



What Is Pastoral?

By Paul Alpers

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One of the enduring traditions of Western literary history, pastoral is often mischaracterized as a catchall for literature about rural themes and nature in general. In *What Is Pastoral?*, distinguished literary historian Paul Alpers argues that pastoral is based upon a fundamental fiction—that the lives of shepherds or other socially humble figures represent the lives of human beings in general.

Ranging from Virgil's *Eclogues* to Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, from Shakespeare and Cervantes to Hardy and Frost, this work brings the story of the pastoral tradition, previously limited to classical and Renaissance literature, into the twentieth century. Pastoral reemerges in this account not as a vehicle of nostalgia for some Golden Age, nor of escape to idyllic landscapes, but as a mode bearing witness to the possibilities and problems of human community and shared experience in the real world.

A rich and engrossing book, *What Is Pastoral?* will soon take its place as the definitive study of pastoral literature.

"Alpers succeeds brilliantly. . . . [He] offers . . . a wealth of new insight into the origins, development, and flowering of the pastoral."—Ann-Maria Contarino, *Renaissance Quarterly*

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Editorial Review

From the Back Cover

One of the enduring traditions of Western literary history, pastoral is often mischaracterized as a catchall for literature about rural themes and nature in general. In *What Is Pastoral?* distinguished literary historian Paul Alpers argues that pastoral is based upon a fundamental fiction - that the lives of shepherds or other socially humble figures represent the lives of human beings in general. Ranging from Virgil's *Eclogues* to Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, from Shakespeare and Cervantes to Wordsworth, Hardy, and Frost, this work brings the story of the pastoral tradition, previously limited to classical and Renaissance literature, into the twentieth century. Pastoral reemerges in this account not as a vehicle of nostalgia for some Golden Age, nor of escape to idyllic landscapes, but as a means of dealing with the loss, decline, and deprivation that motivate pastoral, and of maintaining a sense of human community despite these woes. Alpers argues that the heart of literary pastoral is the representation of herdsmen and their lives. Pastoral does not depict herdsmen "realistically", but its concern with the limitations of their lives, their vulnerabilities and social dependencies, determines its various conventions and usages, including the character of the singing that dominates many pastorals and makes the herdsman a figure of the poet.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Dorcas Starling:

Nowadays reading books become more than want or need but also get a life style. This reading routine give you lot of advantages. The huge benefits you got of course the knowledge the particular information inside the book in which improve your knowledge and information. The info you get based on what kind of guide you read, if you want attract knowledge just go with knowledge books but if you want really feel happy read one with theme for entertaining for instance comic or novel. The actual *What Is Pastoral?* is kind of guide which is giving the reader erratic experience.

Daniel Engle:

Spent a free a chance to be fun activity to complete! A lot of people spent their down time with their family, or all their friends. Usually they accomplishing activity like watching television, likely to beach, or picnic from the park. They actually doing same task every week. Do you feel it? Do you wish to something different to fill your personal free time/ holiday? May be reading a book might be option to fill your no cost time/ holiday. The first thing you ask may be what kinds of guide that you should read. If you want to test look for book, may be the e-book untitled *What Is Pastoral?* can be very good book to read. May be it can be best activity to you.

Brandon Justice:

Playing with family inside a park, coming to see the sea world or hanging out with close friends is thing that usually you will have done when you have spare time, in that case why you don't try thing that really

opposite from that. Just one activity that make you not sensation tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you already been ride on and with addition details. Even you love What Is Pastoral?, you can enjoy both. It is great combination right, you still wish to miss it? What kind of hangout type is it? Oh can happen its mind hangout men. What? Still don't understand it, oh come on its known as reading friends.

Jason Howell:

Reading a book make you to get more knowledge from this. You can take knowledge and information from your book. Book is composed or printed or created from each source which filled update of news. Within this modern era like now, many ways to get information are available for anyone. From media social just like newspaper, magazines, science book, encyclopedia, reference book, novel and comic. You can add your knowledge by that book. Do you want to spend your spare time to open your book? Or just searching for the What Is Pastoral? when you essential it?

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