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The Pastoral Vision in Cormac McCarthy's *The Orchard Keeper*

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Abstract: *Cormac McCarthy is one of the American contemporary literary figures whose fiction distinguishes American life in the second half of the twentieth century by shedding light on a continual comparison between some concepts like country vs. city, the natural vs. the supernatural, and life vs. death in rural settings controlled by a pastoral mode. This paper demonstrates the significance of pastoralism to modern life and shows how pastoralism embodies meaning and value in McCarthy's The Orchard Keeper (1965). The paper also shows how rural people idealize simplicity, environment, nature, and the earth. It explores how the South's notion of uniqueness is shattered through a depiction of a violated pastoral through analysing relevant excerpts from the novel in the light of critical works. Empirical-analytical and the interpretative methods are going to be employed to highlight various kinds, uses, and definitions of pastoral as a mode or genre in contemporary American fiction, to investigate nature of pastoral vision McCarthy longs to express, and to clarify the relationship between pastoral and natural settings in his novel.*

Key Words: *Cormac McCarthy, The Orchard Keeper, pastoral, rural life vs. civilization.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Throughout his debut gothic and pastoral novel, *The Orchard Keeper* (1965), Cormac McCarthy (1935-) expresses his vision about the relationship between human beings and nature exemplified in American pastoralism. Americans in general celebrate nature and countryside, yet they embrace civilization in its commercialism and materialism to achieve a pastoral Utopia. McCarthy's vision has to be explored through definitions and kinds mentioned in Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (2000).

Apart from its historical trace and literary genres or subgenres, 'pastoral' has multiple, developed, and complex meanings. Cuddon (1998) defines 'pastoral' as "a minor but important mode which, by convention, is concerned with the lives of shepherds" (p. 644). As a mode or a sub-genre, 'pastoral' follows some conventions: rural setting concerned with the lives of shepherds, farmers, and peasants, and the impact of urbanity. Similarly, *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2006) defines 'pastoral' as "a mode with conventional prescriptions about setting, characters and diction[….] It employs stylized properties and idealized Arcadian situations from rural life[…]as a deliberate disguise for the preoccupations of urban, sophisticated people" (p. 168). 'Pastoral' is also full of symbols and superstitions that refer to contemporary society.

The use of 'pastoral', according to William Empson (1974), "was not a bundle of conventional properties, but a particular structural relationship ("putting the complex into the simple") which survived and extended beyond the limits of the formal mode" (Cited in Childs and Fowler, 2006, p.169). The term 'pastoral' implies a vision which is an idealization of the reality of life in the countryside. Such a reality is related to "a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life enhancing return" (Marx, 2000, p. 228). Loneliness, power, and return to nature are among the concepts emphasized via 'pastoral'.

According to Marx (2000), 'pastoral' in its American version has two main kinds: "one that is popular and sentimental, the other imaginative and complex" (p. 5). Marx clarifies the first kind as "an expression less of thought than of feeling. It is widely diffused in our culture, insinuating itself into many kinds of behavior" (p. 5). For example, leaving the city toward the countryside. While the second kind, as Marx sees, is "the pastoral ideal [which] has been used to define the meaning of America ever since the age of discovery, and it has not yet lost its hold upon the native imagination"(p. 3).

2. *The Orchard Keeper* As a Southern Gothic Novel:

The Orchard Keeper is McCarthy's Appalachian novel, the first one set in Tennessee. It revolves around three main characters who are immersed in nature and struggle against the impact of urbanity. Kenneth Rattner is a hitchhiker at the very beginning of the novel and a buried corpse in the rest of the events. Marion Sylder, an outlaw and bootlegger, makes his living by the road and keep drifting from one place into another. Arthur Ownby, an isolated woodman, lives

beside a rotting apple orchard and John Wesley Rattner a young mountain boy live by the wilderness. All the three characters live in harmony with nature and feel distressed with civilization (Ellis, 2013, p. 42).

John M. Grammer (1997) states that *The Orchard Keeper* is an "elegiac celebration of a vanishing pastoral realm" since it offers "a positive image of pastoral order[...]of a primitive community clinging tenaciously to existence in the mountains east of Knoxville, Tennessee" (30). Also, the novel explores "the corrupting encounters between the forces of commerce and bureaucracy on the one hand and the natural environment on the other" (Hage, 2010, p. 117). Likewise, the two forces seem at odds with each other as well. The impact of the encounter is reflected in the characters' behaviour throughout the novel. As a pastoral novel, *The Orchard Keeper* has a setting which shares some features of Virgil's "Eclogue," the first pastoral in literature. For example, an idealized middle landscape, neither wild nor over-civilized, where the dream of congruence between humanity and nature might be achievable (Marx, 2000. p. 377).

McCarthy's style and language, and powerful descriptions of the setting are praised. It is claimed that "the unusual word that turns out to be the perfect choice, his control of language at the level of sentences and paragraphs" reflect his remarkable ability in proving that "language spreads a surface of dry lakebed description, or by contrast, rolls in waves of words laden with narrative import" (Ellis, 2013, p. 1). McCarthy's best description of a group of shacks and their inhabitants at the very beginning of the novel serves as a vivid example to the language mastery through which readers feel the impact of the setting:

> They were rented to families of gaunt hollow-eyed and dark-skinned people[...]who reproduced with such frightening prolificness that their entire lives appeared devoted to the production of the ragged line of scions[...] and stared out across the blighted land with expressions of neither hope nor wonder nor despair.1 McCarthy, Cormac.[1]

These people are merely the population of Red Branch, Tennessee, the setting of *The Orchard Keeper*. Demographically, such buildings with their inhabitants are ironically personified to a slightly higher level of existence in which hope, wonder, and despair are among its typical features. Thus, the landscape where people live becomes "the symbolic repository of value of all kinds—economic, political, aesthetic, religious" (Marx, 2000, p. 228). By describing people and their houses brilliantly, McCarthy illustrates the first clue about "the relationship between ground and figure" in his fiction (Ellis, 2013, p. 41). Such a relationship between buildings and people is best described as: "Gangrenous molds took to the foundations before the roofs were fairly nailed down. Mud crept up their sides and paint fell away in long white slashes. Some terrible plague seemed to overtake them one by one" (*TOK* 2).

In *The Orchard Keeper*, the main significant characters in the novel seem to be in flight from houses or escape from civilization. In this respect, "The gravitational pull of a "blighted land" (*TOK* 2), however, warps the lines of their individual flights into arcs" (Ellis, 2013, p. 41). Of all the buildings or small houses in Red Branch, McCarthy describes Rattner's house as

> [A] house of logs, hand-squared and chinked with clay, the heavy rafters in the loft pinned with wooden pegs[....] The house was tall and severe with few windows. Some supposed it to be the oldest house in the county. It was roofed with shakes and they seemed the only part of it not impervious to weather and time[...]for it was sound and the logs were finely checked and seasoned (*TOK* 21).

The novel also gives readers some extra information on a loom was upstairs in the loft where it had been burned piece by piece for kindling. Then the house was "a huge affair of rough-cut wood that under the dust had retained even then a yellow newness. The rafters still looked that way" (*TOK* 21). In any case, the vibrant description does show the readers how stable the house is in McCarthy's novel. The house has a symbolical reference to settlement and rootedness. Ironically, the houses at the Red Branch have their parts built depending on nature. Nevertheless, "the roof is already troubled and will, by the end of the book, fail" (Ellis, 2013, p. 46).

McCarthy's description of Red Branch, the setting of most of the events in *The Orchard Keeper* in 1940s, refers to nature and the pastoral setting:

> [A] dozen jerrybuilt shacks strewn about the valley in unlikely places, squatting over their gullied purlieus like great brooding animals rigid with constipation, and yet endowed with an air transient and happenstantial as if set there by the recession of floodwaters. Even the speed with which they were constructed could not outdistance the decay for which they held such affinity (*TOK* 11).

[1] McCarthy, Cormac. *The Orchard Keeper*. Vintage, 2010. All references will be taken from this edition with the abbreviation *TOK* and page number (s) (2-3).

Through the description above, one notices the rural surroundings, including shoddy huts, isolated valley, stiff animals, ephemeral air, and floodwaters. Besides, "decay" is not far away from the rural area. "Decay" is a direct reference to the impact of urbanity. In McCarthy's fiction, particularly in *The Orchard Keeper*, the human community essentially capitulates to nature and discards urban life.

The genre of the novel is an important issue one has to be very careful to identify *The Orchard Keeper* with. According to Greenwood (2009), *The Orchard Keeper* is "Southern gothic" that is to say it is set in the pastoral south which is full of fear, mystery, and racism. Greenwood states that "the Southern Gothic literary tradition evolved from the antebellum South as an identifiable sub genre in American literature" (p. 16). Through the "atmosphere of decay in the Southern gothic tradition... [McCarthy] focuses on social transgressions, such as bootlegging and murder, to create a vision of society that is falling apart" (Greenwood, 2009, p. 16).

Accordingly, the way with which McCarthy employs the pastoral existence depicts the noble and ignoble characters and their rise and fall throughout the novel. He does that to explore the theme of decay in such a novel. McCarthy also "employs symbolic characters who desire a pastoral existence, engage in extreme violence, and are subjected to tragic narratives" (Greenwood, 2009, p. 16).

McCarthy uses the theme of 'pastoral' as a new method in the genre of Southern Gothic. He explores the relationship between the identifiable characters with nature and the meaning of 'pastoral'. Greenwood (2009), in this respect, states: in "creating characters with whom readers do not want to identify, McCarthy operates against other long-standing literary methods in his Southern gothic works" (p. 16). Although 'pastoral' is an ancient thematic ideal and it had been mentioned in the Bible as well as Greek and Roman culture and literature, it is a theme that has remained essentially unchanged over time. Greenwood (2009) believes that the "pastoral existence defines a mode of living in which the individual lives in harmony with nature in a rural setting completely apart from the corrupting elements of society" (p. 16). In other words, 'Pastoral' is developed to be a subgenre of the novel revolves around modern society to criticize and the rural life to emphasize. Likewise, *The Orchard Keeper* follows the broader tradition of American pastoral literature, which is regarded insofar as a critique of modernity.

3. The Connection of the Pastoral to Nature:

The title of the novel "The Orchard Keeper" is so significant that it predicts "the pastoral trauma of expropriation elaborated" at the end of the novel. While the prologue "insinuates the tree of life cut at the root. The ruined orchard is likened to "a fallen Eden" that is why it is called the novel's "dominant pastoral image" (Cited in Guillemin, 2004, p. 20). The orchard, according to Walsh, "is infused with great metaphoric import. It is ruined, seemingly beyond the chance of any kind of replenishment or cultivation" (p. 63). The apples grown in the orchard are "venomously bitter[...]like a persimmon" so they fit the decaying nature of the landscape. The apples on the trees are "the size of a thumbnail and green with a lucent and fiery green, deathly green as the bellies of the bottleflies" (*TOK* 182-3).

The natural world is a direct "indictment of modernization," civilization or even the impact of urbanization on rural areas. This "indictment of modernization" begins with the prologue that shows the struggle between the natural and manmade things: "Manmade structures and industrial garbage repeatedly clash with pristine wilderness in scenes of decay and growth" (Estes, 2013, p. 17). Three men are cutting a tree and coming across a barbed wire fence which tangled in the tree. Accordingly, "a tree that has grown up around iron fencing, incorporating the modern into itself" (Hawkins, 2017, p. 109). The whole scene shows the impossibility of the action for the separation of the tree from the barbed wire is impossible since "a long strand of barbed wire from an equally ancient and destroyed fence is found to run its length" (Estes, 2013, p. 17). One man remarks, "It's growed all through the tree[....] We cain't cut no more on it. Damned old elum's bad enough on a saw" (*TOK* Prologue). Symbolically speaking, the barbed wire is the active force "growing" through the passive tree. Civilization is inserted into primitive and rural life. Through this scene which is unrelated to the events of the novel, McCarthy shows the negative impact on the pastoral setting.

Despite McCarthy's objection to the encroachment of civilization, he shows that Nature, an invasive force, "is not passive to these intrusions" in this scene in the novel. For instance, green molds grow over the structures constructed by the workers (Hage, 2010, p. 117): "Some terrible plague seemed to overtake them one by one" (*TOK* 11). Likewise, Georg Guillemin (2004) indicates that "civilization represents but one ecosystem among many" in Cormac McCarthy's novels (p. 15). That is to say, the natural ecosystem and the civilizational ecosystem exist simultaneously.

Also, McCarthy clarifies the link between human and nature, suggesting "that nature might remain to some degree deferred from modernization" (Hawkins, 2017, p. 110). Almost all the main characters are closely connected to be part of nature, and they are struggling to be a part of and apart from the modern world. Each character, Uncle Ather, Sylder, and John Wesley "defines a lifestyle that privileges becoming or staying close to the natural world, and refusing definitions of success that include subscription to the efficiency-versus-waste dichotomy that drives modernization" (Hawkins, 2017, p. 112).

On the orchard which is the main setting of the novel and part of its title, readers do not see or feel that there are some fresh fruits as its title suggests. Instead, the keeper of this orchard tends a corpse for seven years. Another thing

to be noticed, the orchard is slowly decaying in the government-built tank: "a concrete tank set in the ground that had once been used to mix insecticide" (*TOK* 25). Similarly, Andrew Keller Estes (2013) claims that "The tank, with its connotations of industry and civilization, is itself being slowly dissolved into the wilderness as the pastoral landscape of the orchard reverts to a wild, overgrown environment" (p. 17).

Wilderness space has been converted into a place of decaying and death in a way or another—the corpse and the tank as references to death or a tool of killing respectively; not to mention that they do not belong to this rural area. McCarthy portrays "the machine as invading the peace of an enclosed space, a world set apart, or an area somehow made to evoke a feeling of encircled felicity" (Marx, 2000, p. 29). Accordingly, the mysterious government tank which has intruded upon the orchard is regarded as threatening to nature. The narrator describes the tank, saying: "The tank was on high legs and had a fence around it with red signs that he had been pondering for some time, not just today" (*TOK* 25). Although the tank as a machine appears suddenly with no prior notice in the wild particularly the orchard and it makes no noise, according to Marx, "the image of the machine's sudden appearance in the landscape has not exercised its fascination"(p. 16). Furthermore, the machine "is associated with crude, masculine aggressiveness in contrast with the tender, feminine, and submissive attitudes traditionally attached to the landscape" (Marx, 2000, p. 29). This implication clearly refers to the treatment of gender in novel i.e. McCarthy focuses on male characters rather than female ones.

Like other nature worshippers, poets and novelists, McCarthy degenerates the impact of technology and civilization upon the pastoral setting. Leo Marx (2000) comments on Wordsworth's rejection of the machine, in this case, he is so similar to McCarthy:

> By placing the machine in opposition to the tranquility and order located in the landscape, he makes it an emblem of the artificial, of the unfeeling utilitarian spirit, and of the fragmented, industrial style of life that allegedly follows from the premises of the empirical philosophy. (p. 18)

The existence of a machine (mobile or not) in the novel as Leo Marx (2000) believes "brings the political and the psychic dissonance associated with the onset of industrialism into a single pattern of meaning" (p. 30).

For Grammer (1997), Ownby, Sylder and Wesley are trying to urge their community to "end the tug of war with nature" (p. 35). This "tug of war" reflects McCarthy's central theme in the novel, or it can be paraphrased as old order vs. new order or even agrarianism vs. industrialization. As a result, the prominence of rural life is a belief in its superiority which is "a sociological corollary[...]to the widely accepted ethical doctrine that the "middle state" was the best of all possible human conditions." That is why "man," for Marx (2000), "is the creature who occupies the middle link in the "great chain of being," the point of transition between the lower and higher, animal and intellectual forms of being" (p. 100). In other words, the severe threat to the rural life of *The Orchard Keeper* comes from the city.

Still, nature can be terrifying and unsafe too. For example, Wesley was about to die because of freezing weather more than once, Sylder almost drowns in the stream, and Ownby fears animals like panthers which represent the wilderness and death. As a result, freezing weather, deep stream, and wild panthers are some other facets of nature. The city is continually dominating the wilderness by building new roads, for instance. A road, connecting the rural community to Knoxville, obviously represents the encroaching city. Elements of modernity or civilization are eliminating any remaining customs and traditions of the primitive and rural life whether they are legal or not.

4. John Wesley: Failed Hunter and Nature Lover:

Another aspect of life that emphasizes the importance of pastoral and the impact of civilization is the failure of hunting little animals in the wild. It is an indication that man finds it hard to be in harmony with nature. For instance, John Wesley is struggling throughout the novel in hunting some animals. Although Wesley conspicuously failed in hunting, he, through his pursuit, hopes to find a means of living off the land via trapping and hunting. Similarly, Wesley's failure to trap animals like muskrat, mink, or wildcat, as a disconnection not only from the past but from nature.

During his town visit, John Wesley is almost affected by the materialistic society when he takes money as a reward for returning the hawk he hunted. McCarthy's description of his reverence for money is shown clearly as a struggle within the boy between nature and civilization:

> He held the dollar in his hand, folded neatly twice. When he got outside he took it and folded it again, making a square of it, and thrust it down between the copper rivets into the watch pocket of his overall pants. He patted it flat" (*TOK* 79).

The description of Wesley's reaction to having money is proof of his infatuation of civilization. However, Wesley uses the dollar to buy traps. Symbolically, his attempt to tame nature is to live in it comfortably. Accepting

money and purchasing traps signify Wesley's conflict to choose from either civilization which is full of materialism or primitivism which is full of spiritualism.

After this conflict, Wesley rejects civilization by returning the hawk money. By doing so, he stops purchasing nature or even doing some harm to it. This decision is similar to Wesley's worshipful affection for the traps which are regarded as ancient religious rituals. Wesley "lifted one down and set it on the counter before the boy at a quarter-angle, straightening the chain, as one might show a watch or a piece of jewelry" (*TOK* 84). Like romantics, Wesley is always thinking of nature for he finds himself in the middle of natural world. In this respect, Natalie Grant (1995) states,

> John Wesley contemplates the natural world in order to find identity and belonging. He is both awed and delighted by the workings of nature and looks to it for companionship. He spends much of his time out of doors regardless of the weather (p. 65).

By showing his love to nature, Wesley desires to be independent from the constraints of life in a house which is "supposed to be the oldest in the county" (*TOK* 63). Such a house or the place where it is located in pastoral setting there is no electricity or running water; the well is even non-functioning. So, Wesley wants to be free in choosing his way of living. As if nature were another character or tutor who could teach him how to be responsible, tough, and finally a man. Likewise, Rick Wallach writes,

> McCarthy's evocation of nature in the mountain forests has won nearly universal praise; among the shifting fortunes of the novel's characters, the presence of nature remains a breath taking constant; nature becomes, in effect, a character (https://www.cormacmccarthy.com/works/the-orchard-keeper/).

5. Arthur Ownby: The Superstitious Orchard Keeper:

Wesley's master of nature or natural life teacher is Ownby, or as Wesley calls him Uncle Arthur who is interested in nature, woodcraft, superstition, and storytelling all of which he passes on to John Wesley. Also, Jarrett (1997) refers to Ownby as "fiercely independent, individualistic, true to his own code yet also quick to violence, suspicious of the literal or cultural intrusions of the outside, modern world" (p. 66). "True to his code" means that he is committed to nature and "quick to violence" means that he is a rebellion against urban life and its consequences. Ownby wishes to be alone and gets rid of people around. In other words, nature is the only place that he feels comfortable. He claims: "If I was a younger man, he told himself, I would move to them mountains[...] And I wouldn't care for no man[....] Then I wouldn't be unneighborly either" (*TOK* 55).

Ownby assists Wesley in escaping the modern world and attempt to live off the land. Ownby proves to Wesley that his goal is achievable by providing him with some knowledge of nature and being a model for him. Ownby is an "old man whose traditional lifestyle enables an almost mystical connection to the cycles of nature" (Ragan, 1997, p. 18). For instance, the old man teaches the boy how to read weather signs: "you can read the signs. You can feel it in your ownself. But it'll be hot and dry. Late frost is one sign if you don't know nothing else" (*TOK* 225). This natural wisdom, however, does not prevent Ownby from being naïve toward the modern world and superstitious toward the natural world. His superstitious beliefs are exemplified by his fear of cats, particularly the old wives' tale that a cat can suck one's breath away: "He feared their coming in the night to suck his meager breath" (*TOK* 59). The cat's cries symbolize Ownby's fear of death. Similarly, Vereen Bell (1988) states that Arthur Ownby's uncharacteristic superstitious dread of cats is a pervasive reminder of nature's patient claim upon us. He also believes that the cats may be possessed by the spirits of the dead (p. 18).

Ownby is a true believer in the ancient folklore that if people haven't been given a proper burial "their soul takes up in a cat for a spell" (*TOK* 227). Similarly, Ownby lives an existence that is not related to materialism but is "the seasons, folklore, the weather, and the landscape" (Hage, 2010, p. 126). Ownby concludes his lesson to John Wesley with "they's lots of things folks don't know about sech as that" (*TOK* 228).

Beside Ownby's superstitious belief in cats, a witch reveals another aspect in Ownby's idea of the natural world in a pastoral setting and of himself especially when he was a child. Like a mother or a passionate grandmother, the witch "chanted over him so that he would have vision. And told him about the "wampus cat[....] Ain't no sign with wampus cats, she told him, but if you has the vision you can read where common folks ain't able" (*TOK* 59-60). Ownby sees the world inhabited by things readers do not and cannot see. However, Ownby's beliefs are meant to be taken seriously by the reader. Throughout his novel, McCarthy refers to Ownby as a "gnomic old man," "dwarflike," and "prophetic" (*TOK* 98, 132, 150) to illustrate that he is a man of wisdom. Likewise, when Ownby starts narrating a story of the Panthers, then "his face [was] composed in wisdom, old hierophant savoring a favorite truth" (*TOK* 148). Ownby is also portrayed as a religious figure: "a holy man and the preserver of tradition" as Brickman (2000) put it (p. 61). Ownby is the wise old man who is advising, insightful and helpful. Similarly, Ragan concludes that "the values which he passes on to the

boy are clear and uncompromising: personal responsibility and self-sacrifice" (p. 25). So, it is a great lesson in personal responsibility and self-sacrifice too.

Ownby conveys a message to Wesley during the latter's final visit: "Well, I hope fares better'n me. I cain't get used to all these here people" (*TOK* 226). "Most ever man loves peace, he said, and none better than an old man" (*TOK* 229). The old world and the old ways are dying out. In other words, "an inspiriting vision of a humane community has been reduced to a token of individual survival." As Marx (2000) puts it, "the American hero is either dead or totally alienated from society, alone and powerless, like the evicted shepherd of Virgil's eclogue" (p.p. 364-365). So, it is not the cat but the government agent who "took his breath" (*TOK* 203) as he takes Ownby into custody.

Much of the readers' attention could be laid on Ownby's significance which comes from an act of civil disobedience represented by the shooting of the government tank. It has invaded his orchard, "like a great silver ikon, fat and bald and sinister, capable of infinite contempt" (*TOK* 93). McCarthy not only personifies the tank but also makes it an "ikon," with a carbon copy of the new order. According to Dianne Luce (2009), "This structure so offends Ownby that he shoots an *x* on its surface to protest its encroachment on his natural environment" (p. 34).

McCarthy's refusal to the machine in the countryside is reflected in Ownby's reaction to the tank in the orchard. Likewise, the narrator in *The Orchard Keeper* says: "It was four o'clock in the morning when Sylder heard the old man shoot the first hole in the tank" (*TOK* 43). Ownby is against conforming to society and its beliefs, instead, he wants to preserve nature and to keep society at a distance. As the narrator continues: "There were six neat black holes in the polished skin of the tank, angled up across it in a staggered line. The man broke the gun and picked the shells out" (*TOK* 43).

One of the apparent reasons to Ownby's shooting the tank in Grant's opinion is that Ownby's "almost mystical mindset [which] cannot reconcile the technological advances of the modern age to his naturalistic world view, and is undone by the resulting collision of universes" (1995, p. 67). In other words, Ownby "was making a huge crude X across the face of the tank. Again he examined the bits of brass before reloading" (*TOK* 43).

Ownby's reaction towards the government agents and other people is regarded as a "retreat toward the mountains marks his choice of nature, traditional mountain culture, and personal freedom over civilization, modern technology, and governmental regulation" (Luce, 2009, p. 1). It is also a nostalgic retreat to his youth and marriage days. Unfortunately, he was imprisoned "in the city and the world of modern bureaucracy" (Luce, 2009, p. 1). Although Ownby's attempts to fight progress have been a failure, he succeeds in resisting the new order. He expresses his opinion to Wesley about the governmental agents clearly by saying that: "Them fellors never had no business there and if I couldn't run em off I could anyway let em know they was one man would let on that he knowned what they was up to" (*TOK* 229). The fellowers never had business there is a justified act of civil disobedience. In both cases, resisting is not enough. So Ownby's failure becomes apparent. Nevertheless, Brickman (2000) sees Ownby's success embodied in John Wesley. She says that "John Wesley survives to take [Ownby's] values west" (p. 66). John Wesley has assumed Ownby's role as orchard keeper. Ownby teaches John Wesley how to live in and with nature. Still, he is obliged to live the rest of his life away from home and nature restrained in a mental institution.

It is noteworthy to mention that in his escape from the authorities, Ownby searches for the "harrykin." A wilderness space where Ownby thinks he can achieve his "isolationist dream of existence." While on his journey, Ownby achieves "an all-too-brief moment of pastoral bliss" (Walsh, 2009, p. 54).

6. Sylder: The Moonshiner

Unlike Ownby, Sylder's job is to teach Wesley not only how to live in the modern world but rather how to coexist with it. Sylder is a moonshiner who has been saved by Wesley from drowning. Yet, the former and the latter, in a way or in another, save each other. Sylder who tries to live in the new world without becoming a part of it attempts to convince his young follower to do the same. McCarthy draws the contrast between Sylder and the new order by juxtaposing him with the agency men who have come to investigate the damage to the tank, clear examples of the postmodern world: "Just beyond the creek he passed an olive-colored truck, the driver and the other man in the cab looking serious and official, but somewhat sleepy and not in any particular hurry. Genial, unofficial, and awake, Marion Sylder drove to town" (*TOK* 98).

Positioned between the official agency men (the new world) and the solitary Ownby (the old world) is Sylder. When Wesley and Sylder first meet, the latter put his hand on the former's shoulder in "an attitude of fatherly counsel" (*TOK* 102). They emerge from the creek, "looking like the last survivors of Armageddon" (*TOK* 104), and they may be the last survivors of an old world. As a caring surrogate, Sylder gives the boy a hunting dog that can aid him in his quest to be a hunter and to live off the land. Sylder also takes him hunting to instruct him in ancient ways. This is a role Sylder maintains throughout the novel in order to advise Wesley about the hypocrisy of the community's law enforcement officers (Walsh, p. 60).

Authorities, not civilization's intrusion, threaten Sylder who is simply afraid of getting caught: "You sure have got cold feet, she said. He stared up at the dark ceiling. I'll be damned if I do, he whispered to himself" (*TOK* 168).

Schäfer suitably labels him as "the classic type of the bandit" (p. 44) who "fights more directly against the men who represent agencies of order and progress" (*TOK* 107). Sylder himself admits that he is wanted, when instructing John Wesley to leave Constable Gifford alone because "it's his job" (*TOK* 213).

Unlike Ownby, Sylder can be seen as "a contemporized version of Ownby." He also indicates "a familiar McCarthy archetype, that of the good bad man who is guilty of breaking laws with his moonshining." He can also "be read as an allegorical figure as his fate at the hand of the authorities reveals an aggressive federally sanctioned campaign" (Walsh, 2009, p. 59). In other words, Sylder is a mixture of bad and good. To him, resisting the authorities is part of resisting the encroachment of civilization to rural life. This is a clear indication to be "against the synthetic, modernistic intrusions into this curiously untouched mountain community" (Walsh, 2009, p. 60). In this case, he is similar to Ownby and Wesley in criticizing "modernistic intrusions." He is both the old and new mountain man, the accomplished driver, the speeding moonshiner who seeks out his own "harrykin" space beyond the "dominion of laws either civil or spiritual," the risk-taking bootlegger, "who is made obsolete following the repeal of prohibition" (Walsh, 2009, p. 59). Sylder seeks out places at the outskirts which are most of the times unrespectable. He has tendencies for frequenting taverns that "hung on the city's perimeter like lost waifs" (*TOK* 29). The narrator also describes Sylder movement and the places he visits:

> Sundays the Knoxville beer taverns were closed, their glass fronts dimmed and muted in sabbatical quietude, and Sylder turned to the mountain to join what crowds marshaled there beyond the dominion of laws either civil or spiritual (*TOK* 16).

It is worth mentioning that Sylder, like many other McCarthy characters, "can't follow the regular practices of normative bourgeois society" (Walsh, 2009, p. 59). Sylder tries his best to be respectable but finds that "he was hard-pressed now on eighteen dollars a week, who had spent that in an evening," and he eventually gets into a fight at the fertilizer plant that costs him his job (*TOK* 30).

McCarthy's characters especially the main three characters are in a conflict, although they are interested in nature, they stand between two worlds: nature's and man's as well. McCarthy, like his characters, has heard the call of the wild and has been preoccupied with nature. In this respect, Vereen Bell (1988) says that when reading *The Orchard Keeper*, readers "are set into this environment, in which the human and non-human are so commingled" (p. 17). McCarthy's presentation of the struggle between the old and new order is summarized by Ragan's assessment in which one can draw a comparison among the three main characters:

> [Arthur Ownby] the old man whose traditional lifestyle enables an almost mystical connection to the cycles of nature; Marion Sylder and Kenneth Rattner, representatives of contrasting responses to the new social order; and the boy John Wesley Rattner, who attempts unsuccessfully to find a compromise between the old dispensation and the new (1997, p. 18).

7. CONCLUSION:

As the novel begins with a mysterious prologue in which three men are cutting a tree and encounter a barbed wire fence tangled in a tree, it ends with the same men who have recently done their work and gone. Their work took place in a cemetery and it has supported two things: the first one is a new grave in the cemetery for Rattner's wife, John Wesley's mother. The second thing is a gap in the cemetery's fence which is John Wesley's exist. The people of the Red Branch are entangled with their community as is the tree and the fence. Both the ground the civic conventions constrain them in different perspectives.

As McCarthy concludes, "No avatar, no scion, no vestige of that people remains. On the lips of the strange race that now dwells there their names are myth, legend, dust" (*TOK* 246). The values, which Wesley has inherited from his two mentors, provoke him to leave the area. Symbolically speaking, his leave refers to his survival and suggests his rejection of the new order. There may be a direct reference to Wesley as a child who passes into an adult; setting in which fall passes into winter; weather in which day passes into night; and finally life passes into death. Wesley, Arthur, and Sylder are totally alienated from society, alone and powerless. The image of a green landscape is likely to be ironic and bitter in their opinions at last. *The Orchard Keeper* ends tragically, so it is an elegy for an older sort of pastoral community which is nobly resisting but is finally defeated by the power of the government. *The Orchard Keeper* is a depiction of a world in which traditional beliefs, relationships, and agrarian connections with the earth have deteriorated due to the increasing pressure of urban culture, commercial interests and governmental intrusions upon the rural characters' lives.

McCarthy pastoral vision is a part of an elegy for there is a mourning on alienated figures like Wesley, Arthur, and even Sylder on the one hand. Besides, there is a sad feeling towards losing the rural places for the sake of civilization encroachment like the new roads and the appearance of the machine or the tank or even the police pursuit to the

moonshiner. So, McCarthy's *The Orchard Keeper* is an expression of bleak pastoral vision through which the image of a rural, as the setting of man's best hope and the ideal pastoral, is neither wild nor urban.

The novel is viewed as a complex pastoral since there is no reference to Arcadia, no shepherds, no ordinary differentiation of city and town, no dynamic dissension among Nature and Art. These conventional features of the pastoral adjacent to idealism, drenching into nature, and disobedience of the infringement of human progress are supplanted by complex ones. *The Orchard Keeper* joins with melancholy allegory to disappoint any arrangement as elegiac pastoralism. Furthermore, these features are communicated in new types of the American experience. The wild, spoken to by the rural territory, replaces Arcadia; the free, lone, fizzled planter and rancher with his conceivable and prophetic provincial plans joined by canines and felines replaces the straightforward shepherd with his sheep; the colloquial language utilized by the plantation guardian replaces the language of a wanton peaceful verse; and an unpredictable variety of the terrific Nature-Art absolute opposite replaces summed up references to the complexity among city and town.

Part of McCarthy's vision is to refer to *The Orchard Keeper* as an eco-peaceful which is concerned with human progress, with both nature and demise which represent an extreme takeoff from conventional American pastoralism. *The Orchard Keeper* utilizes pastoral allegory as a narrative vehicle to impart a sadness that negates the possibility of human matchless quality in perspective on human mortality and nature's apathetic materiality. A large number of McCarthy's characters attempt journeys, and a significant number of them come up short, be it in the South or West, town or city, in a peaceful or wild setting, urban or provincial; yet it is these missions that ingrain McCarthy's aesthetic vision with a ground-breaking mythic and symbolic power.

At the close of the novel, Ownby is worthy of compassion. He ends up in the asylum, his movement restricted and curtailed, seemingly there for the rest of his life, perhaps dying sometime between novel's end and John Wesley's return to Red Branch. The novel's pastoralism as representative of a modern retreat from industrialization to the folkways of rural America is praised since McCarthy has sense enough to see in the land a source of human salvation. Various characters in McCarthy's Southern gothic novels express a conscious or unconscious desire for this pastoral kind of life.

The pastoral ideal has customarily valorized a serene, developed, provincial condition, a middle landscape among wilderness and human progress. Such a central scene is a hindrance for both the brutal vulnerabilities of nature and the suppressions involved by a mind boggling human progress. The pastoral ideal has not viewed nature as sweet and unadulterated, however has appreciated improved nature. In the meantime, the peaceful has typified a longing for departure from progress dumbfounding intricacy, abusiveness, and mercilessness and even from history and its possibilities. What is imagined is a retreat to a presence closer to nature, in spite of the fact that not full deserting of progress.

Through sentimental pastoralism, Americans disregard the inconsistency between their glorification of the scene—and its related aspects, for example, cultivating and community life—and their drive to subordinate nature and society to mechanical and business goals. Complex pastoralism is related to high abstract culture. It includes longing for an admired scene yet in addition perceives that innovation and industrialization fate any charming vision of country life. Complex pastoralism is likewise sensitive to how mechanical society is endorsed by a ruthless, damaging association with nature. Followers of complex pastoralism in this manner perceive a key strain in American life, the inconsistency between rustic fantasy and mechanical actuality. The qualification among wistful and complex pastoralism became out of the test of industrialization. Industrialization was at first held onto as predictable with the peaceful perfect yet in addition started a mounting negativity among progressively genuine and attentive American scholars about a definitive viability of pastoralism. Likewise, three kinds of scene are seen: urban, wild, and country. Urban zones give social unpredictability and incitement. Wild gives the feeling of rest, reestablishment, and sexy delight related to an increasingly indigenous habitat. Country territories would thus be able to be locales of opposition against winning, frequently abusive, political, financial, or social powers.

Finally, the features which portray the pastoral are: a skepticism of anthropocentrism that is integral to present day thought, a rise of non-human to indistinguishable dimension of significance from people, a doubt of the establishments of current society, a suspicion of innovation, and an accentuation on the significance of minimal topographies and populations.

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