Landscapes of Nostalgia:

Pastoral Nature in English Literature from the 1940s

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Table of Contents

Introduction

I be free to go abroad

Or take again my homeward road

To where, for me, the apple tree

Do lean down low in Linden Lea (R. Vaughan Williams, "Linden Lea")

England has always sought its national identity in the countryside, especially in times of distress. During and after the First World War, life on the countryside became a national dream and a symbol of better times of the past, so that rural living became almost a cliché during the interwar period (Wiener 75). This was partly due to government propaganda, which created a sense of togetherness and Englishness through an England represented as the perfect countryside. During the Second World War, this image of rural England was fortified through the depiction of Nazi Germany as industrial, while the home-country was green and fruitful (Wiener 77). Henry C. Warren writes in his ode to the traditional rural village *England is a Village* from 1940: "England's might is still in her fields and villages, and though the whole weight of mechanized armies rolls over them to crush them, in the end they will triumph. The best of England is a village" (5).

During World War II, English people created a dreamlike vision of England as an Arcadian landscape, and longed back for the peaceful times of the 1920s and 1930s. Indeed, this is accounted for by 1940s literature, which saw a revival of countryside and country house novels (Berberich 48). These novels characteristically showed an idealised, nostalgic view of the countryside:

The number of novels set in the countryside continued to grow. These works nearly

> always romanticized rural life [...]. They tended to be about not the contemporary countryside, but former times colored by childhood recollections, which gave them a 'stability and permanence which never exists in real life'. (Wiener 74)

Everyday reality caused authors to create an ideal image of the past, and this is evident in their description of the landscape. However, the twenties and thirties were not without problems, so it is difficult to believe that authors' anxieties and a sense of realism has simply fallen victim to ignorance and nostalgia. It is interesting, then, to examine their view on nature more closely in order to grasp their view on the English countryside in the Interbellum period.

Ecocriticism is a contemporary literary theory, whose critics are concerned about environmental crises and want to create awareness of the importance of nature "in its own right", instead of the use it gives to human beings (Siddall 108). Although reflecting on nature is sometimes seen as a failure to participate in society, ecocritics want to show that a return to nature is not apolitical because it shows the need for a new stance of human beings towards nature. Retreating from civilisation is revolutionary in the way that it rejects people's way of subjecting nature to human needs, and shows how the human and nonhuman environment are interdependent. This stance calls for a new sense of responsibility towards nature in the whole of society.

Ecocritics emphasise that the word ecology is derived from the word *oikos*, that is, dwelling place or home. Dwelling in a home gives the impression of stability, happiness and loyalty, which ecocritics favour to the fast-changing restlessness of cities (Siddall 107). As a result, a dwelling place in nature calls for a sustainable system to maintain the wellbeing of nature, and therefore strives to deconstruct the opposition of human and nonhuman environments. To do this, literary ecocritics study texts by looking at their representation of the natural environment and its relation with human beings, in order to foreground the importance of a vital natural environment.

One of the challenges of ecocritics involves the use of the term pastoral. Terry Gifford in his first chapter of *Pastoral*, defines three definitions of pastoral, of which the first denotes its original meaning of the Classical poetic genre featuring the celebration of a shepherd´s life in Arcadia (1). The second use of pastoral is its popular use, and points to literary works that show admiration of the natural in some way, especially when placed in opposition to an urban environment (Gifford 2). Pastoral texts in this sense of the word often show nature as an idyllic place of perfection and leisure, like the Garden of Eden. Thirdly, the word pastoral is used in a critical way to show that nature in the popular use of pastoral is depicted too idealised, so that it becomes artificial (Gifford 2). It exposes nature as a form of escapism that fails to show hardships and the need for a return to civilisation. The popular use of the word pastoral is problematic for ecocritics, who acknowledge that escaping from civilisation to an idealised landscape is not constructive for the wellbeing of nature, because it ignores problems rather than facing them. Also, nature is not represented as it really is, because pastoral in the popular sense highlights only the paradisiacal elements of nature, while death, poverty, hard work and less picturesque nature, like marshes, are overlooked. Critics of the pastoral stress the importance of this darker side of nature in order to expose the artificiality of pastoral literature (Gifford 120).

Still, pastoral representations of nature remain important elements in literature, and ecocritics have to find a way of dealing with pastoral literature that does not simply dismiss it as an unrealistic ideal. To come to a new approach and leave the old opposition of pastoral and anti-pastoral behind, Gifford argues that nature writing should be aware of "the urgent need of responsibility" and to come to a vision of "an integrated world that includes the human" (Gifford 148-149). This starting point does not exclude the celebration of nature, but avoids idealisation. Several critics have made contributions to this new view on pastoral, for example Lawrence Buell, who argues for studying ways in which nature in literature is

celebrated "as a presence for its own sake", instead of for human beings (Gifford 148). Also, the pastoral is defined as retreat *and* return, in which the return is necessary. Retreat means a withdrawal from the urban to the natural environment that makes people aware of deficiencies in civilisation, so that it becomes a political or social critique. The reading of a pastoral forces a comparison with reality as the reader can use it to "reflect" on the present, so that even an idealised landscape can be insightful (Gifford 46). However, the return to civilisation is inevitable and cannot be overlooked. A more realistic way of analysing nature is that there is a longing for retreat, but an awareness of the return. According to Leo Marx, this return can also be shown through a symbol in the landscape, like death or a machine that disturbs the pastoral, a sign of reality that acknowledges that living in nature is not merely a form of escapism (Bracke 32). Marx calls a text that includes the return and constitutes a social critique "a complex pastoral", while a representation of nature as an idyll is "a sentimental pastoral" (Gifford 10). The return is the movement back to reality and the realisation that change is needed in some way. Therefore, analysing a pastoral text by highlighting its elements of return, or confronting the reader's reality with its views on life in nature, can lead to a productive reading of pastoral literature.

Subsequently, Leo Marx suggests the view on pastoral landscape as a middle landscape, because it is between wilderness and cultivation. He adds that perhaps pastoral nature is all that is left, because ongoing cultivation made unspoilt nature disappear (Bracke 35). Any natural element can be pastoral, even small parks in cities. Still, these small spaces can be meaningful, because they represent a certain way of life and offer a "reflection on city dwelling" (Bracke 35). Anthony Lioi says, therefore, that pastoral spaces are educational spaces, and can teach a responsible stance toward nature (Bracke 35). Also, the pastoral as middle space could be seen as a bridge between the human and nonhuman environments, so that the culturally-constructed opposition between the two is taken away. In this way, pastoral

literature can help posit a new, constructive view on people's environment. Astrid Bracke makes another contribution towards a new way of dealing with the pastoral as she emphasises to use the term as an image rather than a genre. She wants to broaden ecocritical fields by arguing that ecocritical theory should not be concerned with environmentalist' or nature writing only, but can be applied to any (contemporary) text that deals with nature in any way. She says that viewing pastoral as an image creates a "dynamic space in which various personal, cultural and religious views of nature meet and intersect" (Bracke 29). This partly eliminates the pastoral seen in the three definitions mentioned before, so that no view on nature is rejected beforehand. Again, this results in reading and valuing nature for its own sake, as well as appreciating human sentiments towards it.

Apart from viewing pastoral in this way in which realistic elements conveyed by the text validate the idyllic aspect, this thesis would like to examine whether feelings of nostalgia can be approached in a more positive way. As Raymond Williams acknowledges in *The Country and the City*, nostalgia is a recurrent theme in history, and these "old Englands [...] have some actual significance" (Williams 12). Longing back for a better past cannot be treated as trivial, because each time loses elements that were better kept. From an ecological point of view, this is certainly true, as continuing pollution and deforestation are pressing realities, so that it must be acknowledged the world actually *is* losing unspoilt nature. Moreover, it could be argued that ecocritics are inherently idealists, because they long for a world where the natural and civil are fused in a sustainable system. Therefore, nostalgia has to be taken seriously as both significant of the time it is felt, as well as of the ideal that it yearns for. For example, the wave of nostalgic literature during World War II is expressive of sentiments and developments faced in the 1940s, as well as of pre-war times. Not only childhood innocence was lost, but wartime, industrial development and ongoing urbanisation really changed the United Kingdom, so that feelings of nostalgia have to be taken seriously

because they are rooted in real changes of the country.

Also, in a distressing time like the forties, nostalgia as a way of escapism cannot be marginalised, because it gives hope, a sense of being part of a community and a nation's history. Perhaps the thought of idealised nature is what saved people from despair, as historian Martin Wiener suggests: "the countryside seemed to offer release from the tyranny of time's movement" (Wiener 15) when Britain sent propaganda to soldiers abroad about the home-country portrayed as the most beautiful green pastures. What is more, David James and Philip Tew believe that the nostalgic pastoral is often incorrectly dismissed because such a text can create: "radical discursive spaces, engaging our imaginative longings, sustaining utopian aspirations" (13). So, an idealised landscape in literature serves a purpose because it points at how human beings should or want to live, and for that reason should not be overlooked. Indeed, the nostalgic pastoral is a significant element in literature of the 1940s, and might be more constructive than critics of the pastoral idyll think.

The novels discussed in this thesis feature country houses, and therefore belong to the country house genre. Country house poetry celebrates the traditional relationship between the lord and his tenants, and is depicted as stable and fruitful. Traditions and the moral virtues of the country estate are praised, and it is presented as one of the kernels of Englishness. The estate represents England's history as wealthy, aristocratic and virtuous, a celebration of England's past at its best. However, Christine Berberich argues that more and more country houses became impossible to maintain after World War I, and with that, its idealised picture became a myth, a "relic of bygone days" (James 17). Country houses in modern literature, then, can be seen as anti-pastoral, as they become a symbol of a lost past or the sobering image of reality. Country houses have become the image of the decline of decency and gentlemanliness, as well as the remnants of a colonial past of exploitation and racism. On the other hand, country houses could be viewed as part of Marx' middle landscape, because they

fuse elements of civilisation and culture, while also representing a dwelling place in nature. For this reason, it is interesting to analyse to what extent the country house serves as critique on the aristocratic rural system or as an environmental model.

This thesis will engage in the discussion of pastoral in ecocritical theory, by analysing four novels written during or just after the Second World War that reflect on the 1920s and 1930s. Although on first glance these texts seem to show an idealised version of the countryside in the past, they convey a more complex view on nature as the ideal dwelling place. Pastoral texts can be nostalgic and yet constructive, critical and realistic.

The chosen novels share a theme of reflection on growing up in the countryside. Philip Larkin's *A Girl in Winter*, published in 1947, is set in an icy wartime London and is centred around a disillusioned foreign girl who reflects on a summer spent in rural England a few years before. The second novel is by Dodie Smith, who immigrated to the United States and felt homesick, so she wrote *I Capture the Castle*. This novel is set in England in the 1930s and narrated by Cassandra who lives with her family in an ancient castle in the country while attempting to escape from poverty. The next novel discussed is *Brideshead Revisited*, Evelyn Waugh's masterpiece written in 1945, featuring an estate where Captain Charles Ryder spent an important time of his life before he happens upon it again when it is used by British soldiers during the war. The final novel is *The Shrimp and the Anemone* by L.P. Hartley, about a boy growing up under the crushing care of his sister, which was published in 1944. The final chapter will compare and contrast the views on nature that these novels give.

While each novel shows a sense of nostalgia for an idealised, rustic country life, they show a more complex view on pastoral nature, because realistic elements preclude an image of Arcadia and, at the same time, justify a feeling of nostalgia towards a better past. In order to analyse how pastoral nature is depicted, the four novels will be discussed in succession according to themes, like the novel's view on the country as opposed to the city and the text´s

take on retreat and return. Another theme is the portrayal of the countryside as a lost Arcadia, exploring the meaning of childhood innocence, nostalgic and realistic elements. A third important theme is the country as the ‘real’ England, focussing on nationalism, tradition and country estates.

Chapter 1: *A Girl in Winter* by Philip Larkin

A Girl in Winter is one of Philip Larkin's early works and is not well-known or much analysed. It was supposed to be the second part of a trilogy, of which the first is *Jill* (1946) and the third never written. Part one and three of the novel are set in a snow-covered English town during the Second World War, where Katherine Lind, a lonely refugee from Europe, lives. She hopes to become involved with Robin Fennel and his family again, whom she visited six years earlier after having a letter-correspondence with Robin for a school-project. The second part is the story of the three leisurely weeks she spent at his summery country house in Oxfordshire. In the third part, she tries to reconnect with people but is disappointed by them. Finally, after the long day that part one and three involve, she finds a drunken Robin on her doorstep and realises that all her hopes and dreams for a happier future were in vain.

Country and City

Larkin already establishes a contrast between the city and the country on the first page, as he begins to describe the winter in the country where the streets remain empty when the frost and snow make it impossible to go outside. Still, "there was plenty to be done indoors, saved for such a time as this" (Larkin 11). In the next paragraph, the author describes a journey along the train tracks: "But through cuttings and along embankments ran the railway lines" (Larkin 11). The stillness of the previous paragraph is broken with the word *but*, clearly implying a contrast with the previous situation. The railway lines go past factories and houses and reach "the cities where the snow was disregarded, and which the frost could only besiege for a few days, bitterly" (Larkin 12). In this first page-long chapter, Larkin thus already establishes the sharp contrast between the rural and urban that is an important theme in the

novel. Rural wintertime is peaceful, white and slumbering: “the whole landscape was so white and still it might have been a formal painting” (11). It slows down the pace in a village, but the inhabitants adapt to it: there is no work on the farm during the winter months but there is other work that can be done indoors.

However, no such peace can be afforded in cities. Larkin says that there the snow is “disregarded”, as if there is no respect for natural elements. It implies that the snow is not a hindrance for people to go on with their work, but perhaps also that it is not enjoyed because they are too occupied with other things. He also describes the frost as besieging the land, but that in this it is not as successful in cities. The word *besiege* entails that the frost is an attacking enemy, and the city defends itself against it. In other words, the city wants to keep out all natural elements that can disrupt it. This results in a distinction between city people and country people, in which country people are described as living with and adapting to nature while city dwellers try to act as if it is not there.

At the same time, the city is not simply juxtaposed to nature. Katherine admires the city and can at the same time be conscious of nature in it: “Miss Brooks would see it in terms of the deadening snow that was littered everywhere, but to Katherine the frost made everything stand alone and sparkle” (Larkin 29). She admires the shops in the streets, describes a cityscape, and then realises that “this kind of scene [...] would mean nothing to the Fennels at all. They only noticed things that artists had been bringing under their noses for centuries, such as sunsets and landscapes” (Larkin 29). It seems as if the Fennels cannot admire the city, nor can they admire anything that is not seen as romantic enough to become a painting. Katherine criticises them for not being able to see beauty in the chaotic imperfection that is the city, and regarding their country house as a measurement for all natural beauty. She feels that they could not approve of her everyday surroundings, while she can see the beauty of it.

In the middle of the city, Katherine finds a shelter in a park where she brings Miss Brooks who has a tooth-ache, and here she starts to get involved with people after a long time of social retreat. A little drinking-fountain with almost frozen water is described as "a stream drained from plateau after plateau of ice, running down tracks of stones still above cloud level" which "numbed her hand, like a distillation of winter" and is so cold that it almost stops the toothache (Larkin 34). It seems to be purifying and sobering for the poor feverish Miss Brooks. While she is helping the ill girl, Katherine realises that she missed taking care of people, as if the cold water in the shelter also temporarily numbs the pain of being lonely. This short retreat in the park is therefore renewing and healing for the two women.

Throughout the novel, Katherine notices trees, which seem to be the embodiment of eternity or her sense of belonging. She tells Jane about her inherited silver hairbrushes her grandfather made, that feature the trees of knowledge and life (Larkin 108). She is not religious, so for her they are trees that remind her of her family roots. Perhaps that is why, whether she is in the city or the country, she always looks at the trees. The sound of the trees is what makes her feel at home at the Fennels, and the warmth from the sun is described as a "huge green tree" (Larkin 102, 92). Toward the end of her summer holiday she visits Oxford with Robin, which excites Katherine because she "was by upbringing a town dweller" (Larkin 138). However, after listening to the rich history of the place, she found "the sound of the trees was more impressive. [...] They filled the air with whispering of eternity [...] making this place, famous as it was, like all other places" (Larkin 140). The familiarity of the sound of trees keeps Katherine in touch with the world and makes her a part of it. For a girl who is away from home it represents a home, or a dwelling place, that can be both in the city and country.

Splendid Pastoral Nature

The landscape of Katherine's holiday in Oxfordshire is described gloriously, as if she is visiting a Garden of Eden. When she first sees the village, a traditional image of rural England is conveyed: there is a post-office, a church, and cottages with gardens that fascinate Katherine. Robin's house borders on a river and he proudly shows her the fruitful gardens. The sunny, flowered fields and hills are bright and perfect, and when they walk through it, Katherine thinks it is "as if they walked in a kind of splendour" (Larkin 98). She experiences this landscape as a form of gentle perfection.

Also, Robin, his sister Jane and Katherine have nothing but leisure which seems to alter Katherine's perception of time:

> The three weeks of her holiday, still almost untouched, receded like brilliant water. Here, with the Fennels, time had a different quality from when she was at home. She could almost feel it passing slowly, luxuriously, like thick cream pouring from a silver jug. (Larkin 101)

The days seem to flow into one and she feels like they have been walking in "a green maze" (Larkin 116). There seem to be no obligations or intrusions from the outside world. The surroundings even seem to affect her and put her in a meditative state, because "the air in the river valley was so soft that there were times when it slackened all her muscles" (Larkin 118). As in a traditional pastoral, leisure and reflection seem to be the main pastime in summery England.

Katherine goes outside alone twice to find peace and solitude, when being with people becomes too much for her. The first time she is in love with Robin, which she experiences as "a disturbing time" (Larkin 128). She goes outside at five in the morning to find "whatever stillness there was in the summer night", and closely observes the sights and smells (Larkin

128). Perhaps the dew, flowers and frog put her situation in perspective and guide her attention to the outside world, because she realises she is only visiting a short time, and tries not to think about complicated relationships anymore.

The second time she goes outside by herself is during her last night when she is disappointed with the exotic visitor Jack Stormalong, who demands all attention from Robin and Jane. She flees from the company to calm herself and "make her peace" with the place (Larkin 170). She looks at the gardens and river and admires them again, but now they are familiar to her. She tries to close a dripping tap she noticed on the first day but then realises: "Let it go on" (Larkin 170). Katherine realises the place is good as it is, and she does not want to change anything or anyone now. She came to England to get to know her pen pal Robin but was disappointed, and comes to terms with it by walking around the gardens (Larkin 165). The second part of the novel therefore conveys a pastoral view on the English countryside, as Larkin describes the English landscape as fruitful and leisurely, and for Katherine it becomes a refuge. Nature has a soothing, sobering effect on Katherine, and is almost healing when her thoughts or people make her feel distressed.

Symbolic Nature

Larkin uses nature to symbolise the personal relationships between people. This is something ecocritics criticise, because this uses nature to elucidate purely human affairs, instead of appreciating it for itself. Still, Larkin uses intricate metaphors that are beautiful in themselves, and perhaps gain extra beauty because they have significance for the story. It could even be argued that people's behaviour towards nature exposes their true personality.

At the start of the holiday, Katherine, Robin and Jane go to the river and Robin feeds his leftover roll to a group of ducks. Jane remarks that there is a duck that is not able to gobble

up a piece of bread, and says: “He makes little rushes but the others always get there first” (Larkin 97). Robin replies that he does not want it enough, throws the last piece on the duck’s head which is quickly eaten by another duck, so that the duck misses out. When they walk further the ducks follow, but “the one that had been hit swimming with dazed dignity away from its fellows” (...). This seems to be a foreboding of what happens later between the three people, because Jane is always the odd one out. While Jane is the one truly interested in Katherine as a person and tries to be her friend, Katherine is only fixed on becoming interesting to Robin. Katherine only sees her as a chaperon or someone who is forced to stay with them, so that Jane is like the duck trying to get a crumb in vain (Larkin 104). When Robin finally responds to Katherine by speaking with her in her own language, Jane is left out because she does not understand it and after that ceases to join them, like the duck that was hit on the head and swam off.

Another image that reflects their relationships involves a gymkhana, where Katherine sees a girl riding a roan which cannot be controlled; the girl that is on it cannot do anything with it. After that, a girl on a small cream coloured horse comes forward, and is unexpectedly good at jumping because the cooperation between the girl and the horse is excellent. This may be linked to Katherine who is trying to control and steer the relationship with Robin and Jane, but only the one with Jane is unexpectedly successful. Her relationship with Robin goes nowhere, although she is trying very hard to manoeuvre him into loving her. At the end of her visit, she finds out Jane was the one who insisted on inviting Katherine, while Robin did not have any desire to meet her.

Another incident illustrates this as well, when they go punting on the river. When she tries to control the punt according to Robin’s directions, it turns out to be very arduous and does not go well at all, as she does not have control over the boat when she tries to tame the river. Then she follows Jane’s directions which are liberating and she succeeds. Against her

expectations, Jane is more agreeable, and she finds more companionship with her than with Robin.

Another natural element Larkin uses is flowers, which seem to symbolise a person's sincerity. Before Robin and Katherine begin to speak in Katherine's language which Jane cannot understand, Jane is arranging the flowers in the dining room, taking out the dead flowers and pouring fresh water in the vases (Larkin 129). When Jane is defeated and gone, "Robin, with an abstracted air, broke off a cornflower growing through a gate and drew it deliberately into his buttonhole" (Larkin 135). This gesture is almost as if he gives himself a medal and a new status as Katherine's better friend. However, after he disappoints Katherine during their trip to Oxford, she realises she has mistreated Jane's friendliness and goes to her to apologise. Jane is in the garden "tying up a peony that had broken in the force of the shower" (Larkin 142). Jane has taken Robin's place again as the sincerely interested friend, which is indicated by the flowers. It is striking that Jane is the one taking care of the flowers, while Robin kills the cornflower by picking it. Then, after the sobering shower in Oxford where Katherine realises that Robin sees in her another sister, Jane tries to mend the broken flowers as if she wants to mend their friendship. In this way, their behaviour towards nature mirrors or forebodes their behaviour towards Katherine.

It could even be said that the way they treat nature is reflecting their personality, as Robin shows other sudden moves toward nature. For example, he hits a twig over a hedge with a stick, which comes rather as a surprise to Katherine. Until then, he had appeared unnaturally civilised, and this "sudden irresponsibility" (Larkin 97) shows that he is human and becomes more interesting to her. His spontaneity, however, seems to be limited to only one more occasion. When Katherine is about to go home, he suddenly takes hold of her and kisses her while Katherine just came to be at peace with her situation, hereby disturbing it

again. His ability to suddenly disturb peacefulness is already seen in his behaviour towards nature.

England as Mistaken Promised Land

Katherine is a refugee and an outsider in England, and feels isolated: she has taken on a job below her capabilities that "stressed what was already sufficiently marked: that she was foreign and had no proper status there" (Larkin 25). She even feels that she is regarded as an enemy: "it might even be that they would dislike dealing with her because of her nationality, for the English [...] were characterized in time of war by antagonism to every foreign country, friendly or unfriendly, as a simple matter of instinct" (22).

This is a sharp contrast with her earlier experience with England, when she was welcomed by the Fennels as an interesting foreign girl rather than an intruder, and that is why she thinks of them so often. At the end of her long day, she figures out why she thought about Robin Fennel and his family so much: "she knew what [Robin] meant to her. He was in the forefront of a time when she had come to this strange country, and had been welcomed by strangers and taken in among them" (Larkin 216). When she came to England as a refugee, she was not taken in among friendly people, so that she began to think about that holiday six years ago and the possibility of bringing it back. That pastoral England of her memories is what she expected to find again, but instead, she is alone in a cold town.

Memory and Realism

Although the summer story seems Katherine's memory, it is told by an omniscient narrator. It is as if the reader goes back in time to experience the holiday, but Katherine does not

remember it the same way it is described in the second part of the novel, because for her "all that remained was a mingled flavour" (Larkin 30). For example, in part three she still cannot remember Jane's face, although she is described in the second part (Larkin 180). She cannot even recall whether Robin really kissed her or if she made that up later. So what she is wishing for in the first and third part of the novel is only that flavour of a memory. It seems that, apart from the splendid surroundings, the holiday was not even that agreeable: the first days she is waiting for the family to act more naturally, she is annoyed by Jane's presence, falls in love with Robin but that feeling is painful rather than pleasant, and she is disappointed when Robin does not return her love. At that point, the holiday is almost over, and Jack Stormalong arrives and wants all attention. Only when people disappoint her again in the third part, she realises that her memories do not quite resemble reality: "His [Robin's] manner was so unlike her recollections that he was still nearly a chance acquaintance to her" (Larkin 232). Salem K. Hassan notes Larkin's sobering realism and concludes: "The present becomes the only reality and the past a mere illusion. Larkin is not nostalgic" (Hassan 153). The Fennels represented the possibility of improving her situation as a lonely refugee more than that she was genuinely fond of the family. She uses her recollection of them to protect herself from her present situation, but once she realises that, she tries to accept it and face her life alone: "if she were to be happy, the happiness would have to burn from her own nature" (Larkin 184).

Joyce Carol Oates even argues that the novel conveys a certain joy in the refusal of happiness: "a perverse eagerness to celebrate the failure of the world's enchantment" (Oates). She regards the novel as too hard and bleak, but Katherine's insight seems necessary to break Katherine's infatuation with the past and face the facts. Therefore, what Oates seems to overlook is that Larkin does not end with emptiness and disillusion alone. Larkin wants to show that a break with the past is necessary to start anew, and he ends with a note of hope of what remains:

> So many snowflakes, so many seconds. [...] Yet their passage was not saddening. Unsatisfied dreams rose and fell about them, crying out against their implacability, but in the end glad that such order, such destiny, existed. Against this knowledge, the heart, the will, and all that made for protest, could at last sleep. (Larkin 248)

Time is not up, and there are still hopes and dreams for the future, however disappointed Katherine feels with people now.

Retreat and Return

The sobering view on the past also accounts for Larkin's vision on pastoral nature. Katherine would like to revisit that pastoral country she knew before, but she realises it is impossible, and that the retreat is an illusion. In that way, Larkin shares the view of anti-pastoral critics that it is wrong to idealise nature as a happy dream. Katherine realises that the city and the present are more realistic than a past memory of the countryside. In the end she can see that trying to go back to past was an illusion:

> She had moved into a world that might have been a country dance, when, dressed in white, she had momentarily joined hands with the one in yellow, the one in green, the lavender and the sprigged-rose. [...] And she thought in some way he might lead her back to it. What a pretty thought it was, and how untrue. She had known it was untrue. (Larkin 217)

She had given in to nostalgic feelings but is punished for it. Now, a return to the city is inevitable, because she knows it is impossible to revisit a place that is so changed by her memory and not be disappointed by it. She distances herself from her past because when she meets Robin she cannot see him other than a stranger, a "fellow-traveller" (Larkin 237).

A Girl in Winter culminates in a rejection of the pastoral in the sense of an idyllic

landscape where true happiness can be found, because it can only end in dissatisfaction with reality. In the end, “she had to face what remained”, and Katherine tries to find some hope in the falling snow (Larkin 217).

Chapter 2: Dodie Smith's *I Capture the Castle*

I Capture the Castle is a novel written in diary form, and was first published in 1949. Cassandra Mortmain is the seventeen-year-old narrator who starts practising her writing-skills by trying to describe her peculiar family and her life in their home, Godsend castle in Godsend Village, Suffolk. Cassandra is fond of the castle and its natural surroundings, and the theme of 'pastoral nature' is an important element in the novel.

Cassandra's father, who is an author, has never published anything after his one successful work, and consequently the family are trying to make do in their beautiful but impractical and dilapidated castle. Their lives change when two American men arrive at the neighbouring Scoatney Hall, as one of whom is the inheritor of the estate that Godsend castle belongs to. Cassandra's sister, Rose, soon wins the heart of the eldest, Simon, and with that their financial situation improves substantially. Tragically, Cassandra falls in love with him too and confronts Rose for wanting Simon only for his money. Then it turns out Rose chooses love over money after all as she elopes with Simon's brother Neil. After a while Simon asks Cassandra to come with him to New England, but she decides not to settle for second best and stays at the castle.

The Country in Contrast

The romantic, pastoral atmosphere of the English landscape is an important theme in *I Capture the Castle*, as the Mortmain family live a simple, rather isolated life in the countryside. Several elements of the classical pastoral are presented, such as a simple life that values being artistically inspired by natural surroundings. The sisters Cassandra and Rose have finished school and live a fairly leisurely life while they wait for someone to marry

them, while their younger brother Thomas is still at school. Their stepmother Topaz is an artist and model, who frequently goes communing with nature: “Thank heaven Nature never fails me” (Smith 162). Meanwhile, James Mortmain spends most of his time isolated in the gatehouse, supposedly focusing on his writing. Cassandra frequently writes about what she sees in nature, for example which flowers are blooming at what time of year and what weather it is. Moreover, they are living in a castle that is often linked with its ancient history, and the romantic atmosphere of it is used by the two sisters to look more appealing to the men. There is, therefore, an apparent romanticised landscape that confirms stereotypical notions of the English countryside.

The romantic quality of the rural castle and village is even more emphasised as it is contrasted with London. The Fox-Cottons, acquaintances of Simon and Neil Cotton, have a hypermodern home in London. When Cassandra visits them and remarks on the house’s modernity, Aubrey Fox-Cotton replies that he loves “Modernity in London, antiquity in the country” (314). It seems that for him, the ideal situation would be to preserve history and an old-fashioned lifestyle in one place and progression in another, because he does not want to lose one of them. This would make the countryside an emblem of history, but also of increasing backwardness. What is more, his view only highlights stereotypical notions of the countryside and the city, because his views imply that nothing related to modernity should be permitted in the countryside, while the city is ever-changing.

Not only is it his wish that the countryside stays the same, the novel seems to affirm that it is already quite constant. Indeed, life in Suffolk is frequently alluded to as being backward and old-fashioned. Because Mr Mortmain has dropped his London friends, Rose and Cassandra only know a few people in Godsend village. News from the outside world does not seem to reach them because Cassandra never refers to it. Also, when the two Americans visit, Rose does not know how to behave, because all her knowledge is “out of old books”

(Smith 79). Cassandra writes that they do not know any role models: “Oh poor, poor Rose – She never even saw modern girls on the pictures, as I did.” (Smith 79). This is why Rose acts like a Victorian heroine, which makes it seem as if rural people live in a bygone age.

Cassandra and Rose feel awkward when they take a trip to London to collect their inherited wardrobe. They are excited to visit the city, and while travelling Cassandra remarks “how different things felt” when they come nearer to the city: “the feel of the country went – it was as if the London air was trapped in the London train. And our white suits began to look peculiar” (Smith 92). Their wardrobe offers little choice but to wear their school uniforms in April which was not strange-looking while they were in the country, but the more urban their surroundings get, the more they feel out of place. They look like they know nothing of the fashionable world and feel that other people know that they are not city girls.

In the city, the things Cassandra notices and admires are mostly elements from the natural world. When the sisters enter a luxurious shop, she describes it as follows: “the pale grey carpets were as springy as moss and the air was scented; it smelt a bit like bluebells, but richer, deeper” (97). Here Cassandra compares the shop with the woods she knows from home, but as more luxurious, because the scent is deeper than real flowers, and the woods’ ground is not covered with moss alone. She continues describing the shop: “bottles of scent and a little glass tree with cherries on it and a piece of white branched coral on a sea-green chiffon scarf. Oh it was an artful place” (Smith 97). She describes the shop, then, as showing imitations of natural objects such as cherries and coral and calls it artful, which means creative as well as artificial. This depiction of nature is on the one hand beautiful, but it is overdone and does not resemble reality anymore. It could be said that it resembles pastoral nature: it is the invention of a natural environment that is more like heaven or an idealised version of nature rather than real nature itself. Indeed, Rose replies she thinks it smells like heaven.

When Cassandra goes to London again by herself, she visits Hyde Park and notices its "separateness" from the city (Smith 311). She contemplates that the park belongs to the countryside: "and that it thus links the Londons of all periods together most magically – by remaining for ever unchanged at the heart of the ever-changing town" (Smith 312). The park embodies a different lifestyle, one that is more peaceful and constant. That is why this is an example of the middle landscape, that connects the busy city with nature and history. Trees and grass will always look the same, in ancient history and in the present, in the country and the city, so that they symbolise an eternity that is solacing.

The Country and the World

Dodie Smith wrote *I Capture the Castle* during the Second World War in the United States. Just before the war, she went there to assist with the preparations of the production of one of her plays, and suddenly decided not to go back (Crater). However, she missed her home country and was "in a perpetual state of wretched regret about having left London" (Grove vii). Her yearning for England is likely to have had an effect on her portrayal of her country in *I Capture the Castle*. Smith wanted to "evade engagement with the political, social and cultural turmoil of wartime England", which results in Cassandra's journals to be free of any difficulties in these areas (Stewart 328). It could be argued that Smith's choice to place her novel in the countryside of 1930s is a form of escapism in an attempt to save her version of the ideal England before the war. However, this does not imply that her portrayal of England in the thirties is correct. In fact, it is likely that Smith's notion of England became more idealised as time went by and her memories changed with wishing to be there. That is why *I Capture the Castle´*s rural setting embodies the national ideal that the English wanted to

defend in the war. This idea of "equating the countryside with the nation-state" is exemplary for its time (Stewart 329).

Cassandra often reflects on the foreignness of Simon and Neil. Neil seems to be the strangest appearance in the village, because he dresses differently and misses his home the most. That is why he cannot appreciate anything English, as Rose acknowledges: "He thinks England's a joke, funny sort of toy – toy trains toy countryside" (Smith 112). Simon has a more romantic character and is more open towards rural England, because he speaks more like English people and wears tweeds. He is fond of history and wants to "strike English roots", so Cassandra thinks he might like her Midsummer night rites (Smith 251).

When Rose and Cassandra return from picking up their furs in London, they experience a feeling of being foreigners in their native village. They are compelled to wear the furs so that when they get off the train they are mistaken for bears, and Neil decides to hunt them down. This makes them feel like invaders, and as such exemplifies how out of place Rose and Cassandra feel. In London they felt like strangers because they were wearing unsuitable clothes, and now that they are back and have experienced the city, they look at the countryside with different eyes as Cassandra suddenly notices how sweet the country smells (Smith 101). What is more, this incident seems to be the cause of Rose and Neil falling in love. Rose becomes the subject of Neil's love which is symbolised in her being hunted down as his prey. This is a strikingly tragic image because it seems as if Rose becomes Neil's victim.

The arrival of the two Americans make Cassandra see everything differently, which becomes apparent in how she looks at nature while she is swimming in the moat with Neil: "it occurred to me that never before had I seen flowers growing above my head, so that I saw the stalks first and only the underneath of the flowers – it was quite a nice change" (Smith 209). She learns to see her situation and surroundings in a different perspective, just as Simon and

Neil see it. The poverty and ancient surroundings and the strange Mortmain and Topaz were all familiar to her, but once the modern men have arrived, Cassandra becomes aware of herself, her house and her family. She realises how strange they must seem, living in their decaying castle and how much Rose wants to escape from it. However, the night when the Cottons come for dinner, she sees the romantic part of living in the castle again. This is an evening of hope, of new perspectives, which is, as she says, "quite a nice change" (Smith 209). Perhaps this is also applicable with regard to nature. It is no use to see nature as merely idyllic and harmonious, or merely with a rational anti-pastoral outlook as if it does not have beautiful, romantic qualities. This paragraph shows that it is worthwhile not only to look at the obviously pretty top of the flower, but to view it from beneath and discover that side also has its beauty.

Cassandra is aware that nature is not only pastoral innocence, for example when they encounter the swans in the moat while swimming (Smith 209). However beautiful they are and contribute to the beauty of the castle, she knows they can also be dangerous: "I was really quite frightened" (Smith 209). Neil is used to the more extreme Californian desert, and is not impressed by anything in England, so he only laughs when they disturb the swans. As was mentioned before, he thinks England is a toy country and cannot take it seriously. He even says he appreciates the castle only because it is fun, not because it is old. Neil is completely ignorant of any subtlety in English nature because it is too dull for him, and he feels too superior to notice things that are important to Cassandra, such as nice smells or historic details (Smith 208).

Moreover, Neil seems to be a symbolic representative of human beings who dominate their natural surroundings. He is the one who hunts the 'bear' and pretends to have killed it. He seems to be a stereotype of the American who wants to explore the wilderness and inhabit it, because he is going to work on a ranch in what used to be the Wild West. The only thing

that interests him about the castle is its warfare, which implies that he is interested in fighting and governing rather than peace (Smith 208).

Realism

Despite conveying some clichéd notions of the country in contrast to the rest of the world, Victoria Stewart notices that Dodie Smith prevents herself from writing too nostalgically by being realistic. Stewart argues that Smith tries to engage with both modernism and realism through the medium of the journal, thereby addressing problems of objective representation (Stewart 329). Cassandra raises questions of representation when she pledges to write what she sees, but also admits that she is sometimes inclined to change or overlook an uncomfortable detail. Still, her goal is to write how she sees the world as truthfully as she can, so that the reader is compelled to take her view on the country seriously.

The family's poverty also puts the idealised outlook on life in a country castle into perspective. Rose is extremely unsatisfied with their lack of money, and her first statement in the novel is that "she saw nothing romantic about being shut up in a crumbling ruin surrounded by a sea of mud." (Smith 6). This shows that beautiful natural surroundings do not suggest their life is like life in Arcadia, because their poverty makes the castle more like a prison than a voluntary retreat. They are often hungry, the house is cold and leaky and most of their possessions have been sold, so their life is not comfortable. This has a sobering effect on the representation of their lifestyle, and leads to Cassandra reacting in a practical way to distressing situations. She writes for example that "even a broken heart doesn't warrant a waste of good paper" (Smith 407).

Also, the countryside is not completely shut off from modernity and progress. Smith realises that the rural world she and other writers were wishing back for was already

nonexistent (Stewart 337). This is apparent through her versions of Marx' machine in the garden. First of all, there is a railway to London, and even though it is more like a toy-train, it does connect Godsend village to the rest of the world. Also, Cassandra is given a wireless and a gramophone for her birthday, something that brings the world inside the castle because the family now have access to the latest news. Moreover, the most important example of the arrival of the modern world are Simon and Neil. As Americans in the 1930s, they are emblems of modernity, freshness and progress, and they are happy to share their knowledge with the Mortmain family. Their arrival also opens up possibilities of escaping the poverty and backwardness, because Rose hopes to marry a rich man. The new people even seem to inspire and believe in James Mortmain's writing skills. They thus disturb the Mortmain's peaceful life and bring modern life to their castle.

English Nature and Melancholy

Nature in *I Capture the Castle* is often connected to time and history, and connects the English countryside with nostalgic nationalism. When Cassandra and Simon walk through the village, they talk about landscapes in New England, and Simon says that compared to New England the beauty of the English countryside is touching, it is "much more than visual" (Smith 177). Cassandra has an explanation for his sadness, as she has felt it herself sometimes. She thinks nature's beauty inspires melancholy because it is fleeting and reminds people of their own temporal nature. This places the landscape in an eternal, nostalgic background full of history.

That melancholic atmosphere is precisely what Cassandra seems to love about the landscape. For Cassandra, the country means being in touch with a history to be proud of. The summery sights of the village when they have lunch there inspire a sense of being in touch

with several pasts: “I seemed to capture everything together – medieval England, myself at ten, the summers of the past and the summer really coming” (Smith 182). This is a happy moment, almost an epiphany in which she is conscious of herself as a part of England’s history. Stewart argues: “Her experience of happiness in the present is inseparable from a particular, carefully edited version of the past, both historical and personal” (Stewart 338). She implies that Cassandra constructs a subjective image of what England is, because she does not want to think of England in terms of “flags and Kipling and outposts of Empire and such” (Smith 181). In this way, Cassandra’s depiction of England is deliberately ignorant of more negative elements in English history to enable an experience of belonging to a nation.

A nostalgic sense of England’s landscape is what seems to contribute in Cassandra’s decision not to follow Simon to New England. The last pages of her journal relate how Simon comes to say goodbye to Cassandra:

> Then we spoke of the autumn – the hoped he would be in time to catch a glimpse of it in New England. ‘Is it more beautiful than this?’ I asked. ‘No. But it’s less melancholy. So many of the loveliest things in England are melancholy.’ (Smith 404-405)

Then he asks her to come with him to the United States and she refuses. It is almost as if one of the reasons she decides to stay is her attachment to a land full of history and melancholy.

In other ways Cassandra’s surroundings put her in an English tradition. The idea of a castle in the country makes her think of classic literary heroines in the novels of Jane Austen and the Brontë sisters. She even compares herself to these writers as she is writing with only a candle to light the journal. Smith herself said about the castle: “It was a place where the past is ‘like a presence, a caress in the air’” (Grove viii). She is completely surrounded by history, that connects the countryside with being the epitome of Englishness and gives a strong sense of rural nostalgia.

Memories of Season's Past

The landscape is not only connected with history and Englishness, but also to Cassandra's memories. Memory is an important recurring theme in the novel because Cassandra is often reflecting on her childhood. The seasons are often mentioned and have symbolic connotations. When the Cotton brothers arrive, spring is just arriving, denoting the expectant feeling of a new beginning. High summer is the time when Cassandra is happiest and the family's prospects are increasing, while the autumn decay corresponds with Cassandra's depressed feelings.

The seasons also invite memories of a different place or time. Cassandra relates how her family came across Godsend castle for the first time, and her impression of it seems to depend much upon the time of year: "It was late autumn, very gentle and golden. I loved the quiet-coloured fields of stubble and the hazy water meadows" (Smith 33). Stewart mentions Cassandra's descriptions of moments of epiphany in which several times come together (336). One example is what Cassandra sees when she thinks of her home: "How strange memory is! When I close my eyes, I see three different castles – one in the sunset light of that first evening, one all fresh and clean as in our early days there, one as it is now." (Smith 42). These memories are all interrelated and each one gives Cassandra a new fondness of her home. Another example of different pasts coming together and changing reality is when she describes the history of Godsend castle and its adjacent tower:

> While I have been writing I have lived in the past, the light of it has been all around me – first the golden light of autumn, then the silver light of spring and then the strange light, grey but exciting, in which I see the historic past. But now I have come back to earth and rain is beating on the attic window, an icy draught is blowing up the staircase. (Smith 46)

These pasts seem to make reality bearable, because for a moment Cassandra had forgotten about the cold and poverty. In this way, nostalgic memories and imagination can serve as a form of therapy when reality is difficult.

The peculiar thing about the novel as a journal is that the things that are described are already a memory and therefore filtered through Cassandra's mind. When she writes things down they are already in the past, and are subjective because they are Cassandra's view. Also, she has the urge to change her memory in her favour but at the same time admits it. Furthermore, Stewart argues that "memory and representation intertwine" because Simon's presence influences her memories (336). At the end of the novel Cassandra looks back on Midsummer Eve and says: "I could never explain how the image [of the cathedral-like avenue on Midsummer Eve] and the reality merge, and how they somehow extend and beautify each other" (Smith 402). This shows how the present changes memories, and how memories also affect the present, so none of them are objective representations but the sum of different memories, experiences, feelings and insights.

It is clear that Smith yearns back for the days before the countryside was disturbed by modernity and was not at war, but she acknowledges that memories are not objective representations of the past. Yet they are still memories of a happy moment or vision. The novel is therefore subjected to a nostalgic view on the past while also being aware of it not being the complete truth. Stewart mentions that Nicholas Dames has suggested that "nostalgia can be a means of transforming trauma into sentiment" (Stewart 339). In this way, Cassandra and Smith herself can come to terms with the past and present and know what feeling of happiness they want to work for to obtain again in the future. Pastoral nature in literature resembles a happy memory: it can be the reality of the moment, but is not everyday reality. However, those moments can be a motivation to sustain nature and work towards a harmony between nature and culture.

Godsend Castle as Middle Landscape

Godsend Castle is not like a comfortable palace, but it can be regarded as a bridge between humans and nature. It is not a place to keep nature out, because it is so cold and damp and there are holes in the roof. This diminishes the boundaries between outside and inside, and indeed Cassandra spends time inside as much as outside. In Cassandra's observations she often speaks of nature and the castle in unison. There seems to be a sort of unity between the castle and nature, as if the castle is still the ruin taken over by nature when they entered it for the first time: overgrown with brambles and high hedges that almost swallow the building (Smith 34). When they move in, nature is still ever-present in the house: Cassandra describes how she is inside, looking at beech leaves that her mother brought in while Rose plays a song called 'To a Water Lily'. Then she looks out the window and sees two swans on the moat as if they welcome them (Smith 42).

Dodie Smith seems to suggest that a simple lifestyle is more rewarding. Poverty is not presented as comfortable, but even in the first chapter, Cassandra states that she can still be happy: "I really am just as discontented [as Rose is], but I don't seem to notice it so much. I am unreasonable happy this minute" (Smith 10). Poverty makes the family conscious of what they spend, and small pleasures like food are greatly appreciated that makes it seem as if life is lived with more attention: "I shouldn't think even millionaires could eat anything nicer than new bread and real butter and honey for tea" (Smith 48). Even lacking modern devices is praised, because Mortmain "has always said that being without [a wireless] is one of the few pleasures of poverty" (Smith 295). Cassandra can always find riches in nature to adorn their interior: "at least we can still have beech leaves" (Smith 43). This deliberate consciousness of homely and natural details is what makes Cassandra's life in the castle an example of dwelling in a home.

Then there is Scoatney Hall, which is almost the opposite of the ancient castle. It is a luxurious house, wealthy and modern. After the Midsummer rites, Simon brings Cassandra there, and according to Stewart she "is now entering the 'civilised' world of adult emotions, guilt, and shame" (340). The modern house stands for loss of innocence and childhood, and implies a more artificial life, closer to civilisation and further from living in communion with nature.

There is even a sense of nostalgia for poverty when they have a little more to spend. When Rose is living in London and is given all she has ever wanted, she tells Cassandra she would rather like to go back to the past when they were poor but happier (Smith 223). Rose pretends she loves Simon because it will make her happy to have enough money. It turns out that all the luxury in the world cannot make people happy when they are not honest. As Stewart puts it, "material goods soon come to be equated with artificiality and inauthenticity" (Stewart 340). The best example for this is the expensive scent Cassandra wanted that reminded her of bluebells, and that she is given as a present from Rose. She wants to wear it when performing the rites, but it seems synthetic now: "it no longer reminded me of bluebells" because it "stood for London and luxury. It killed the faint wild-flower scents and I knew it would spoil the lovely smell that comes from Belmotte grass" (Smith 247). Once she smells the scent in the countryside, it does not seem natural anymore and it suddenly seems worthless.

It is clear that Smith criticises the prospering consumerism that started in the 1920s and wants to show that money does not grant happiness. With regard to nature, overconsumption exhausts the earth's resources and has proven to be extremely harmful. Smith's praise of a simple life close to nature is therefore also a responsible stance to protect the rural country she so admires.

Midsummer Dwelling

On Midsummer Day, Cassandra spends a day alone at home that can be seen as a day dedicated to harmony with nature or a retreat from society. Every Midsummer Eve, Cassandra and Rose perform rites as if they are pagans worshipping the earth. It is a tradition they invented themselves when they were young, and evokes memories with regard to Cassandra's childhood more. Now she performs them for the last time, she is already feeling nostalgic for the times she still half believed in them and felt frightened by them (Smith 238).

On Midsummer Day, she seems to 'capture' the castle completely and becomes its queen as if it is all hers. The days before, she was compelled to become the head of the family as Topaz and Rose are in London. On Midsummer Day she is alone for the first time, and suddenly becomes aware of herself and her surroundings: "I owned myself more than I usually do" (Smith 242). Cassandra compares the day with a natural avenue as glorious as a cathedral: "an avenue leading to a home I had loved once but forgotten" (Smith 242, made of trees and the sky. She notices worms and birds as if her senses are more awake than usual. Then she decides to "commune with nature" (Smith 244) like Topaz does and go sunbathing naked on the roof of the tower which makes her feel as if she "seemed to live in every inch of [her] body" (Smith 244). The warmth of the sun is like "enormous hands pressing gently" (Smith 244). The rites themselves are symbolic of being one with nature: Cassandra picks wildflowers for a garland and puts on a green dress, to immerse herself in greenery. She decides not to use the expensive scent in order to be able to smell the real country and then makes a fire on the mound to honour nature. This is a rather spiritual account of living in harmony with nature, but it is what dwelling in nature can mean: a feeling of being more alive and of being aware of living nature.

This Midsummer Eve becomes a symbol for Cassandra saying goodbye to her childhood and her natural community with nature. She knows this will be the last time she will perform the rites and this day becomes symbolic for the end of a phase, as she is now an adult. She remembers previous Midsummer rites with melancholy as the night begins to fall: "I took one last look round the quiet fields, sorry to let them go" (Smith 248). This indeed proves to be the end of a happy time. Her life is changed by Simon's kiss later that evening and a more depressing time is coming. It drives a wedge between her and Rose, and from that happiest Midsummer moment, life can only go downward, as the days shorten and autumn approaches slowly. The next day it is raining, and after that the summer never feels as glorious as before: "there was no hopeful, beginning feeling" (Smith 308).

Conclusion

It cannot be denied that Smith has on the one hand described the surroundings of Godsend village as a popular pastoral that is very romantic and peaceful. The English countryside is contrasted with London and landscapes in the United States, emphasising certain stereotypes about the countryside being full of beauty and history and yet backward. It also shows connections with English history and traditions, making it a nostalgic, idealised landscape that is constructed out of happy memories. However, there are also realistic elements that disturb the pastoral village, such as the difficulty of poverty, foreigners and modern gadgets. The novel also explores memories as subjective representations of the past that help to accept the present. Pastoral nature is an example of these nostalgic memories that do not correspond with reality, and yet are necessary to cope with the future and form an ideal to strive for.

Smith conveys an example of how to approach nature as a dwelling place, by showing how Cassandra lives with her natural surroundings in the castle. It also criticises excessive luxury

and shows the beauty of a simple life, without arguing that poverty is delightful. In this way, *I Capture the Castle* manages to combine a nostalgic sense of the countryside with realism and modernity.

Chapter 3: *Brideshead Revisited* by Evelyn Waugh

Evelyn Waugh's best known novel *Brideshead Revisited* is Charles Ryder's recollection of his relationship with an aristocratic family and their country house. It is often regarded as the most representative text of aristocratic rural nostalgia in 1940s literature. Raymond Williams, for example, says the novel is an example of "consciously reactionary idealisations of this supposed class and its way of life" (Williams 249). This way of life is an idealised image of the traditional English rural gentry of the past, because it mourns the loss of nostalgic images of how an Englishman in the country used to be like according to Charles' hopes and memories.

Aristocratic Arcadia

Brideshead Castle is presented as a paradisiacal Arcadia: the leftovers of a golden age filled with luxury, leisure and art. In the novel, Charles Ryder comes across the obsolete castle during the Second World War, which triggers memories of how he became involved with Sebastian Flyte and his family, a traditional aristocratic family for whom tradition and religion become a burden. Charles becomes involved with Sebastian and his dandy-like friends in Oxford in the 1920s, and discovers that he admires their eccentric, extravagant and artistic lives. He describes his becoming acquainted with Sebastian as entering "an enclosed and enchanted garden" (Waugh 40). This garden is enclosed because he feels it is a privilege to become part of this colourful world in which art is a lifestyle. As an only child with a distant father, he is aching for love and community because he seems to have lacked those. So for Charles, being with his new friends is a form of Arcadia or Eden.

In other words, the group of friends have created a world for themselves which is

almost heavenly: a world of art, love and luxury that he was searching for. The image that captures this feeling of perfection in the first stage of their friendship is a pastoral scene of a picnic: "On a sheep-cropped knoll under a clump of elms we ate the strawberries and drank the wine – as Sebastian promised, they were delicious together – and we lit the fat, Turkish cigarettes and lay on our backs, Sebastian's eyes on the leaves before him, mine on his profile, while the blue-grey smoke rose, untroubled by any wind, to the blue-green shadows of foliage, and the sweet scent of the tobacco merged with the sweet summer scents around us" (Waugh 32). In this passage Charles and Sebastian seem to be in harmony with each other and nature, enjoying the fruits of it in peace.

When Charles is invited to Brideshead the following summer, his time with Sebastian shows parallels with pastoral literature, with Brideshead as the emblem of Arcadia. They enjoy each other's company, the beauty of the estate, and wine and food, so that Charles believes himself "very near heaven, during those languid days at Brideshead" (Waugh 94). To express his feelings of that summer and be able to commemorate it, he paints a romantic pastoral landscape in one of the rooms: "a summer scene of white cloud and blue distances, with an ivy-clad ruin in the foreground, rocks and a waterfall affording a rugged introduction to the receding parkland behind" (Waugh 98). With this, he further idealises his summer, trying to hold on to his happiness and not be worried by Sebastian's reluctance to speak of his family history.

Brideshead estate and its aristocratic owners are presented as a vanishing phenomenon that has to be saved. It is often thought that the First World War meant the end of the age where the English gentry ruled the country, because as much as twenty per cent of the British gentry were killed and as a consequence many estates had to be sold (Howkins 55). However, Howkins shows that country society remained intact and the gentry still owned most of the rural land until the Second World War, and the rural aristocracy in the Interbellum "has taken

on in many memoirs the quality that an earlier generation ascribed to the years before 1914." (Howkins 61). The part of aristocracy that suffered the most was the more traditional paternalist gentry that tried to stay dependent on agriculture alone. The depression that followed the Wall Street Crash in 1929 had strong effects on the agricultural business and landlords were unable to maintain their estate so that many country houses had to be demolished (Howkins 61). This last group is what the Marchmain family is part of, as they are anxiously trying to hold on to the past and do not want to find new ways of obtaining income. Charles becomes part of this vanishing group of aristocrats because he starts to paint their houses that are soon to be broken down, in the way the family wants to remember it. His job is to capture and idealise country houses: rural nostalgia in a painting.

Rex is the embodiment of the modern, American business man, who is an outsider because he does not understand tradition. His detachment from moral value is connected with his modern character:

> He wasn't a complete human being at all. He was a tiny bit of one, unnaturally developed; something in a bottle, an organ kept alive in a laboratory. I thought he was a sort of primitive savage, but he was something absolutely modern and up-to-date that only this ghastly age could produce. (Waugh 229-230)

He is an example of an uncultured man who is not part of tradition. When Rex tells him Brideshead estate will be destroyed to build flats, Charles is drinking good wine and thinks that the Burgundy is "a reminder that the world was an older place than Rex knew" (Waugh 201-202) as if the wine is a solacing remnant of tradition. In this way, Waugh criticises modernity and shows the superiority of tradition and continuity.

Part three of the novel features more examples of modern life and urban landscapes, but what is striking is that peacefulness and fresh air, so often sought for in the country by city people, are still connected to Julia and Brideshead. When they encounter each other on the

ship, the storm makes most people on the ship fall ill and have to stay in their rooms, so Charles and Julia can spend time together and even take walks on deck. After the opening of his exposition, Charles is happy to escape to the country with Julia after what he calls a nightmare of crowds and critics (Waugh 213). He looks out of a train window: "the glow of the town gave place first to the scattered lights of the suburbs, then to the darkness of the fields" (Waugh 312). He is happy to go away from civilisation and sees Julia and the country house as a pastoral retreat. However, he finds that the world has come to Brideshead as Rex and his politician friends discuss politics and the impending war. The only place to go to is the garden, where they can remember the past and isolate themselves. In one day, Charles and Julia meet each other three times by the fountain. Charles remarks on the romantic spot and compares it to the setting of a play: "Act one, sunset; act two, dusk; act three, moonlight" (Waugh 332). It seems that he has a habit of placing his life in a tradition, like a romantic drama or a pastoral poem, romanticising his life in that way. This shows how deliberately artificial this pastoral setting is.

Death Comes to Arcadia

The first part of *Brideshead Revisited* is called "Et in Arcadia Ego", which means "Even in Arcadia, I am present". It refers to a skull with this inscription in Charles' room, and is a reference to paintings where death intrudes in a pastoral landscape in the form of a grave or a snake. Erwin Panofsky argues: "In conjunction, the two compositions thus teach a twofold lesson, one warning against a mad desire for riches at the expense of the more real values of life, the other against a thoughtless enjoyment of pleasures soon to be ended" (257). The phrase is inherently anti-pastoral, because it acknowledges that all happiness, luxury and life, comes eventually comes to an end, and is a reminder that love and faith are more important

than wine and leisure. It seems that Evelyn Waugh is aware that an Arcadian-like environment such as Brideshead cannot be free of sin, death and unhappiness. In more general terms, he acknowledges the falsity of pastoral nature, and so critiques the nostalgia for a better age that is a theme in the novel.

Sebastian experiences the loss of pastoral bliss because his luxurious way of life is connected to his desire to stay an innocent child. He is attached to his nanny and carries around his teddy bear Aloysius. Lord Marchmains's mistress foresees that the realisation that he is not a child anymore wil make him unhappy (Waugh 120). She refers to "the illusions of boyhood – innocence, God, hope" that Sebastian, like his father, wants to hold on to (Waugh 120). It could be that that is why he holds on to luxury and pastoral nature, because he constructs a world for himself where he can feign sin and unhappiness are not there. Indeed, Charles describes Sebastian's ways of creating a pastoral lifestyle as a form of escapism, and when Charles becomes too involved with Sebastian's family, Charles "became part of the world which he sought to escape" (Waugh 148). Lady Marchmain and the rest of Sebastian's family remind him what he did not want to face by holding on to the innocence of childhood: that the moral obligations of his religious upbringing compel him to take into account sin and death. Charles says that Sebastian's "days in Arcadia are numbered", because his constructed Arcadia is falling apart (Waugh 148). It turns out that living in reality is impossible for Sebastian because he resorts to another form of escapism: large quantities of alcohol.

England is a Country House

Country estates have been propagated as the essence of Englishness and an emblem of England as a nation, for example in country house poems. This genre of literature glorifies the

estate and its landlord, to emphasise its "tradition and continuity" as a fruitful system where the lord takes care of his tenants (Siddall 56). In a way, Waugh has written *Brideshead Revisited* as continuation of this literary genre, yet now the wellbeing of the estate is in jeopardy. Simon Schama writes that not only the glory of Brideshead is gone, but that the novel "turns into a long graveside oration for the death of faith, love, dynasty, England itself" (Schama 519). In this way, Brideshead castle becomes an emblem of all the old, traditional values that people feel are lost in the interbellum period.

There is, however, a danger of equating the nation with a country estate. Christine Berberich argues that mere glorification of country houses is false. When country houses are seen as the essence of Englishness, people are willing to overlook "an intricate system of slavery and the subordination of the lower classes" that made such luxurious houses possible (Berberich 48). She further argues that "the unquestioning depiction of Brideshead itself as an Arcadian idyll [...] needs to be challenged" (Berberich 49). Waugh indeed overlooks less moral historical factors of the English gentry and uses the country house to glorify the aristocracy. For example, when Charles and Julia are in the garden, Charles notices that the sunset is "glorifying the head and shoulders of the woman beside me" (Waugh 319). As the sun is setting and beautifies the house and Julia, it seems that it pays its respects to the last splendour of Brideshead and one of its country ladies. The use of the word glorification evokes an adoration of a high-placed person, or even God, and thus re-establishes social class. Therefore, Christine Berberich rightly criticises the nostalgic idealisation of country houses and calls it misleading, as only its beauty is celebrated and not the underlying image of economical, social and political realities.

Nature Redesigned

Presented as an old-fashioned, traditional estate from a bygone golden age, Brideshead castle gives the illusion of being pure and unspoilt by modern life. However, nature in *Brideshead Revisited* is always highly artificial, and is therefore a prime example of the popular pastoral, where nature is idealised and forced through a filter of culture. Brideshead Castle´s surrounding garden is an example of a picturesque landscape garden: "an exquisite man-made landscape" (Waugh 25). Although beautiful, it is entirely constructed and planned by man, and has become "a simple, carefully designed pattern" (Waugh 25). Nature, however, is not simple and patterned: it is complicated, unstructured and confusing. Human beings have the urge to structure, weed and adapt nature so that it can be grasped and ruled to serve their needs and ideals. Brideshead estate is, therefore, an example of nature that is subjected to human beings and not valued because of its inherent beauty.

It seems, therefore, that nature is approached as art, something that belongs to culture and is constructed and malleable by man. On the one hand it is admirable to admire a flower as a piece of art, especially when Sebastian looks at it: he "feel[s] the same kind of emotion for a butterfly or a flower that he feels for a cathedral or a picture" (Waugh 37). He sees it as a work of art from God. However, without that particular world-view, nature as an art piece becomes subjected to human beings as they pick and choose what suits their culture: "culture sees its lands according to its desires" (Michael Cohen).

This becomes clear when Anthony Blanche visits Charles' exposition of his paintings made in South America. Anthony tells Charles that he has always thought his art is so "gentlemanly" that he finds it "English snobbery" (Waugh 310). This time he expects to find something different, something wild, new and genuine because Charles has been spending time out of civilisation in the wilderness. He is disappointed, however, to find "charm again, my dear, simple, creamy English charm, playing tigers" (Waugh 311). This charm destroys everything, like love and art. It could be seen as a term for British domination, as English

charm masks and distorts reality, to make it seem more beautiful. English charm tries to embellish purely selfish deeds. In terms of pastoral, English charm can be exactly that: a filter through which reality is presented as an idyll. By including this criticism from Anthony, Waugh offers a reflection on his own novel by questioning Charles' view of reality through a filter of charm and nostalgia.

In the same way, the embellished tortoise is an example of enhancing the exotic, and could be a reference to the power of English imperialism and how English charm and arrogance wanted to change colonised cultures. Julia's tortoise is a gift from Rex, with her initials "set in diamonds in the living shell", that is teased by the Pekinese and eventually gets lost (Waugh 190). It could be an image for Charles who, not being part of the family, is driven away by Lady Marchmain when he does not support their method of curing Sebastian. Julia remarks that the tortoise is unable to feel and that setting in the diamonds is not cruel. When regarding the tortoise as a representative of nature, the family's outlook on it is that it can be enhanced and tortured because it does not have feelings. In the Marchmain family, nature serves human beings as entertainment.

Gardens as Bridges to Nature

Regarding nature as art can also be seen as a bridge between nature and culture. Sebastian seems to admire nature and is inspired by it. For example, he feels the urge to visit the botanical gardens, to see the ivy. However, the botanical gardens are also artificially made by man. Still, this being surrounded by nature has an effect on Charles, because when he returns to his room, he sees the world differently. He says that "nothing except the golden daffodils seemed to be real" (Waugh 43). This is an example of a retreat to nature and return to civilisation that leaves Charles with a renewed awe for the natural environment. The botanical

gardens can be seen as an example of Marx' middle landscape, that offers a feeling of defamiliarization. Charles spends time in nature and returns with a fresh outlook on his own environment, that includes a fascination with, and therefore more care for, nature.

Conclusion

Brideshead Revisited is a novel that mourns for the old aristocratic way of life that seemed to disappear during the first half of the twentieth century. Waugh praises the country estate, presents it as the essence of Englishness and shows the English as a superior culture. When writing the novel, Waugh wanted to go back to the past because it was at least more like Arcadia than wartime England where the future seemed as bleak as ever. He therefore prefers an Arcadia with the presence of death over a nation at war where all gentlemanliness seems to have disappeared.

Although *Brideshead Revisited* is rightly called reactionary and nostalgic, Waugh eventually critiques his novel as well, because he acknowledges the presence of death in Arcadia. He shows that his idyllic view of the past is also false: it is a man-made construction of a dream that was never real. The author has deliberately idealised nature and English tradition to point out that although nostalgia is comforting, it does not justify reality. As a young man, Charles caught a glimpse of a happy life and believed in it during their summer together, although he also witnessed Sebastian's struggle with his family and faith. Charles holds on to that English charm in his art as he keeps constructing a dreamlike Arcadia for himself, but it does not work out as modern life overtakes and destroys their dreams, so that trying to construct a better reality proves to be futile.

Chapter 4: *The Shrimp and the Anemone* by L.P. Hartley

The Shrimp and the Anemone is the first novel in a trilogy called *Eustace and Hilda*, written by L. P. Hartley and published in 1944. It relates Eustace Cherrington´s childhood in Anchorstone, a fictional place based on the seaside town of Hunstanton in Norfolk. Eustace grows up under the continuous domination of his elders, in particular his sister Hilda, who thinks she has to take over the role of their deceased mother. In each of the three novels, Eustace discovers himself further as an independent being and attempts to escape the control of his sister. In the end Eustace fails as he eventually dies "because he and Hilda can no longer exist in the same world" (Mulkeen 42). Although the three novels belong together, they can be read separately, so this chapter will focus on the first of the three novels only. Events occur in Eustace's life that partly free him from his sister's influence, such as a paper-chase that causes an illness, and an inheritance from a lady whom he held company, but Eustace keeps struggling between being more independent and winning sympathy from his sister. The seaside landscape in *The Shrimp and the Anemone* is an important theme in the novel, because it is related to human domination and touches on the cost of human interference with natural phenomena. The novel also conveys themes of nostalgia and childhood innocence, as Hartley tries to come to terms with modernism and a fast-changing world that focuses on the masses instead of the individual.

A Seemingly Pastoral Seascape

The landscape in *The Shrimp and the Anemone* resembles a pastoral landscape as Eustace, Hilda and other children from the town go to the beach every day, have a picnic in a green valley and play in a park. Their house adjoins the beach as if it is their back garden. This

seems to convey childhood as an age of innocence, a Golden Age that is a perpetual holiday. There is one reference to the city as opposed to the country in which the city is used as a threat. As part of Eustace´s punishment for disobeying his father and going on a paper-chase with the audacious girl Nancy, Mr Cherrington warns that if he does not behave they will have to move to the city: "Eustace opened wide his tear-filled eyes in horrified surprise; already he saw the dingy side street in Ousemouth and smelt the confined musty smell of the house where they lived at such close quarters round and above his father's office" (Hartley 104). Eustace´s recollection of the city is presented as stuffy and dark, without room to play and run around. It is in sharp contrast with the sunny, spacious beach that borders on his backdoor.

However, the pastoral landscape only gives the illusion of peace and childhood innocence, as Eustace is troubled by the difficulties and obligations of growing up under a demanding sister. He is an insecure boy who doubts his abilities, for example because he cannot yet ride a horse, and he is afraid of school and taking on other responsibilities.

> Indeed, the future was already dull and menacing with the ambitions other people entertained on his behalf. [...] In self-defence Eustace had formed the mental habit of postponing starting to make a man of himself to an unspecified date that never came nearer, remaining miraculously just far enough away not to arouse feelings of nervous dread, but not so far away as to give his conscience cause to reproach him with neglect of his duties. (Hartley 35).

This shows how he is already suffering from his sense of duty that he was taught to have at all times, although he is still a nine year-old child and does not even have responsibilities. That is why Eustace regards the past with melancholy. For example, his toys bring back the past in memories that are like "living relics of a golden age which it was an ecstasy to contemplate" (Hartley 17). It is as if Eustace view of life is that he can only become less happy as he grows

older and therefore already starts to look back on his life without responsibilities.

His refusal to grow up is only reinforced by the controlling, overprotecting nature of his sister, whose criticisms make him feel perpetually guilty of not behaving well enough and on guard to keep peace with her: "she kept him up to the scratch, she was extreme to mark what was done amiss" (Hartley 17). He feels guilty because he likes pleasurable things, as he is taught doing things because they are the duty of a respectable boy, such as being sociable to old ladies and "a lifetime's effort to keep dry" on the beach (Hartley 22). Anne Mulkeen captures this defiance of pastoral innocence when she describes the novel as "Innocence faced with bitter Experience" (68). It is clear that the seemingly innocent, pastoral life of Eustace is not at all without anxieties.

The title of the novel illustrates Eustace and Hilda's destructive relationship. It refers to the first paragraph of the novel, where Eustace finds an anemone that devours a shrimp. Hilda is convinced that the shrimp has to be saved, while Eustace thinks that perhaps the shrimp has to be sacrificed because the anemone is more beautiful. Hilda pulls the shrimp out of the anemone, accidentally killing them both. This resembles Hilda's controlling behaviour because on the one hand Hilda tries to secure a successful future for her little brother by teaching him that decorum, lessons and good deeds are important, but at the same time she smothers his enthusiasm for taking initiative and nourishes his fear of doing something wrong. Hilda's way of protecting Eustace is unhealthy and will crush them both if she keeps dominating him, like her overprotection of the shrimp has killed both animals.

Another way of looking at the shrimp and anemone tragedy is that this interference with the natural flow of things can disturb nature so badly that it is killed, as Hilda kills both the shrimp and the anemone because she tries to save it. Her attempt is admirable, but she should have seen that her interference only makes the situation worse. This illustrates the lethal dangers of meddling with the natural world as if human beings know all. If she had

acted sooner, perhaps she could have saved both animals, so this also shows the urgency of changing human's stance towards the natural world. Human intervention with nature can sometimes do more harm than good. The saving of the shrimp is as much a symbol for their relationship as it illustrates the dangers of human intervention and the wish to dominate nature.

Pond-making and Manipulating Nature

Eustace and Hilda go to the beach every day to dig an artificial pond which they have to watch ceaselessly to prevent its walls from breaking and the water from flowing to the sea. Hilda is the "great harnesser of water", because in Eustace's eyes she is mastering the water as well as Eustace (Tester 33). How they care for the pond symbolises their unequal relationship, as it shows how Hilda controls Eustace, when together they are "controlling and manipulating the water" (Tester 33). She manages the work with passion: "her fiery nature informed the whole business and made it exciting and dangerous" (Hartley 22). Helping her build and control the pond seems to help Eustace to win Hilda's sympathy and admiration, because they can work as a team to subject nature to their will.

When Eustace plays with Nancy, she is presented as behaving completely different than Hilda. They are building a sandcastle, which is the opposite of pond-making because they make a mound rather than a hole (Hartley 16). They are building something new and pretty rather than protecting a pool. Also, Nancy does not govern building the castle, but "seemed content to resign the task to him" (Hartley 16). She lets Eustace enjoy the building instead of pushing him to a certain goal, which makes Eustace like her. This shows the contrasting natures of the two girls, who are about the same age and competitors for Eustace's loyalty.

When playing Eustace likes to build cities and let them be destroyed by "volcanoes, earthquakes and violent manifestations of Nature" to exercise some power himself as a sort of "Angel of Death" (Hartley 20). It is as if, with his sister controlling him, he has to dominate something to not feel entirely subjected to the world. Because of his strong imagination, he half believes his play can give "fate the opportunity to take you at your word" (Hartley 20) so when Eustace's tidal wave almost hits Hilda, he is afraid something will happen to her. Strikingly, Eustace's play involves nature that cannot be controlled by man, as if the most obedient child who is at the bottom of the power-ladder can still have power over nonhuman nature. On the other hand, Eustace's violent nature is recreated on a small scale for playing, while real erupting volcanoes and tidal waves are uncontrollable. For Eustace, Hilda is the controller of the sea through the pond-making. That is why he is imagining nature that is even more violent and destructive to exercise his control over. Furthermore, it is as if Hartley wants to stress that there is also nature outside this pastoral seascape; a landscape that is not controllable but in its turn manipulates human constructions.

The pond-making is also reassuring for Eustace. He is terrified to be humiliated in dancing class and be told that he is a bad student, so he tries to think of pleasurable things, but no "ponds, rocks, volcanoes, eagles, Nancy Steptoe herself – would keep [his fear] at bay" (Hartley 64). The making of the pond "measured their strength against the universe and won" so that "the glory of living gathered itself into a wave and flowed over them", and "they felt themselves to be immortal" (157). Working on something and succeeding the way Hilda likes it gives Eustace a sense of virtue and usefulness, which makes him feel alive. It is almost as if their manipulation of nature makes them feel godlike. In this way, the novel shows how appealing the feeling of power and control can be, because even the subjected Eustace loves it.

What is more, this shows how human beings are only a small part of the world, even

though they can be convinced of their influence over it. Eustace and Hilda feel as if they have overcome the universe, while they have only succeeded in digging and protecting a pond. Ironically, the sea will break it as soon as they are called home for lunch. It might be that Hartley wants to show that human beings are not masters of the universe, because nature can easily destroy parts of civilisation. A volcano's violence amazes and teaches some reverence to humanity.

Ownership and domination

The landscape in Hartley's novel is also talked about in terms of ownership. Similar to Hilda's control over the ponds, the local gentry owns the whole beach. Dick Staveley, who finds Eustace and brings him home after the paper-chase, is the son of the family who are called the lords of the foreshore. When talking to Eustace he says: "it belongs to us as far as a man can ride into the sea and shoot an arrow" (Hartley 94). This traditional power impresses Eustace greatly and changes his way of seeing the beach forever. Mulkeen adds that Dick is presented as a "destroyer" because he hunts, shoots and talks of war (64). The famous white rocks of his local beach are not admired by Dick, which is for Eustace a whole new way of looking at his surroundings: "with a pang that was half pain, half pleasure, Eustace had a vision of his beloved rocks reduced to the meagre role of providing obstacles for Dick's horse to stumble over" (Hartley 95). After he recovers from his illness, "the pond, the rocks, the sand, the cliffs seemed to lose their magic" (Hartley 95). This is because of Dick's influence over him and the superiority of his worldview as an aristocrat, but also because the beach is connected to Hilda. After the paper-chase her spell over him has lifted, as well as the appeal of the pond-making. The pond "ceased to be a symbol" of conquering the world together with his sister (Hartley 157). His desire to become friends with Dick shows his shift from nature

and his sister to civilisation and fuels his wish to become a rich man without worries who moves in aristocratic society.

A Retreat from Obligation

When Eustace decides to go on a paper-chase with Nancy without telling his family, he makes the first move away from Hilda's domination. This could be seen as a retreat from civilisation to the countryside, as Eustace enjoys the freedom and beauty of nature. Nancy convinces Eustace that they can make a shortcut through the private park that belongs to the Anchorstone estate, so that they are even more secluded from civilisation. The worries whether his family misses him slide away as he soaks up the beautiful surroundings: "The contrast between the brilliant green foreground already aglow with evening gold and the incipient fir plantation, shaggy, grey, and a little mysterious, delighted Eustace" (Hartley 82). The race and being with Nancy gives him a new sense of independence and he is determined to show her that he is a strong boy. However, soon nature seems to turn against them as the weather turns and they try to run home as fast as possible: "They fought their way through the dripping hostile stalks while overhead and all round lightning flashed and thunder rent the sky" (Hartley 84). Eustace is overcome by a "sense of defeat" despite his new-found independence (Hartley 84). The children are found by Dick Staveley and Eustace is brought home wet and ill.

The return to civilisation and his family and the punishment for being disobedient, are inevitable. However, although the consequences of his outing with Nancy are the wrath of his father and a severe illness, the retreat has taught him and his family important life-lessons. Eustace's confidence is not shattered because the doctor and nurse have pressed upon the family "the necessity of fomenting his self-esteem", and for that reason Hilda should not

involve herself with him too much(Hartley 89). The outcome of the paper-chase starts Eustace's discovery of independence and Hilda's influence over him becomes less crushing. In this way the retreat from his family helps Eustace to become his own being whose wishes are taken seriously and helps him realise he can make his own decisions.

Nostalgia as Example

Tester shows that Hartley's writing is influenced by a sense of nostalgia for a lost way of living, as he writes during "years of rapid change in an oppressive, 'modern' world which Hartley disliked" (Tester 8). That is why his novels are always set in the Edwardian and Interbellum eras. The world he wants to go back to is a society focused on gentlemanliness, as he takes refuge in the stability of the aristocracy and their country houses. Tester argues that Hartley himself was part of upper-class society, and witnessed the importance of social class decrease during the Second World War (Tester 9). Other than the loss of elegance, Hartley was afraid of the power of the masses over the individual. In his novels, he wants to express the more Victorian idea of belief in the individual and its possibilities of growth and progress in life that is part of Victorian ideology. That is why his protagonists are more reminiscent of Victorian rather than early twentieth-century characters, as can be seen in *The Shrimp and the Anemone* in which self-improvement is an important theme.

Yet, Hartley does not ignore the present, because he wants to "re-assert" the individual: "The often intense suffering of his male protagonists, as they near self-understanding, is also a metaphor for the condition of the individual in post- Second World War England who was faced with the stultifying features of the age" (Tester 15). His nostalgia is therefore not only a lamentation for a lost world, but a hope for the future. Hartley believes in the "freedom to overcome" (Tester 15) difficulties, and not be subjected to the

masses. This is based on the ability to understand the self, so that an individual can confidently deal with the world and other people. In this way, nostalgia is made constructive instead of being a mere idealisation of the past. Anne Mulkeen adds that Eustace's experience with sin and guilt reflects the post-war world, because it is "the evidence of the inexplicable evil that can come out of his own nature" (68). It also shows that in Eustace's age, the world was not without sin, so Hartley does not idealise the past. He does not want to return to former times, but wants to critique the present society in order to improve it.

Conclusion

Eustace's relation with water and his continuous struggle against it seems to grasp the essence of the novel, for example in his dealing with the sea, the ponds and the bath. On the one hand he has to fight against the water literally as he has to stay dry while also protecting the artificial pond, and he is anxious to prevent the water in the bath from coming too high (Hartley 125). His fear of water symbolises several things as well, the tides of the sea, for example, symbolise change and time running. He wants to fight against time because he does not want to grow older. The sea further represents uncontrollable nature and inevitability. The pond and Eustace's love for recreating violent nature is an attempt to control it, but it is made clear that the sea cannot be overcome by human intervention.

In *The Shrimp and the Anemone*, Hartley questions human domination, as Hilda behaves too controlling towards her brother and her surroundings and Eustace is perhaps too passive. Mulkeen sees Hartley's novel as the juxtaposing of these attitudes: "Should we co-operate with nature [...] and expect the Golden Age" (66) or "does it need to be controlled, feared, tamed, worked against" (67). Nature in this novel is talked about in terms of subjection and ownership, adapting and controlling it. This accounts for human nature as well

as the natural landscape. With use of the landscape, Hartley shows that domination and control can destroy relationships and the joy of living, and that nature cannot entirely be controlled, as exemplified in the depiction of violent nature and Eustace's defiance of his sister.

Chapter 5: A Landscape Comparison

In this chapter the four novels will be compared and their similarities pointed out, so that some general conclusions can be drawn. First the notion of retreat from civilisation will be discussed, followed by a return in the form of Marx' machine in the garden. Then the equation of the real English nation and the countryside will be analysed, so that the question can be answered if country houses can represent a bridge between culture and nature. After that, rural nostalgia and the status of nature will be more closely analysed.

Escape to the Country

A constructive non-idealising pastoral text cannot do without retreat and return, in which "retreat illustrates the idealization of nature and a longing for communion with the nonhuman world, whereas return is the knowledge that such a connection is fleeting and that idealization bypasses environmental realities" (Bracke 36). This idealisation and enjoyment of pleasurable nature has become apparent in the authors' portrayal of rural life in the interbellum.

Katherine´s memory of a glorious summer in England is set in the middle of *A Girl in Winter* to remember nature´s beauty and the warmth of the English countryside and its people before the Second World War begins. The country house is described as a perfect place surrounded by water and green fields with flowers where the characters can live leisurely. Dodie Smith conveys the same image of a peaceful rural village where politics and news from the outside world does not seem to penetrate. Charles in *Brideshead Revisited* uses the countryside as a retreat, for example during his holiday with Sebastian, and later, when he has a relationship with Julia, he is relieved to depart to Brideshead after a long day in the crowds. Hartley shows the merits of a retreat from civilisation as Eustace escapes from his family's

tyranny by going on a paper-chase. That decision is the commencement of Eustace's discovery of his own will and the first step to becoming independent.

The Machine in the Garden

Still, the countryside in the past is not a pure depiction of escapism because retreats end in a return to reality. This can be in the form of a return to the past, or the presence of realistic elements that disturb the dreamlike pastoral landscape. All novels show such a deconstruction of the image of a pastoral landscape as Arcadia that are "counters to the pastoral dream" and "brings a world which is more 'real' into juxtaposition with an idyllic vision" like mortality and machines (Marx 25). The machine in the garden is a narrative device that is a form of return, because it exposes the idealisation of nature and critiques it.

Philip Larkin criticises idealisations of the past of which pastoral nature is a part because Katherine has to return to the cold reality, but he does seem to keep the image of nature as a refuge intact. It could be concluded that Larkin is the author who has presented the most sentimental pastoral, because he strongly opposes the country and the city, and Katherine Lind finds comfort in nature's beauty rather than in relationships with human beings. Smith's pastoral landscape in *I Capture the Castle* is countered by the struggle against poverty, the arrival of modern foreigners and the longing for a fashionable life in London. This invasion of modernity is symbolised by the arrival of the wireless, which brings the whole world to the countryside. *Brideshead Revisited* features the famous traditional symbol for mortality in Arcadia, the skull with the inscription *Et in Arcadia Ego* that Marx sees as the origin of his invention of the machine in the garden (Marx 26). Death and sin do not pass over the almost heavenly estate full of art and tradition, as the Marchmain family suffers from the weight of their traditional religious heritage. The seemingly innocent childhood of Eustace in

The Shrimp and the Anemone is quickly countered by his worries about his sister's domination, his responsibilities and the future, which shows that children do not live in a version of a Golden Age.

Rural England as Arcadia

All novels portray rural England as the real England where tradition and integrity go together with a pastoral landscape. Philip Larkin sharply opposes the country and the city, but represents a carefree life in the country as forever lost. He seems to believe that the world used to be a better place before the Second World War and wants to convey that view, but at the same time he shows that nostalgia is not the answer. He seems to show that in the 1940s, England has become less like a beautiful garden because Katherine does not believe such an England exists anymore. Larkin further shows that happiness and rural England do not necessarily go together. Instead, he represents nature as universal: Katherine can enjoy nature in the countryside and the city; in England and in her native country as the rustling trees comfort her everywhere.

Although Dodie Smith does not dismiss the city as less English or less desirable to live, she does depict the village where the Mortmain's live as picturesque and essentially English. This is especially clear when Cassandra and Simon have lunch in the village and she has a moment where she feels more English than ever before: the bread-and-cheese, the singing choir and the touching scenery make her glorify her native country (Smith 182).

Evelyn Waugh presents the English countryside as the source of tradition, moral virtue and artistic inspiration, in which the country estate plays the central role. Charles finds companionship and a retreat from a busy life when he stays at Brideshead. In *The Shrimp and the Anemone,* the city is only mentioned as a place where Eustace does not want to live.

What is striking is that English tradition and history is so important in all four novels. The English aristocracy and their estates, picturesque rural villages, the University of Oxford and old dilapidated castles and towers are all romanticised images of England that are almost touristy. As one may infer from these novels, literature in the forties seems to express a desire to emphasise these stereotypical images of the home-country as a form of empowerment or comfort.

Country Houses

Country houses can be viewed from different angles and can represent multiple ways of life. Sometimes they are portrayed as portals to civilisation, embodying wealth and social status. Anchorstone Hall seems to Eustace a dreamlike castle where he wishes he could live, and for Hartley it was important to protect that aristocratic world and its values because it represented the lost ideals of individual worth and decorum. For Waugh it represented a world that was threatened to be forever lost during the 1940s. The country house in *A Girl in Winter* represents luxury and leisure, a sunny paradise in a memory. In this view these houses signify civilisation more than that they stand for a natural, sustainable way of living. On the other hand, country estates represent the stability and fruitfulness that were the inspiration for country house novels. Estates in the countryside can awake interest in the natural world, as for example in the case of Charles' landscape-painting in Waugh's novel.

The estate with Godsend Castle and Scoatney Hall in *I Capture the Castle* shows this duality clearly. Scoatney Hall is the portal to modern civilisation and wealth, while the castle symbolises the old England, tradition, innocence and simplicity. Dualism is at the core of the country house, and it depends on one's perspective whether a country house is a bridge between nature and culture or not. The beauty of tradition and nostalgia for a rural past can be

a way to rediscover the values of living in the countryside and taking care of the landscape. This is evident in Cassandra's way of enjoying her natural surroundings and how Katherine in Larkin's novel admires natural elements in the city. Cassandra and her family show how a simple life in the country can fuel an awareness and gratitude for nature's bounty without harming it.

The Usefulness of Nostalgia

It seems that the authors were aware of the criticism on nostalgic writing, because they offer a critique on escapist, nostalgic feelings or show how they can become useful. For example, Cassandra's writing down of her memories help her to cope with the present and process her experiences. *A Girl in Winter*, on the other hand, suggests that clinging to an idealised past is useless and will only end in disappointment with reality. Hartley shows the beauty of lost values like the belief in individual progress in life, which becomes a critique on present-day society. He uses the past to point out deficiencies in the present, in order to oppose values in society he did not agree with.

Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* was part of a general feeling that mourned the loss of country houses, which helped create a movement to protect them. In the "Preface" to the edition of 1959, Waugh writes:

> It seemed then that the ancestral seats which were our chief national artistic achievement were doomed to decay and spoliation like the monasteries in the sixteenth century. Brideshead today would be open to trippers, its treasures rearranged by expert hands and the fabric better maintained than it was by Lord Marchmain. (Waugh 10)

This shows that he views country houses as important artefacts and that his novel is a plea to prove with "passionate sincerity" that the traditional rural system had beautiful aspects that

should be protected (Waugh 10). At the time of writing his preface, country estates were protected and their natural surroundings with them. People's nostalgia in the 1940s thus saved certain moral values and objects of artistic value. Waugh further writes that *Brideshead Revisited* now has become a "souvenir of the Second War" (Waugh10) that shows the sentiments of that time rather than trying to prove the significance of saving country houses, but those nostalgic sentiments are historically valuable in themselves.

Culture versus Nature

Human supremacy over the natural world is present in all four novels, and in some it is criticised. In *A Girl in Winter,* nature is often used as a literary device to symbolise feelings or foreground certain aspects of relationships. This also happens in *The Shrimp and the Anemone*, but because its theme is human domination, this becomes a comment on misusing authority. In Waugh's novel, nature is dominated by trying to reshape it or copy it to make it into a work of art, such as the highly artificial gardens surrounding Brideshead, to cover everything with English charm. At the same time, this charm is questioned by the author. The domination of the English landscape is less apparent in *I Capture the Castle* because the Mortmain family is too poor to exert power over anything, so in that novel nature and culture seem to fuse the most naturally. Neil Cotton, however, does show characteristics of a coloniser, someone who wants to own and change nature. Overall, human interference with fellow human beings and the natural world is questioned and the dangers of it pointed out.

Conclusion

After analysing closely what view on the natural landscape is represented in the four novels in terms of retreat and return, nostalgia and the degree of idealisation of the natural landscape, it can be concluded that the depiction of pastoral landscape in these novels is complex. It is evident that the image of rural England displayed in the 1940s of the interbellum period is not merely an idealised one. Although there is a clear aspect of the past England as a Golden Age-like garden, realistic aspects such as poverty and domination disturb the idyllic scenery so it is acknowledged that the past is not merely and simply a natural harmony.

Nevertheless, given the context of wartime England, it is not surprising that there is a certain sentimentalism and nostalgia that perhaps idealises the past. By showing admirable aspects from the past, the authors can provide a social critique on England in the 1940s that is realistic: they are aware that the world has changed, which has to be accepted to a certain extent, but they want to point out that the virtues of rural life should not be discarded too easily.

Country houses can be seen as a bridge or middle space between nature and civilisation, because they represent a fuse of nature and culture that are equally admired, and promotes an interest in engaging with the natural world in a system that is fertile and stable for both people and nature. At the same time there is another view on country houses possible, in which it is seen as a departure from a natural, innocent way of life to a system of domination and disappointment. These two are aptly communicated by Waugh in the Marchmain's estate.

It must be acknowledged, however, that in these novels nature is often in subjection to humanity. It is literally dominated and manipulated in the pond-making of Hartley's novel and Brideshead's artificial landscaping as well as metaphorically, for example through

Charles' English charm in his art and the characterisation of Robin that is enhanced by his behaviour towards nature. This shows a stance towards nature that supports a view on nature and culture juxtaposed, in which nature provides a means of symbolising human relationships, so that nature is used to serve literary devices. On the other hand, the presence of nature in literature is valuable in itself to acknowledge its presence in everyday reality because it creates the awareness that human beings are part of the natural world. Literature that features a retreat to nature to rediscover it without idealising it can stimulate people's realisation that a more responsible and sustaining relationship with the world is necessary.

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