dichotomous ‘nature’ of pastoral; pastoral death and elegy. Each section of this ‘history’ will, on the one hand, offer a definition of the selected aspects, providing a consistent terminology with which to return to each feature as necessary, while tracing said features’ development to contemporary and post-/modern literary examples.

Lastly, and despite this ambitious endeavour of developing a new definition of the pastoral, it is not the intention of this study to denounce the overt connections that exist between ecocriticism and the pastoral mode. As Laurence Buell has argued, “even if [...] pastoral interposes some major stumbling blocks in the way of developing a mature environmental aesthetics, it cannot but play a major role in that endeavour” (The Environmental Unconscious 32). Literary critics around the world have expanded in abundance upon Buell’s pioneering interrelation of the pastoral mode with ecocritical perspectives. Rather, I wish merely to complement the “ecocentric repossession of pastoral” (The Environmental Unconscious 52) with a critical repossession of my own. Once a consistent definition for the pastoral mode has been developed, moreover, it is essential to use that definition to re-evaluate the pastoral as a mode in post-/modern literature of its own right, with a particular focus on how it affects contemporary identity discourse, concerns of nostalgia, as well as literary treatments of the relationship between identity, memory and time.

2.2 What is Pastoral? – Myths, Motifs, Origins

Der junge Faun war sehr glücklich auf seiner Sommerwiese. Hier gab es kein «Rechtfertige dich!», keine Verantwortung [...] Hier herrschte das Vergessen selbst, der selige Stillstand, die Unschuld der Zeitlosigkeit: Es war die Liederlichkeit mit bestem Gewissen, die wunschbildhafte Apotheose all und jeder Verneinung des abendländischen Aktivitätskommandos. — Thomas Mann, Der Zauberberg

6 Greg Garrard provides an excellent, up-to-date interrelation of the pastoral mode and ecocriticism, with a particular focus on North American literature, in the chapter “Pastoral” of his Ecocriticism for The New Critical Idiom (2004, 33–58). Other studies that focus on the relation of ecocriticism to the pastoral in twentieth-century literature include Elise Martucci’s The Environmental Unconscious in the Fiction of Don DeLillo (2007) and George Guillemin’s The Pastoral Vision of Cormac McCarthy (2004).

7 Der Zauberberg [The Magic Mountain] vol. 2, no. 13: “The youthful faun was very happy in his summer meadow. Here there was no ‘Justify yourself!’ no responsibility. [...] Here reigned oblivion, the blissful arrest of motion itself, the innocence of timelessness. It was lightheartedness in quiet conscience, the picture-perfect apotheosis of each and every denial of the Western imperative of action” (transl. Daniela Langer, 2009).
The origins of pastoral are among the few aspects of the mode that critics agree on, and they are consistently traced back to the *Idylls* of Theocritus (c. 316–260 BC), who sought to entertain the Alexandrian court of Ptolemy with a number of vignettes about the countryside peasantry of his native Sicily (Loughrey, *The Pastoral Mode* 8). Almost all the motifs appropriated by Theocritus’ immediate successors can be found in the opening lines of this first poetic form of pastoral:

*Thyris:* Sweet is the whispering music of yonder pine that sings  
Over the water-brooks, and sweet the melody of your pipe,  
Dear goatherd. After Pan, the second prize you’ll bear away.  
If he should take the hornèd goat for his meed, to you shall fall  
The kid; and dainty is kid’s flesh, till you begin to milk them.

*Goatherd:* Sweeter, O shepherd, is your song than the melodious fall  
Of yonder stream that from on high gushes down the rock.  
If it chance that the Muses take the young ewe for their gift,  
Then your reward will be the stall-fed lamb, but should they choose  
To take the lamb, then yours shall be the sheep for second prize.

(Theocritus, *Idylls* 1.1–11)

More than a pastoral with strict formal or poetic constraints, the *Idylls* and their immediate successors are perhaps best defined as containing certain motifs that are continuously re-interpreted and expanded upon, especially when the pastoral enters other genres. It is clear that many critics place more emphasis on the formal constraints of this “traditional” pastoral. This often leads to lamenting the mode’s early inconsistencies. By focusing on the pastoral mode’s shared motifs, however, this can be avoided, and the attendant criticism can do justice to mode’s versatility (as opposed to lamenting its idiosyncrasies as inconsistencies. These motifs include shepherds who indulge in improvised song contests (*Idylls* 1–2), who praise the beauty of country life (*Idylls* 6–7), and who recount anecdotes from folklore and tales from mythology (*Idylls* 3–5; 8–11). Perhaps one of the most elegant commentaries on the origins of this idyllic pastoral of shepherds was formulated by René Rapin, a pioneer of serious pastoral criticism, in his extensive *A Treatise de Carmine Pastorali*:

Yet what beginning this kind of poetry had, I think I can pretty well conjecture: for ’tis likely that first shepherds used songs to recreate themselves in their leisure hours whilst they fed their sheep; and that each man, as his wit served, accommodated his songs to his present circumstances: to this solitude invited, and the extreme leisure that attends that employment absolutely required it: For as their retirement gave pleasure, and solitude a fit place for meditation, meditation and invention produced a verse. (Rapin, *Carmine Pastorali* 13–14)
In collaboration with these motifs of the shepherd’s song, solitude, a life of leisure and innocence, pastoral begins to take form, both within its poetic origins and in a canon of literary criticism. These first motifs, courtesy of their recurrent and perennial nature, help create a unified terminology for the pastoral mode, whilst elegantly avoiding the constraints of a “traditional” pastoral poetic, within which the mode does not remain for long. It is therefore crucial to take into account and, where necessary, to return to these motifs as we continue to survey the chronology of the mode.

**Pan and the Original Arcadians**

Although Theocritus’ *Idylls* suggest a fairly limited and stable sense of pastoral as a literature that portrays, in an idealised manner, “the life of shepherds, or of the country” (*OED* online), they are also already atypical of this ‘original pastoral,’ because “they contain considerable elements of realism and sometimes dwell on the harsher aspects of the lives led by an entire rural community, consisting not just of shepherds, but of farmers, serfs, goatherds, fishermen, neatherds and housewives” (Loughrey, *The Pastoral Mode* 8). For all the living at one with nature, for example, herdsman Corydon warns Battus he ought to wear sandals, as the ground is one thorny ambush:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Battus:</th>
<th>Zeus save thee, Corydon; see here!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It had at me as thou said’st the word, this thorn, here under my ankle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And how deep the distaff-thistles go! A plague o’ thy heifer!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It all came o’ my gaping after her. [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corydon:</td>
<td>Aye, aye, and have got him ‘twixt my nails; and lo! Here he is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battus:</td>
<td><em>(in mock-heroic strain)</em> O what a little tiny wound to overmaster so mighty a man!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corydon:</td>
<td><em>(pointing out the moral)</em> Thou should’st put on thy shoes when thou goest into the hills, Battus; ‘Tis rare ground for thorns and gorse, the hills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Theocritus, *Idylls* 4.50–57)*

The realism Theocritus gave to his *Idylls* hints at other origins of pastoral, often ignored in criticism. For Theocritus’s Arcadia has its own origin story, steeped in Greek mythology, and presided over by Pan, whom all ancient sources call Arcadian. Indeed, much of pastoral’s versatility and many of its recurrent motifs must be traced back to the this first and ‘original’ Arcadian:
Pan has long been thought of as the complete product of the Arcadian mountains and pastures, the divine projection of their shepherds and goatherds. Evidently everything follows from this: Pan’s music (the pastoral syrinx); his activity as a huntsman; his erotic solitude (and the perversion it induces); the distance he keeps from urban life. [...] In him, through his primitive homeland, the original life of the Greek countryside speaks to us, and Pan in the end touches something universal. The Greek peasant is still latent in each of us; his ‘experience’ is not extinct. (Borgeaud, *The Cult of Pan*)

In the oral traditions and myths, as collected by Pausanias, the primitive brutishness of Pan and his fellow Arcadians was explained in their immeasurable antiquity. Arcadian Pan presents “a universe radically different from that of the Greece we call classical.” Therefore, it is somewhat difficult, perhaps even impossible, to “understand him while clinging to a humanistic phenomenology that assumes a continuous inheritance from ancient Greece to the people of our times.” Due to his distant origins, and an impulse to face his own past, Arcadian Pan thus “takes on a kind of otherness” (Borgeaud, *The Cult of Pan*), that has remained a stratum of pastoral as we know it today. Arcadians, additionally, were considered to be the oldest inhabitants of the Peloponnese; they were considered autochthonous,

or, if Aristotle’s interpretation is preferred, from elsewhere, but before the moon, the Arcadians never separate themselves from the place where they made their temporal appearance. As compared with their neighbors, they are consequently equivocal beings, at once in time and timeless” (Borgeaud, *The Cult of Pan*).

Although pastoral’s timelessness can thus be traced back to the autochthonous nature of Pan and the original Arcadians, it is not how we usually imagine the Arcadian landscape, largely due to Theocritus’ systematic elimination of almost all features of Pan’s ‘primitive,’ original Arcadia:

Many an aspen, many an elm bowed and rustled overhead, and hard by, the hallowed water welled purling forth of a cave of the Nymphs, while the brown cricket chirped busily amid the shady leafage, and the tree-frog murmured aloof in the dense thorn brake. All nature smelt of the opulent summer-time, smelt of the season of fruit. Pears lay at our feet, apples on either side, rolling abundantly, and the young branches lay splayed upon the ground because of the weight of their damsons. (Theocritus, *Idylls* VII, 105)

Through music, Theocritus softened the brutishness of Arcadian life: “Pan, the nymphs, and the goatherds are still in residence, but the wild notes of the syrinx have been replaced by melodious fluting and endless song contests.” Pan, too,
has become much more akin to the “custodian of flocks and amiable prankster the Romans would recognise” (Schama, “Arcadia Redesigned” 527).

**Two Kinds of Arcadia**

Crucially, Theocritus’ lyrics are the product of a much more sophisticated, urbane taste, and it is here that we first see how the pastoral mode was intended for an urban audience. Ultimately, “both kinds of Arcadia, the idyllic as well as the wild, are landscapes of the urban imagination” (Schama, “Arcadia Redesigned” 525). In England, for example, both the wilderness of a primitive Arcadia and the life of bucolic love, simplicity and shepherded idyll were sources of imitation for cityscapes and aristocratic country life alike. The great Palladian villa of Kenwood, for example, supplied with graceful iconic columns, pilasters on the garden facade and an elegant pediment, was considered by many to be the epitome of an ‘Arcadian’ Hampstead:

> The beautifully elevated situation of this estate, happily ranks it above all others round London, as the most charming spot where the Gentleman and the Builder may exercise their taste in the erection of Villas, as many of which can be so delightfully placed as to command the richest home views of wood and water and the distant views of the Metropolis with the surrounding counties of Essex, Surrey and Berkshire. (*Morning Herald*, July 8 1789)

Kenwood was a living catalogue of an aristocratic Arcadia, with almost all the key ingredients carefully orchestrated into the estate (see Fig. 1: Robertson, *A View of Kenwood* 1781). As Simon Schama observes:

> Sheep safely grazed not ten miles from where the objects of the lord chief justice’s attention danced on the Tyburn gallows. The house [...] was full of paintings of itself, or of similar estates that testified to the elegant pastoral taste of the ruling class. In the graceful Orangery a Gainsborough couple posed before their park, beaming with self-satisfaction. [...] Music played from a pavilion on the far side of the lake[.]

(Schama, “Arcadia Redesigned” 521)

Not far from Kenwood “it is an easy thing to stray into the other Arcadia: a dark grove of desire, but also a labyrinth of madness and death” (“Arcadia Redesigned” 522). What is interesting is not that both Arcadias are found in immediate vicinity of each other, but that considerable investments were made to keep pristine the first (Kenwood), and to maintain the heath-adjacent other. The sheep were still there in 1960, Schama notes, and when, in 1829, Thomas Maryon Wilson, “Lord of the Manor,” proposed an enclosure for part of the heath, and
to turn it entirely into a picturesque park, a confrontation between developer and conservationists ensued. While Wilson fiercely fought for precut fencing and a pristine landscape architecture, the conservationist campaigners argued that “the great city needed a wilderness for its own civic health” and that “it was precisely the unkempt and uncultivated nature of the heath that was said to be its special gift to the people” (Schama, “Arcadia Redesigned” 524). Although it is thus tempting to view the two kinds of Arcadia, the wild and the idyllic, as constantly defined against each other – one evoking the ideal of the park, the other civility and harmony, it is just as easy to view them as mutually exclusive and as contentious landscapes. The quarrel between them “even persists at the heart of debates within the environmental movement,” but “their long history suggests that they are, in fact, mutually sustaining” (Schama, “Arcadia Redesigned” 525).

The pristine, constructed Arcadia of Kenwood stands at the polar opposite of the ‘original’ Arcadia of myth, where men looked and behaved like beasts. Thus we can see a mutuality that would become crucial to any further developments of the pastoral mode, namely between town and country, especially when the poetic contradictions of this gardened Arcadia took the form of a country villa like Kenwood. Naturally, such mutual contradictions were also borne from the “ancient ideal of country life as a corrective to the corruption, intrigue and disease of the town,” and thus it was, and would always be a “spur to rustication in a locus amoenus” Indeed, this “redesigned Arcadia” became “a product of the orderly mind rather than the playground of unchained senses” (Schama, “Arcadia Redesigned” 529–30).

The strain of realism witnessed in some of Theocritus’ pastorals is not only at the heart of the mode’s first dichotomies, moreover, but it often also creates elements within the mode that are amusing, elements of what would later become the mock-pastoral.⁸ Realism and humour thus produced two main strains of pastoral: first, the shepherd was re-appropriated and turned variously into philosopher, artist, recluse or a fool who could provide comic relief, implicit social critique, and opine about the nature of love. Shakespeare’s clown Feste (Twelfth Night), his clever, cynical fool Touchstone (As You Like It) or Thomas Hardy’s ‘heathfolk’ in The Return of the Native are but the most often referenced examples of this reappropriation. In such comic spectacles of bucolic love, the simple life is increasingly equated with the bitter-sweet simple-mindedness of

---

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

---

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