

**Bush Ballads between the Past
and the Present: A. B. (Banjo)
Paterson's Romanticization of
the Bush vs. John Kinsella's
Anti-Pastoralism**

أغاني الأدغال (البوش) بين الماضي والحاضر: إضفاء الطابع
الرومانسي للبوش في شعر البانجو باترسون مقابل مكافحة الرعوية في
شعر جون كينسيلا

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Abstract

The contemplative reader of Australian literary history discerns the fact that early Australian poetry witnessed a distinctive style of a poem entitled the "bush ballad," in complete reference to the "Australian Bush"- a large area in Western Australia that is sparsely populated and uncultivated. Early Australian bush poets adopt a Romantic attitude in which they depict the life, character and scenery of the Australian Bush. A. B. (Banjo) Paterson (1864-1941) is the best to exemplify early Australian bush poetry. He is widely known as the "bard of the bush". His bush poetry tends to tell personal stories that best portray all aspects of life in the Australian Bush at that time. On the other hand, John Kinsella (born 1963) is a contemporary Australian poet whose poetry is highly influenced by the rural landscape. However, his poetic attitude is completely different from that of Paterson. Whereas Paterson tends to romanticize and idealize the Australian Bush with its alluring character, Kinsella is inclined to provide a counterforce to the idyllic elements of the pastoral. The present study is a modest attempt to explore the evolution of Australian poetry between the past and the present, i.e. from romanticizing the Australian Bush in Paterson's poetry to attacking the pastoral in Kinsella's poetry. To do this, there is a tendency to provide a brief account of the rise of the Australian bush poetry. Then, the paper purports to elucidate the way in which Paterson and Kinsella deal with the identity of the Australian Bush in their poetry.

Keywords: Australian, Bush Ballads, Romanticization, Banjo Paterson, Anti-Pastoral, John Kinsella.



أغاني الأدغال (البوش) بين الماضي والحاضر: إضفاء الطابع الرومانسي للبوش في شعر البانجو باترسون مقابل مكافحة الرعوية في شعر جون كينسيلا

الملخص:

يدرك القارئ المتأمل لتاريخ الأدب الأسترالي حقيقة أن الشعر الأسترالي القديم قد شهد أسلوباً مُميّزاً في نَظْم القصيدة يُسمّى "أغنية الأدغال (البوش)"، في إشارة صريحة منه لمنطقة "الأدغال الأسترالية" - وهي منطقة كبيرة في غرب أستراليا قليلة السكان وغير مزروعة. يتبنى شعراء البوش الأستراليين الأوائل اتجاهها رومانتيكياً يصوّرون من خلاله حياة الأدغال الأسترالية بطابعها المتميز، فضلاً عن مناظرها الطبيعية. في الواقع، يعد البانجو باترسون (1864-1941) خير من يمثل شعر الأدغال الأسترالي القديم؛ إذ أنه يُعرّف على نطاق واسع "بشاعر الأدغال (البوش)". يميل باترسون في شعره إلى سرد القصص الشخصية التي تُصوّر جميع جوانب الحياة في منطقة الأدغال الأسترالية آنذاك. من ناحية أخرى، تتطرق الورقة البحثية إلى الشاعر الشهير جون كينسيلا (مواليد 1963)، وهو شاعر أسترالي معاصر يتأثر شعره بشكل كبير بالمناظر الطبيعية الريفية، إلا أن اتجاهه الشعري يختلف تماماً عن اتجاه باترسون. ففي حين يميل باترسون إلى إضفاء الطابع الرومانسي على الأدغال الأسترالية، يميل كينسيلا إلى مكافحة العناصر الرعوية المثالية. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى استكشاف تطور أغاني البوش الأسترالية بين الماضي والحاضر: بدءاً من إضفاء الطابع الرومانسي على البوش الأسترالي في شعر باترسون، ووصولاً إلى مكافحة الرعوية في شعر كينسيلا. تقدّم الدراسة في مطلعها وصفا موجزا لظهور شعر الأدغال (البوش) في أستراليا. بعد ذلك، تُعَمّد الدراسة إلى توضيح الطريقة التي عالج بها باترسون وكينسيلا أغاني الأدغال الأسترالية في أشعارهما.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أسترالي، أغاني الأدغال (البوش)، الرومانسية، البانجو باترسون، مكافحة الرعوية، جون كينسيلا.



Introduction

As a matter of fact, poetry plays the greatest part in building the entity of Australian literature. However, the meditative reader of Australian literary history realizes that until the end of the eighteenth century, there was almost no mention of Australian literature in general and poetry in particular. Ironically speaking, the early writers were not indigenous Australians, but convicts and soldiers from the first British settlement in Australia (i.e. the New South Wales in 1788). In her book *The Generations of Men* (1959), Judith Wright states, "If there were men of a poetic turn among the convicts and soldiers of the first settlement, they had probably no time or inclination to exercise the gift. Mere survival, and a fair share of the rum, perhaps filled the early ambitions of most. (58)

Indeed, the first published poetry in Australia was not written by indigenous Australian poets. Rather, it was composed by such English convicts as the British-born Michael Massey Robinson (1744-1826), who later became the first poet-laureate of Australia, as well as the two Irish-born poets: Francis Macnamara (1810-1861) and George Barrington (1755-1804). Those poets came to Australia as convicts after the settlement of New South Wales in 1788. In this regard, Paul Romano B. Royo argues:

The origins of written Australian poetry lay in the prison systems. From 1788 until 1823 the colony of New South Wales was classified as a penal colony consisting mainly of convicts. From 1793 free settlers also started to arrive. Only those people who were educated in their mother country (predominantly England) could read or write



because there were no formal schools in Australia ... Since population was poorly educated, there was no demand for written communication such as newspapers. (1-2)

The above-mentioned convict poets composed their early poetry just to act as a cathartic correlative for the suppressed emotions they had experienced in prisons. Thus, their pains and sufferings were highly addressed in their earliest melancholic poetry.

The Emergence of Australian Bush Poetry

The cathartic poetry of early Australian poets did not last long. Rather, a rich poetic tradition entitled "bush ballads" emerged from the melancholic poetry of the convicts. In the definition of "the Bush," Mary E. Fullerton states, "All of Australia that is not city, town, or suburb, is loosely referred to as 'the bush' by most people" (36). Indeed, bush poetry directed the English reader to more details about the new flora and fauna of the new land as well as about the rivers and the newly-discovered places in Australia. That was the beginning of indigenous Australian poetry. It is worth noting that W. C. Wentworth (1790-1872) and Charles Thompson (1807-1883) were the first to compose native Australian poetry. However, Charles Harpur (1813-1868) was the most significant native-born Australian poet to publish indigenous poetry side by side with Henry Kendall (1839-1882) and Adam Lindsay Gordon (1833-1870). The poetry of such poets tended to portray the countryside and its inhabitants. There was an inclination by such poets to tell personal stories of the farmers, horsemen as well as of other everyday people who inhabited the Australian Bush at that time. Such stories were the best to reflect all aspects of life in



Australia at that time since they were deep-rooted in Australian history and culture.

Following the inauguration of the well-known Australian literary journal, *Bulletin*, in 1880, a number of national poets appeared. Those indigenous poets were headed by Andrew Barton "Banjo" Paterson (1864-1941) and his contemporary Henry Lawson (1867-1922), whose writings contributed much to popularizing the Australian vernacular in poetry, fiction and drama. The years between 1890 and 1917 were the most influential in the activity of *Bulletin*. During that period, the journal was given the title, *The Bulletin School of Australian Literature*. There was an intention of Banjo Paterson and his colleagues to highlight the national identity and character of Australia in their writings. This was achieved by romanticizing and idealizing the portrait of Australia. Such poets did not find better than the Australian Bush to provide an indigenous image of Australia and Australians. Their poetic production paid much attention to the pastoral landscape of the Australian Bush, not as a British colony but as a nation with its independent character. In this regard, Elizabeth Webby states, "By the 1900, too, Australian readers were beginning to develop something of a taste for writing about Australia and about themselves" (50). Thus, their writings were marked by distinctive attributes that gave them uniqueness and individuality. It was with the poetic genius of Banjo Paterson that the worth and identity of indigenous Australian poetry was established.

Paterson is considered the "giant bard" of Australian literature. He belongs to a famous poetry school, entitled the "Australian Bush Poetry," which is concerned with writing



metrical and rhymed ballads, not free ones. Such bush ballads revolve around Australia and the Australian lifestyle. Paterson's direct contact with the "bushrangers" and other land owners helped him a lot with the composition of his bush poetry. Thus, Paterson composed a great number of poems about Australian life, where he focused on the life of villages and remote areas such as the Bennelong region in the state of New South Wales (Paterson's birthplace). Such a great poet attempted to embellish the Australian countryside with the most beautiful suburban descriptions as well as beautiful Romantic images. It can be said that Paterson adopted a Romantic-idealistic as well as a nationalistic attitude in the composition of his bush ballads.

On the other hand, John Kinsella (born 1963) is a contemporary Australian poet who has brought a sense of vitality to Australian bush poetry over the last thirty years. Like Paterson, Kinsella has been captured by the Romantic notion of Australia's bush heritage. His literary production- over seventy volumes of poetry, fiction, drama as well as of criticism- is both experimental and pastoral. Throughout his long poetic career, Kinsella got many awards including "the Australian Prime Minister's Literary Award for Poetry, the Victorian Premier's Award for Poetry, the John Bray Award for Poetry, the Judith Wright Calanthe Award for Poetry (twice) and the Western Australian Premier's Award for Poetry (three times)" (Kinsella, *Supervivid Depastoralism*). Kinsella's poetry is highly influenced by rural landscape. However, his poetic attitude is completely different from that of Paterson. Whereas Paterson tends to romanticize and idealize the Australian Bush, Kinsella is inclined to provide a counterforce to the idyllic elements of the pastoral.



In light of the farming practices at the hands of earlier settlers in the Western Australian Bush, Kinsella finds himself forced to address the pastoral in a completely different way from that adopted by the earliest Australian poets like Paterson. His aim is to question and destabilize the historic mode of the pastoral in a time that suffers from ecological crises. The result is a number of books penned by Kinsella on anti, post, counter, and radical pastoral; perhaps the last of these works is a collection of shorter poems entitled *Supervivid Depastoralism* (July 2021). All of Kinsella's works on pastoralism act as a critique of the damaging wrongs experienced by the Australian fauna and flora in the time of ecological calamities. Now, a modest attempt is made to explore the Romantic attitude adopted by Banjo Paterson to beautify the traditional pastoral image of Australian Bush versus the subversive attack inaugurated by John Kinsella on the pastoral.

Paterson's Romanticization of the Australian Bush

Banjo Paterson is a progenitor of the literary bush ballad in Australia. His literary production spanned across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. What made Paterson highly interested in composing bush poetry is due to his upbringing in the bush Illalong Station near Yass in New South Wales. Since his childhood, Paterson had been in contact with the bush milieu and its characters. Even his education was in a little bush school at Binalong, riding there on horseback ten miles each day. Moreover, Paterson enjoyed his vacations watching the magnificence of bush life. It was J. F. Archibald, the chief editor of *The Bulletin*, who encouraged him to write about the Australian Bush and its inhabitants in the 1880s.



The question now is, "Why did Paterson choose the form of the ballad to express his poetic vision?" A proper answer to this question was provided in *Australian Literature in English* edited by IGNOU (Indira Gandhi National Open University):

Paterson has chosen the form of the ballad to give a concrete shape to his vision of the Australian Arcadia in which drovers, swagmen, horsemen, bushmen and bushrangers communicate among themselves in a dialogue that is colloquial, earthy and informal. Even when it is not a dialogue, the poet's pen puts the poem in the language of the people whose life he portrays. His style matches his themes and becomes a fit vehicle of his vision. In this respect Paterson is one of the most successful poets who have developed right mediums for their poetry. (60)

Paterson's first bush ballad entitled "A Dream of the Melbourne Cup: A Long Way after Gordon" was published in the *Bulletin* in 1886 under the pseudonym "The Banjo". It was the first time for him to use that penname under a poem, in complete reference to the name of a racehorse his father once owned. All the bush ballads published in the *Bulletin* from 1886 to 1895 were collected by Paterson in his first volume *The Man from Snowy River und Other Verses* (1896). Ten thousand copies of its first edition were sold in the first year. It has been said that the total sales of Paterson's first volume reached a hundred thousand copies, achieving an outstanding success compared with the other collections of bush ballads. In her introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature* (1991), Elizabeth



Webby talks about the publicity of Paterson's writings, saying:

The 1890s also saw the beginnings of a local publishing industry as the Sydney firm of Angus & Robertson brought out bestselling editions of the poems and ballads of A.B. "Banjo" Paterson and the stories and poems of Henry Lawson, both of whom had gained a wide readership through the columns of the popular Sydney weekly magazine, the *Bulletin*. (10)

Moreover, Paterson is best known for his seminal bush ballad *Waltzing Matilda* (1895), which is regarded by many as the unofficial national anthem of Australia. This poetic masterpiece made Paterson a celebrity not only in Australia but all over the world, due to its great representation of the bush people and their pastoral lives. The later collections of Paterson were published in the first half of the twentieth century. In his bush ballads, Paterson could delve into the adventures of life in the Australian Bush. Such odes cover diverse topics like relations with indigenous Australians, the landscape, bush ranging, cattle and livestock droving, droughts, floods and Australian folklore.

It is worth mentioning that Paterson's bush ballads have much in common with Wordsworth's Romantic poetry, particularly his *Lyrical Ballads*. In his preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth states that his poems are experimental attempts to fit to "metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation" (233). Wordsworth and the other Romantic poets had a desire to draw upon the expressive power of ordinary speech instead of resting automatically upon an artificial, uniquely and



artificially 'poetic' way of using language. But that does not mean that the language of poetry could ever be a direct imitation of the language of man on the street or the worker in the field. For Wordsworth, the real language must be selected by the poet in order to be fitted to metrical arrangement. Thus, it can be concluded that the language of Romantic poetry is a metrical selection of everyday language.

Like Wordsworth, Paterson shows high interest in employing not an ornamental language but the bush everyday language used by the indigenous Australian people with the aim to bring a sense of vitality and freshness into English poetry. Despite being affected by Wordsworth, Paterson had never mentioned the name of Wordsworth in his writings:

Though Paterson does not refer to Wordsworth, you may reflect that to some extent he proves himself a true follower of Wordsworth in choosing to exploit the possibilities of the language really spoken by people of the time in that particular period of history. The vitality of his poetry emanates from the language that he has used. (Gullybaba 60)

Thus, it can be said that Paterson's poetry is Romantic in the sense that it emphasizes the pastoral, the subjective, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous, the emotional, the visionary, the transcendental, as well as the simple everyday language.



Reflections on Paterson's "The Man from the Snowy River"

In the preface to his first poetic volume *The Man from Snowy River and other Verses* (1896), Paterson expresses his true love of the countryside in a pure Romantic way. His tone is obvious from the beginning, cheerful and optimistic. He sets the scene for his stories and tales in a natural Romantic background:

I have gathered these stories afar
 In the wind and the rain,
 In the land where the cattle-camps are,
 On the edge of the Plain.
 On the overland routes of the west,
 When the watches were long,
 I have fashioned in earnest and jest
 These fragments of song. (Paterson, Prelude)

Indeed, words like "wind," "rain," "land," "cattle-camps" and "plain" best illustrate the Romantic atmosphere drawn by Paterson to fashion his songs.

Perhaps, Paterson's "The Man from Snowy River" is the best to exemplify his bush ballads. Such a poem well demonstrates the life, character, and scenery of the Australian Bush. Its popularity has become so wide-spread that it has been made into a successful film. As mentioned before, the sales of this volume reached over a lakh (one hundred thousand) copies. Due to his simple and colloquial style, Paterson could compose a bush ballad that is still admired in the present day of adventure. In point of fact, Paterson's "The Man from Snowy River" comprises all the elements that characterize the most successful Australian



ballads. Examples of such elements can be represented in its excitement, its genuine feeling as well as its love for bush setting. In other words, Paterson's "The Man from Snowy River" is completely made out of the Australia lifestyle that has evolved in the Australian Bush. In this poem, Paterson made use of the horse to be a common Australian poetic image as well as a metaphor for the state of vividness and speed that characterize the Australia people, particularly those inhabiting the Australia bush.

In "The Man from Snowy River," Paterson tends to romanticize the tough nature of the Australian Bush through telling the story of a reckless but brave horseman. The bravery of such a horseman made thousands of Australians reconsider their over-fright from riding horses. The beauty of diction as well as the integrity of meaning incited a great number of the Australians to experience horse riding and to enjoy the charm of the Australian Bush. What features this ballad is its portrayal of the life of "the early Australians, their dare-devilry, extraordinary feats of their courage and their readiness to face the challenges of life" (Gullybaba 63). On a heroic scale, "The Man from Snowy River" recaptures the unconquerable spirit of the early Australians fighting for survival.

The hero of "The Man from Snowy River" is not an ordinary man. For Paterson, such a horseman is no less than *the Ancient Mariner* in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's lyrical ballad "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," or *John Gilpin* in William Cowper's comic ballad "The Diverting History of John Gilpin," or *young Lochinvar* in Sir Walter Scott's Romantic literary ballad "Lochinvar". Through his national character of a horseman in "The Man from Snowy River",



Paterson could bring almost all the features of an Australian at the end of the nineteenth century. Bravery, perseverance and horsemanship are some of the noteworthy features that characterize the hero of the ballad. These features made of him an incredible 'myth.' Such a character became more influential on the city dwellers than on the bush inhabitants themselves.

The question now is "What is the story behind Paterson's composition of that bush ballad?" It has been told that in the year 1890, Paterson accompanied by one of his comrades were on a visit to the Snowy Mountain Area. While they were camping in a hut belonging to a well-known brave horseman and stockman called Jack Riley from Corryong (a rural town in Australia), they found it amusing to listen to Riley's adventures in the Australian Bush. It is said that he told them "the story of a colt (a young male horse under the age of four) that ran away in the mountains" (Gullybaba 63). Indeed, Paterson started to compose his poem immediately after his trip, basing the character of "The Man from Snowy River" on Jack Riley. The poem was published in the *Bulletin* on 26th April 1890. All what Riley narrated to Paterson and his companion is already mentioned in the poem.

In form, Paterson's "The Man from Snowy River" is made up of thirteen octets (eight-line stanzas) written in a regular structure. Each octet comprises four rhyming couplets, with a scheme of ABABCDCD. Paterson succeeds in engaging his readers, making them feel like they are living in the Australian Bush. The contemplative reader of "The Man from Snowy River" realizes that the first stanza sets the scene for the subject of the ballad, with the speaker



portraying the gathering of highly-skilled horsemen who are waiting on their horsebacks to start searching for the lost colt:

There was movement at the station, for the word
 had passed around
 That the colt from old Regret had got away,
 And had joined the wild bush horses — he was
 worth a thousand pound,
 So all the cracks had gathered to the fray.
 All the tried and noted riders from the stations near
 and far
 Had mustered at the homestead overnight,
 For the bushmen love hard riding where the wild
 bush horses are,
 And the stock-horse snuffs the battle with delight.
 (Paterson 3)

The lost colt around which the story revolves is not an ordinary horse. Rather, it is a prizewinning racehorse that runs away from its barn and lives with the wild horses. Its owner offers a pricey sum of money to anyone who could bring it back. Thus, a great number of trained riders have come to capture the horse and obtain the costly offered prize.

Upon reading the first stanza, the contemplative reader observes the great number of literary devices employed by Paterson to best illustrate the magnificent Australian landscape. Indeed, the poet makes the best use of such literary devices as metaphors, similes, alliteration and personification besides the vernacular language that adds beauty to the ballad. More than this, the ballad is rich with the use of imagery in all its different types (visual, auditory, tactile... etc.) to provide a further beauty to the setting of the poem (i.e. the Australian Bush). Moreover, such imagery



helps to paint a Romantic picture of an emotional and vulnerable horseman. The ballad is rich in visual imagery with symbolic meaning.

An example of the literary devices employed by Paterson in the first stanza is the personification in "he was worth a thousand pound." Here, the poet treats the lost 'colt' as a male person. Moreover, the imagery used in "There was movement at the station," "So all the cracks had gathered to the fray," "Had mustered at the homestead overnight," and "stock horse snuffs" best describes the actions of the story. This descriptive language provides the reader with the nature and style of the Australian wildlife as well as the plant life at the end of the nineteenth century. The worth of a thousand pounds justifies the commotion that has been created at the station directly after the word has passed that a colt has escaped away and joined the wild horses in the mountains. No wonder then that a great number of highly skilled and brave fighters, from near and far, have gathered in front of the homestead. They are a group of young men interested in chasing wild horses across wild bushes. Some alliterations can be noted in "That the colt," "he was worth," and "where the wild", which makes the reading of the poem more interesting. The stanza concludes with the use of onomatopoeia, by saying "And the stock-horse snuffs the battle with delight." Such a use of literary devices paints a detailed vivid picture of what is happening in the story.

Perhaps, the word "horse" or its alternatives has been repeated many times throughout the ballad to emphasize the horse imagery against a mountainous background. In the second stanza, the poet introduces the reader to the stockmen who have gathered to participate in the hard mission of



bringing back the lost colt to his owner. Two of those horsemen, Clancy and Harrison, are known as the most courageous huntsmen in the 'Snowy River' area. They are the heroes of Paterson's conspicuous poems "Clancy of the Overflow" and "Old Pardon, Son of Reprieve" respectively. These poems are included in *The Man from Snowy River and other Verses*. Despite his old age, no other horseman can do what Harrison does:

There was Harrison, who made his pile when
Pardon won the cup,
The old man with his hair as white as snow;
But few could ride beside him when his blood was
fairly up —
He would go wherever horse and man could go.
And Clancy of the Overflow came down to lend a
hand,
No better horseman ever held the reins;
For never horse could throw him while the saddle-
girths would stand,
He learnt to ride while droving on the plains.
(Paterson 3-4)

Paterson's strong use of similes can be evident in some examples like "The old man with his hair as white as snow". The excessive use of imagery and similes is meant to create a vivid picture of the Romantic natural scenery as well as the characters of the poem. In so doing, readers are made to feel enthralled and excited. Moreover, Paterson gives them insight into what is happening in the Australian Bush. The theme of horsemanship and bravery is at its utmost peak in Paterson's description of Harrison by saying, "But few could ride beside him when his blood was fairly up," and also in his description of Clancy of the Overflow by saying, "No better



horseman ever held the reins." These descriptions show the extent of courage and valor such horsemen enjoy against the rugged terrain of the Bush.

The third stanza introduces the hero of the bush ballad to readers. Such a man proves to be stronger than the rough rocky nature of the Bush due to his ability to overcome the other riders who find themselves unable to continue their pursuit journey:

And one was there, a stripling on a small and weedy
beast,
He was something like a racehorse undersized,
With a touch of Timor pony — three parts
thoroughbred at least —
And such as are by mountain horsemen prized.
He was hard and tough and wiry — just the sort that
won't say die —
There was courage in his quick impatient tread;
And he bore the badge of gameness in his bright
and fiery eye,
And the proud and lofty carriage of his head.
(Paterson 4)

Unlike Harrison or Clancy, the protagonist appears undersized on a small, weedy little horse. Paterson does not refer to his name in his ballad. The youngster rider is so scrawny that the other horsemen ridicule both him and his feeble horse. However in the second half of stanza three, Paterson starts to tell his readers the features that make of him a hero. For Paterson, this young man is hard, tough and wiry; there is courage in his quick impatient tread. His bright and fiery eye shows a sign of steely courage and tenacity in both the rider and his horse. His self-confidence makes him always proud and lofty. Though he was "a stripling on a



small and weedy beast," he bore "the badge of gameness in his bright and fiery eye, / And the proud and lofty carriage of his head" (Paterson 4). There is an alliteration in "bore the badge" to provide music to the rhythm of the poem.

The fourth stanza best demonstrates the extent of ridicule and mockery made by the other riders upon seeing the man from Snowy River coming on his skinny little horse:

But still so slight and weedy, one would doubt his
power to stay,
And the old man said, 'That horse will never do
For a long and tiring gallop — lad, you'd better stop
away,
Those hills are far too rough for such as you.'
So he waited sad and wistful — only Clancy stood
his friend —
'I think we ought to let him come,' he said;
'I warrant he'll be with us when he's wanted at the
end,
For both his horse and he are mountain bred.
(Paterson 4-5)

The first half of the above-mentioned stanza displays the opponent viewpoints that are against the participation of the man from the Snowy River in the pursuit journey. The station owner (the old man) warns the young rider against sharing the strong riders, claiming that he and his feeble horse are not suitable for the "long and tiring gallop". Accordingly, he asks the youngster to be away from this hazardous mission. Unfortunately, the man from Snowy River stands quietly in disappointment.

On the other hand, Clancy in the second half of stanza four argues for the young rider's coming, stating that "both



his horse and he are mountain bred". Like all the stanzas above, this stanza is rich with verbal music. The poet chooses words for sound as well as for meaning. Verbal music here is one of the important resources that enable the poet to do something more than communicate mere information. Alliteration can be monitored in such expressions as "still so slight" and "his horse and he" to add music and beauty to the poem.

The coming stanzas discuss the bravery and persistence of the man from Snowy River and how the other riders stand short at the summit of the high mountain due to the unpaved route after it. Only the man from the Snowy River proves bold to ride on that bad road. What is most important in the coming stanzas is not the content of the story as much as the poet's description of nature, which is the major focus of the present study- Paterson's romanticization of the Australian Bush. From the beginning till the end of his bush ballad, the poet provides a striking pen-portrait of the rugged mountainous region. He "keeps the image of the mountains in the background, never concentrating his descriptive focus on any particular aspect of it till he reaches the last stanza of the poem" (Gullybaba 63-4).

The hard tough nature of the Rocky Mountains is evident in such lines as "Where the hills are twice as steep and twice as rough, / Where a horse's hoofs strike firelight from the flint stones every stride"(Paterson 5). The visual and auditory imagery here reaches its utmost peak in Paterson's description of the fire made by the hooves of the horse while climbing up a mountain. The speaker tells the other riders that those who live in the Snowy River area are considered the best horsemen ever, since they build their



houses over the mountains where the Snowy River runs between them:

And the Snowy River riders on the mountains make their home,
Where the river runs those giant hills between;
I have seen full many horsemen since I first commenced to roam,
But nowhere yet such horsemen have I seen.'
(Paterson 5)

Indeed, the image of the Snowy River running between the mountains is super Romantic here. Examples of the other Romantic images can be evident in stanza eight when the riders encounter the wild horses by a clump of trees. Unfortunately, the riders find it difficult to hunt the escaped colt due to the rugged mountainous area. There, they reached a stalemate:

Then fast the horsemen followed, where the gorges deep and black
Resounded to the thunder of their tread,
And the stockwhips woke the echoes, and they fiercely answered back
From cliffs and crags that beetled overhead.
And upward, ever upward, the wild horses held their way,
Where mountain ash and kurrajong grew wide;
And the old man muttered fiercely, 'We may bid the mob good day,
NO man can hold them down the other side.'
(Paterson 6-7)

Here, the riders are still following the wild horses through the deep ravines and gorges. They climbed up the steep



mountainside amongst the echoes of their stockwhips and tread. The more the riders chase the wild horses, the farther those horses go up and up, making it difficult for the riders to continue. Disappointed, the old man whispers furiously, telling his companions that it is time to “bid the mob good day”. For him, if the wild horses start descending down the other side, it will be difficult to catch them.

The bravery of the man from Snowy River reaches its utmost peak in stanza nine when the horsemen reach the summit of the mountain, where they have no way to continue except to start their descent down the other side. Indeed, any small slip means death. The whole riders, even Clancy, took a pull:

It well might make the boldest hold their breath,
The wild hop scrub grew thickly, and the hidden
ground was full
Of wombat holes, and any slip was death.
But the man from Snowy River let the pony have
his head,
And he swung his stockwhip round and gave a
cheer,
And he raced him down the mountain like a torrent
down its bed,
While the others stood and watched in very fear.
(Paterson 7)

Seeing his companions holding their breath out of fear, the man from Snowy River unhesitatingly continues further. Cheerfully, he started to race his little horse down like "a torrent down its bed". At that time, the other riders are standing in great awe, watching him in very fear.



Stanza ten portrays the fearful but brave descent of the man from Snowy River, and how he sends the “flint stones flying” (astonishing visual imagery). The only steady rider in the pursuit is he, for he neither shifts on his seat nor draws the bridle till he lands safely. He goes on the racing pace until he reaches the bottom of that “terrible descent”. Stanzas eleven and twelve tell readers how the man from Snowy River can alone capture the wild horses. Standing mute, the horsemen see him racing across a clearing at a distant hillside. Alone, he brought the wild horses all back like a “bloodhound on their track”. Upon his arrival, his little horse

was blood from hip to shoulder from the spur;
 But his pluck was still undaunted, and his courage
 fiery hot,
 For never yet was mountain horse a cur. (Paterson 9)

In the last stanza, the man from Snowy River returns his home in Kosciusko. He proves himself a legend in the eyes of those who ridicule him at the beginning of the story. The concluding stanza of the ballad paints graphically a Romantic cool, placid mountain side in Kosciusko where

the pine-clad ridges raise
 Their torn and rugged battlements on high,
 Where the air is clear as crystal, and the white stars
 fairly blaze
 At midnight in the cold and frosty sky,
 And where around the Overflow the reedbeds sweep
 and sway
 To the breezes, and the rolling plains are wide,
 The Man from Snowy River is a household word to-
 day,
 And the stockmen tell the story of his ride.
 (Paterson 9)



It is worth noting that the last lines have some kind of a quiet and cool tone compared with the rest of the poem. In so doing, Paterson's poem shares similar features with the dramatic poem in the sense that it has gone through the five stages of the plot structure: initial incident, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement or conclusion. The concluding two lines of the poem show how memorable the poem is, "The Man from Snowy River is a household word to-day, / And the stockmen tell the story of his ride".

To conclude, Paterson Paterson proves to be the best bush balladist of the horse and horsemanship. His high Romantic sensibility as well as his ardent love for Australia and Australians is the motive behind composing indigenous bush ballads. His bush poetry is highly marked by its stylistic variety and thematic width, which is evident in his first volume *The Man from Snowy River und Other Verses*. This volume brought a sense of freshness and vitality to early Australian poetry since it was written by an Australian on Australia and for Australians. In other words, its subject matter is purely indigenous and original. In his bush poetry, Paterson produces an affinity with the great Romantic poet, William Wordsworth, in the sense that he shows preference to employ not ornamental language but the bush everyday language used by the indigenous Australian people. Due to its colloquial and simple style, Paterson's "The Man from Snowy River" has become a great literary ballad, not a mere bush song. The poem is rich with imagery, particularly visual imagery, which helps to paint a highly Romantic picture of rural Australia in general and of an emotional and vulnerable horseman in particular.



John Kinsella's Anti-Pastoralism

Like Banjo Paterson, the voluminous poet John Kinsella has been highly influenced by the Australian Bush. His poetry is both experimental and pastoral, paying greater attention to the Australian rural landscape, particularly the Western Australian Bush. However, Kinsella's approach is fully reverse to that of Paterson. While Paterson's poetry romanticizes and idealizes the Australian Bush with its alluring character, Kinsella's verse aims to provide a counterforce to the idyllic elements of the pastoral. What made Kinsella's poetic attitude differs from that of Paterson is the fact that the Australian rural landscape of the nineteenth century is not the same as that of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Indeed, the peacefulness and cleanliness of the pastoral at Paterson's time turns to be that of pollution and hubbub at Kinsella's. Such ugliness and hubbub are an inevitable outcome of an industrialized and over-sophisticated age.

The question now is, "What is meant by 'pastoral'?" An answer to this question is provided by Peter Marinelli in his book *Pastoral* (1971). For him, 'pastoral' is any "literature which deals with the complexities of human life against a background of simplicity, that simplicity usually being a country landscape" (3). In other words, a pastoral work of art recollects the pleasant and traditional characteristics of the countryside in comparison with the complicated technology. In point of fact, pastoral writers often lament the innocent past that has recently been violated by advancing technology. They yearn for the simplicity and tranquility of a life lived amidst nature.



Likewise, the term "anti-pastoral" is so common in John Kinsella's writings. In his article "The Danger of Nostalgia: Anti-Pastoral Tension in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*," Ryan Crennen defines "anti-pastoral" as "an attack on or subversion of traditional pastoral themes and motifs" (29). Comparing the pastoral with the anti-pastoral, Crennen argues:

In its broader thematic sense, the pastoral signifies an escape from complexity to simplicity (often represented by a city/country contrast), implied criticism of modern life, and a nostalgia for a Golden-Age past, as symbolized in the semi-mythical location of Arcadia. While the anti-pastoral has not received the same degree of critical attention as the pastoral itself, it is best understood as an effort to negate or oppose these traditional themes. Because it is defined through negation, the anti-pastoral is a literary mode that varies depending on its point of reference. It is implicitly a response to pastoral ideals rather than a freestanding literary mode. Accordingly, anti-pastoral literature tends to oppose idealism with realism, emphasizing the hardships of rural life and mocking the naïve attitude of its urban proponents. (30)

Thus, it can be said that 'anti-pastoral' is a criticism of the false idealism that the pastoral generates. Indeed, the anti-pastoral sees pastoral literature as innately destructive and problematic. In light of the 'anti-pastoral,' the nostalgia for the pastoral has become a tragic dream. Therefore, the anti-pastoral tends to refute and subvert the pastoral tradition through suffering from the disappointments of modern life.



Concerning "pastoral" and "anti-pastoral," it can be said that Paterson's "the Man from Snowy River" is classified as "pastoral." In this, Tom Wilson argues:

Banjo Paterson's poem 'The Man from Snowy River' is a nationally celebrated pastoral which narrates the horse-back pursuit of an escaped colt through mountainous terrain. It is presumed to be so quintessentially 'Australian' a verse that the federal government has seen fit to have the text printed on each and every Australian ten dollar note in micro-script, viewable using a magnifying glass. (5)

It is worth mentioning that the setting and context in which Paterson composed his ballads are completely different from that of Kinsella. If Paterson situated his poems in the Australian Bush, then Kinsella rests his poetry in

Western Australia's wheat country...The Avon River Valley is a predominantly rural, agricultural district devoted to the production of wheat, sheep, and barley. A dry landscape, it enjoys less than three hundred millimeters of rain a year; even so, more than seventy-five percent of the basin has been cleared to support agriculture. Widespread clearing of the land has led to rising salt levels in many waterways, and overgrazing has contributed to erosion. (Reed 79)

This description paves the way to Kinsella's anti-pastoral attitude, where readers are invited "to seemingly indulge the . . . [European] pastoral myth in an Australian setting, and then he dismantles it and smashes the illusions of the readers, revealing the darkness of 'pastoral' in this different continent of Australia" (79).



Kinsella's Anti-Pastoral Poetry: Selected Poems

Kinsella's anti-pastoral poetry functions as a critique of the damaging wrongs experienced by the Australian fauna and flora in a time of ecological calamities. Perhaps, his fifth poetic volume *The Silo: A Pastoral Symphony* (1995) is the best to illustrate Kinsella's anti-pastoral poetry. The first poem in *The Silo*, entitled "On Arriving at a Deserted House Deep in the Country after Running over a Rabbit on a Gravel Road, at Night," begins with the following lines:

The fly-wire door slams ominously
 As the Fluorescent starter cracks
 And light suggests company
 That evaporates, fails
 To materialize. (Kinsella 12)

The anti-pastoral tone is clear from the beginning. Here, the poet sets the scene for the rest of the volume in general and for the poem in particular. As mentioned before, Kinsella selected Western Australia's Wheat-belt to set his anti-pastoral poems. Regrettably, the area turns to be "a severely degraded land of rising salt and massively disrupted natural ecosystems" (Wilson 7).

In this barren land, the speaker has a deserted house with a banging fly-wire door. The door slams ominously, which indicates the fact that it is no longer a populated house. It has been expected to see Western Australian wheat farmers walking amongst their golden crops of annual plants. Yet, the "company evaporates, fails to materialize". The company, here, refers to those farmers who "are being forced to leave the country in line with progressive environmental degradation and in line with the evaporation of water from their lands" (Wilson 7). The company does not just 'fail', but



fails to 'materialize', hinting "towards the shoddy ethos that has led to so much destruction of nature in this place: materialism fails" (7).

As is the case with the Romantic poets of the early nineteenth century, John Kinsella moved to the countryside (the rainforests of south-western Australia), seeking comfort and peace in the companionship of nature. Regrettably, the rainforests were no longer there due to the state of deforestation carried out at the hands of the British colonists who tended to transform the bush rainforests into farmlands. In his interview with Cambridge academic Rod Mengham, Kinsella states, "We are talking about an invaded space, from a farming perspective, a land that has been ecologically devastated" (285). The result has been a decrease in the rate of rainfall, as well as an increase in the rate of salinization (excessive accumulation of soluble water salts). Accordingly, Kinsella from the beginning of his poetic career started to adopt an anti-pastoral attitude in most of his poetry.

Indeed, it was the agricultural industry initiated by the colonizers against the local landscapes which made Kinsella wage a stinging attack on the Australian pastoral. In his poetic volume *The Silo*, Kinsella tries to revisit the Western Australian landscape by focusing on the farming practices of earlier settlers. In this respect, Liu Pingping and Glen Phillips argue:

The Silo tries to show that Western farming practice had brought negative influences on the Australian environment during the earlier colonial period and these have persisted to today. The land and the animals and plants, in particular, are victims of Australian farm work, according to Kinsella in this poetry collection. Firstly, the curse of land salinization is repeatedly depicted in *The Silo*, just



as Kinsella stated in *Fairly Obsessive* (2000), 'Salt is the most prominent image in my work, ...land ... has been ecologically devastated.' (3)

As mentioned before, deforestation is a main cause behind the emergence of salinization. Indeed, Kinsella's poem "Why They Stripped the Last Trees from the Banks of the Creek" is such a case in point. Its first lines say:

They stripped the last trees
 From the banks of this creek
 Twenty years ago. The old man
 Couldn't stand the thought
 Of bare paddocks with a creek
 Covered by trees slap bang
 In the middle of them.
 A kind of guilt I guess.
 Anyway, he was old
 And we humoured him –
 Chains, rabbit rippers,
 Chainsaws. (Kinsella 67)

Here, the poet portrays the destruction and damage done by the British colonizers to the Australian landscape. He depicts the exploitation of nature by humans in an extremely lamentable way.

Then, Kinsella invites his readers to visualize the extent of harm caused by the deforestation of the bush to grow crops. Examples of such damage are represented in the stale water that turns red as well as the accumulated salt that left lines on the bath:

We cleared
 those banks until the water
 ran a stale sort of red.
 Until salt crept into
 the surrounding soaks.
 Furious he was – the salt



left lines on the bath,
the soap wouldn't lather. (67)

Kinsella's tact of employing musical devices in this poem is notable here. Alliteration can be monitored in such expressions as "guilt I guess," "humoured him," "rabbit rippers," "a stale sort," "surrounding soaks" and "left lines" with the aim to add music and beauty to the poem.

Kinsella's environmental attack is not limited to the agricultural industry only. Rather, it extends to the animal industry, particularly the sheep industry as it is considered one of the main sources of profits for Australian farmers. Until mining has become prominent in Australia, the Australian economy has been standing on the sheep industry for more than two centuries. In his prominent poem "The Ascension of Sheep," Kinsella wages a harsh attack on the sheep slaughter for the purpose of meat industry. In this regard, Pingping and Phillips maintain:

Animal slaughter for the meat industry has turned out to be an increasingly controversial issue ever since environmental protection became a public issue some eighty years ago. As a poet with ecological concerns, Kinsella uses animal 'persecution' in the poetry of *The Silo*, in order to wake up human beings to respect animals – as members of this global ecological community. Yet only recently have sheep farmers agreed to cease the cruel practice of 'mulesing' which stripped the skin from live sheep to prevent blowfly attacks.

Again, Kinsella's poem "The Ascension of Sheep" is one of the poems that best exemplify his anti-pastoral attitude. Its first lines say:

The sun has dragged
the fog away
and now the sheep



in sodden clothes may
 fleece the farmer-
 who warm by the fire
 tallies heads and prices
 and thinks about slaughter –
 each soul taken upwards
 from its fertile
 body – columns of mist
 like pillars of a temple. (Kinsella 21)

Of this poem, Harold Bloom states, "This uncanny piece is unlike anything I know, even by Kinsella, or perhaps I should call it a unique ascension. Ascension, secularized, is one of Kinsella's creative obsessions" (Craven 417). The above-mentioned lines best illustrate Kinsella's anti-pastoralism, particularly on the animal level. The poem is rich with both figurative and musical devices, which accentuates Kinsella's high poetic sensibility. The extent of cruelty can be felt in the last two lines of the poem "where the soul / could never feel secure" (Kinsella 21).

To conclude, John Kinsella is a contemporary Australian poet who has brought a sense of vitality and freshness into the tradition of Australian poetry. His poetry cannot but be classified as being 'anti-pastoral' due to its great emphasis on the environmental problems inherent in the Western Australian landscape. Indeed, Kinsella succeeds in directing his readers to a deeper thinking about the severe damage caused by humans to the environment, whether on the agricultural industry level or on the animal one. His poetic volume *The Silo: A Pastoral Symphony* proves to be the best to illustrate Kinsella's anti-pastoral poetic attitude. The poems included in this volume managed to expose an anti-pastoral dilemma. Such a dilemma had been caused by the earlier British settlers who cleared away the Australian



rainforests for the purpose of agriculture and animal breeding. Not only the content but also the structure of *The Silo* contributed much to revealing the dark sides of the rural Australian history.

In light of the current study, Kinsella's anti-pastoral poetic attitude proved to be completely different from Paterson's Romantic and pastoral one. Whereas the first is inclined to attack the agricultural practices, the latter tends to romanticize and idealize the Australian Bush. Indeed, Paterson's poetry bears an optimistic and cheerful view of life in comparison with the gloomy and pessimistic tone adopted by Kinsella towards everything beautiful in Australia. Undoubtedly, the dissimilarity observed in their approach is due to the fact that the Australian rural landscape of the nineteenth century is completely different from that of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Regrettably, the peacefulness and cleanliness of the pastoral at Paterson's time turns to be that of pollution and hubbub at Kinsella's, which is an inevitable outcome of an industrialized and over-sophisticated age.

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