlier garden, made the year after their first child died stillborn, a "dark, clenched year" (AFM 44) for Philip. That garden brought her closer to her husband: "That was why I had the garden, because when the dust was blowing, when the sun burned, and my arms were sore and tired, then it seemed that I was sharing in his struggle too. Somehow it brought me nearer to him, made me feel I mattered" (AFM 44). In the making of this later garden, her problem is to get Philip to do the digging, a task she cannot take on as a lady and a minister's wife in a town whose notions of propriety rest on rigidly defined sexual roles. Two days later, Mrs. Bentley records in her journal, "It's dug" (AFM 45). Watching Philip through the window as he turns up the soil, she euphemistically observes, "he has the build and stride for out-of-doors" though "in these little rooms I seldom see him" (AFM 45). The sight gives way to her wish that "I had a garden for him every day, or a horse to ride, and a hat and chaps like Paul's" (AFM 45), her friend the school teacher and philologist. The Bentleys, characteristically, do not work the garden together. When Philip goes off to the country with Steve, a young boy they want to adopt, Mrs. Bentley feigns a headache to stay home and put in the garden by herself.

As was expected, the garden falls victim to drought, the poppies

and nasturtiums dry up, not even the weeds will grow in this emblem of the Bentley's dessicated relationship. The couple's inner and outer landscapes have a low yield: Philip remains in his study where he writes a failed novel; Mrs. Bentley's peas and radishes eventually come up only to be covered with dust, the beans sprout amidst a wind "dry and deadly like the current of heat that rises from the fire" (AFM 67). The garden's only purpose becomes that of an object to "thresh out against" to "keep from smothering" (AFM 90). Finally, even that outlet lies "bare, inert, impaled by the rays of the sun and left to die" (AFM 90).

As a necessary alternative to her failed garden, Mrs. Bentley often walks along the railroad tracks that lead to the prairie, excursions that provide a momentary escape from the confines of the house, the constraints of the community. Though during the day she may walk along the rails far into the prairie, she does not leave the safe, somehow civilized ground of the tracks; her night journeys evoke fear even within these confines. The hostile void of the surrounding wilderness and her own inner sexual landscapes imaged by her wolf hound, El Greco, whose howls at the moon and eyes, "green and shining like a wolf's" (AFM 128), provoke a feeling of "skulking, primeval terror" (AFM 128) that sends her scurrying toward the safety and enclosure of the house. On one such venture into the dark, she and the dog walk as far as the last grain elevator where they watch the train pull out. There Mrs. Bentley feels "the wilderness ahead of night and rain" as the engine leaves "a smell of smoke and distance" (AFM 131) reminiscent of Philip's move away from her and their mutual past (which included the sharing of an evening pipe), toward Judith (whose surname, conveniently, is West), and unto himself. The train has had a similar attraction and connotation for Judith and for Philip during their youth in the small towns and farms of the prairie. Then the train was emblematic of Philip's quest, reminding him "somewhere, potential, unknown, there was another world; and every day the train sped into it, and every day he watched it, hungered, went on dreaming" (AFM 29). Just as the Bentleys do not make their garden together, neither do they share walks along these rails which promise escape from the constricted world of the prairie community.

When the Bentleys vacation at a ranch, a middle landscape replete with at least one androgynous figure, the two remain sexually isolated. Mrs. Bentley sleeps in the house in a "small and stuffy" room decorated "with pictures on the walls of pure-bred bulls and stallions" (AFM 95). The men take to the tent. Laura, the rancher's wife, who has a "mannish verve about her" coupled with a "kind of glamour: and the still "slim and supple" (AFM 93) body of a girl, is avoided by her husband and seemingly prefers to spend her time with Mrs. Bentley. Preferring the company of men to that of women, Mrs. Bentley goes to join them in the tent, but after watching the men from the darkness she leaves to walk along the river bank alone. It is a venture

into a real wilderness, "a forbidden country, approaching the lair of the terror that destroyed the hills, that was lurking still among the skulls" (AFM 95). Frightened, she makes "a bolt for the house" where she lies safe if frustrated, the face of a fleshy Hereford on the wall above her. She has "lived in a little town too long" (AFM 99), secure within an enclosed and domestic space, to feel easy with the immensity of the prairie wilderness.

The Bentley's excursion to the ranch and the prairie serves to increase the couple's sexual estrangement once they return to Horizon. Philip works in his study, waiting for his wife "to go to bed and be asleep before he comes" (AFM 113). As they lie awake for hours, "cramped and still, trying not to let the other know," Mrs. Bentley muses, "I have a feeling all the time that rain would help" (AFM 113). When the storm finally breaks, allowing her to "huddle against him a minute" (AFM 117), it is only a prelude to the moment when Mrs. Bentley hears Judith and Philip making love one rainy night in the lean-to shed. As in Grove's *Settlers in the Marsh*, the book ends with a reconciliation and promise of future fulfillment, in this instance signalled by the childlike "vacancy of beginning" (AFM 165) found in Philip's eyes. But there is ambiguity even here as to the nature of the couple's future relationship. Mrs. Bentley has named their adopted child, born of Judith West (who died immediately after giving birth), Philip. "Another Philip?" queries her husband. "Sometimes you won't know which of us is which" (AFM 165). Inwardly, Mrs. Bentley responds "I want it so" (AFM 165), indication enough of her continuing confusion of roles, her need to be a mother to her husband and to make a husband of her child.

The opposition of nature and civilization with its accompanying sexual polarity within the garden appears again in Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel*¹⁸ (1964), one of the Manawakan Garden series. Hagar, the narrator and central character who looks back on her life from the age of ninety, begins her story by recalling the cemetery above the town where her mother's grave lies, marked by an imported marble angel "with sightless eyes" (SA 3). It is a fit image. Hagar is herself "sightless," blinded by a pride that has all her life prevented the giving and receiving of affection, the revelation of self. When she walked the cemetery's ordered paths as a girl, "imagining life had been created only to celebrate tidiness" (SA 5), she sometimes caught the "faint musky dust-tinged smell of things that grew untended and had grown always, before the portly peonies and angels with rigid wings, when the prairie bluffs were walked through only by Cree with enigmatic faces and greasy hair" (SA 5). Her inner landscape embraces these unreconciled oppositions of the wild and the civilized, masculine and feminine.

Hagar, her mother dead at her birth, identifies with her father, a man who would discipline her to his sense of order and propriety but for his admiration of her willfulness. In defiance of her father, but

also out of attraction to his wild qualities, she marries Bram Shipley, a frontier farmer who “looked like a bearded Indian. . . . The black hair thrusting from his chin was rough as thistles” (SA 45). Hagar never reconciles with her father after going to live on the Shipley farm. At her father’s death, he wills a “certain sum to pay for care of the family plot, in perpetuity, so his soul need never peer down from the elegant halls of eternity and be offended by cowslips spawning on his grave” (SA 63). Nothing is left to Hagar. Instead, the balance of her father’s money goes to the town, an affirmation of its order and civility just as it is a rejection of her wild rebelliousness. The old man’s money creates Currie Memorial Park: uprooting scrub oak, mowing couchgrass, and supplanting cowslips, “nearly circular beds of petunias proclaimed my father’s immortality in mauve and pink frilled petals” (AS 64). Even at ninety, Hagar says, “I detest petunias” (AS 64).

But if her independent nature compelled her to marry Bram, a man who had “been seen with half-breed girls” (SA 47) and is himself half savage, once married her genteel unbringing, her preference for civility cantankerously asserts itself. Hagar identifies these oppositions as the source of her attraction to Bram, noting “we’d each married for those qualities we later found we couldn’t bear, he for my manners and speech, I for his flouting of them” (SA 79-80). Within the Manawaka middle landscape of Bram’s run-down farm, Hagar and Bram are alienated from each other by Hagar’s pride. When they shared the marriage bed, Hagar “made certain that the trembling was all inner” (SA 81), ashamed to acknowledge her response to his lovemaking, keeping her “pride intact, like some maidenhead” (SA 81), unbreachable. Only in old age, long after Bram’s death and with the vision of hindsight, does she recognize and acknowledge their love for each other.

Eventually Hagar leaves Bram, the Shipley farm, the marble angel that guards “the gardens of snow, the empty places and the deeplying dead” (SA 142), taking her younger son John with her to the West coast where she works as a housekeeper for a Mr. Oatley. There, she and John are given the “run of the garden,” its well kept lawns “like green ballrooms, tended with loving precision by an old Japanese gardener” (SA 156), recalling the order of the cemetery and Currie Memorial Park. Life in the garden in the company of one’s son has its limitations, however. Hagar does not care to dwell on the thought of John’s emerging sexuality, even though she overhears him making love to a girlfriend in Mr. Oatley’s garden. Her own nights are often sleepless, requiring sedatives to seal off her sexual urges, “to blot away the image of Bram’s heavy manhood” (SA 160).

Although the Stone Angel is rampant with garden imagery, these images are re-experienced through memory and within the confines of a house whose furnishings and bric-a-brac evoke Hagar’s past. When Hagar’s older son, Marvin, decides he must put her in a nursing home, she willfully runs away to a park at Shadow Point. There Hagar enters

the obvious, chequered ground of pastoral: "sun and shadow mingle here, making the forest mottled, changing dark and light" (SA 151). The park is reverting to a wilderness, its stair banisters half-rotted away, the steps overgrown with ferns. As Hagar passes through, "bushes of goatsbeard brush satyr-like against me" (SA 151). Even at Shadow Point, however, Hagar spends little time in the actual grounds of the park, retiring instead to one of the gray outbuildings, an unpainted place that reminds her of the Shipley farmhouse. At Shadow Point she revisits Manawaka and Bram through reminiscence, relives her husband's death and her inability to communicate with him or with their son, grows aware of her resistance to love at the moment it is given. Finally, after being found by her son and hospitalized, she awaits death within the confines of a ward that also houses Mrs. Jardine, a warm, talkative patient who leads Hagar to a greater self understanding. Although Hagar at last attains the illumination of the pastoral moment, realizing that "pride was my wilderness, and the demon that led me there was fear" (SA 292), all of her "gardens" (including Mrs. Jardine) are revisited within the confines of the containing images of the house, the outbuilding, the hospital.

This image of the garden contained by emblems of civilization re-occurs frequently in Canadian fiction. Hugh McLennan's *Barometer Rising*, set in Halifax, Nova Scotia, provides an excellent example of this phenomenon in its image of Jim and Mary Fraser's house, Prince's Lodge. The Fraser home not only contains the imagery of the wild garden, but it houses Jenny, a child whose destiny McLennan ties to the emergence of a new Canadian identity after the Halifax explosion and World War I. Hugh Hood's *The Swing in the Garden* locates the garden of childhood within the confines of Toronto, an encompassing urban space which includes not only the Edenic backyard play area of childhood but, through the narrator's pendulum or "swinging" movement through time and space, the wilds of Lake Simcoe and the Toronto Islands. The image of the contained garden appears again, with quite different connotations, in Carol Shields' *The Box Garden*, a clear satire of the American myth of the garden.

Alice Munro's collection of short stories, *The Dance of the Happy Shades*¹⁹ (1968), contains those same unmediated oppositions of masculine and feminine, wilderness and civilization found in the preceding literature. Set in Ontario, the stories "Walker Brother's Cowboy," "Images," and "Boys and Girls" share a common narrator and setting (as does Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*), focusing on a young girl's excursions into the rural or wild environment in the company of her father and the constraint she experiences within the world of the house dominated by her mother.

In "Walker Brother's Cowboy," the girl's father, Ben Jordan, often walks with his daughter to a lakeshore park after supper, outings that are not at all like her walks to the grocery store with her mother, irksome jaunts that require hair curling, bows, scrubbed knees, clean

socks—an adherence to the conventions of proper appearance. By contrast, excursions with the father connote unkempt adventure and flight from conventionality and the enclosed, feminine sphere of the mother and the house into the outer, masculine regions of the country and the bush.

When Mrs. Jordan, who “has headaches” (DHS 6), declines an invitation to go riding in the country with her husband while he peddles liniments and spices for Walker Brothers, Ben takes his daughter and son instead. The business trip through the scorched and empty farmlands of Ontario is eventually forsaken as Mr. Jordan leaves his sales territory to pay a surprise visit to an old flame, Nora, a vibrant, earthy woman whom Ben might have married. His visit to Nora is a trip to a past that figures some former self, a past whose contours his daughter can only wonder over as she watches her father drink whiskey (something her mother says he never does), reminisce, joke and sing with his former sweetheart. Nora turns on the gramophone, recalling that Ben was once a great dancer, and offers to show his daughter how to dance. As the two whirl “round and round the linoleum, me proud, intent, Nora laughing and moving with great buoyancy, wrapping me in her strange gaiety, her smell of whisky, cologne, and sweat” (DHS 16), Nora lets go of the girl to ask the father to dance. But Ben declines to enter the dance and soon departs for home. On the drive back to town, the girl feels her “father’s life flowing back from our car in the last of the afternoon, darkening and turning strange, like a landscape that has enchantment on it, making it kindly, ordinary and familiar while you are looking at it, but changing it once your back is turned into something you will never know, with all kinds of weathers, and distances you cannot imagine” (DHS 18).

While the middle landscape of the Ontario countryside may contain a sexual charge in the character of Nora, it holds no promise of consummation, of psychic balance or androgynous harmony. Instead, Nora will remain on the farm where she lives an isolated (and unmarried) life with her blind, aging mother. Ben will return to the town and the confines of his marriage, the unreconciled dualism of outer and inner environments, masculine and feminine territories.

In “Images,” the girl goes with her father to look at the traps he has set in the bush. It is a venture into a sometimes terrifying masculine province. The father, though ready with “jokes and courtesies,” has an alternate expression, imaged in the “dogged and uncompromising” look of his boots, the “counterpart of his face” (DHS 36), reflecting the brutality of his life as a woodsman and trapper. The father’s alternate nature does not surprise the girl, though, nor is she afraid. His world is one she cannot know but accepts, remarking “my father came back to us always, to my mother and me, from places where our judgment could not follow” (DHS 36). A later emblem of Ben Jordan’s brutality, the skinning knife with “its slim bright blade,” finds its correspondence in the wild landscape, “the Wawanash River,

which was high, running full, silver in the middle where the sun hit it and where it arrowed in to its swiftest motion" (DHS 36).

The bush surrounding their farm is hostile, inhabited by a half-crazy hermit, Joe, whom the girl spies as he stealthily approaches her father, axe in hand, mistaking Ben for a neighbor he believes is trying to burn him out. Eventually the paranoid old man recognizes Ben Jordan and invites him to his cellar home, an earthen-floored dwelling stale with the heavy air of coal oil and urine. It is a male enclosure, quite unlike the Jordan home which is dominated by the antiseptic order of Mary McQuade, the nurse who is tending the girl's ill mother. The child falls asleep and is carried home by her father, awakening, as he sets her down at the top of the hill near their farm, to see the basin of the Wawanash River, eventually to recognize their house, strange at first because approached from the side that "nobody saw in winter, the front door that went unopened from November to April and was still stuffed with rags around its edges to keep out the west wind" (DHS 42). When the girl returns to the house, "dazed and powerful with secrets" (DHS 43), it is as an initiate to a masculine region of brutality and terror, the dark side of her father's nature mirrored in the very landscape of the bush they have traversed, a journey permitted her only by the asexuality of childhood.

Munro's stories depict a child's world defined by the unreconciled polarities of an exterior, wild environment connoting adventure, freedom, brutality and the masculine and the contained, ordered interior space of the house with its associations of conventionality, restriction and the feminine. The house itself is an enclosure Munro's characters in most instances would escape. In "The Peace of Utrecht," a now-grown Helen Jordan visits her sister, Maddy, after their mother's death. Maddy, the sister who has tended their invalid mother, never married, never left home, is not able to escape the confines of her mother's house, to take possession of her own life. In "The Office," Helen searches for a space where she can write, create an identity unconnected with her usual role of wife and mother. While "a house is all right for a man to work in" (DHS 60), Munro's character remarks, it is not the same for a woman. "She *is* the house; there is no separation possible" (DHS 60).

In "Boys and Girls" the child narrator must choose between the outer domain of the father and the interior, domestic space of the mother to assert her values and her emerging sexual identity. As children, Munro's narrator tells us, "we were afraid of inside, the room where we slept" (DHS 113). Although the winter wind might harass the house with its "old bugbear chorus of threats and misery" (DHS 112), the children's unfinished attic room with its imagined bats and skeletons evokes fears the outer world can not. The fear of the inside resonates in the girl's attitude toward her mother, the house and her own femininity. The mother is the girl's "enemy," an unfathomable creature who "was not to be trusted" (DHS 117), always plotting ways

to keep her in the house “although she knew I hated it (*because she knew I hated it*) and keep me from working for my father” (DHS 118). To be inside the house is to be female, to have a clear-cut sexual identity that would prevent access to that outer, masculine domain of freedom and adventure allowed by the asexuality of childhood. But in winter the house becomes not only a feminine but a masculine region.

In the weeks before Christmas Ben Jordan pelts foxes in the basement of the house, an operation her mother detests and wishes took place elsewhere. “The strong primitive odor of the fox” penetrates the house, “reassuringly seasonal, like the smell of oranges and pine needles” (DHS 112). Seemingly mindless of the killing going on down in the basement, the young girl shivers in her bed at thoughts of her own death as she sings “Danny Boy” in the dark of her room and tells her brother stories of her imagined adventures riding horseback and shooting rabid wolves.

The foxes, who elicit little empathy from the girl since they are not only ferocious but usually nameless, are fed horsemeat. Horses would sometimes be kept alive until the meat was needed and in the interval the children would become attached to them. One spring, the girl and her brother watch through a knothole in the barn while her father and the hired man shoot Mack, an old black workhorse who has pulled the cutter to town in harness with Flora, a skittish mare. The shooting of the horse fills the girl with shame and “a new wariness, a sense of holding-off, in my attitude to my father and his work” (DHS 124). Two weeks later, when it is time for Flora to be shot, the girl allows her to escape, swinging wide the gate to the road in defiance of her father’s shouts to shut it. As the men (and her little brother) go after the horse in the truck, the girl realizes she has alienated herself from her father’s world by her response to the wild-eyed sorrel mare. She has made the only choice she can make: to be “only a girl” (DHS 127), a designation she can not protest because “maybe it was true” (DHS 127). The tensions between inner and outer space, masculine and feminine, bush and house, are never clearly resolved in Munro’s stories, despite the girl’s reluctant acceptance of her sexual identity.

In “The Shining Houses,” Munro delineates the nature of this conflict in values and the character of the Canadian garden its resolution necessarily entails. Here, Mrs. Fullerton, an elderly woman who sells eggs, connotes both the feminine containment of the house and the alluring disorder of the wilderness. Mrs. Fullerton, an independent, courageous woman who stoutly refuses to grow old, lives alone (her younger second husband having walked off one day) in her ramshackle house, resolutely contending “husbands maybe come and go, but a place you’ve lived fifty years is something else” (DHS 21). When Mary, a young housewife who lives in the surrounding suburb of Garden Place, visits Mrs. Fullerton, she finds leaving the place like “passing through barricades” (DHS 22):

The house and its surroundings were so self-sufficient, with

their complicated and seemingly unalterable layout of vegetables and flower beds, apple and cherry trees, wired chicken-run, berry patch and wooden walks, woodpile, a great many roughly built dark little sheds, for hens or rabbits or a goat. Here was no open or straightforward plan, no order that an outsider could understand; yet what was haphazard time had made final. The place had become fixed, impregnable, all its accumulations necessary, until it seemed that even the washtubs, mops, couch springs and stacks of old police magazines on the back porch were there to stay." (DHS 22)

Mrs. Fullerton's house was once in the country but now it is surrounded by Garden Place, a subdivision with streets named for wild flowers, its earth raw beside the road, its ditches crossed by planks that lead toward the "new, white and shining houses" (DHS 23) of the young married couples who live there. Beneath this raw new city, there remains the structure of an "old wilderness city that had lain on the side of the mountain" (DHS 24), its houses separated by "uncut forest and a jungle of wild blackberry and salmonberry bushes . . ." (DHS 24). The stark order of Garden Place is dotted with surviving houses from this wild city, "expressing something like savagery in their disorder—the steep unmatched angles of roofs and lean-tos; not possible on these streets, but there" (DHS 24).

Mary would preserve this remnant of the savage and wild, imaged as Mrs. Fullerton's house contained within the order of Garden Place, but her neighbors feel it is an eyesore and intend to have it torn down. The young woman's values are clearly located in the oppositions of wilderness and the containment of its savagery in the rambling old house rather than in the geometrical order of the ersatz garden of suburbia. The story ends but is not resolved as Mary leaves a neighbor's party after refusing to sign a petition to have a lane put through Mrs. Fullerton's property. As she walks down the street it is dark, the white houses grow dim, and "the pattern of Garden Place, so assertive in the daytime, seemed to shrink at night into the raw black mountainside" (DHS 29). Munro's character wishes for preservation of a past that allowed coexistence of the opposing values of wilderness and community, bush and house, values allowed no place in the new Garden Place, but acknowledges "there is nothing you can do at present but put your hands in your pockets and keep a disaffected heart" (DHS 29).

This brief excursion into the fictive gardens of Canadian literature, while preliminary to a larger work encompassing non-literary artifacts, reveals an underlying contrast in Canadian and American attitudes toward that myth which has shaped so much of the American experience of the continent. Canadian prairie fiction, while often viewed by Canadians as a regional genre, embodies much that is common to Canadian pastoral of whatever region, and recapitulates the configurations of a larger cultural reality which are described in Frye's

theory of the garrison mentality. To a great extent, the Prairie, even today, images the experience typical of earlier, eastern settlement in Canada. A major text on Canadian regional geography reiterates a central theme of Canadian pastoral, noting that "Isolation is the outstanding characteristic of the Prairie region."²⁰ Separated from the eastern heartland by the sparsely settled Canadian Shield, cut off from the Pacific region by mountain barriers, politically isolated from similar landscapes to the south, enclosed by the climatically inhospitable non-agricultural forests to the north, the Prairie, real or fictive, mirrors a larger ecology of the Canadian imagination and historical/environmental experience.

The correspondence occurs on a political and economic level as well. The governments of the prairie provinces have been, until recently, subservient to the needs and power focussed in Ontario, dependent upon the industrial activity of the central provinces of Ontario and Quebec. During the 1930s the economic, political and geographical separateness of the Prairie erupted in a denunciation of Ottawa for its failure to retain for Prairie use that income generated by the region, threats of secession that echo recurrently in the interchanges between provincial and national governments during the present era of Prairie prosperity. To some extent, the Prairie has had a "colonial" relationship to Ontario, one that corresponds to the Canadian political position within the British Empire and Commonwealth.

Canadian pastoral fiction captures this delicate interplay between politics and environment, reflects the isolation, dependency, restraint engendered by Canada's political and psychic connection to the mother country and reinforced by the geography and climate of North America. Longstanding cultural subservience and a containing, hostile environment created the peculiar ecology of the Canadian imagination—an imagination whose contours become more apparent when given structure by the conventions of pastoral and compared to that which shaped the gardens of American fiction. Moreover, as compatible as we may appear to be, as similar as we sometimes are on the surface, the Canadian is not an American who simply lives farther north—a fact that often surprises visitors from the States. To a significant extent the Canadian character and national identity have been shaped with a skeptical eye cast at the American model, mythic or otherwise.

The reasons for this may be several. William H. New, in a discussion of the gardens of Emily Montague,²¹ has noted that by the time the English came to settle Canada, the myth of North America as a new world garden had largely lost its force in the European imagination. Certainly the dynamism of the American version of the pastoral ideal issues from that early and intimate association of image and historical moment. Canada, farther north, less inviting in climate and geography to agriculture and settlement, offered less hospitable

ground for pastoral. Perhaps more importantly, Canadians of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, unlike their neighbors to the south, felt little need to look to their environment for national definition. When the Canadians did reach for a separate cultural identity during the twentieth century, they turned to nature as we did—a movement that lent critical reinforcement to regionalism by its careful scrutiny of local environment and its reflection in the literature—but they increasingly rejected the myth of the garden. While Canadian skepticism of the pastoral ideal runs through the early literature as well, later literature clearly satirizes our central myth and makes clear the ambivalence felt toward the values intrinsic to American culture.

My work with Canadian fiction confirms the spatial phenomenology of psychological enclosure versus hostile void described by Frye's garrison interpretation and locates the Canadian garden within a contained, civilized space. It is a pattern repeated by the Canadian environment itself. Canada's major agricultural region outside the Prairie provinces, the Quebec City-Windsor axis, coincides with the areas of densest population, greatest urbanization and industrialization. There, the garden is integrated with the cityscape, a strange mix more urban than typically pastoral, lacking as it does the definition provided by a separate, distinctly urban space and a wilderness frontier common to pastoral landscapes since Vergil. Even the Prairie region, the largest tract of agricultural land in Canada and the country's major source of petroleum and natural gas, "constitutes, despite its diffuseness, the secondary Canadian focus in population and market (next to the southern Ontario-southern Quebec area)."²² In the actual Canadian landscape, the garden is often curiously urban, industrial, comparatively densely populated, enclosed by wilderness rather than abutting an undeveloped western frontier and eastern cityscape.

Just as Canada has by comparison with the United States only a small amount of land suited by soil and climate to agriculture, so, too, is there little of what Americans consider a "middle landscape experience" in the Canadian literary garden. Unlike American literature, Canadian pastoral is not dominated by the image of land-as-woman, an accessible, easily ravaged space. Instead, in Canadian pastoral the feminine is figured frequently by the more tightly contained image of the clearing, the house, the community. It is a literature whose characters are bound both by environment and sharply defined sexual roles that defy the androgynous harmony pervading the middle landscapes of American fiction. If the American experience of the continent is defined by the myth of the garden, the harmonious return to an Eden characterized by androgyny and/or psychic balance, Canadian fiction suggests a North American garden that has moved from the imagery of a containing environment to that of a wilderness contained within the walls of its civilized psychic space, a movement that parallels the nation's political experience and evolving encounter with the continent.

While in American literature the middle landscape or pastoral environment resonates with the myth of the harmonious return, whether treated by critics as immature sexual impulse accompanied by frustration, violence and guilt, or as a sought-for-and-believed-to-be-achievable ideal of psychic balance and androgynous harmony, in Canadian literature, whether French or English, another pattern emerges. There the middle landscape or the garden is often depicted as an image of tight containment, an enclosure surrounding an experience of womb-like stasis or a space forbidden, unpossessable. Frequently, the garden as an ideal is rejected, Eden located elsewhere or the garden excluded from the character's experience and the Canadian setting. Characters leave the garden, in its ideal state, as they pass from childhood and, unlike the figures in American pastoral, do not return as adults to find some restorative moment of psychic integration and psychosexual harmony.

The American and Canadian pastoral continuums mirror each other imperfectly. While in the schema drawn from Marx, our urban area is characterized by the masculine, nature by the feminine, and the middle landscape functions as a mediating ground for these polar oppositions, in Canadian literature the community figures as a tightly contained, restraining space that in later literature connotes the civilizing force of feminine constraint imaged by the house. Wilderness, not the machine, is an amoral counterforce that frequently bears masculine associations.²³ The Canadian resolution of these oppositions is less likely to be found in a middle landscape chequered by the lights and shadows of pastoral than figured as a wild garden contained, more or less unmodified, within some emblem of civility. When this resolution is not achieved, the ideal ground of pastoral is excluded, located elsewhere, or peopled with sexual isolates. The oppressive stasis of habitant life or its modern counterpart, the constraints of religion, and the necessity for ethnic and political preservation characterize the French-Canadian middle landscape, making the garden a place to flee as much as an ideal to be sought. Notably, several of the novels considered have been written by women, but then Canadian literature, especially English-Canadian literature, has from its beginnings been dominated by its lady authors, just as American literature has been a pre-eminently male province despite the success of its women writers. Whether it is a novel written by Ross or Munro, however, the images of the house and the garden are remarkably similar, an indication that authorial sexual dominance is not a likely determinant of the Canadian garden's character but rather part of a larger cultural matrix of thought and feeling, heritage and environment.

In many respects, the Canadian experience of pastoral bears close resemblance to Annette Kolodny's interpretation of American pastoral described in *The Lay of the Land*.²⁴ Kolodny locates the tensions of American pastoral in the initial urge to return to and passively merge with the feminine principle figured by the land. Her version of

the American pastoral design describes “a movement back into the realm of the Mother, in order to begin again, and then an attempted (and not always successful) movement out of that containment in order to experience the self as independent, assertive, and sexually active” (LL 153). Kolodny’s emphasis, unlike Marx’s, is not on the attainment of psychic harmony or some androgynous balance between the masculine and the feminine elements of the self. Instead she finds our pastoral literature characterized by a pattern of violent rejection of the maternal but seductive embrace of the land-as-mother, or a ravishing of the virgin continent accompanied by concomitant feelings of guilt. Kolodny’s perjorative interpretation of the myth of the garden as the myth of harmonious return is one to which the annals of Canadian fiction would lend hearty subscription.

One should keep in mind a few important points in comparing Kolodny’s reading of American pastoral to that of Marx. First, Kolodny’s study, rooted in radical feminism, focusses by necessity on the psychosexual polarities of American pastoral rather than its middle ground. More importantly, unlike Marx, Kolodny gives only passing mention to writers of the American Renaissance, working instead with Crèvecoeur, Cooper, Simms, Faulkner—men whose work certainly falls within the canon of American literature, but also writers politically conservative in temperament, if not Anglophilic and/or Southern in voice and disposition, writers certainly significant, but representative of a subcultural strain in our fiction. The fictive gardens Kolodny identifies as American and those found in Canadian literature may well owe their similarity to that critic’s feminist assumptions and her choice of sources which, while important, are secondary to the dominant pattern of American pastoral.

American pastoral partakes of a larger schema that involves the relation of the character’s self to the environment, a relationship frequently necessary in the process of maturation or individuation. If the American hero seeks the harmonious return to the feminine that is both mother and would-be lover, it is often, as Kolodny acknowledges briefly (but does not develop), in order to begin again, to attempt a reordering of the self or to clarify the character’s identity. The movement toward nature allows the character to return not only to the maternal embrace but to touch his or her childhood and in doing so to connect once more with an order perceived in nature that is somehow intimately associated with the early seed of the self.²⁵ Such a pattern appears in works as distant in content, style, genre and time as Thoreau’s *Walden*, Melville’s *Moby Dick*, Cather’s *My Antonia*, Sigurd Olson’s “Farewell to Saganaga,” Charles Olson’s *Maximus Poems IV, V, VI*. It is a persistent and identifying mark of American pastoral and of that broader genre, American nature literature. And in this literature, the hero does not recoil from seduction by the mother or succumb to guilt at ravaging the feminine landscape, but re-experiences the landscapes of childhood erotically and ideally, discov-

ers in the American landscape a mate of his or her psychic dimensions, an "other" that lends order to disorder, provides intimate contact with the natural world, and access, often through memory, to the primal structures of the self. If there is any resolution in our present day pastoral, it is here in the landscape of the psyche. In fact, the very psychic oppositions of American pastoral imply not only the nature of the resolution its characters seek, but the kinds of environment necessary for this process. If the resolution is momentary, if it does not translate into the political arena as an attained Golden Age, it is still intrinsic to the ecology of our imagination.

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notes

1. *Man in the Landscape* (New York, 1967), 98, 108.
2. *The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1975), 3. Hereafter cited as OF.
3. (Berkeley, 1971), 3.
4. (New York, 1964).
5. "Conclusion to a *Literary History of Canada*," *The Bush Garden* (Toronto, 1971), 217.
6. (Vancouver, 1973), ix.
7. *Patterns of Isolation in English Canadian Fiction* (Toronto, 1974).
8. "Images of Prairie Man," *Another Time* (Erin, Ontario, 1977), 50.
9. *Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction* (Edmonton, Alberta, 1977), 72. Hereafter cited as UC.
10. *Writers of the Prairies*, edited by Donald G. Stephens. (Canadian Literature Series. George Woodcock, general editor. Vancouver, British Columbia, 1973), 165-174. Hereafter cited as HP.
11. *Crossing Frontiers: Papers in American and Canadian Western Literature*, edited by Dick Harrison (Edmonton, Alberta, 1979), 73-83. Hereafter cited as FWPF.
12. *The History of Emily Montague* (1769; New Canadian Library. Toronto, 1961). Hereafter cited as HEM.
13. *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852; New Canadian Library. Toronto, 1962). Hereafter cited as RIB.
14. *Maria Chapdelaine* (1814; Laurentian Library. Toronto, 1973). Hereafter cited as MC.
15. *A Search for America* (1927; New Canadian Library. Toronto, 1971). Hereafter cited as SFA.
16. *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925; New Canadian Library. Toronto, 1965). Hereafter cited as SM.
17. *As For Me and My House* (1941; New Canadian Library. Toronto, 1970). Hereafter cited as AFM.
18. *The Stone Angel* (1964; New Canadian Library. Toronto, 1968). Hereafter cited as SA.
19. *Dance of the Happy Shades* (Toronto, 1968). Hereafter cited as DHS.
20. J. Howard Richards, "The Prairie Region," *Canada: A Geographical Interpretation*, edited by John Warkentin (Toronto, 1968), 396.
21. "Frances Brooke's Chequered Gardens," *Canadian Literature*, 52 (Spring 1972), 38.
22. Richards, 396.
23. See Marcia B. Kline's *Beyond the Land Itself: Views of Nature in Canada and the United States* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1970), a fine comparative study of the Canadian and American view of wilderness, for a focussed treatment of the Canadian perception of undeveloped nature as an amoral force.
24. (Chapel Hill, 1975). Hereafter cited as LL.
25. Edith Cobb's study, "The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood," *Daedalus*, 88:3 (Summer 1959), 537-48, provides a fuller delineation of the possible outlines of this relationship between psyche and environment. Cobb's work indicates that there is a period in human development that is crucial to holistic perception in the adult: the "prepubertal, halcyon" years between the ages of six and twelve when the child is capable of an intimate association with nature that provides a biological basis for those later intuitions of universal order that inform adult genius. The pastoral journey found in American imaginative literature corresponds to this movement back into childhood and the values that inform a corresponding order within the self.