that uses the linguistic landscapes and the constructs of Arcadia as its artifice of expression, to mediate between (and meditate on) the intersubjective consciousness of the self.

Both pastoral and postmodernism facilitated the rise to supremacy of the individual in literature. Pastoral, on the one hand, was ever sentient of the crisis of the “sundered self” (Lawson, “On Modern Pastoral” 41); indeed, one could say the pastoral mode itself, throughout literary history, has been engaged in a socio-cultural process of identification and reification, the very process and concerns the mode has been used to express. Postmodernism, on the other hand, represents the apotheosis of subjectivity in literature and cultural theory. It is consilient with pastoral because, in utilising language and narrative as a “kind of fictional liberation movement” (Worthington, “A Devious Narrative” 4), it turns the pastoral mode, that has up to now expressed a public crisis of identity (by way of social, political, and ecocriticism), into one that can also express the most private identity crises. Moreover, post-/modernism has helped raise the bucolic tradition to a mode that can express a pastoral crisis of intersubjectivity, language, and self. It is the subtext, the narrative landscape of pastoral that allows it to become such a modulor for the acrobatics of post-/modern literature which gives such primacy to the crisis of identity and self-consciousness. This subtext, as Garber expounds, is what constitutes pastoral’s “inner geography, ... a space of gaps and lacunae” (Garber, “Pastoral Spaces” 443).

Post-/Modernism, Nostalgia, and Identity Discourse

Furthermore, postmodernism is consequential because the term has become “the code-name for the crisis of confidence in Western conceptual systems;” this “crisis of confidence” goes well beyond any empirical or social self to include the transcendental self (Holstein & Gubrium, The Self We Live By 56). Postmodernism is at sharp odds with any overarching cultural sensibilities as regards the way we perceive ourselves:

Postmodernism is born out of the uprising of the marginalised, the evolution in communication technology, the fissures of a global multinational hypercapitalism, and our sense of the limits of Enlightenment rationality, all creating a conjunction that shifts our sense of who we are and what is possible. (Lather, “Postmodernism, Post-Structuralism” 102)

Postmodernists differ in how radically they articulate this crisis of confidence, especially in their responses to the question of the existence of the self. James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium distinguish between “affirmative”
(moderate) and “sceptical” (radical) postmodernists, providing an inclusive yet crisp disambiguation. Affirmatives seek to sustain the notion of reality as something socially constructed, yet evidentiary that includes an experiencing, if equally constructed, self. In this sense, the postmodern condition multiplies and hybridises our identities, resulting in “a polysemic self, a self refracted, but not displaced, by all manner of signification” (Gubrium and Holstein, The Self We Live By 57). The self of everyday life is hereby affirmed, not eliminated. In conjunction with this, postmodern commentators such as Kenneth Gergen (The Saturated Self 1991) and Noram Denzin (Images of Postmodern Society 1991), speak of a world exploding with images and representations of who we are that skews our sense of self (The Self We Live By 58).

In contrast, “sceptical” or “radical” postmodernists altogether mistrust modern reality, the reality of the self in particular. For such postmodernists the real is just another myth of Western rationality. Jean Baudrillard speaks of a “hyperreality” where the self is no more than an image for conveying identity that exists in a myriad gallery of others (Baudrillard, Simulations 1983). Any conceptual anchors are hoisted as this “reality” removes the self from its traditional moorings, disabling it as an agent of experience altogether. The postmodern thus conditions a world in which objects do not exist distinct or separate from their representation (Gubrium and Holstein, The Self We Live By 57).

Depending on which path is or is not taken, the self walks through different stories to different endings. According to Holstein and Gubrium, the postmodern self has two options: The first option entails a range of reactions which correlate with the affirmative/sceptical distinction. Those postmodernists who choose to “react” attempt to “reaffirm familiar renditions of identity, entrenching in ‘tried and true’ versions of the social self formulated by the early pragmatists,” a narrative or plot that formulates a strategy for the social self to “withstand the current siege, adapting to postmodern (or late modern times) … but remaining essentially in tact as it has been known for decades.” Other ‘reactionary’ thinkers, more sceptical, “dismiss the self as an empirical reality, effectively putting an end to its narrative by catapulting it into an altogether different universe” (The Self We Live By 57).

The second option desires to transform the crisis of confidence rather than simply relegating it or capitulating to it: “Acknowledging the hard, complex times that confront the social self, this transformation reconceptualises the self as a form of working subjectivity” (The Self We Live by 57) The attendant panel of postmodernists, including such commentators as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Jean-François Lyotard, and Michel Foucault, thereby formulate “a self that not only is a polysemic product of experience, but is also a by-product of practices
that diversely construct it in response to varied senses of what it could be, or need be” (*The Self We Live By* 57).

Now to close the circle of argument by relating the two options of the postmodern self to the pastoral mode and its subtexts of nostalgia and identity discourse. As previously discussed, nostalgia is a prevalent impulse that engenders the pastoral mode with a crisis of authenticity, reality and self. It has also been pointed out that pastoral may either use nostalgia as a vehicle to simply escape from this crisis, or as a vessel with which to explore it. Indeed, this is not dissimilar to the postmodernist self that can either capitulate to the crisis of confidence or use it as a catalyst for metamorphosis and development. At the core of both the pastoral of nostalgia and the postmodern debate of self, in sum, is a crisis of identity as expressed within a narrative’s text, space and time.

Indeed, both the pastoral and the postmodern use a continuum of spatial and temporal imagery in their incessant survey of the self, in search of a voice to express themselves within own narratives. “I am therefore I think”: John Banville’s Cartesian inversion (*Birchwood* 3) aptly illustrates both the single most prominent feature of his writing and the singular postmodern obsession with thinking and narrating the self. The technologies of self construction are not only constituted in language, as Madan Sarup succinctly infers, but also within the space and time of the resulting narrative: “We apprehend identity not in the abstract but always in relation to a given place and time” (*Sarup, Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World* 15). The narratology of the self – to invoke Banville’s inversion again – preconditions a modern voice (text, story, narrative) of the modern individual, thrust into a space (I am) they must make sense of (I think). And it is the pastoral mode, in conjunction with its subtext of nostalgia, its narrative topography, and its constructions of Arcadia that offers the linguistic, spatial and temporal technologies which allow this process of identification to move and progress towards that which is desired.

Nostalgia provides a first and relentless impulse within pastoral that creates a crisis of perceived time discordant to the hitherto experienced self in that time. This causes the self to act, to act out nostalgia, more precisely, and to try and unify the past and the desired future with the present. This reification of one’s experience of time is in turn a necessary part of the process of identification: “The impulse to preserve the past is part of the impulse to preserve the self. [...] The nostalgic impulse is an important agent in adjustment to crisis; it is a social emollient and reinforces public [as well as private] identity when confidence is weakened or threatened” (*Sarup, Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World* 97).

Since it is always in the process of emerging, moreover, the present is by definition always uncertain, and thus it is only through recollections of past