

Antipastoral Introduction

Pastoral is a genre of many things, but one that is constantly shown again and again is its rosy idealization of the past.

Counterbalancing this is the anti-pastoral, which tries to ground the lofty ideals of the pastoral in the cold and hard facts of reality. In *Pastoral*, Gifford uses the poem 'Dover Beach' by Matthew Arnold (1851) as a representative example of the anti-pastoral. In his analysis, he shows how the poem claims

That the natural world can no longer be constructed as 'a land of dreams', but is in fact a bleak battle for survival without divine purpose [...] which places Matthew Arnold in a tradition of anti-pastoral poets



While many claim that the anti-pastoral begins with Stephen Duck and his famous poem "The Thresher's Labour" in 1766, its themes have been present in some of pastoral's earlier works.