the *boukolos*, or herdsman: “the word ‘bucolic’ [...] can be used to mean ‘of the country,’ but the implications of simplicity of life in this usage have come to be associated with the comic” (Gifford, *Pastoral 17*). Shakespeare’s contemporaries, among them Christopher Marlowe, Sir Walter Raleigh and Thomas Campion, each produced such pastoral songs of courtship and seduction. Pastoral drama and romance of the time was heavily indebted to poems of the Italian Renaissance, including Tasso’s *Aminta* (1573) and Guarini’s *Il Pastor Fido* (1590). Examples for pastoral drama and romance of the English Renaissance include Sidney’s *Arcadia* (1590), *Rosalynde*, by Thomas Lodge (Shakespeare’s model for *As You Like It*), *The Faithful Shepherdess* by John Fletcher (1610) and Ben Jonson’s *The Sad Shepherd* (1637).

**Pastoral as Social Praise and Implicit Critique**

Elsewhere such pastoral imitations provide both explicit social praise and implicit critique; while Edmund Spenser, in *Eclogue 4* of his *Shepherd’s Calendar* (1579) and Mary Herbert, in “A Dialogue Between Two Shepherds” (1599), both praise Queen Elizabeth, John Milton’s *Lycidas* (1637) condemns the corruption of the clergy, and *Eclogue 10* of Spenser’s *Calender* denounces those responsible for the demise of poetry. Theocritus’ mock-realistic tendencies thus helped produce a “proletarian pastoral” that “gives a natural expression for a sense of social injustice.” The shepherd, “outside society because too poor for its benefits” gains a sort of artistic independence and becomes “a critic of society” (Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* 16). As George Puttenham observes about one of the first English definitions of the mode: “under the veil of homely persons, and in rude speeches [pastoral is able] to insinuate and glance at greater matters, and such as perchance had not been safe to have been disclosed” (Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesie* 31).

Puttenham’s astute observations on the nature of pastoral are echoed in Wordsworth’s “Michael,” where a traditional setting of “pastoral mountains” and “rocks and stones and kites, that overhead are sailing in the sky” (*The Art of English Poesie* 5; 11–12), allow the poetic voice to “feel / For passions that were not my own, and think [...] On man, the heart of man, and human life” (30–34). Indeed, Wordsworth’s “Michael: A Pastoral Poem” (1800) is a striking example.

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9 Examples include Christopher Marlowe’s “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love,” Sir Walter Raleigh’s “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd,” and Thomas Campion’s “I Care Not For These Ladies.”

of how the shepherd in literature could transform and be used by the poet to challenge pastoral conventions, even if that same poem begins conventionally enough:

Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name;
An old man, stout of heart and strong of limb.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength; his mind was keen,
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs,
And in his shepherd’s calling he was prompt
And watchful more than ordinary men.

Wordsworth, “Michael” 40–47

Although Wordsworth paints Michael as an ideal shepherd, “stout of heart and strong of limb,” his focus quickly shifts to the “unusual strength” of this shepherd’s “keen” mind, “apt for [more] affairs” and “watchful more than ordinary men.” This elevation of the shepherd’s “mind” above his more traditional strengths echoes Puttenham’s analysis of the shepherd as “able to glance at greater matters.” Thus, “Wordsworth’s shepherd has a maturity, integrity and dignity that is both produced by his work and extends beyond it” (Gifford, Pastoral 6). Wordsworth goes further, addressing the reader as he attacks “the patronising simplification” of other pastoral conventions. Indeed, “Wordsworth has used the pastoral mode to subvert conventional assumptions about the shepherd by making a realistic and broader portrait of an actual person in an actual village” (Gifford, Pastoral 7).

In addition, “Michael” places the shepherd in an intense, partly georgic relation to the land, and focuses on a need for living with misfortune. Like Michael, Wordsworth’s poetic speaker lacks the occasion for song, and instead, as Nancy Lindheim notes, “often becomes a teller of tales.” Although “the poetic theory announced in the preface to Lyrical Ballads places Wordsworth in the pastoral tradition, therefore, [...] his characteristic poetic practice is inflected by what is actually an unpastoral emphasis on nature” (Lindheim, The Virgilian Pastoral Tradition 238).

It is due to this “unpastoral emphasis on nature,” moreover, that the circle of pastoral realism – traced to Theocritus’ mock-heroic exchanges between Battus and Corydon – closes prominently with the contemporary ecocritical novel which portrays a dystopian landscape, as devastated by human hand, and to such an extent that it threatens survival. Exponents of ecocriticism have written