Environment & Society Portal

Multimedia Library Collection: Periodicals

"The Dark Pastoral: Material Ecocriticism in the Anthropocene"

Sullivan, Heather I.

Sullivan, Heather I. "The Dark Pastoral: Material Ecocriticism in the Anthropocene." *Ecocene: Cappadocia Journal of Environmental Humanities* 1, no. 2 (2020): 19–31. doi:10.46863/ecocene.16 .

The "dark pastoral" unites the Anthropocene's strangely sunny celebration of its fossil-fueled agriculture and technology generally with the retro-nostalgic, "pastoral" dreams of resplendent greenery, which is all too often complicit in the wealth of global industrial capitalism and colonial resource acquisition dictating specific land uses. With the dark pastoral, I pay particular attention to "anthropocenic" materialities and human and non-human agencies in order to frame, analyze, and even, perhaps, re-shape our ecological thought(s) and actions. The dark pastoral is thus an ecocritical trope adapted to the "new nature" of climate change, the troublingly catastrophecentered scenarios so popular in the fossil-fueled era of the Anthropocene, and the ongoing centrality of reverently pastoral impulses in environmentalism. By studying together the jarring contrasts of, on the one hand, total catastrophic rubble that may unintentionally reveal naïve visions of cultural power in popular post-apocalyptic texts and films and, on the other hand, the traditional (and poignant) ideals of "nature" as a former (deemed lost) blue-green place of harmony that often purposefully dissemble power structures behind utopian settings, the dark pastoral is well armed with diverse strategies for exposing the dynamics of power and agency in relation to material nature-culture. (Abstract)

2020 Heather I. Sullivan. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License .

Download:
Download full article
https://www.environmentandsociety.org/sites/default/files/key_docs/19-article_text-64-1-10-20210109.pdf

Related links:

- Full issue
  http://ecocene.kapadokya.edu.tr/ecocene/index.php/ecocene/issue/view/2

Periodicals Collection, Multimedia Library, Environment & Society Portal
"The Dark Pastoral: Material Ecocriticism in the Anthropocene"
Source URL: http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/9206
Print date: 14 November 2026 19:02:16

Websites linked in this text:

- https://doi.org/10.46863/ecocene.16

Periodicals Collection, Multimedia Library, Environment & Society Portal
"The Dark Pastoral: Material Ecocriticism in the Anthropocene"
Source URL: http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/9206
Print date: 14 November 2026 19:02:16