Pastoral Criticism in the Context of the Environmental Humanities – Trajectories in the Anthology

Georgian Poetry Vol. I-V (1911-1922)

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Doctoral Thesis
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ACADEMIC YEAR 2020 / 2021
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The need for more creativity or new figurations rests on the awareness that there is a noticeable gap between how we live [...] and how we represent to ourselves this lived existence in theoretical terms and discourses. [...] Filling in this gap with adequate figurations is therefore one of the greatest challenges of the present, one which enlists the resources of the imagination as much as conceptual tools.

Rosi Braidotti, *Writing as a Nomadic Subject*
Acknowledgments

This thesis would have never been completed without the generous support of many inspiring people, whom I feel blessed to have encountered during my wonderful PhD journey.

First and foremost, acknowledgments are due to my first supervisor at the University of Bergamo, Prof. Dr. Flaminia Nicora, for her wise and progressive guidance, her continuous encouragement, and her valuable, pragmatic advice both regarding my dissertation and navigating through the challenges of academic life. I am also very grateful to my supervisor at Justus Liebig Universität Gießen, Prof. Dr. Prof. Dr. hc. Ansgar Nünning, for his inspiring, visionary mentoring, for the sharing of his extensive knowledge on literature and culture, and for constantly encouraging me to “pursue excellence” in and with my work.

This thesis would also have never come to light without my valuable exchanges with the staff of the Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC) in Gießen – Professors, researchers, post-docs and colleagues who shared their expertise and helped me develop fundamental skills for conducting strong research. Special thanks goes to Dr. Poland, Dr. Steiner, and Dr. Kovack, and to the GCSC Team for the impeccable coordination and tireless assistance that they offered regarding my co-tutelle. I also cannot forget to express my gratitude to the organizing team and partners of PhdNet, on which I have the honor of serving as an affiliate member. The feedback that the Professors involved in this unique PhD Programme provided to chapter drafts of my thesis was a fundamental contribution to the completion of my degree. Special thanks goes to Professor Emerita Angela Locatelli for the caring and meticulous support that she provided during my exploration of the knowledge of literature, which has been accompanying my personal and professional growth for several years now.

During my research stay in Gießen, the personal and professional exchange that I had with my fellow PhD colleagues was also fundamental to the outcome of my thesis, especially during the challenges caused by the pandemic. The members of the XVII cohort of the IPP Literary and Cultural Studies (GCSC) and the members of the PhDNet Fifth Cycle provided useful, practical responses to the early drafts of my dissertation and showed constant support to my preliminary ideas. The members of the Research Area
“Ecology and the Study of Culture” gave me the unique opportunity to engage in accurate, deep discussions on ecocriticism that have resurfaced throughout my thesis. Special, heartfelt thanks go to my fellow PhD Candidates and friends Lucia, Annika, Lukas, Richard, Aleks, Silvia Boide and Silvia Casazza for having created the most wonderful environment around me.

Thanks also to my colleagues in Bergamo – Ambra, Enrico, Elena, Francesco, Alessandra, Julia, Sara Cianciullo, and Sara Volpi – for seeing the strengths in one another and for the companionship. I am also indebted to Dr. Eleonora Fracalanza who has been, since the very beginning of this adventure, a trustworthy sidekick.

I would also like to acknowledge the generosity of the international network of scholars that, during the past three years, supported my research project in many, different ways. Among them, I express my sincere gratitude to the international Woolfian community, who provided insightful comments, suggestions, and encouragement toward my thesis argument: one for all, thank you, Prof. Dr. Drew Shannon for your generosity and care. Furthermore, I would like to extend my thanks to my worldwide Posthuman community for having represented a unique source of ideas and input and for guiding my productive journey in this special field of study; I especially thank the members of the Global Posthuman Network and the Rete Postumana Italiana. Special thanks goes to Prof. Dr. Francesca Ferrando for the trust that she placed in me, and to my posthuman tribe generated at Utrecht University inspired by Rosi Braidotti’s affirmative theory: Lidia, Myriam, Elisa, Francesco and Giovanni. I also wish to credit my global Ecocritical network, starting from the team of the course ‘Økokritikk og didaktiske praksiser’ at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, to Prof. Dr. Serenella Iovino for her valuable advice and for giving me the chance to participate in the debates of her PhD Course at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Very special and deepest thanks go to Rachel Carazo, not only for her extraordinary, tireless proofreading of my work(s), but also for the constant, productive, and inspiring exchanges that have allowed us to become great friends. I am also indebted to Susanne Schotanus for her attentive advice, language revisions, and punctual suggestions that stem from her editorial experience.

To other scholars and colleagues worldwide – Dr. Elisa Bolchi Dr. Emanuel Stelzer, David Lombard, Henry Tien, Ben Bagocious and Cristiano Poletti –
acknowledgments are also due for the unique opportunities to learn by doing, talking, and sharing that they gave to me.

Finally, I express my gratitude to the many people in my personal sphere who have been crucial for motivating my research and filling my life with love: my family has been incredibly generous in providing a material and immaterial ‘room of my own’ for conducting my research; my many friends supported my journey, generating a positive, stimulating environment around me; my local community provided occasions to put what I preached into practice.

Many other people deserve to be included in these acknowledgments: it is thanks to unexpected sparks during conversations that my work has consistently grown. It is to these unnamed, generous human beings that my dissertation is dedicated: they are beautiful people who give without asking for anything in return for the sake of knowledge production, cooperation, and the hope to build a better future through the power of sharing and becoming-with.

Thanks to you all, from the bottom of my heart, for helping me achieve a life-long dream.
1. Introduction

We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier: we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

This is a study about the pastoral: a study about pastoral theory, and a study about pastoral poetry. However, this is also a study about how the environmental urgencies of the present-day world encourage contemporary readers to adjust their way(s) of thinking, seeing, and evaluating nonhumans/other-than-humans/more-than-humans1 through the rereading of past literary and cultural phenomena.

In response to the defeatist attitude that often accompanies the cultural discourses regarding the many crises of our times – from climate change to the Covid-19 pandemic – this dissertation intends to embrace an affirmative approach. Based on the idea of evaluating problems as opportunities, my study relates the above-mentioned fatiguing2 issues (Braidotti 2019, 16) offering a possible way out, while enacting a critical discussion of the dualistic and anthropocentric axioms, rooted in Western thought, which have led

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1 In this thesis, the expression ‘nonhuman’ will be preferred compared to other words when indicating entities that are not classified as human beings, such as animal and plants, but also inorganic materials, like minerals. This choice, however, does not intend to dismiss or disregard the extensive scholarly discussion on the alternative expressions to ‘nonhuman’, such as ‘other-than-humans’ or ‘more-than-human’, especially in the fields of posthumanism and ecocriticism. These expressions, in fact, allow for a useful critique of the implicit prolongation of dualistic and anthropocentric assumptions that the term ‘nonhuman’ (as the counterpart of ‘human’) may carry. While the expression “other-than-humans” can be related to Haraway’s discussion on “significant otherness”, in which she investigates the bond between, for instance, dogs and human beings following the “implosion of nature and culture in the relentlessly historically specific, joint lives of” (2003, 17) living beings, “more-than-human”, as Yuki Masumi affirms, engages with discussions on multispecies relationships while “refer[ring] to how there are also other existences going above humans” (2007, n.p.), recalling the seminal scholarship of Abraham (1996). By underlining my awareness of this scholarship, I invite the readers of my dissertation to consider my use of the term ‘nonhuman’ as being distanced from implicit, latent dualistic and anthropocentric narratives that the term may carry.

2 As Braidotti discusses: “If the public debates at the end of the Cold War in the 1990s were dominated by the dubious – and ideologically loaded – claim to the ‘end of history’, by the 2020s we seem to be heading for a massive outburst of over-fatigue with just about everything else. We may feel exhausted about a range of issues, from democracy to liberal politics, everyday politics, classical emancipation, the knowledge of experts, the nation state, the EU, academic education – and so on. Critical theory reflects this negative trend by indulging in its own kind of self-pitying lament” (Braidotti 2019, 16).
to the Anthropocene\(^3\) (Ferrando 2019, 22). Particularly, following the line proposed by Hubert Zapf, who called for the necessity of re-reading and re-evaluating the archives of Western literature for better responding to these crises (2020) – I intend to reevaluate disregarded, past pastoral poems. I argue that even traditional pastoral poems offer valuable models of human-nonhuman relational ethics which can be a useful tool for a contemporary readership to respond to contemporary ecological crises. These reevaluations, in fact, demonstrate that traditional pastoral poems serve as an inexhaustible re-source, already at hand, for recovering the sense of connectedness in the present-day world between humans and the many entities comprising their surrounding environments, as a way for ensuring a more sustainable future.

While this study adopts a retrospective glance by focusing on early twentieth-century pastoral poetry which appeared in the anthology *Georgian Poetry*, published in England between 1912 and 1922, its theoretical framework engages with contemporary critical and philosophical evaluations. Central to my work is the awareness that the conceptual biases that led to the major anthropogenic environmental alterations of the past few decades – dualistic figurations of the natural world and anthropocentrism – can be challenged by adopting alternative critical perspectives: these include posthumanism and ecocriticism, which propose an alternative epistemology to current, dominant paradigms. These approaches negotiate rooted Western assumptions, such as the centrality of the human “as the measure of all things” (Braidotti 2019, 8) and related limiting dichotomies, including nature/culture and human/nature. Instead, posthumanism and ecocriticism explore more pluralistic figurations, postulating that humans and nonhumans should be conceived through a set of inter/intra-actions (Barad, 2007). The adoption of a similar perspective is increasingly advocated by scholars in the burgeoning

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\(^3\) In this work, I privilege the term ‘Anthropocene’ compared to other, similar expressions in order to refer to a period in which the major biospherical alterations of planet earth have made the negative impact of human activities on the environment indisputable, insomuch that a new geological era could be determined today, as Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer have famously assessed (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000, 17-18). In the past few years, many critical discussions have underlined limits and implicit biases that the concept of the Anthropocene carries hand in hand with the proposal for new neologisms, such as Capitalocene (Moore 2016), Plantationocene (Haraway 2016), and Wastocene (Armiero 2021), in order to retune Crutzen and Stoermer’s evaluation with different assumptions. By emphasizing that I am aware of these and other similar studies, I wish to stress that by utilizing the expression Anthropocene, I acknowledge the complexity of the processes – and the causes – that have determined the current environmental crises and the difficulty in establishing one single term for embracing all of them. While, in my thesis, I will limit myself to using the term ‘Anthropocene’ for practical reasons, I invite the readers of my dissertation to consider the broad scope of my understanding of it.
field of the Environmental Humanities, who, in spite of different research foci and disciplinary backgrounds, converge on the necessity of exceeding the limits of dualistic and anthropocentric standpoints when evaluating the relationship between human beings and their surrounding worlds. Recalling what Lawrence Buell affirmed during the early stages of ecocriticism, in order to respond appropriately to the urgencies of our times, it is necessary to determine a “mature environmental aesthetics” (Buell 1995, 32) in the study of literary and cultural phenomena related to (the representation of) the natural world: the pastoral, which is “entrenched in Western culture, [and] so deeply problematic for environmentalism” (Garrard 2012 [2004], 37), I argue, is a crucial case study for conducting a critical rethinking of traditional Western evaluations of the natural world while responding to the challenges posed by the Anthropocene.

Traditionally, the pastoral is discussed through a set of old-fashioned clichés converging on the idea of the contrast between the rural and the urban, and the idealized representation of the countryside (Gifford 1999, 2). In this way, the pastoral has resulted in engrained dualistic figurations, while corroborating the idea that ‘nature’ represents an entity ontologically separated from humans. However, alongside the growing environmental awareness developed since the 1970s, a more ‘mature’ understanding of literary and cultural phenomena related to the natural world has started developing. And while today’s critics reflect on how “the ways we understand and interact with nature are in need of commensurate updating” (Coole and Frost 2010, 5), the pastoral, as a concept and as a literary and cultural phenomenon, can – and should – also be reevaluated accordingly. Specifically, I suggest approaching the pastoral as a method to inspire contemporary readers to enact ethical modes of relationality with the nonhuman realm. Through my work, I discuss that this effect can be achieved by adopting a perspective that combines ecocriticism and posthuman studies when reading past pastoral poetry. Reframing traditional pastoral criticism into a postdualistic and postanthropocentric

While Ferrando discusses post-dualism and post-anthropocentrism as hyphenated words, in my dissertation, these terms will be used with the same assumptions but without the hyphen. As Ferrando illustrates, the hyphen is an important component for the understanding of the concept of ‘posthuman’, where the “post-” (hyphenated) allows one to see a multiplicity of possibilities that posthumanism offers, rather than assessing it as a mere dualistic surpassing of humanism. While my understanding of post(-)dualism and post(-)anthropocentrism still relies on the same premises, the decision to employ these terms without the hyphen relates to Ferrando’s clarification that: “The hyphen can manifest through its presence as well as through its absence: sometimes it disappears. Specifically, when the use of a term becomes more common, it tends to be omitted [...]. Its relevance, though, should not be dismissed” (Ferrando 2019, 66). My decision to not utilize the hyphen is motivated by two main reasons: a) for favoring readability; b) for
methodology I wish to acknowledge the ethical potentials in poetic pastoral works: this methodology, I argue, become a way for disclosing ethical, environmentally related considerations that have been smothered by the weight of rooted (dualistic and anthropocentric) critical perspectives on this topic during the past few centuries.

Based on these considerations, this thesis aims to answer the following questions: how does current ecological awareness – and the achievements of the Environmental Humanities – affect the understanding of traditional pastoral poetry? And how can the re-reading of traditional pastoral poems, through the lens of contemporary ecocritical and posthuman epistemology, favour the unleashing of new ethical environmental narratives? How can this approach support reflection on more ethical relational praxis between humans and nonhumans? How can disregarded pastoral poems be rediscovered as valuable sites which provide insights into the challenges of current environmental crises?

This dissertation intends to answer these questions by analysing a selection of pastoral poems appearing in the five-volume anthology *Georgian Poetry*, edited by Edward Marsh. Despite its popularity at the time of its publication, this collection remains neglected by critics today, while its ecocritical potential represents a missing link in the study of early twentieth-century British literature. Moreover, this anthology suffered from a dismissive critical positioning in the literary landscape of that period: since the poems that it contains distanced themselves from the formal experimentations and imagery created by more popular and appreciated (early)Modernist poets, starting from T.S. Eliot – if only to explore alternative poetic forms such as the lyrical in innovative ways – the expression ‘Georgian’ remains a pejorative label. Many of the Georgians were, in fact, considered primarily traditionalist and conservative by contemporary critics, and their reliance on the pastoral had a significant impact in fostering this understanding, mainly functioning as a stigma that continues today in the evaluation of *Georgian Poetry*. Yet in my work, I discuss how the pastoral poems of this anthology represent valuable traces of the growing environmental sensibility occurring at the time, in reference to both a new ontological figuration of the human-nonhuman relationship and many other socio-cultural underlining how postdualism and postanthropocentrism have increased their popularity in the past few years, while becoming more and more accepted in the scholarly community since the beginning of this study. Thus, discussing these concepts without the hyphen also serves as way of supporting the validity of my approach in light of current discussions in posthumanism.
transformations of the period. For instance, one can consider the alterations that the English countryside underwent on the verge of the twentieth century, as well as the growing environmental awareness that matured alongside increasing critiques of the anthropocentrism in the same period. Among others, Charles Darwin’s studies, published a few decades earlier, are crucial in this regard. Eventually, I argue that Georgian pastoral poems can offer current readership useful ways for discussing issues of relationality between humans and nonhumans echoing current ecocritical epistemology. In this sense, re-reading Georgian poetry through a perspective inspired by the combination of posthumanism and ecocriticism offers present-day readers the possibility to reflect on the same issues of relationality in regard to the challenges caused by the Anthropocene.

By overcoming the constraints and the dismissive labelling of traditional pastoral criticism in the study of Edward Marsh’s anthology, this thesis invites scholars to: a) reinscribe the collection within the growing (proto-)environmental discourse in early twentieth-century England; b) discuss the importance of critically resurrecting this work in light of the challenges of the Anthropocene; c) re-consider the pastoral trajectory running through the collection, passing from seeing it as a ‘literary stigma’ to a baseline for conducting a critical reevaluation.

The time has come to observe past books of pastoral poetry as being useful for more than just “decorat[ing] the shelves of tasteful cottages [and…] furnish[ing] nostalgia” (Barrell & Bull 1974, 432). By taking them back, dusting off their covers, and reading – and re-reading – them from ever-new ecocritical viewpoints, we can consider Georgian pastoral poems to be useful sources for responding to the human-nonhuman relational crises of our times.

1.1 Extended Project Map, Aims, Methods

One important practice that this thesis will employ is the use of the prefix ‘re-’. This prefix has gained increasing popularity in recent scholarly works on literary and cultural studies for its capacity to summarize an extended hermeneutical attitude in current academic knowledge production, aimed at re-thinking and re-figuring existing dominant paradigms
toward a more pluralistic and broader spectrum. The prefix ‘re-’ addresses two main notions, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests: “[a]) prefixed to ordinary verbs of action […] sometimes denoting that the action itself is performed a second time, and [b]) sometimes that its result is to reverse a previous action or process, or to restore a previous state of things” (“re-” OED 2021). Throughout my dissertation I engage with both uses: on the one hand, I work on topics that have already gone through several evaluations in history – namely, pastoral theory, pastoral poetry, and the concept of pastoral itself – through the innovative perspective of postdualism and postanthropocentrism. On the other hand, this study adopts a restorative, and renovative, critical attitude aimed at disclosing new qualities and understandings of these long-standing phenomena. Therefore, my thesis does not focus only on resurrecting past literary works, in the sense of letting them circulate again among contemporary readers, but it also re-imagines them in light of the current epistemologies delineated within the transdisciplinary field of the Environmental Humanities.

My argument is constructed in the dialogue – or, more precisely, the tri-ilogue – of three main verbs/concepts, all of them carrying the prefix ‘-re’ in their essence, as the following figure clarifies:

![Diagram](https://example.com/diagram.png)

Preliminarily: a) re-conceptualizing understands the pastoral as a concept, and captures the dissertation’s aim to expose new, alternative ways of envisioning that move the concept beyond traditional dualistic domains; b) re-framing refers to pastoral literary...
criticism, in the sense of revising the traditional dualistic critical framework characterizing the study of pastoral poetry – which remained almost untouched in the approach to pastoral poetry throughout history – through new, postdualistic and postanthropocentric stances inspired by the combination of ecocriticism and posthuman studies; c) re-evaluating refers to the critical literary operation that I intend to conduct on Edward Marsh’s collection *Georgian Poetry*, by providing evidence that the pastoral poetic trajectory in this work has the capacity to disclose narratives resonating with the current discourses on human-nonhuman relational ethics. While the pastoral represents the key concept of my thesis, these three verbs are to be considered as the fundamental *meta-concepts* (Nünning and Nünning, 2020) for developing my argument. These meta-concepts not only determine the systematic methodology through which my work progresses, but they also represent the three interlocking critical operations occurring in it. The tri-logue – the simultaneous dialogue of three elements – becomes a useful notion for glueing the different layers of this work together and for presenting a cohesive, albeit pluralistic study. In addition, the use of the equilateral triangle in the summative project map in *Figure 1* serves to stress that each section of this work appears equally relevant for drawing the ‘big picture’ of my thesis. The black arrows indicate the systematic and organized progression of my discussion (starting from the upper corner of the figure), although this order should not be intended as an exclusive or as an absolute way for engaging with the discussion presented in my study.

After delineating the dissertation map and establishing the main working concepts, my thesis proposes a critical reflection on the pastoral – as a concept – by exposing it to a postdualistic and a postanthropocentric lens. This framework is useful for challenging the dominant understanding of the pastoral: moving beyond the idea that it regards solely “the contrast between the rural and the urban”, or as the “idealization of the natural world” (Gifford 1999, 2), I propose to read it as the representation of an ecosystem. As I discuss in the following chapters, I propose the pastoral as a favorable literary *locus* for excerpting models of ethical relationships between the human and nonhuman entities inhabiting it.

Connected to the idea of re-conceptualizing the pastoral is my intent to negotiate the dualistic and anthropocentric stance prompted by traditional approaches in the study
of pastoral literature, which I explain through my original notion of ‘sustainable criticism’. This approach has been inspired by the popular 5Rs ecological model – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rot, Repair – as a tool for conducting a literary analysis beyond the main critical assumptions dominating the interpretation of pastoral poems. My 5Rs model responds to another well-established combination of 5Rs in pastoral studies – a still-relevant critical (dualistic and anthropocentric) model theorized by Roger Sales (1987), which determines the pastoral primarily according to the following notions: Refuge, Reflection, Return, Requiem, and Reconstruction. By relying on the innovative framework inaugurated by the ecological 3Rs motto (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) guiding the environmental movement which has been developing since the 1970s – later expanded to a wider number of “Rs” – my understanding of ‘sustainable criticism’ serves two main functions: on the one hand, it stresses a keen connection between my work and environmental thinking; on the other hand, it helps clarify my updated (Coole and Frost 2010, 5) approach on (past) pastoral criticism and establish my own niche in the field of contemporary pastoral theory in the ecocritical and posthuman turn.

Specifically, I intend to use my ‘sustainable’ 5Rs model in the following way. The adoption of a theoretical framework combining ecocriticism and posthumanism allows for developing a proactive, attentive critical operation, which acknowledges the importance of texts in the Western tradition for tackling the environmental issues affecting our times (Reuse). By weakening dominant anthropocentric perspectives and decentralizing the human in the re-reading of these texts (Reduce), and by re-elaborating established interpretations of pastoral lyrics (Recycle), new narratives are disclosed. This operation proves how dismissed and disregarded works, such as the anthology Georgian Poetry, can be rediscovered and reevaluated. Specifically, what represented the stigma determining their dismissal – the reliance on the pastoral – can be considered today as the very baseline for developing their critical value (Rot). Finally, this operation becomes valuable for enacting the very critical reevaluation of a disregarded case study of pastoral poetry (Repair).

Exposed to a new theoretical perspective and to a new understanding of the pastoral, latent ecocritical narratives from Marsh’s anthology can therefore be unveiled, which demonstrates how Georgian Poetry provides contemporary readers with useful ‘food for thought’ for engaging with current ethical discussions about the environment.
Thus, in the analytical section of my dissertation, I explore how Georgian pastoral poems discuss issues of relationality between humans and nonhumans which resonate with the urgencies revealed by the Anthropocene. In this way, I underline the existence of a long-overlooked literary pastoral trajectory running through the five volumes of Marsh’s collection, which has been disregarded in the predominantly Modernist-Eliotian reception of the work since the late 1910s. By moving from a primarily formal and comparatist-oriented interpretation that predominated in the early reception of *Georgian Poetry* to a more culturally oriented ecocritical exploration – I also intend to reveal latent aspects of modernity in the ‘Georgian pastoral’.

While my dissertation concludes with a chapter dedicated to literary analysis, another arrow in my summative image connects the meta-concept *re-evaluating* to *re-conceptualizing*: this aspect, which will be illustrated in the conclusion, suggests that reevaluating certain pastoral works contributes to strengthening the idea that the pastoral represents a *tool* for ecocriticism (Gifford 2006) and that increasing attention should be dedicated to its several manifestations in literature and culture, old and new. The pastoral, in this sense, appears as an inexhaustible source for constructing a response to the environmental challenges of current and future times, if one regards it in reference to how it may inform people of issues of human-nonhuman connectedness and ethical forms of relationality when adopting a postdualistic and postanthropocentric lens.

**A Caveat: How to Pronounce ‘R’ in the Present Work and Why Do So**

A final remark on the relevance of the prefix ‘re-’ in this work regards a suggestion on how to pronounce it, as a way for clarifying the theoretical framework behind this dissertation. As stated, in both posthumanism and ecocriticism, the stress on the prefix ‘re-’ appears in many scholarly publications which highlights the attempt of critics to move beyond traditional domains in the understanding of key concepts at the core of the traditional Western culture and *re-thinking* related dominant paradigms. Along this line, I suggest that proposing a special pronunciation of the letter ‘r’ in this work – in reference to the three meta-concepts of my dissertation – can be useful for enhancing this theoretical background even further.

Anyone who has attended one of Rosi Braidotti’s inspiring lectures would likely remember how the Italian-Australian philosopher occasionally emphasizes the
pronunciation of the letter ‘r’ when discussing the word ‘roar’, a key concept for understanding her Neo-Spinozist and Deleuzian approach of her discussion on (posthuman) subjectivity. Specifically, by pronouncing this letter as the voiced alveolar trill /r/, rather than according to the more standard RP pronunciation, Braidotti seems to emphasize – also on the acoustic level – the idea of “the innermost essence, or potentia of all living entities”, the materialist, secular, and vital sense of life, representing “the fragile yet irrepressible bond that interconnects” all of them (2019, 7). According to Braidotti, in fact, “this [condition] produces a roar of energy that is mostly unperceived and imperceptible, yet indispensable” (2019, 7, emphasis added) for enacting what she and other scholars envision as a posthuman(ist) paradigm shift (with which my work on the pastoral also aligns).

Braidotti’s “roar” is indebted to images created by another relevant thinker, British novelist George Eliot (1819-1880), who shares Spinoza’s philosophy on the vitalist power of materiality and the essence of the bounds connecting humans and nonhuman entities together. In addition to translating Spinoza’s *Ethics* (1677) into English, George Eliot included some of his philosophical insights into her novels, of which *Middlemarch* (1871) remains the most popular example. As Braidotti suggests, for instance, a Spinozian trace in George Eliot’s writing can be observed in the following lines: “If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel’s heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk around well wadded with stupidity” (Eliot 1965 [1871], 226). George Eliot’s emphasis on human inattentiveness regarding certain fundamental domains of existence – namely, the awareness of living in strict contact with one’s material surroundings – underlines the limits (“stupidity”) of committing solely to an anthropocentric and dualistic perspective when evaluating the environment and related phenomena. In contrast, being aware of this limiting perspective, as George Eliot suggests, would oblige one to pay attention to “the other side of silence”, that is attempting to perceive the vibrant force of the nonhuman (Bennett 2009), which traditional (Western, dualistic, and anthropocentric) thought has often neglected.

By inviting readers of my dissertation to pronounce the key ‘r’s of my work – both in the three meta-concepts reconceptualizing, reframing and reevaluating, and the words composing the 5Rs of my ‘sustainable criticism’ model – with the same ‘trilling’
emphasis that Braidotti uses when voicing the word ‘roar’, I therefore wish to highlight the ethical purpose of my dissertation: acknowledging “that roar which lies on the other side of silence” (Eliot 1965 [1871], 226) in the understanding of the pastoral. Although this elocution caveat could be considered as a trivial addition to my introduction, it becomes useful for enacting a multi-logue between Braidotti, George Eliot, and other posthumanists and ecocritics inspiring my dissertation, thus closing the circle between posthuman philosophy, ecocriticism and (British) literature that my thesis embraces.

Finally, Braidotti’s ideas are effectively connected to my opening discussion on how literature, specifically on traditional pastoral poems, and literary criticism may serve as inexhaustible re-sources for recovering the sense of human-nonhuman connectedness in the contemporary world, as well for stressing the affirmative stance of my work. In fact, Braidotti acknowledges the relevance of the in/exhaustible when discussing the power of affirmation: “[it] is a praxis that affects and transforms the negative conditions, and because of the infinite range of virtual actualizations, it is logically and materially impossible to exhaust all possibilities” (2019, 388). In this alignment, through several pastoral “Rs” proposed in my work, I wish to respond proactively to the challenges of the Anthropocene while acknowledging the power of literature and of pastoral poetry to provide a way out of the ethical crises between humans and nonhumans in the present-day world.

1.2 Positioning My Study Through a Literature Review of Selected Pastoral Theories

In order to better understand the original aspect of my work, it is important to clarify how I intend to position it within the long-standing, and still flourishing, field of pastoral theory. The heritage of critical scholarship on the pastoral cannot be summarized in detail here, for it would exceed the purpose of my introduction. An attentive discussion on this topic, particularly through a more historical perspective, is provided in Chapter 2: in it, I stress the rootedness of dualistic figurations in the conceptualization of the pastoral, which have remained almost unchanged despite the everchanging cultural scenarios in which the phenomenon developed, by investigating selected key texts of pastoral theory.

Instead, the following literature review will focus on some key critical texts of recent pastoral criticism, which serves for positioning my research in the wider
contemporary scholarly debate on the pastoral and underlying the original aspects of my research. While my dissertation can be inscribed in the recent ecocritical trajectory in the study of the pastoral developed since early 1990s, considering the approach of cultural studies, which my thesis also pursues, my literature review will take a step backwards by starting to discuss the main evolutionary phases of pastoral criticism since the cultural turn in literary studies, which occurred in the 1960s (Bachmann-Medick 2016). This operation is important since, in this way, I aim to clarify my position in regard to critical texts which remain influential sources for understanding the pastoral and with which this dissertation needs to come to terms.

In this alignment, the positioning of my dissertation within the field of pastoral criticism will comprise three main sections – the 1960s to the 1990s, the 1990s to the early 2000s, and the early 2000s until today – that correspond to three steps in the recent evolution of pastoral criticism.

The Pastoral at the Cultural Turn in the Study of Literature: 1960s – 1990s

On the verge of the cultural turn in literary studies, the pastoral was one of the first topics to be investigated through the new cross-disciplinary epistemological approach: Raymond Williams’s field-defining *The Country and The City* (1973) highlights the relevance of the pastoral for enacting a cultural materialist discussion. Williams observed cultural materialism as “a theory of culture as a (social and material) productive process and of specific practices, of ‘arts’, as social uses of material means of production” (1980 [1973], 234), an approach through which the scholar enacts a Marxist-inspired reading of some major pastoral poems from the British literary tradition. In his observation, Williams determined how the pastoralization of rural labour and economics produced by literature determined the pastoral and related issues, such as the trope of the golden age, as “a myth functioning as memory” (1973, 43). In this sense, the pastoral serves as an element of propaganda through which the landed gentry conveyed certain narratives, resulting in a conservative-oriented formula inextricably entangled with the political.

This perspective on the pastoral, corroborated by the success of cultural materialism, inspired a politically oriented trend in reading pastoral poetry which still remains relevant today. As ecocritic Dana Phillips also affirms, currently the “pastoral seems to be an ideologically comprised form because of its deployment, especially in
British literature, in service of class and imperial or metropolitan interests” (2009, 16). Among the scholars who echo Williams’s approach, Roger Sales (1983) cannot be overlooked for his contribution in supporting the idea that the pastoral creates a false ideology that endorses a comfortable status quo for the landowning class. Traces of the significance of the 5Rs model, through which Sales summarizes his discussion on the pastoral – and which, as noted above, included the concepts of Refuge, Reflection, Return, Requiem, and Reconstruction (1983, 17) – is, in fact, visible in multiple contemporary evaluations on the topic: these includes, for instance, the seminal work by Terry Gifford (1999; 2020) which acknowledges how ‘retreat’ and ‘return’ represent “fundamental pastoral movement […] in the sense that the pastoral retreat ‘returned’ some insights relevant to the urban audience” (Gifford 1999, 2). My approach does not pursue this (political) perspective, while focusing on the pastoral through a different standpoint inspired by the achievements of ecocriticism in the evaluation of the pastoral.

During the 1960s, a proto-environmental and culture-oriented evaluation of the study of the pastoral was suggested in the seminal 1964 book by Leo Marx, titled The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America. Marx proposes the pastoral as a cultural construction and as a culture-constructing ideal to reflect on how the notion of “yearning for a simpler, more harmonious style of life, and existence ‘closer to nature’” (1964, 6) is engrained in American culture – as several American writers, from Ralph Waldo Emerson to F. Scott Fitzgerald, reveal. While discussing that the development of technology has made this condition even more evident, Marx’s observation was not successful in enacting a real ecology-oriented discussion evaluating the effects of technological advancement on the environment. While not specifically focusing on this impact of technology on the environment, my thesis focuses on the ethical issues determined by (anthropocentric) human behaviors and ways of thinking.

In the context of cultural studies, a bewildering variety of interpretations in pastoral theory developed during the 1970s, which stressed even further the elasticity and porosity of the concept, as well as its high degree of adaptability to ever-new theoretical paradigms and critical evaluations. Bryan Loughery observed this effect in his The Pastoral Mode (1984), which includes, among others, references to 1) the “Freudian pastoral”, as discussed by Lawrence Lerner (1972), 2) “the pastoral of childhood”, as observed by Peter V. Marinelli (1971), and 3) “urban pastoral,” in the case of Marshall
Berman (1983). It is thus evident how, during the 1970s, the pastoral became involved in a growing combination of cultural issues turning it into an instrument for enacting wider considerations concerning society and culture. This attentiveness towards the engagement of the pastoral and cultural is central in my approach to this phenomenon, even though, differently from the main perspectives developed during the 1970s, my attention primarily focuses on how issues of human-nonhuman relationality.

Though John Barrell and John Bull declared the death of pastoral after Hardy (1982 [1974], 432) in the preface of their anthology English Pastoral Verse (1974), the two critics prophetically announced a revival of interest in pastoral poetry in conjunction with the at-that-time early ecological discourse: Barrell and Bull wrote their book at the dawn of the environmental movement and, simultaneously, of ecocriticism, which would soon become a major approach for fulfilling a critical refashioning in the study of the pastoral on the basis on the discussion on “the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty 1996, xviii).

An Ecocritical Understanding of Pastoral: 1990s-early 2010s

It is curious to observe how Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring (1962) – a seminal study that paved the way for the American (proto-)environmentalist movement and, later, ecocriticism – included references to the pastoral in a now-iconic opening vignette. In her popular account titled “fable of tomorrow”, at the beginning of her book, Carson writes: “all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings. The town lay in the midst of a checkerboard of prosperous farms, with fields of grain and hillsides of orchards where, in spring, white clouds of bloom drifted above the green fields […]” (1964 [1962], 9). The usage of conventional rural pastoral imagery helped Carson emphasise her critique of the moment in which the insecticide DDT began proliferating in the American market, a moment in which, as she continues, “everything began to change” (1964, 9). The reference to the pristine natural environment, in contrast with the technologically advanced urban dynamics, is fundamental for Carson’s aim to highlight the danger of using chemicals in agriculture, both for humans and nonhumans. Beyond Carson’s specific argument, it is possible to observe how her reference to the pastoral in nonfiction

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5 These versions of the pastoral are cited in: Gifford 1999, 4.
writing already functioned as a tool for cultural criticism with an environmental foundation, thus proving the capacity of the pastoral to surpass the strict limits of anthropocentric evaluations and to favour considerations dedicated to the protection of the nonhuman realm. My approach to the pastoral aligns to this perspective.

Deeper and more ‘green’ conceptualizations of the pastoral kept pace with the rapid development of ecocritical scholarship. Among the scholars of the so-called “first wave” of ecocriticism which started in the 1990s, pioneering ecocritic Glen A. Love stressed the necessity to “redefine pastoral in terms of the new and more complex understanding of nature” (1990, 207) in order to place further importance on developing a more environmentally oriented trajectory in the study of the phenomenon in light of contemporary ecological issues. A similar reflection was made by Lawrence Buell, who emphasized the complexity of the pastoral through the notion of “dual accountability” (1995, 96), stressing the necessity to adopt a multifaceted approach while studying it. While, on the one hand, Buell suggests that the pastoral is to be seen in regard to issues of ideology and as such as fundamental to the construction of the notion of “nature” in Western culture, on the other hand, he advocates for the adoption of a more material-based perspective, that allows pastoral poetry to engage more effectively with environmental concerns. According to Buell, the environment and its sense of place are as much social, cultural, and ideological entities as they are physical ones. Therefore, limiting the observation to literary and non-literary representations of nature as an ideological screen “becomes unfruitful if it is used to portray the green world as nothing more than the projective fantasy or social allegory” (Buell 1995, 36). In response to this issue, while inviting critics to regard the pastoral through an ecocritical frame, Buell “shift[s] from [the] representation of nature as a theatre for human events to representation in the sense of advocacy of nature as a presence for its own sake” (1995, 52). On the basis of this premise, Buell highlights the constraints of the traditional understanding of the pastoral when engrained with rooted understandings of the concept of nature – especially when he addresses the risk that the pastoral “interposes some major stumbling blocks in the way of developing a mature environmental aesthetics, [though] it cannot but play a major role in that endeavor” (Buell, 32). Therefore, since ecocriticism represents the “outgrowth of post-structural criticism that studies the human representations on nature” (Speek, 160), engaging with an ecocritical discussion on the pastoral began to appear as
a way for exploring the complexity of this topic, and for determining new purposes and functions of it, while enacting more ‘mature’ considerations on the environment.

Among the main critics responding to Buell’s claim, Terry Gifford remains the most relevant due to his extensive scholarship on this topic, including his successful monograph, titled *Pastoral* (1999). In it, Gifford observes how: “‘a mature environmental aesthetics’ would need to recognize that some literature has gone beyond the closed circuit of pastoral and antipastoral to achieve a vision of an integrated natural world that includes the human” (1999, 148). By emphasising the importance of establishing the pastoral beyond the limits of the idealization of the natural world, or of the contrast between the rural and the urban, Gifford introduces the concept of “post-pastoral”, which he defines as a “discourse that can both celebrate and take responsibility for nature without false consciousness” (1999, 148, emphasis in original). By arguing that literature “take[s] responsibility for our problematic relationship with our natural homeground, from slugs to our solar system, from genes to galaxies,” (2002, 57) Gifford has favoured the rejuvenation of the study of the pastoral in contemporary literary criticism, and beyond. Gifford’s scholarship, in fact, has been fundamental for inscribing the study of the pastoral into contemporary environmental epistemologies, especially considering how several scholars have relied on his notion of the post-pastoral for developing (ever-)new environmentally oriented approaches to the topic.

The ‘post-pastoral’ is also assigned a significant role in my explorations of human and nonhuman relationality in past pastoral poems in this dissertation. However, there remain aspects of originality in my approach, combined with a slightly critical regard of Gifford’s vision. Where Gifford acknowledges the post-pastoral in reference to “a body of literature that transcends ‘naïve idyllicism’ with a more positive agenda than simply being an ‘anti-pastoral’ corrective to idyllicism in its intent” (Gifford 2006, 15) – I do not limit my perspective to texts that possess explicit evidence of exceeding (or intent to exceed) the traditional domains of the pastoral. Rather, I develop my post-pastoral inspired discussion even in reference to texts which engage with an apparent – and perhaps merely – idyllic figuration of the environment, by demonstrating how these texts also possess the potential to unveil useful narratives regarding the topic of human-nonhuman connectedness when exposed to an ecocritical and posthuman lens. Moreover, it is my intention to pursue and to explicitly critique the dualistic paradigm that not only
characterizes the pastoral, but also the dominant approach to the pastoral in literary criticism, which often postulates the ontological separation of the human and nonhuman realms. While Gifford’s post-pastoral aligns with a critique of similar perspectives, a specific discussion on the pastoral dualistic stance was not offered in his studies, nor in related scholarship by other critics. A similar lack can be observed regarding my intent to propose a postdualistic and postanthropocentric philosophical perspective on the pastoral deriving from posthuman studies. An attentive, explicit inquiry of the pastoral from this standpoint, therefore, represents the major original aspect of my thesis.

The environmental perspective on the pastoral that ecocritics provide, instead, allows for the development of other critical trajectories that are crucial for my thesis. One of these is Greg Garrard’s discussion in Ecocriticism (2004), in which he lists the pastoral as one of the keywords necessary for understanding the eponymous field, for it provides an “implicit critique of contemporary society” (2012 [2004], 62). A similar perspective is adopted in my work, in which a postdualistic and postanthropocentric understanding of the pastoral is proposed for discussing how this phenomenon may favour the emergence of ethical models of relationality with the nonhuman realm. Another example of how ecocritical approaches to the pastoral inform my thesis is Ken Hiltner’s study What Else is Pastoral? (2011): his focus on reevaluating traditional pastoral poems through a contemporary ecocritical lens – specifically by investigating how writers of the past possessed an ecological sensibility similar to those observed today – is also relevant in the context of my work. Specifically, as Hiltner observes, humanity becomes aware of the environment (only) “when its survival is threatened” (2011, 9); hence, reflecting on the way in which, for instance, Renaissance writers responded to the deforestation and air pollution occurring during their lifetimes is useful for conducting a critical discussion on (similar) contemporary environmental concerns. As Hiltner affirms: “Renaissance pastoral, in addition to something being a figurative mode masking political controversy, is also frequently concerned with literal landscapes […] and […] early modern England was indeed in the throes of what can only be described as a ‘modern’ environmental crisis” (2011, 4). Hiltner is one of the first scholars who adopted a specific retrospective lens for re-reading pastoral poems through an ecocritical lens, while favouring a critical dialogue between past pastoral literature and contemporary environmental concerns. This approach echoes in my idea of reevaluating the pastoral trajectory in the anthology
*Georgian Poetry* alongside more contemporary scholarly evaluations to establish a dialogue between the past and the present on what concerns ecological urgencies. However, differently from Hiltner, my attention will not be placed on how Georgian authors were aware of environmental concerns or pollution in early twentieth-century England. Rather, my interest lies primarily in exploring a more conceptual and ethical reflection on the way they engaged with the relationship between humans and nonhumans.

**Studying the Pastoral at the Time of the Environmental Humanities: Early 2010s until Today**

In the last few years, an increasingly transdisciplinary perspective has developed in ecocriticism, which has favoured the rise of the so-called Environmental Humanities – a wider research field that accommodates an array of cross-pollinating approaches and critical perspectives for better tackling the complexities of environment-related issues.

Deborah Bird Rose and Libby Robin referred to this all-encompassing dynamic as a ‘connective ontology’, stressing the impossibility of regarding issues of political justice, the natural sciences, and the social sciences separately (2004). Similarly, as Jodi Frawley and Iain McCalman also affirm, at the core of the Environmental Humanities lies the principle that “[h]uman beings, cultures and natures have been, and remain, deeply entangled and interdependent” (2014, 5). Reflecting on the Environmental Humanities as a wider approach to ecocriticism, thus, helps scholars access a broader – and more updated (Coole and Frost 2010, 5) – theoretical framework when studying the “relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty 1996, xviii), especially if compared to what occurred during the early stages of ecocriticism. Hence, inscribing this thesis in the frame of the Environmental Humanities means stressing the importance of exceeding primarily literary-oriented discussions on the environment – to which the notion of ecocriticism is still related. Instead, following the stance proposed by the notion of the Environmental Humanities, my dissertation embraces a wider theoretical scope for conducting a more effective, problematizing, and pluralistic analysis of pastoral poetry. As already anticipated, I intend to integrate a more literary-oriented ecocritical discussion on the pastoral to a more philosophically grounded reflection supported by the insights of posthuman studies, particularly, the critique of Western dualisms alongside
the critical framework of critical and philosophical posthumanism (Braidotti 2013; 2019; Ferrando 2019). In this way, I elaborate an interdisciplinary approach which resonates with the methodology discussed by several scholars in the context of the Environmental Humanities.

As observed by Deborah Lilley, “[a]dditional or contradictory connections and new disjunctions become visible” (2020, 3) in the understanding of the pastoral in contemporary literature as a consequence of the transformations which fundamental concepts in Western traditional thought, such as ‘human’ and ‘nature’, have undergone in recent years. Consequently, I argue that new approaches to the study of pastoral should resonate with such a complexity, while engaging with the many faces that the pastoral reveals when exposed to the lens of posthumanist epistemology, which resonates with many disciplines and fields attributed to the umbrella term ‘Environmental Humanities’.

Unsurprisingly, in the past few years, a growing entanglement of posthuman studies with ecocriticism has occurred, broadening the spectrum of the possible investigations on the nonhuman when compared to those available in ecocriticism in its early stages. It is interesting to observe how this dynamic was anticipated by Leo Marx, who stressed that the growing “conception of the precariousness of our relations with nature is bound to bring forth new versions of pastoral” (1992, 222). Within this effect, a more critical evaluation of the traditional Western dualisms imbuing the pastoral has also started emerging, as the set of pastoral neologisms discussed in the following lines will demonstrate. In a certain way, one could consider how the very notion of ‘complexity’ in relation to the pastoral has evolved with the rise of the Environmental Humanities: while Leo Marx first discussed ‘complex pastoral’ in reference to a pastoral experience disturbed by a textual reference to technology (1964, 5-11), today, a new sense of pastoral complexity should be considered. This attitude regards the necessity to study this phenomenon through the epistemological stance and the transdisciplinary approach. Along this line, my thesis wishes to provide an up-to-date scholarly discussion on the pastoral, which can meet the imaginative challenges of interpreting current crises, through contemporary evaluations of this topic which includes the concept’s contradictions and paradoxes (Rozzoni and Lombard, 2021e).

Among recent critical approaches echoing this perspective is Joshua Corey and C. Waldrep’s study on the “postmodern pastoral poetry” that assumes a “vision of humanity
undivided from nature” alongside current scholarly discussions about the necessity to conceptually move beyond “Cartesian dualism[s]” including “Nature/Society”, [and] “Human/Nature” (2012, 5). Specifically, Corey and Waldrep explore new poetic pastoral renderings, which acknowledge current environmental concerns and serve to negotiate more traditional dualistic figurations on pastoral poetry, as is visible in the anthology they edited, titled *The Arcadia Project* (2012).

Among the most recent studies on the pastoral, which are useful for clarifying the increasingly complex theoretical ground on which this dissertation is also positioned, it is interesting to cite the ‘necropastoral’ (McSweeney, 2015), which advocates for the necessity of surpassing the limits of the idealization of the natural world when discussing the phenomenon, while regarding new forms of ecopoetics centering on biological issues, such as degradation, contamination, and decay. Similarly, ‘dark pastoral’, as defined by Heather I. Sullivan, appears as another updated version of the pastoral that “recognize[s] that associations with the ‘natural’ are often perverse and prejudiced” (2014, 87), along the line prosed by Timothy Morton’s notion of ‘dark ecology’ (2009; 2016). These perspectives corroborate the attempts of contemporary critics to distance themselves from an understanding of the pastoral solely rooted in the idea of the natural environment (uniquely) as an idyllic, pristine entity, while shedding light on the possible further considerations with which this issue engages when attuned to contemporary epistemologies. And while David Farrier’s ‘toxic pastoral’ refers to “versions of pastoral in which former pastoral certainties are degraded, permitting an engagement with and celebration of the ambivalence in human interactions with the more-than-human world” (2014, 4, emphasis in original), other, original versions of pastoral continue, together with the incessant mutations of the pastoral literary form in the contemporary world (Lilley 2020) and in the Anthropocene (Rozzoni and Lombard 2021e).

If, on the one hand, it is evident today that the pastoral is a compelling cultural and literary phenomenon for challenging dominant, traditional figurations of the environment in favor of more critical, pluralistic, and complex perspectives; on the other hand, there remains “conservationist, and preservationist sensibility” (Schneider 2016, vii), even within the field of ecocriticism. This tendency, in my perspective, regards two main issues: a) that most of the study on ecocriticism evaluates the pastoral in primarily contemporary literary works; and b) that in current scholarly evaluations, dualistic
considerations characterizing the pastoral (often) remain. It is in my negotiation of these two issues, by proposing a declared retrospective, postdualistic, and postanthropocentric perspective on pastoral poetry, that I intend to position myself and my original perspective in the field of the Environmental Humanities.

For what concerns the first point – the fact that most recent pastoral criticism primarily discusses contemporary literary cases – I argue that a more retrospective glance is (also) useful in current studies on the pastoral for unveiling latent, overlooked ecocritical potentials in past poems of which the achieves of Western literature (Zapf 2020) abound. Being aware of the risk of running into anachronistic delineations, I clarify that, through my thesis, I do not intend to affirm that Georgian poets were already aware of present-day environmental concerns, or of notions such as the Anthropocene. Rather, I would like to stress the capacity of past literary works, namely some pastoral poems contained in the anthology *Georgian Poetry*, to provide current readership with new, helpful considerations for reflecting on the ecological urgencies of our time. Reframing the pastoral through a postdualistic and postanthropocentric lens, therefore, serves to highlight yet unexplored critical narratives in neglected poems, which can defy the rooted dominant Western axioms of the (ontological) *separatedness* of the human from the nonhuman world.

In general terms, a backward-looking perspective is spreading in ecocritical studies. Not only, for instance, is Hubert Zapf’s aim of reevaluating the archives of Western literature significant for the development of a possible new trajectory of studies in ecocriticism; but other scholars are also calling for more attention to be paid to the many disregarded works and literary periods by ecocritics. For instance, one can consider Christopher Schliephake’s (pioneering) role in engaging with an ecocritical exploration of Ancient Greek and Latin literature as a response to how, in his view, the Environmental Humanities have primarily focused on early modern and modern works, at the expense of other periods (2016). Or we can reflect on how Serenella Iovino includes antiquity in the critical tool bag of ecocriticism, showcasing ancient people’s contributions in “make[ing] us think about [our] roots” (2016, 313) as a critical operation for more effectively tackling current environmental concerns. The present work aligns with these considerations by embracing a similar retrospective glance on some missing links in the study of early twentieth-century British literature – including the Georgian period, an
epoch which, in fact, remains surprisingly disregarded when using an ecocritical lens, even though scholars are paying growing attention to Victorian (Hall 2017; Mazzeno and Morrison 2017) and Modernist (Sultzbach 2016; Black 2018; Diaper 2022) times.

Differently from other contemporary scholars working on the pastoral, I do not intend to elaborate a(nother) neologism (e.g., ‘dark pastoral’, ‘postmodern pastoral’, ‘post-pastoral’) for identifying a possible trend in current developments of pastoral literature. Instead, I am investigating the postdualistic and postanthropocentric potentialities of the concept by keeping my attention on the general term ‘pastoral’. In this way, I regard this notion as a “travelling concept”, in Mieke Bal’s sense (2002), by evaluating its capacity to adapt and transform to the ever-new cultural urgencies throughout history. Particularly, I intend to make evident how the pastoral is capable of responding to the pressing ethical issues prompted by the Anthropocene, and how the concept per se adapts to the necessity of a paradigmatic shift in the understanding of humans and nonhumans as ontologically intertwined entities.

By following these two axes – postdualism and postanthropocentrism – overall, my critical perspective resonates with the necessity that researchers develop scholarly perspectives “worthy of our times” (Braidotti 2019, 17), in the sense that they align with the epistemological complexity that the Environmental Humanities introduces as a way for taking into account complex issues prompted by the current crises. The following paragraphs illustrate more in-depth the theoretical framework that this work pursues, not only by elucidating my combinatory approach of ecocriticism and posthumanism, but also by clarifying on which of the many trajectories and critical perspectives that these fields offer I ground my argument.

1.3 Preliminary Theoretical Framework: Intersecting Ecocriticism and Posthumanism

As already discussed, the way in which the pastoral resonates with the notion of connectedness between humans and nonhumans represents the guiding light for this work. Connectedness, however, also explains the methodological structure of this work. This last aspect can be observed if one considers the combinatory nature of the theoretical framework that I propose. While this dissertation positions itself in the field of English studies, the growing transdisciplinary approach evoked in the Humanities – my PhD
programs, namely ‘Transcultural Studies in Humanities’ at the University of Bergamo, Italy, and Literary and Cultural Studies at Justus Liebig University, Germany, are clarificatory in this sense – requires young researchers to exceed the limits of a strict disciplinary oriented approach. This work, therefore, aims to utilize a hybrid critical framework, enmeshing a more literary oriented approach taken from ecocriticism with a more philosophical discussion taken from posthumanism.

This specification opens the door to a main problem: both these fields, though well-established today, challenge a univocal definition, for they include an array of different perspectives. Moreover, while they have been presented as two different fields of study, overlapping aspects between ecocriticism and posthumanism are easily identifiable. For instance, they both advocate for a more attentive perspective on issues of (inter/intra-)connectedness between humans and nonhumans, as well as the adoption of more ethical forms of relationality between them, in response to current ecological crises. Hence, by aligning issues posed halfway between ecocriticism and posthuman studies with an interdisciplinary approach, I intend to reflect on how these two scholarly fields may inform each other when reimagining the concept of pastoral, pastoral criticism, and pastoral poetry in light of the challenges of the Anthropocene.

The following paragraphs illustrate how these two fields will be employed in more detail and, specifically, which among the many critical discussions that they both offer will be considered in my work.

Ecocriticism: A Dialogue between Jonathan Bate’s Ecopoiesis and Hubert Zapf’s Sustainable Texts

Considering the many approaches that ecocriticism presents, it is fundamental to clarify which one a scholar intends to pursue when declaring his or her interest in engaging with the field. Ecocriticism has matured into a complex, multivocal area of study, which involves different theoretical perspectives, critical foci, and objects of study both within and outside of the domain of literature. While ecocritical attention has long embraced several cultural phenomena, from cinema (Willoquet-Maricondi 2010; Gael 2021) to (bio)art (Mitchell 2015; Coughlin and Gephart 2020), my interest remains aligned with that used by ecocritical scholars who focus on a specific literary-oriented perspective. Specifically, I intend to address the contribution that Jonathan Bate’s ecopoiesis, and b)
Hubert Zapf’s “literature as cultural ecology” and as “sustainable texts” may offer to build the theoretical scaffolding of my study of pastoral poetry.

Before delving into a more detailed account of these concepts, and before illustrating how I intend to make use of them for the sake of my argument, it is beneficial to engage in a preliminary discussion to underline Bate’s and Zapf’s strict connection with the ethical perspective that my thesis pursues. Ursula Heise represents a useful starting point for this reflection, thanks to her observations on the growing enmeshment of literature with practices of identity formation. Heise, in this sense, affirmed how “the aesthetic transformation of the real has a particular potential for reshaping the individual and collective ecosocial imagery” (2010, 258). This consideration is important for reflecting on the ethical implications that literature possesses, and on its capacity to affect culture accordingly. Since, as already established, my exploration primarily intends to reflect on the issues of human-nonhuman relationality in response to global challenges caused by the Anthropocene, in an ethical sense, Jonathan Bate’s and Hubert Zapf’s theoretical assumptions become particularly useful. Their theories, in fact, resonate with Heise’s discussion on the capacity of certain ideas to affect a person’s perception of the environment. These approaches should be inscribed into a trajectory through which literature and literary studies, in general, have developed in the past few decades, which allowed them to emerge as valuable sites for maturing possible responses to current environmental crises. By evoking a so-called ‘ethical turn’ in contemporary literary studies, Michael Eskin, in fact, observes that literature is a “more capacious, more universal and concrete […] sign” which “make[s] us see and feel […] in a way no philosophical treatise can” (2004, 588). In a similar way, Martha Nussbaum has underlined the capacity of literature to “cultivate our ability to see and care for particulars” while expanding our interest “in the universal and in the universalizability of ethical judgments” (1990, 38). And since focusing on literature through an ethical perspective, as James Phelan observes, serves to “show respect for the Other by facing his/her otherness” (Phelan 2014, 530), engaging with Bate’s and Zapf’s ethical stance becomes useful for emphasizing this intent within my work.

Moreover, both Bate and Zapf offer the opportunity to regard an increasing scholarly trend that establishes a dialogue between ‘theory and practice’, in the sense that more theoretical considerations regarding the environment should correspond to the
development of more ethical everyday practices and habits toward the environment. As Stuart Hall discusses:

it is by our use of things, and what we say, think and feel about them – how we represent them – that we give them meaning. In part, we give objects, people and events meaning by the frameworks of interpretations which we bring to them. In part we give things meaning by how we use them or integrate them into our everyday practices (Hall 1997, 2, emphasis in original).

This discussion is particularly representative of my engagement with ecocriticism: my critical approach combining the study of the pastoral, pastoral criticism, and pastoral poetry, serves to rethink their own relational practices with the environment, rather than developing considerations limited to the field of literary studies. This idea is getting increasingly popular in ecocriticism where the necessity to integrate theoretical considerations with more material practices has come to represent the premises of the so-called Fourth Wave of ecocriticism. In this, Scott Slovic suggests that “academic ecocriticism’ is now spawning a new mode of ‘applied ecocriticism,’ with applications “encompassing basic human behaviors and lifestyle choices, such as eating and locomotion and clothing and dwelling” (2012, 619).

Jonathan Bate, I suggest, could be aligned with these tendencies, and his scholarship provides useful theoretical tools for enacting them in one’s scholarly work. While Bate serves as a key scholar of the first generation of ecocriticism, his ideas are still the baseline for multiple current studies in this field, while offering a valuable conceptual framework for engaging with literary works in an innovative ecocritical way. Bate’s scholarly attention focuses on the potentials of literary works to become effective agents of transformation in real-life practices of human-nonhuman relationships. The innovative character of Bate’s work has been stressed by Susanna Lidström, who names Bate’s *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (1991) as one of the first explicit attempts to introduce ecocriticism as a new academic field (2015, 2) because of its original perspective on the Romantic period. Specifically, Bate moves beyond reflections restricted to the idealization and the celebration of the natural world in this period – and, in fact, beyond its notion of ‘romanticization’ in the sense of “to make romantic or idealized in character; to make (something) seem better or more appealing than it really is; to describe, portray, or view in a romantic manner”
In response to this traditional understanding, Bate argues that “Wordsworth went before us in some of the steps we are now taking in our thinking about the environment” (1991, 5), and demonstrated how past, Romantic literary texts (also) offer useful opportunities for conducting reflections on contemporary environmental concerns. In his argument, the notion of *ecopoiesis* remains crucial.

With this notion, Bate stresses the engagement of literature with everyday practices, offering an interesting etymology-based discussion. As Bate informs, “[e]copoetics asks in what respect a poem may be a making (Greek *poiesis*) of the dwelling-place – the prefix eco- is derived from the Greek *oikos*, ‘the home or place of dwelling’” (1991, 75). Hence, through ecopoiesis Bate intends to give prominence to the capacity of literary works, especially poetry, in realizing a material enactment of ecological issues. In this sense, not only is literature a source for determining evaluations in the real world, but it also serves as an instrument for influencing cultural practices in more ecological terms. The expression ‘ecopoetics’ is now well-established in literary field but the different evaluations and approaches regarding it challenge a univocal definition. Yet, as Sarah Nolan suggests, the term generally refers to:

> a methodology or theoretical lens that considers the nuances of how environmental experiences are expressed on the page […] and it tends to involve analyzing how poems move beyond idealized interactions with the physical world and begin to represent nature for its own inherent value and autonomous self (2017, 37).

While Bate’s vision of ecopoetics may be referred to this observation, his etymology-oriented discussion on *ecopoiesis* highlights a more ethical function of literary works, which my dissertation also acknowledges.

Moreover, according to Bate, literature, particularly poetry, can determine “thoughtfulness and attentiveness, and attunement to both words and the world” and it is useful “to acknowledge that, although we make sense of things by way of words, we do not live apart from the world” (2000, 23). In this sense, one can consider that, as Bate suggests, literary works reveal their capacity to become ingrained with material aspects and practices in the real world if one considers them “a making of the dwelling” (Bate 1991, 75). I adopt this consideration for discussing how Georgian pastoral poems can be regarded as sources for unleashing ethical forms of relationality between humans and nonhumans, prompting their sense of connectedness. Hence, the concept of ‘ecopoiesis’
will be adopted in my thesis as a guiding light for approaching the study of Georgian pastoral poetry. Specifically, I will approach Georgian pastoral poems in search for textual evidence that highlights the strict sense of human-nonhuman connection, thus observing these literary texts as being useful to contemporary readership to enact related ethical forms of relationality with the nonhuman realm in the real-world.

A similar consideration can be made when taking into account Hubert Zapf’s discussion on ‘cultural ecology’ (2016), especially for what concerns the expansions of the ethical functions of literature to the wider field of culture, which are also at the center of this dissertation’s argument. Hubert Zapf has provided a useful contribution to ecocriticism with his notion of ‘literature as cultural ecology’. Through it, Zapf observes the cultural relevance of literature through two main axes: on the one hand, there is the idea that literature serves as “a medium that primarily illustrates certain ecological issues” (2001, 85). On the other hand, there is the idea that literary texts work through complex symbolic representations portraying creative and transformative processes of nature and human life. When we consider it as ‘cultural ecology’, literature takes up a distinctive function in comparison with other discourses by enacting three main procedures, which Zapf’s describes as: 1) “cultural-critical metadiscourse”; 2) “imaginative counter-discourse”; and 3) “reintegrative inter-discourse” (2001). In the following paragraphs, I clarify how Zapf understands these expressions, while briefly outlining how they are useful for the purpose of my dissertation.

In the first sense (the “cultural-critical metadiscourse”), literature – as cultural ecology – works for the “balancing of typical deficits, contradictions and deformations in prevailing political, economic, ideological and utilitarian systems of civilisatory power” (Zapf 2001, 93). Hence, Zapf’s attention resonates with the critical stance that literature entails in regard to certain cultural periods by highlighting the problems and challenges concerning them. In the case of pastoral Georgian poetry, for instance, the idea of literature as cultural ecology becomes useful for exploring the traces of the “political, economic, [and] ideological” (Zapf 2001, 93) traits in early twentieth-century Britain, and thus for informing readers of the environmental discourses of the time embedded in the poems.

The second feature, Zapf’s vision of literature as ‘cultural ecology’, regards literature as an “imaginative counter-discourse”. This expression resonates with the idea
that literature allows for “articulating what otherwise remains unarticulated in the available categories of self-interpretations” (Zapf 2001, 93). In other words, Zapf observes how literature is useful for focusing on what is marginalised, neglected, or repressed in dominant cultural domains. Applying these evaluations to the study of the pastoral poetry becomes a strategy for explaining how it represents a locus for determining alternative models of ethical human-nonhuman relationality, in the sense that they counter the primarily dualistic and anthropocentric understanding of the environment that has led to the Anthropocene. Applying this principle to the study of Georgian pastoral poetry, therefore, means acknowledging how the poems of this anthology may be useful to reflect on alternative, latent (environmental) narratives, which remained overlooked and disregarded due to the dominance of other major cultural issues during the 1910s and the 1920s.

Finally, according to Zapf, the idea of literature as ‘cultural ecology’ refers to the function of literature as a “reintegrative interdiscourse”. This vision is important for conceiving literature as “reintegrating the repressed and unmentioned into the cultural reality system” (Gras 2006, 102). Hence, literature becomes relevant for (re)circulating issues, values, and concepts that dominant paradigms have left aside, or made latent. Approaching Georgian pastoral poetry along this line allows for determining (these) overlooked and dismissed literary works, while acknowledging them as useful narratives which contribute to inspiring a mature awareness of the inter/intraconnections of humans and nonhumans. In this sense, Georgian pastoral poems can be viewed as neglected works that deserve to be ‘reintegrated’ into current literary debates by putting them in circulation through a process of critical reevaluation. Consequently, by extending Zapf’s approach to the study of Georgian pastoral poetry, there emerges the possibility to conceive it as a counter-narrative useful for possibly responding to the challenges of the Anthropocene, and to the conceptual bias of dominant Humanistic tradition in the understanding of the natural world.

In addition to acknowledging the relevance of Zapf’s notion of ‘cultural ecology’ in the development of my argument, I stress that his concept of “sustainable texts” also appears useful for explaining the ecocritical potentials of pastoral literary criticism when exposing it to a postdualistic and postanthropocentric perspective. Specifically, as I will
discuss in more detail in Chapter 3, I intend to engage with these considerations by proposing an original form of ‘sustainable’ pastoral literary criticism. I develop this argument by elaborating the notion of “sustainable texts” which Zapf proposed for reflecting on the traits that imaginative literature – as a special artistic form of cultural textuality – possesses. Zapf discusses ‘sustainable texts’ in reference to how literature ensures:

[...] an attention both to life-sustaining diversities and to patterns of connectivity across the boundaries of categories, discourses, and life-forms; and an implicit but crucial relevance of this ecocultural potential of imaginative texts for the survival of the cultural ecosystem in its long-term co-evolution with natural ecosystems (2016, 26).

This inspiring and rich definition resonates with the aims of my thesis, which, as already stated, intends to explore the capacity of the pastoral, and (past) traditional pastoral poetry in general, to unleash possible reflections concerning ethical relationships among living beings. Hence, by proposing the idea of ‘sustainable’ pastoral criticism, I intend to propose a way of looking at traditional pastoral poems centering on the features of “natural ecosystems” (Zapf 2016, 26). However, my focus on pastoral criticism does more than simply explore the concept of pastoral or pastoral poems. Instead, it is motivated by the following consideration: while it is more evident that “stories about the environment significantly influence experiences of that environment” (James and Morel, 2020, 1), it is also important to acknowledge how a story per se is not always enough to achieve the effect of affecting one’s experience of an environment. In fact, one can observe how a critical framework is also needed to enhance the potentialities of texts, which thus allows for disclosing rooted reflections in them for establishing a more effective dialogue between traditional pastoral poems of the past and present-day cultural issues.

My proposal of a ‘sustainable’ form of pastoral literary criticism, therefore, appears as a strategy to approach the pastoral beyond the trajectories followed in traditional literary studies on the concept, which have limited the understanding of the pastoral primarily by building their reflections on dualistic and anthropocentric considerations. As will be more attentively discussed in Chapter 3, I ground my hermeneutical approach on ecological principles by proposing my possibly ‘sustainable’
pastoral criticism alongside five pastoral concepts – Reuse, Reduce, Recycle, Repair, and Rot. By adapting this cultural-ecological notion to strategies of literary analysis, I therefore intend to echo both Zapf’s attention to “life-sustaining diversities and to patterns of connectivity across the boundaries of categories, discourses, and life-forms” as well as to unleash the “ecocultural potential of imaginative texts” (2016, 26) in past pastoral texts.

By employing a combination of Bate’s and Zapf’s visions, which relies on their shared – albeit diverse – perspectives on the ethical implications possessed by (pastoral) literature, my thesis acknowledges the opportunity to enact a paradigm shift in the practice of reconceptualizing the pastoral, reframing pastoral criticism, and reevaluating (Georgian) pastoral poetry.

Posthumanism: A Dialogue between Braidotti and Ferrando on Postdualism and Postanthropocentrism

Even though it has only been a few decades since the term ‘posthumanism’ was coined (Hassan 1977), today, it represents a well-established field of study for providing a critique of the dominant axioms of Western thought, as well as of the founding values and beliefs of the Humanistic tradition. While, in general terms, the pluralist perspectives of posthumanism converge in the attempt to exceed the discriminatory implications and the conceptual exclusivist biases rooted in the universalistic notions of ‘Man’ and ‘Human’, an array of areas of investigation has developed in the past few decades, with different foci and objects of inquiry. Within the perspective of posthumanism, in fact, there lies a multitude of topics related to the interaction between humans and nonhumans, in a broad sense, spanning from the ethical concerns brought in by technological enhancement (Sorgner 2014), to the idea of the human-nonhuman continuum (Braidotti 2013), passing through nonhuman agency (Bennet 2010) and (new)materialistic perspectives (Coole and Frost 2010).

Realizing that “an important premise for post-human thought” lies in the philosophy of Anti-humanism (Braidotti 2013, 23), connected, among others, to Foucault’s scholarship on this topic, is useful for underlining the inclusive and pluralistic approach that posthumanism entails. In this sense, Braidotti observes how “Anti-humanism [...] rejected unitary identities indexed on that Eurocentric and normative
humanist ideal of ‘Man’” (2013, 27) emphasizing difference and diversity as constitutive aspects of subjectivity. In this sense, Anti-humanism questions the dichotomy between subjectivity and otherness, so that “‘others’ are no longer perceived as ‘others’” (Deleuze 1990 [1967], 359, cited in Jardine 2019 [1986], 221). This consideration, therefore, suggests how posthumanism not only highlights the importance of differences and surpassing tacit discriminatory hierarchies within the conceptualization of humans, but it also expands the adoption of a similar perspective beyond the human domain, including the nonhuman world. Moreover, while Anti-humanists primarily focused on “de-linking the human agent from this universalistic posture” (Braidotti 2013, 23) as a way for “signal[ling] the end of a certain conception of the human” (Hayles 1999, 286), posthumanism adopts a more proactive approach by delineating possible alternatives to traditional conceptual Humanistic domains. As Andy Miah observed, “the ‘post’ of posthumanism need not imply moving beyond humanness in some biological or evolutionary manner. Rather, the starting point should be an attempt to understand what has been omitted from an anthropocentric worldview” (2009, 77 cited in Ferrando 2019, 23). Hence, starting from Foucault’s declaration of the “dead of Man” – in reference to the crisis of the idea of man as an autonomous, independent subject – posthumanist philosophers are interested in rethinking forms of subjectivity capable of taking into account the multiplicity of organic and inorganic entities dwelling the world, that we – the humans – are part of. In this way, posthumanism appears as a valuable lens for regarding the major ethical, political challenges of the present-day world connected to the Anthropocene – whose rootedness in dualistic and anthropocentric principles has been well established – by stressing the idea of inclusivity and pluralism.

Within the variety of areas of investigation and critical approaches that posthumanism embraces, from Transhumanism to Metahumanism, for the purpose of my dissertation, stress will be placed on some of the insights developed within the sub-fields named a) critical posthumanism – especially in regard to the work of Rosi Braidotti – and b) philosophical posthumanism developed by Francesca Ferrando. As Ferrando reminds us, Critical posthumanism represents “the specific take on the posthuman developed within the field of literary criticism” (Ferrando 2019, 25) for it is rooted within feminist and postmodern critical practices and works engaged with the study of narratives, within which Katherine Hayles’ work *How We Became Posthuman* (1999) remains crucial.
Considering the role of Hayles in discussing “disembodied narratives within cybernetic and informatic literature” (Ferrando 2019, 26), it is evident how the issue of critiquing dualisms is essential in the perspective called into account by critical posthumanism. To ground this statement, Pramod K. Nayar observes, “critical posthumanism calls attention to the ways in which the machine and the organic body and the human and other forms of life are more or less seamlessly articulated, mutually depended and co-evolving” (2014, 8). Hence, considering the attention in my dissertation to literature and to re-discussing the dualisms rooted in the traditional Western perspective on the pastoral – critical posthumanism appears as a useful guiding light for my negotiation of the deep, axiomatic essence of the concept and its related topics. Within the debate on critical posthumanism, the work of Braidotti, in dialogue with the reflection offered by Ferrando, is particularly relevant for my dissertation since, among many aspects, it elucidates two conceptual axes along which this scholarship proceeds, and which represents the two operative tools for my study of the pastoral: postanthropocentrism and postdualism.

**Conceptual premises in Rosi Braidotti’s work**

Before exploring the depth of these two concepts, a brief overview of Rosi Braidotti’s philosophy is essential in order to ground my discussion on a solid theoretical framework, as well as to better clarify the premises of her thought, on which the present thesis is also based. Within her diverse scholarship, Braidotti has focused on the topic of the posthuman subjectivity, on the basis of the idea that the complexity of the present-day world necessitates determining a wider sense of the self, which is able to integrate many other forms of life as the result of exceeding mere anthropocentric and dualistic evaluations of the nonhuman realm. While discussing that “we need to re-cast ethical and political subjectivity for posthuman times” (2019, 81) Braidotti advocates a (posthumanist) paradigm shift, which, by re-discussing the axioms sustained by the Humanistic tradition, can negotiate the anthropocentric, speciesist, and political – among other exclusivist patterns – implications connected to the traditional understanding of the subject/object binary. In this alignment, she claims that attention should be dedicated to “reject[ing] unitary identities, emphasizing difference and diversity as constitutive aspects of subjectivity” (Braidotti 2013, 27) in order to overcome exclusivist patterns embedded in traditional (Western) thinking, as a way for overcoming discriminatory attitudes.
Braidotti’s thought also becomes useful for reflecting on what she determines as the “naturalized others” (Braidotti 2019, 30) – entities that have undergone a process of categorization and discriminations on the basis of rooted ideologies, well expressed by the Aristotelian Scala Naturae (the Great Chain of Being). As Ferrando reminds, “the Great Chain of Being depicted a hierarchical structure of all matter and life […], starting from God: this model, with contextual differences and specificities, passed on, in its Christian interpretation, through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, until the eighteenth century” (2019, 94). In response to the idea of the Man as the “measure of all things” (Bradotti, 2019, 8) dwelling at the top of the Aristotelian hierarchical contextualization of living beings, Braidotti proposes an alternative, pluralistic understanding of the subjectivity – structured on horizontal, non-hierarchical assumptions. In this alignment, the idea of exceeding the human(ist) exceptionalism of the Western tradition results in taking into account and valuing the relational dependency of the human on the multiplicity of nonhumans by “conceptualizing the subject across multiple axes” (Braidotti 2019, 35): by disclosing a “subject position worthy of our time”, and by “prioritiz[ing] issues linked to social justice, ethical accountability, sustainability and to trans-species and intergenerational solidarity” (Braidotti 2019, 35) Braidotti offers a possible way toward the necessary practice of enacting a paradigm shift to respond to the ethical challenges of our times. In this sense, it is visible how issues of relationality possess a key role for the development of a new sense of self in the contemporary world, and that the notion of ‘subject’ cannot be conceptualized without taking into account the complex nexus of entities with which it is entangled, and which comprehends both humans and nonhumans entities.

The stress on human-nonhuman ontological connectedness, a mainstay for my discussion on the pastoral, resonates with the idea that “[w]hat constitutes subjectivity is a structural relational capacity, coupled with the specific degree of force or power that any one entity is endowed with: their ability to extend towards and in proximity with others” (Braidotti 2019, 36). Building upon this observation, Ferrando suggests that through a posthumanist perspective “the loneliness of the Western subject is lost in the recognition of the others as interconnected to the self” and that “there is no absolute ‘otherness’; we exist in a material net in which everything is actually connected and potentially intra-acting” (2014, 168).
All these considerations are based on the premise that a critique of the practice of ‘binary thinking’, upon which Western traditional thought is based, is needed. By taking from the philosophical approach of post-structuralism – including the work of philosophers such as Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze and Guattari – which sees in deconstruction its most representative intellectual operation; as well as on the ontological pluralism of Baruch Spinoza, Braidotti advocates for the necessity of rethinking “mental habits” in the Western world (Braidotti 2019, 19) while highlighting their limitations that have been prolonged through the reiteration of conceptual dualisms. As already said, posthumanism, in contrast, does not place attention only on dichotomies characterizing the human domain, such as ‘man/woman’, ‘black/white’, ‘heterosexual/homosexual’, along many others. Expanding the scope to the nonhuman realm, (critical) posthumanism invites scholars to enact a critical reflection on dichotomies such as ‘human/nature’; ‘human/culture’, and ‘nature/culture’, including “binary oppositions, such as human/inhuman, self/other, natural/cultural, inside/outside, subject/object, us/them, here/there, active/passive, and wild/tame” (Badmington 2004, 1345), all of which contain similar discriminatory and exclusivist patterns. As Ferrando well explains, when it comes to dualisms, one term always carries a power onto the other, in the sense that it expresses a form of prevalence, while the other/the Other, consequently, is regarded as inferior and subjugated (2019, 60-61). Therefore, the exceeding of a similar paradigm becomes necessary for ensuring a less hierarchical perspective as well as for acknowledging the complexity of phenomena. Consequently, one cannot overlook the importance of discussing the liminality of the conceptual dichotomies, particularly between ‘human’ and ‘nonhuman’ when attempting to conduct a postdualistic and postanthropocentric discussion on the pastoral, as this dissertation aims to do.

Surpassing a strict dichotomic way of thinking, however, does not mean foregoing the importance of differences: as Braidotti states “taking the posthuman convergence seriously, therefore, means accepting the multiplicity of perspectives and locations as embodied and embedded” (2019, 56). In this sense, the pluralism and the perspectivism that critical posthumanism presents should not be confused with ‘relativism’. As Braidotti reminds: “this [posthumanism] is not relativism but grounded immanence and politics of locations” (2019, 57). In this sense, a posthumanist perspective becomes useful for acknowledging the importance of negotiating the limits of binary thinking – particularly
in conceptualizing issues such as ‘human’ and ‘nonhuman’ – while substituting a dualistic, hierarchical way of thinking with a more horizontal figuration. Braidotti brilliantly summarizes this vision in her discussion of subjectivity: “the proper subject of the posthuman convergence is not ‘Man’, but a new collective subject, a ‘we-are-(all)-in-this-together-but-we-are-not-one-and-the-same’ kind of subject” (2019, 43). This pluralistic, horizontal approach will be adopted in my work as a way for re-discussing and challenging the binaries, which (still) survive in the understanding of the pastoral, pastoral criticism, and pastoral poetry today. Specifically, by negotiating the dualistic and anthropocentric implications that they carry, a discussion is offered on how, through the lens of posthumanism, the pastoral can become the site for a keen conceptual and philosophical evaluation of the dynamics of interactions among the living forms of life dwelling on planet Earth. In other words, approaching the pastoral in this way makes evident the effects of “the environmental turn” in the study of culture, which, as Ferrando observes, “more than evoking and essentialization of the Earth, liquefies the relation between the Earth and the human; symbolically and materially” (2019, 107).

**Discussing ‘postdualism’ and ‘postanthropocentrism’**

Enacting a critique of dualistic and anthropocentric thinking is a philosophical project that I intend to embrace in my work. When emphasizing the importance of moving beyond anthropocentrism and dualism, however, it is important to stress that Critical posthumanism defies the principle of the ‘negative opposition’ – in the sense of advocating for a strict non-anthropocentric and non-dualistic approach in response to dominant mental habits. On the one hand, a similar intellectual operation would appear utopian – for pushing for a complete move beyond dualism and anthropocentrism is perhaps an impossible task to achieve considering the foundational assumptions of Western thought. Second, the attempt to transcend an openly dualistic understanding, should be based on a grounded theoretical framework which is capable of preventing the risk of replicating inescapable dualistic circuits of traditional Western thought.

In this regard, Ferrando’s discussion on postdualism and postanthropocentrism is be crucial. Post-humanism, post-anthropocentrism and post-dualism are key
characteristics of ‘philosophical posthumanism’⁶ that express well the extent of posthuman sensitivity marked by a non-hierarchical perspective and by its onto-epistemological openness placed in a hybrid vision of humanity (Ferrando 2019). While the notion of ‘post-humanism’ implies an understanding of the plurality of human experiences, thus moving beyond a generalized and universalized approach to the human, “post-anthropocentrism” reflects on decentering the human in relation to the nonhuman: hence, “post-anthropocentrism” challenges the hierarchical scale that has granted an ontological privilege to the human to the detriment of other forms of life in the majority of historical accounts (Ferrando, 2019, 54).

When elaborating on the notion of postanthropocentrism, it is useful to call into account what Giorgio Agamben discusses in his investigation of practices of ‘humanization’, and consequently of establishing nonhuman ‘alterities’. Agamben has stressed that the historical construction of the human evokes the image of an anthropological machine, which is “constructed in a series of mirrors in which man, looking at himself, sees his own image always already deformed in the features of an ape” (2004, 26. Cited in Ferrando 2019, 73). This mechanism allowed the concept of ‘the human’ to construct itself through processes of negative dialect with his alterity. Similarly, the concept of ‘the animal’, has been widely relied on in language, thanks to an array of expressions reiterating values and beliefs that a similar dualistic vision support. Hence, it is evident how prolonging a dualistic assumption, particularly in reference to the human/nature opposition when regarding the pastoral, raises paradoxes and contradictions with the purpose of achieving an effective ethical and ecocritical response to the environmental challenges of the present-day world. As Braidotti also highlights in regard to postanthropocentrism, “displacing the centrality of Anthropos within the European world view exposes and explodes a number of boundaries between ‘Man’ and the environment or naturalized ‘others’” (2019, 14). This goes to show that in moving beyond anthropocentrism, new issues are raised in regard to the connectedness characterizing the relationship between humans and nonhumans in a wider sense. Taking

⁶ According to Francesca Ferrando, ‘philosophical posthumanism’ is a philosophy of mediation which “can be defined as a post-humanism, as a post-anthropocentrism, and as a post-dualism: these three aspects should be addressed in conjunction, which means an account based on a philosophical posthumanist approach shall have a posthumanist sensitivity as well as a post-anthropocentric and a post-dualistic one” (Ferrando 2019, 54).
this consideration into account while reading literary texts in which environmental issues are pivotal, such as in the case of pastoral poetry, becomes particularly useful for determining the disclosure of several narratives that prevailing anthropocentric trends have made latent. Without pursuing the ambitious mission of challenging anthropocentrism in the study of the pastoral, this work, instead, aims to develop a critical perspective, by which, in understanding of the pastoral, humans and nonhumans are seen as being involved in an ontological relationality.

Reflecting on the notion of postdualism, instead, means considering the assumptions of a deep-rooted conceptual framework that has supported humanistic thought for centuries, based on “a rigid way to define identity, based on a closed notion of self and actualized in symbiotic dichotomies, such as ‘us’/ ‘them’” (Ferrando 2019, 54). Reflecting on the pastoral along this line of reasoning becomes a way to challenge binary thinking by exploring the liminality between dichotomic terms and, as Braidotti states, favoring the emergence of unexplored trajectories. In this sense, it is useful to recall philosopher Stefan L. Sorgner’s metaphoric use of the concept of twisting as a way for rediscussing (alleged) categorically separate ontological dualities while disclosing meanings and issues advocated by the posthuman paradigm shift (Sorgner 2019, 1). Through the concept of ‘twisting’, in fact, Sorgner illustrates that “it is not the case that posthuman thinkers try to overcome dualities by excluding one of the two aspects, but that both aspects are being considered, adapted, and woven into a unity” (2019, 1)

Therefore, once again, it becomes evident that instead of offering a strict, purely nondualistic understanding of the pastoral, the aim of this dissertation regards the possibility of determining a critical trajectory that challenges the conceptual limits traditionally carried by exploring the liminalities of rooted dichotomies. Therefore, attention is here placed on the possibility of exploring the liminalities of dualisms such as ‘human/nature’, but also ‘country/city’ when discussing the pastoral, pastoral criticism, and pastoral poetry, as a way for favoring the emergence of new reflections that, as previously stated, resonate with the notion of connectedness, rather than separateness.

With this illustration of these two axes – postanthropocentrism and postdualism – the preliminary theoretical scaffolding of my dissertation is constructed: the domain of posthumanism becomes a particularly relevant viewpoint in contemporary critical debates for theorizing alternative perspectives on the study of rooted traditional concepts, such as
the pastoral, acknowledging their complexity and their engagement with issues of human-nonhuman connectedness.

The fact that we are now on the verge of a posthuman paradigmatic shift, re-discussing dominant figurations in the relationship between the human and the nonhuman becomes essential. This condition is visible in the growing awareness of the anthropogenic causes of the major biospheric alterations of planet Earth and the collective effort to find a solution to them, through practical and material experiences in the present-day world. Not only does the popularity of the notion of Anthropocene offer proof of this awareness, but its revisited, critical, and related \textit{-cene} concepts – includingCapitalocene (Moore 2016), Plantationocene (Haraway 2016), Wastocene (Armiero 2021) – also reveal this trend. In addition, the growing and diversified scholarly interest in enacting a critical discussion of dualistic assumptions in regard to the human-nonhuman relationship also fosters this awareness. Whether conceived, as Braidotti reveals, within the domain of the ‘posthuman convergence’ (2013; 2019) or through a wider scope of growing transdisciplinary transformation under the scope of the Environmental Humanities – the environmental concerns of our times have made undisputable the necessity of re-vising traditional cultural phenomena that are “deeply problematic for environmentalism” such as the pastoral (Garrard 2012 [2004], 37).

In the case of the study of pastoral poetry, the dialogue between ecocriticism and posthumanism resonates in my attempt to re-configure the role of nonhuman subjects in the interpretation of pastoral poems, while interrogating past, disregarded and dismissed texts in light of issues of relationality and connectedness. Therefore, re-inscribing the pastoral in the field of Environmental Humanities, where the literary-based observation provided by Bate and Zapf and the more philosophically oriented discussion offered by Braidotti and Ferrando converge, becomes a fundamental operation: it allows for developing new, deep, ethical, and critical insights on a key concept regarding an environmental aspect of Western thought and experience, according to an original alternative perspective, which is worthy of our times.
1.4 A Terminological Clarification: Use(s) and Understanding(s) of the Term ‘Pastoral’

One of the many complications in the study of the pastoral is the fact that this term ‘pastoral’ a) is characterized by a high level of polysemy; b) has undergone multiple and idiosyncratic interpretations throughout history; and c) has been attributed to a “bewildering variety of works” (Loughrey 1984, 8) pertaining to different cultural and artistic areas, from literature to music. However, without denying the difficulties of limiting the pastoral to a univocal understanding of the term, to clarify its uses becomes fundamental for leading a clear and systematic discussion in this thesis.

While ‘pastoral’ remains a “contested term” (Lourghrey 1984, 8), I propose to engage with its complexity, again, in a more proactive way. Inspired by Donna Haraway’s thought-provoking vocabulary, I suggest considering ‘pastoral’ as a troubled term in the sense of approaching the intricacy which characterizes it through a more affirmative epistemological stance. Specifically, just like Haraway invites her readers to stay with the trouble⁷ while discussing the importance of acknowledging how “we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations…we become-with each other or not at all” (2016, 4) – I suggest that the study of the pastoral should occur accordingly. Therefore, I invite readers to surpass the excessive, traditional reliance on hegemonic essentialist praxis (Ferrando 2012, 9) when approaching the pastoral, while interrogating themselves on the ethical considerations embedded in it, especially those considerations regarding the relationship between humans and nonhumans. In this sense, the apparent ambiguity that the pastoral possesses does not appear solely as a disadvantage: on the contrary, through the lens offered by Haraway, this feature can be seen as favoring multi-perspectivism and interrogating the liminality of its traditional dualism(s) for disclosing ever-new, creative understandings and interpretations of the human-nonhuman relationship, which can be aligned with current ecocritical/posthuman epistemology.

As already been discussed, my thesis does not intend to negatively regard the widespread critical debate revolving around the attempt to define what the pastoral is, nor does it intend to provide a univocal definition of this phenomenon. Contrarily, through my research, I wish to investigate diverse, (still) unexplored implications of this term,

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while problematizing the dominant perspective of the pastoral in light of the approach suggested by the Environmental Humanities. Particularly, this study will be conducted by reflecting on how the urgencies raised by the Anthropocene inform current readership of new implications regarding the pastoral. Yet, before delving into this discussion, it is important to clarify the starting point of my observation, that is, to answer the following question: which is the idea of the pastoral – which is representative of the long-standing traditional dualistic, anthropocentric perspective of the concept – that I intend to reconceptualize?

Again, a univocal answer would be both limiting and imprecise. Therefore, I propose a tripartite definition, which elaborates on the notion of ‘pastoral’ in relation to each of the three sections comprising my dissertation, where a different perspective of the term is provided. For clarificatory purposes, I isolated the three different uses of the term ‘pastoral’ in my work in the following figure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#Understanding</th>
<th>Analytical Level</th>
<th>Meta-concept</th>
<th>What the term ‘pastoral’ refers to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Meta-meta level</td>
<td>Re-conceptualizing</td>
<td>Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Meta-level</td>
<td>Re-framing</td>
<td>Literary criticism (on pastoral poetry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Textual level</td>
<td>Re-evaluating</td>
<td>Pastoral poems (both as a mode and as a genre)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Maps of the understandings associated with the pastoral adopted in the present work*

For each use of the term ‘pastoral’ appearing in my dissertation I have indicated the analytical level of my discussion – 1) meta-meta-level; 2) meta-level; and 3) literary level...
– as well as each of the three meta-concepts through which the discussion develops, as illustrated in the previous paragraphs – 1) reconceptualizing; 2) reframing; and 3) reevaluating. This combination aims to facilitate the understanding of the notion of ‘pastoral’ – that can be understood as 1) a concept; 2) a specific subject-related field in literary criticism; and 3) as a typology of poetry – within my thesis. The use of dashed lines in Figure 1 to separate the several understandings of the term is representative of my intent to emphasize the dialogue (trialogue or, in fact, multilogue) between the different notions of ‘pastoral’ involved in my work. In my view, not only can they influence one another, but they also should be considered collectively, as inextricably intertwined topics. The three understandings will be explored in more detail in the following paragraphs.

#1 Pastoral as ‘a concept’

As already stated, at the center of my dissertation is the idea of the pastoral as a **concept**, which I intend to shift from its traditional, dualistic, and anthropocentric significance, to a more pluralistic one – by exposing it to an ecocritical-posthumanist perspective, through a process of reconceptualization. Mieke Bal discusses the notion of ‘concept’ as “a third partner between critic and object” that needs to be kept under scrutiny (2007, 36) while conducting analytical operations in the field of literary and cultural studies. Hence, when one scholar considers approaching the pastoral as a concept, it becomes fundamental to establish a preliminary discussion on what the concept of pastoral actually means in his or her argument. Simultaneously, it is crucial to keep in mind the capacity of a concept – in general terms – to undergo processes of transformation. Mieke Bal’s study on ‘travelling concepts’ highlights how concepts are, in fact, “flexible”, “tremendously productive” (2007, 36) and in constant change, especially when working with concepts for an analytical operation. In this alignment, one can reflect on how the use of the pastoral as a concept in this work also postulates its capacity of *travelling* from a more traditional, dualistic, and anthropocentric sense to a more pluralistic and non-hierarchical one.

While different scholars offer a wide range of possible definitions of the pastoral as a concept, Terry Gifford has famously isolated “a broader” (1999, 2) understanding which becomes useful here for framing it as a transdisciplinary and transmedial phenomenon. Among several definitions that Gifford provides, he establishes the pastoral
as “any literature that describes the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban” (Gifford 1999, 2). This explanation appears particularly relevant for my argument due to its evident dualistic stance, as the reference to the dichotomy ‘country/city’ reveals. This aspect is representative of how Western thought has characterized the general, traditional understanding of the environment alongside dichotomies such as human/nature and nature/culture, thus attributing to the idea of the environment certain features and values in opposition to the urban world. The dichotomy country/city – or rural/urban – resonates with another, wider dichotomy that ecocritics have continued to problematize in the attempt to enact a more mature understanding of the environment: nature/culture. In general terms, this dualism refers to an alleged ontological separation, and contraposition, between a human-made reality (or in general, human beings) and nonhuman-made realms, or in general, nonhuman entities. This opposition has reinforced the idea of the natural world as a pristine setting (nature) untouched by civilizations (culture), which, as Raymond Williams well-explained in his seminal, eponymous study (1973), is evoked in the way the pastoral (often) represents the rural world. All these considerations need to be taken into account when reading Gifford’s ‘broad’ definition of the pastoral – “the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban” (Gifford 1999, 2) – and reflect how this traditional understanding adheres to an evident, strict, dichotomistic vision of the environment, rooted in traditional Western thought.

In alignment with this consideration is another – different, albeit related – understanding of the pastoral that Gifford suggests, which regards the pastoral as “an idealisation of the reality of life in the country” (1999, 2). According to this second ‘broad’ definition, there is the idea that the natural world possesses certain features that distance it from the domain of human material experientiality, while remaining attached to a primarily metaphysical figuration. From this definition, it is possible to delineate another connection to the dualism regarding the pastoral – the sense of separation between the human and the natural world – and other key dualisms inherent in the understanding of the environment through the traditional and dualistic philosophical domains.

Ecocriticism has highlighted a similar dependence of traditional figurations of the environment on dualistic thinking both in relation to the pastoral and to other topics, while advocating for a re-construction of a sense of continuity between human beings and nonhuman entities. Ecocritics have placed stress on reassessing how human beings are
part of (whatever is generally referred to as) ‘nature’, and that, in fact, no such thing as ‘nature’ as an ontological entity separated from the humans, or vice versa, exists (McKibben 1989). These considerations underline the impossibility of maintaining the idea of the pastoral according to the epistemologies rooted on the idea of ‘separateness’ rather that of ‘connectedness’ when regarding humans and nonhumans. Hence, keeping this consideration in mind, and in accordance with Bal’s observation that “concepts are not stable” (2007, 39), reconceptualizing the traditional understandings of the pastoral summarized by Gifford into the idea of the intertwining between the rural and the urban becomes a fundamental operation, in alignment with the claims of current ecocritical epistemology. Specifically, conducting this operation through the help of a postdualistic and postanthropocentric perspective serves to emphasize even further that the absolute distinctions between the country and the city, the rural and the urban, and nature and culture are aleatory.

While an openly postdualistic, and postanthropocentric reconceptualization of the pastoral seems not to have occurred yet in pastoral theory, many scholars in and outside of ecocriticism have already offered useful, related considerations through which my work can be conducted. Among them, Donna Haraway’s discussion on the thought-provoking, non-dualistic blending ‘natureculture’ (2003) remains pivotal. Through this concept, Haraway observes that what is commonly identified as ‘natural’ is, in fact, determined by culture – that is, by a series of historical, material, and political conditions of possibility. For Haraway, “the invention and reinvention of nature” – which she sees as “perhaps the most central arena of hopes, oppression, and contestation for inhabitants of the planet earth in our times” (1991, 1) – represents a conceptual bias that scholars are encouraged to regard critically by relying on the concept of hybridity. For Haraway, this notion represents a necessary intellectual effort in order to move beyond the nature/artifice polarity associated with Cartesian thought, in alignment with a current popular scholarly debate in ecocritical studies (Ferrando 2019, 37). This consideration is, in fact, at the base of the perspective that guides my reconceptualization of the pastoral, as will be explained more in detail in Chapter 2.
#2 ‘Pastoral’ Literary Criticism

Just like Mieke Bal discusses the concept as “a tool for, at first mainly literary analysis” (2007, 34), having clarified the use of pastoral as a concept in this work, it is possible to move on to discussing how the ‘term’ pastoral in my thesis also regards literary criticism. Specifically, I discuss that, in accordance with the reconceptualization of the pastoral that I propose, the critical/analytical scope in the study of pastoral poetry also necessitates to be updated, in the sense of re-negotiating its traditional assumptions within the postdualistic and postanthropocentric perspective already debated. As Figure 1 reflects, the second use of the ‘pastoral’ appearing in my study regards the wide-raging number of critical works dedicated to pastoral poetry. Specifically, I refer to the long-standing tradition of theories developed in the field of literary studies that have enhanced ever-renewing understanding of the pastoral throughout history.

As already considered, pastoral poetry has been under the scrutiny within different theoretical frameworks for centuries, while multiple, idiosyncratic approaches have interrogated literary texts in different ways. Even limiting one’s discussion to the last few decades, it is possible to observe how pastoral literary criticism engaged with almost all major analytical scopes of Critical studies: from psychoanalysis to cultural materialism until, more recently, ecocriticism. However, among the main points of my argument is the idea that, despite this variety, there survives a traditional, dichotomic core, which has prolonged itself almost untouched throughout centuries. This core regards the conservation of the above-cited dualisms – human/nature; country/city; nature/culture, etc. – as the preliminary assumption for approaching pastoral poetry.

Connected to my intent to reconceptualize the pastoral through an ecocritical and posthumanist lens, therefore, is my interest in reframing pastoral literary criticism by offering an alternative way out exploring (Georgian) pastoral poetry beyond only dualistic standpoints. I discuss that more pluralistic and eco-logical assumptions can still be pursued as the baseline for conducting a literary analysis on pastoral poetry. Consequently, on the one hand, there is the idea that this thesis may enact a critique of pastoral criticism for demonstrating how the major works of pastoral theory – still evoked as stepping-stones for pastoral literary critics – have run along the traditional Western dichotomies already discussed. On the other hand, my work proposes an alternative critical frame in accordance with the theoretical axes advocated by current scholarship in
the perspective of the Environmental Humanities. Along this line, I suggest that literary scholars approaching a pastoral poem should, for instance, ask which kinds of relationships between human and nonhuman entities are represented within a pastoral poem? Or, how does a pastoral poem inform readers regarding possible forms of human-nonhuman ethical relationality? While these questions will be discussed more attentively in Chapter 3 as the center of my critical pastoral perspective, it becomes necessary to clarify what makes a pastoral poem ‘pastoral’. In other words, what is the object of my reframed pastoral critical perspective? The answer to this question will be provided in the following paragraphs.

#3 ‘Pastoral’ Poetry (Mode and Genre)

Taking (again) from Mieke Bal’s discussion, in which she defines a concept as “a third partner in the otherwise totally unverifiable and symbiotic interaction between critic and object” (2007, 36) it becomes essential to clarify the third and last use of the term ‘pastoral’ as the object of my dissertation: that is, pastoral as a typology of poetry. Since the pastoral occurs in poetry in relation to multiple works, authors, and epochs, isolating a sole possible answer to my question – what is the object of my critical reframed pastoral critical perspective? – is not possible. In fact, different historical and cultural contextualizations of this inquiry would lead to different responses. In spite of this, it remains important to clarify the principle that this thesis pursues when establishing that a poem is ‘pastoral’, and why a particular pastoral poem is chosen for the analysis while another one is excluded. For this discussion, I rely on the two main trajectories emerging in pastoral theory, which primarily identify pastoral poetry either as a ‘mode’ or as a ‘genre’. Nevertheless, these two visions are not in contrast with each other: they are simply based on different assumptions. Thus, the following paragraphs illustrate this aspect, while discussing them as two useful trajectories along which my dissertation develops, which can also allow for a combinatory perspective.

The Pastoral as a Literary ‘Mode’

As the Oxford English Dictionary outlines, a “mode” refers to “[a] particular form, manner, or variety in which some quality, phenomenon, or condition occurs or is
manifested”, or “[a] prevailing fashion, custom, practice, or style, esp. one characteristic of a particular place or period” (“mode”, 2020). This definition suggests that a set of features can be determined (both textual and more imagery-related) that serves for recognizing a poem as a pastoral poem. With the purpose of clarifying this indication, recalling Bryan Loughrey’s The Pastoral Mode (1984) is beneficial. In this study, Loughrey observes the pastoral in relation to an array of manifestations, starting from Renaissance poetry. In spite of the many differences in form, theme, and style throughout history, there remain opportunities to inscribe poems of different epochs within the same poetic domain – the pastoral: this awareness allows one to understand the usefulness of the pastoral as a mode, that is as a set of features that groups together different literary works. In this sense, conceiving the pastoral as a mode appears useful for conducting a cohesive study on collections of poems that appear diversified and pluralistic, just like Georgian Poetry, considering that it contains works from different poets and styles.

In What is Pastoral? (1997), Paul Alpers also approaches the pastoral as a mode. He summarizes his understanding of this phenomenon in reference to a set of features, which includes the “idyllic landscape, landscape as a setting for song, an atmosphere of otium, a conscious attention to art and nature”, and which represents “the multiplicity defining pastoral” (Alpers 1997, 22). Through Alpers’s words, a poem can be considered ‘pastoral’ when it displays images, themes, and issues connected to the so-called pastoral conventions. A similar consideration is also offered by Leo Marx, who, in addition, discusses the pastoral as a cultural symbol and as a product of the collective imagination, that is “an image that conveys a special meaning (thought and feeling) to a large number of those who share the culture” (1964, 4). For Marx, this effect occurs when certain images are evident in a literary work, which makes it highly identifiable to the members of a community as pertaining to a certain category. This reflection becomes fundamental when attributing the label pastoral to a work which contains the presence of certain images including, for instance, sheep, shepherds, nymphs, and green pastures; but also references to the locus amoenus, “an idealized landscape with three fundamental ingredients: “trees, grass and water” (Ruff 2015, 92), or which typically contains “trees and shade, a grassy meadow, running water, song-bird, and cool breezes” (Spawforth et al. 2012, 854). Marx’s popular equation “No shepherd, no pastoral” (1986, 45) is clarificatory in this sense: through this expression, the critic acknowledges that certain
conventional images in a poem allow a reader to observe the pastoral in an array of diversified literary work as long as pastoral conventional imagery is present. Therefore, adopting this perspective, for determining whether a Georgian poem is pastoral, I will look for the presence of the conventional pastoral images cited above.

By observing the pastoral as a mode, one can discuss various pastoral trajectories running through the history of Western culture as one transversal, transmedial phenomenon. Beyond the literary world, the ‘pastoral mode’, in fact, appears in multiple cultural areas, including architecture (Wilson 1992), advertisement (Winder & Dix 2015), and videogames (Wiles 2019; Op de Beke 2021), in correlation with the appearance of the imagery already mentioned. When limiting one’s consideration to the context of literature, this approach still permits one to find evidence of the pastoral in reference to multiple literary forms (novel, short story, poems) as well as periods (Neoclassicism, Romanticism, Modernism, etc.). Despite the popularity of the pastoral mode, however, its conventional imagery has increasingly become discussed negatively, and, with it, ‘pastoral’ conceived in pejorative terms (Gifford 1999, 147). Or, as Garrard reminds, the ‘pastoral’ is often considered a synonym of “kitsch” (Garrard 2012 [2004], 53), especially in correspondence to the growing awareness of environmental complexities since the 1970s ecological movements. However, through a more updated and mature ecocritical discussion, which sees how “conventional motifs of the genre such as ‘retreat’ or ‘escape’ or ‘refuge’ in mainly nonhuman environments are no longer possible” (Voie 2019, 201), the way I engage with the pastoral mode possesses aspects of originality. In the present work, I intend to reevaluate the traditional assumptions of the pastoral mode by exploring conventional images, such as the “idyllic landscape, landscape as a setting for song, an atmosphere of otium, a conscious attention to art and nature” (Alpers 1997, 22 in search for their implicit ecological implications: these implications regards, for instance, how the abovecited images inform readers about issues of relationality between humans and nonhumans.

Therefore, while Leo Marx’s statement “no shepherd, no pastoral” successfully summarized a (still-enduring) understanding of the phenomenon, I propose the idea of new shepherds, new pastoral. On the one hand, I still affirm that the pastoral regards the presence of certain established images that have become conventions over time (e.g. shepherds, sheep); on the other hand, I underline that a new process of reading them,
beyond rooted dichotomies and binaries, is needed. Therefore, when pursuing an observation of the pastoral as a mode, I adopt a new (ecocritical and posthuman) lens, which allows for disclosing new ethical considerations regarding the human-nonhuman connectedness when examining conventional pastoral images that a poem contains.

**The Pastoral as a ‘Genre’**

Differently from what was discussed for the pastoral as a ‘mode’, the OED defines ‘genre’ as “[a] particular style or category of works of art; esp. a type of literary work characterized by a particular form, style, or purpose” (“genre”, 2020). This categorization invites readers to take into account more textual-oriented considerations when discussing the pastoral, which link the pastoral to a set of conventional formal elements, identifiable, for instance, as rhymes, meters, and other rhetorical devices. Even if an explicit reference to the notion of the pastoral as a genre is less frequent in contemporary literary criticism, clarifying this perspective is relevant to explain another aspect of my approach in the study of Georgian pastoral poetry.

Thomas K. Hubbard is among the most representative scholars who studied pastoral poetry through an explicit formal-oriented angle. In *The Pipes of Pan*, Hubbard observes how “criticism has tended to expand the boundaries of what can be defined ‘pastoral’ to encompass not merely formal eclogues in the classical tradition or recognized subgenres […] but any work fitting the escapist archetype posited for the genre” (1998, 2). By investigating the “core texts of the pastoral tradition” (1998, 6), Hubbard defines a set of formal features, which reconstructs a coherent development of pastoral poetry throughout centuries despite the several modifications that this has genre undergone. Specifically, Hubbard shows how a reflection mainly based on formal literary features may enhance valuable considerations on a cultural level, just like it occurs when one takes into account the pastoral in terms of imagery and themes (mode).

Hubbard’s approach relies on two main notions, ‘literary filiation’ and ‘intertextuality’, for sustaining a diachronic exploration of the genre, starting from antiquity, along the identification of a formal-oriented trajectory. The first expression – ‘literary filiation’ – regards how one pastoral poem serves as a representative model for the writing of later poems. An example is the repetition of the formal device of the singing competition between shepherds deriving from Theocritus’ *Idylls* in several (later) poems.
Literary filiation can also be observed in what Hubbard determines as the idea of “young poets, ephebes aspiring to assert their manhood in the agon of poetic memory” (Hubbard 1998, 7), which also returns in several later poems, starting from Virgil’s *Eclogues*. Along the dynamics of literary filiation, Virgil’s pastoral works, in their turn, become fundamental for the writing of poems of many Renaissance authors, including Sannazaro, Spenser, and Milton, whose works can be interpreted as “imitation of the Virgilian career paradigm” (Hubbard 1998, 9), on a formal level.

For what concerns ‘intertextuality’, instead, Hubbard discusses the capacity of a text to dialogue with other pastoral works in the literary tradition. For instance, this aspect regards the appearance of the same characters in the pastoral works of different authors, such as the shepherd Daphnis, who is mentioned in multiple pastoral poems, including Theocritus’s *Idylls* and Virgil’s *Eclogues*.

Hubbard’s approach is useful for the purpose of my thesis because it allows one to determine the study of Georgian pastoral poetry within the wider lineage of the pastoral in the British literary tradition. While less attention will be dedicated here to understanding the specific literary filiation of certain Georgian (pastoral) poems in relation to earlier British poems, the possibility of conceiving them within a wider evolutionary trajectory is fundamental for determining Georgian poetry as being representative of a particular step in the genre’s evolution. Moreover, if one takes into account the particular historical and cultural moment of (early) British Modernism when Marsh’s anthology was published, the reflection on literary form becomes even more crucial. In this sense, the aspects of originality of the pastoral brought in by *Georgian Poetry* can be intended as ‘leaps’ in the evolution of the genre in early twentieth-century England, rather than as out-of-fashion replicas of past stylistic features, as Georgian poets were accused of doing. According to Russian formalist Yury Tynyanov, a ‘leap’ represents a mutation of certain formal and stylistic patterns of a genre, resulting as a signal of an accomplished step of its evolution (1929). Along this line, I acknowledge innovation in Georgian pastoral poetry in the way it expresses originality in the representation of human-nonhuman relationality when compared to previous pastoral works. Specifically, attention will be here dedicated to demonstrating how the possibility of reading Georgian pastoral poems through a postdualistic and postanthropocentric lens informs the reader of the poems’ engagement with valuable ethical reflections possessing
similarities with current ecocritical epistemology. Similarly these aspects of innovation will be discussed as a proof of the engagement of the Georgians with the rising environmental sensibility in the cultural milieu of early twentieth-century Britain. Therefore, even though Georgian pastoral poetry still presents the classical domains of the pastoral – in the sense that evidence of an apparent, solely dualistic representation of the country and the city can be found in them – through a lens inspired by ecocriticism and posthumanism new possible interpretations emerge: this possibility serves to acknowledge these poems’ innovative and ‘modern’ character which assesses a baseline for conducting my reevaluation of the anthology Georgian Poetry.

As has already been presented, discussing the pastoral as a “mode” and as a “genre” separately does not serve to favor one term over the other in my understanding of this literary phenomenon, or to limit my observations to one of these two perspectives exclusively. Oppositely, this clarification is useful for specifying the combined approach that I intend to pursue when selecting the Georgian pastoral poems for my literary analysis. On the one hand (‘pastoral as a mode’), I will pay attention to poems which present certain formal features and imagery that have accompanied the pastoral for more than two millennia (Buell 1995), like the eclogue or the locus amoenus. On the other hand (‘pastoral as a genre’), attention will be placed on how these conventional elements allows for determining the innovative character of the ‘Georgian pastoral within the wider evolution of the pastoral in the context of British poetry.

1.5 Chapters Overview

This thesis is divided into two main sections. The first part, which comprises Chapter 1, Chapter 2, and Chapter 3, offers a more theoretical exploration regarding how my work intends to re-think the dominant, traditional understanding of the pastoral and of pastoral literary criticism through a postdualistic and postanthropocentric perspective. These chapters highlight the limits of rooted domains – dualism and anthropocentrism – both in the way the pastoral is conceptualized and in regard to the assumptions of traditional pastoral literary criticism. Moreover, this perspective also offers an alternative account of the pastoral through a lens that combines ecocriticism and critical posthuman studies. The
aim of this first section is deterritorialize and reterritorialize dualistic approaches to the study of the pastoral in a more pluralistic way.

The second part of this work, which comprises Chapter 4 and 5, instead focuses on the discussion of Georgian pastoral poetry. This operation occurs along two strands: a) it provides an original, critical introduction to the anthology *Georgian Poetry*, while reinscribing it in the wider environmental debate emerging between late nineteenth and early twentieth century in England; b) it offers an ecocritical rereading of the pastoral trajectory running through the anthology, for the purpose of critically reevaluating this overlooked and dismissed anthology in English studies.

This current Chapter 1 opened with a concise presentation of the main argument of my thesis and presented the project map, the research question(s), and the main aims. A short summary of the dissertation highlighted its tripartite structure in order to clarify the three meta-concepts – reconceptualizing the pastoral, reframing pastoral criticism, and reevaluating (Georgian) pastoral poetry – on which the thesis relies. Attention was also dedicated to the theoretical baseline of my work: the chapter emphasized its combinatory approach that merges ecocriticism and posthuman studies, which was discussed as an original perspective within the lineage of pastoral theory, inspired by the transdisciplinary scholarly approach characterizing the Environmental Humanities. The concept of ‘ecopoiesis’ coined by Jonathan Bate as well as the notions of ‘literature as cultural ecology’ and of ‘sustainable texts’ offered by Hubert Zapf were then introduced, with a stress on their ethical perspectives on literature. In addition, I delineated a quick overview of Rosi Braidotti’s perspective on posthumanism, and clarified, in dialogue with Ferrando’s scholarship, how the concepts of ‘postdualism’ and ‘postanthropocentrism’ serve as two fundamental operative guidelines of my dissertation. Finally, Chapter 1 clarified the understandings of the term ‘pastoral’ in this work: echoing the tripartite structure of the dissertation, three main uses of the pastoral were isolated – pastoral as a concept, pastoral as a specification of literary criticism, and pastoral as a category of poetry (both in reference to the pastoral as mode and as a genre). In this way, a theoretical scaffolding of my argument was offered, which will be expanded in the following sections.

Chapter 2 opens with a clarification of the usage of the term “nature” in this work as an *ethico-onto-epistemological* operation (Barad 2007) guiding my
reconceptualization of the pastoral. Therefore, a cartography of some key texts of pastoral literary criticism from the last few centuries is offered to demonstrate how the pastoral, as a concept, has travelled (Bal, 2002) along reiterated dichotomies – especially human/nature and country/city – throughout history. After arguing that this perspective is too limited for reflecting on the complex issues of human-nonhuman connectedness advocated by contemporary ecocritical and posthuman epistemology, a more pluralistic understanding of the pastoral is discussed. This final section of the chapter focuses on a conceptual refiguration of the pastoral by making use of the idea of the pastoral as an ‘ecosystem.’ Therefore, I discuss the possibility of approaching the pastoral beyond solely issues of separateness (prolonged by the already mentioned traditional pastoral dichotomies) while stressing how it also resonates with issues of human-nonhuman connectedness: specifically, I argue that these issues emerge when regarding how relationships between human beings and the environment appear in pastoral poems.

Chapter 3 proposes an alternative analytical methodology for disclosing postdualistic and postanthropocentric narratives from traditional pastoral poems. This operation is realized through my notion of ‘sustainable pastoral criticism’. Taking from Hubert Zapf’s discussion of ‘sustainable texts’ (1996) – in which he presents literature as an “ecological force” for its capacity to circulate discourses and enhance environmental ethics in culture – through a meta-meta-literary discussion, I argue that sustainable literary criticism a) allows for recuperating disregarded narratives in past pastoral poems that relate to the ethical urgencies of the present-day world and b) serves for reevaluating disregarded works by acknowledging their topicality in light of the challenges posed by the Anthropocene.

Echoing the assumptions addressed in the field of the Environmental Humanities – particularly in regard to the idea of facing the complexity of current ecological crises by adopting a pluralistic, transdisciplinary approach – the reframing of pastoral criticism proposed in this chapter occurs by integrating literary studies and ecological sciences. In this alignment, I structure my perspective along five concepts (Reuse, Reduce, Recycle, Repair, and Rot), which reflect the popular 5Rs model populating current ecological discourses and ethical environmental behaviors. These keywords are re-envisioned as a provocative, new set of ‘pastoral Rs’ in response to the still-relevant critical (albeit primarily dualistic and anthropocentric) model theorized by Roger Sales (1987) – within
which the pastoral is conceived according to the notions Refuge, Reflection, Return, Requiem, and Reconstruction.

Adopting a more historical perspective, Chapter 4 introduces the anthology *Georgian Poetry Vol. I-V*, which was published between 1912 and 1922. It re-contextualizes the collection within the environmental discourse that developed within the cultural and literary *milieu* at the time of the anthology publication. The chapter offers an overview of the main environmental discussions occurring in England on the verge of the twentieth century in order to better attune the understanding of Georgian poetry to the growing ecological sensibilities in that period. While traditional criticism has often neglected this topic when discussing *Georgian Poetry*, this chapter suggests that major relevant achievements in science, biology, and philosophy between the nineteenth and twentieth – from Darwin’s evolutionary theory to Spinoza’s echoes in literature – favored the maturation of a new ecological awareness, which can be inferred while reading the poems of the anthology.

Moreover, Chapter 4 serves as a counter-narrative to the well-established Modernist critical depiction of Georgians, which (de)valuated their profile by establishing their work as forcibly opposing the experimentations occurring in poetry between the 1910s and 1920s, particularly due to its reliance on the pastoral. By calling into account the critical appraisal of the pastoral discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, the five-volume anthology *Georgian Poetry* is presented here as a useful object of study for informing current readers: a) about the growing (proto-)environmental awareness in the 1910s and 1920s England; and b) about related narratives stressing the sense of connectedness between humans and nonhumans, which also becomes useful for addressing current ecological crises. By (re)tracing a link between Georgian poets and their cultural-historical context, therefore, the natural-pastoral imagery emerging from the collection – often considered a stigma by literary critics at that time – assumes new implications, becoming the baseline along which I conduct a critical revaluation of the anthology *Georgian Poetry*.

Finally, Chapter 5 sheds light on some long-disregarded literary pastoral trajectories running through the five volumes of *Georgian Poetry*, which have been dismissed by the predominance of a Modernist-Eliotian (negative) reception of it. This chapter intends to disclose latent aspects of modernity in the anthology by unveiling its
overlooked ecocritical potentials of apparently conventional pastoral imagery and stylistic features on a selection of pastoral poems. Thus, a discussion is presented on how an updated (Coole and Frost 2016) perspective on the pastoral in Marsh’s anthology allows present-day critics to reevaluating it, by underlining the capacity of these poems to dialogue with current ethical challenges. While the chapter discusses each of the five volumes of *Georgian Poetry* separately, a collective conclusion serves to delineate the features of the pastoral trajectory running through the collection.

Eventually, the tripartite structure of my dissertation will be reassembled in a final chapter (Conclusion) and within a final, summative consideration, which also paves the way to possible, future study paths that my thesis offers in the field of pastoral theory.
2. A Critique of Pastoral Literary Criticism: Reconceptualizing the Pastoral

Theories then are dangerous things. All the same we must risk making one this afternoon since we are going to discuss modern tendencies. Virginia Woolf, The Leaning Tower.

“What happens when human exceptionalism and bounded individualism, those old saws of Western philosophy and political economics, become unthinkable in the best sciences, whether natural or social?” (Haraway 2016, 30). With this provocative question, Donna Haraway encourages readers to reflect on the conceptual limits of traditional figurations of the human-nonhuman relationship in Western thought. Moreover, she invites scholars to rethink (or, as this study suggests, to reconceptualize, to reframe, and to reevaluate) these very understandings in a more pluralistic sense.

Haraway’s questions become particularly significant if one reflects on how the many theoretical perspectives developed during the past few decades – among which ecocriticism, posthuman studies, and new materialism remain pivotal – have made it evident that the Humanistic assumptions characterizing Western thought are no longer sustainable, especially in light of current crises. Not only do these assumptions offer limited and simplistic vision of humans, nonhumans, and their relationship, but the increasingly material effects of the Anthropocene have also made the negative consequences of traditional dichotomic thinking undisputable (Ferrando 2019, 22). Therefore, questioning human exceptionalism and cultural dualisms such as human/nature, nature/culture and related concepts – including the pastoral – becomes crucial for responding to the ethical challenges of the present-day world.

As already discussed, traditional scholarship on the pastoral primarily considers it in the context of “Greek and Roman poems about life in the country, and about the life of the shepherd in particular” or, in more general terms, as “any literature that describes the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban” (Gifford 1999, 1-2). However, similar dichotomic evaluations collide with the growing scholarly critique of dualisms, which encourages scholars to take a more attentive look at the complexity of ecological systems (Emmett and Nye 2017, 7) both in relation to the real, material environment and representations of the natural world. Moreover, the increasing interest of ecocritics in the pastoral during the past few decades serves as evidence of current scholars’ commitment
to defying the dualistic Cartesian heritage and the limits of Western thought when considering this phenomenon. Thanks to the work of many ecocritics, in fact, the pastoral has become increasingly visible as a site to account for a wider sense of the environment and the entanglement between the human and the nonhuman, as more than simply a pristine reality detached from human beings. My reconceptualization of the pastoral in a postdualistic and postanthropocentric way follows this line, by relying on the reflections offered by critical posthumanism in dialogue with related ecocritical studies. This approach, I argue, allows for exploring the latent potentialities of the pastoral by moving beyond hegemonic essentialist praxis (Ferrando 2012, 9) when approaching it, in order to better understand how the concept involves issues of ‘connectedness’, rather than (only) of ‘separateness’, when it comes to considering the relationship between human and nonhuman entities appearing in pastoral poetry.

This challenging intellectual operation requires an effective and systematic methodology, especially if one wants to avoid having anthropocentrism and binary thinking sneak in through the backdoor. Hence, in my reconceptualization of the pastoral, I propose to address the philosophical practice of de-/reterritorialization. These joint processes, as epitomes of the tools of poststructural philosophy, are particularly beneficial for a) revealing implicit prejudices and latent contradictions in regard to key concepts in culture (de-territorialization); while b) assigning new implications and potentialities to them on the basis of different assumptions (re-territorialization). While these two terms were originally introduced by French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their analysis of capitalism, power, and identity (1985 [1980]) – de- and reconceptualization have been successfully utilized in different disciplines, from the social sciences to the humanities, and have thus been adapted to dissect a wide array of cultural topics. Accordingly, de-/reterritorialization will be here adopted for conducting an analysis of the pastoral in order to a) shed light on the (latent) dualistic and anthropocentric implications that characterize the conventional understanding of it, and b) rethink the pastoral in a more pluralistic, ethical (postdualistic and postanthropocentric) way.

Through my de-territorialization of the concept of pastoral I also wish to conduct a critique of pastoral criticism, in the sense of investigating a selection of works of

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8 This discussion has been proposed in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
pastoral theory in order to highlight the conceptual biases that traditional understandings of the phenomenon carry. I suggest that conceptual biases in traditional evaluations of the pastoral are visible when one goes through the extended production of pastoral literary criticism throughout history. However, considering that providing an extensive discussion on pastoral theory would require examining a plethora of scholarly works from antiquity to the present-day, my discussion on this topic will be dedicated to a selection of texts that are more effective than others in revealing the dualistic nature of the pastoral in different epochs. Instead, for what concerns the re-territorialization of the pastoral that I intend to pursue, I posit that, through my original combination of ecocriticism and posthuman studies, the issues of *separateness* at the core of the traditional, dualistic understanding of the concept can leave space for different interpretations of it. Binaries such human/nonhuman, the country/the city, and human/nature will, in fact, be re-considered by investigating their liminality, through the notions of *hybridity* and *connectedness*. This reterritorialization (and reconceptualization) is further explored in subchapter 2.3 when I suggest that the pastoral can be seen as an ecosystem. This notion, deriving from biology, is here adapted as a tool for regarding the natural-world representation that pastoral works offer, which is able to inform readers regarding the ontological relationality between humans and nonhumans. Specifically, considering how, in general terms, according to the OED, ‘ecosystem’ refers to “[a] biological system composed of all the organisms found in a particular physical environment, interacting with it and with each other” (“ecosystem”, 2021), I suggest that the pastoral landscape can be considered accordingly. Rather than regarding it only as a representation depicting, for instance, the contrast between the country and the city, the rural and the urban, and human and nonhuman – which implies a forcible distance between two terms – I argue that the pastoral *also* offers the possibility to raise questions regarding which kinds of relationships these two dynamics attain, and the several entities represented in them.

My de- and reterritorialization of the pastoral is anticipated by a discussion on the evolution that the concept of ‘nature’ has undergone within the ecocritical debate of the last few decades. These preliminary observations will prove useful, first, to highlight the bond between the concepts of nature and pastoral, and second, because an evolution in the conceptualization of nature suggests a strategy for reconceptualizing the pastoral. In fact, just like ecocriticism made evident the necessity of re-regarding the conventional
definitions of ‘nature’ into a more complex enmeshment of humans and nonhumans, I argue that the pastoral can and should be re-assessed accordingly. This preliminary discussion, which will be developed in subchapter 2.1, represents an *ethico-onto-epistemological* operation for this work. Karen Barad has introduced this expression in 2007 in the following terms:

> Practices of knowing and being are not isolable; they are mutually implicated. We don’t obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming. The separation of epistemology from ontology is a reverberation of a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse (Barad 2007, 185).

In alignment with what was previously observed, and in reference to the necessity of coming to terms with the complexity revealed through the study of natural world representations, Barad’s vision thus provides a valid methodology for 1) reconceptualizing the pastoral in a way that resonates with the idea of reassessing human-nonhuman *connectedness* at its centre (ontology); 2) underlining that the pastoral bonds with new practices of knowledge production (epistemology) along a pluralistic stance; and 3) revealing the contribution that the reconceptualization of the pastoral can provide in the process of responding to the urgencies of current environmental crises (ethics).

Therefore, the following paragraphs will offer a concise summary of some relevant critical discussions concerning the notion of ‘nature’ since the late 1980s that may guide a reconceptualization of the pastoral in similar terms. As Lynn White Jr. affirms “[w]hat people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them” (White 1967 [1996], 9). Hence, clarifying the assumptions about the notion of nature – as a key term for reflecting on the world around us, both in its material sense and in representations of it – becomes fundamental for guiding the development of new postanthropocentric and postdualistic ecological praxis on the study of the pastoral that this work also aims to achieve.

### 2.1 Coming to Terms with the Concept of ‘Nature’ for a Criticism on the Pastoral

It is well established how the notions of ‘pastoral’ and ‘nature’ are characterized by a longstanding and solid conceptual *entanglement*. These terms are, in fact, connected on a
semantic level considering how they both refer to the nonhuman world and the many entities attributed to it – whether they are nonhuman animals, plants, minerals, or other organic or inorganic elements. A link between the two notions has also been suggested by ecocritics: it is interesting to note that both ‘pastoral’ and ‘nature’ appear to be among the very first scholarly topics since the dawn of ecocriticism to undergo critical scrutiny, when, in fact, ‘pastoralization’ was accused of corroborating old-fashioned ideas of ‘nature’ as an “urge to idealize a simple, rural environment” (Marx 2000, 5).

The close link between ‘pastoral’ and ‘nature’ is also visible in their contingent development throughout history. As Alan Ruff suggests, the two notions are characterized by a (conceptual) dependency, according to which “our evolving perspective of nature has constantly altered our Arcadian visions, resulting in changes to art, literature and the design of architecture” (2015, 270) and vice versa. Early associations between them are visible, for instance, when one considers the Roman practice of villeggiatura – the experience of leisure time (otium) in countryside villas separated from urban centres, which were instead conceived of as locations for productivity and business (negotium). Just like the pastoral can be defined as “any literature that describes the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban” (Gifford 1999, 2), Roman culture already associated the natural world with countryside locations, and with an array of values linked to them such as relaxation and tranquillity; these values were in contraposition to those characterizing the urban, where, instead, notions such as yield and operativity prevailed. As Ruff also observes, villeggiatura is a phenomenon representative of how, since antiquity, there have existed dichotomic narratives in the experience of the natural world resonating with understandings of the pastoral surviving in modern times. This same proliferation of narratives was also noted on by Raymond Williams in his seminal The Country and the City (1973). As already mentioned, Williams made evident how, in the Western tradition, the country has come to be representative of “the idea of a natural way of life of peace, innocence, and simple virtue” which counters the city, traditionally connected to the idea of “a place of noise, worldliness and ambition” (1973, 1). And always, according to Williams, the pastoral plays a relevant role in the prolongation of this trend.

Similar considerations emerge when one reflects on how a generic definition of ‘nature’ presents similarities with conventional attributes of pastoral imagery, in the sense
of “a land of pristine otherness to human culture”, as Kate Soper establishes (1995, 16). After discussing more figurative uses of ‘nature’ (including “[t]he inherent or essential quality or constitution of a thing”, or “[t]he innate or characteristic disposition of a particular person, animal, etc.”) the OED presents this concept as “[t]he phenomena of the physical world collectively; esp. plants, animals, and other features and products of the earth itself, as opposed to humans and human creations” (“nature”, 2021, emphasis added). In this sense, it can be observed how a dualistic figuration prevails in a general definition of nature and how a sense of opposition between nonhuman and human entities echoes the nature/culture binary that also identifies the pastoral. Only after presenting this first definition, a more pluralistic sense of ‘nature’ is introduced by the OED, which “in a wider sense” sees ‘nature’ as “the whole natural world, including human beings; the cosmos” (“nature”, 2021). And while this last definition is indicated as “[o]bsolete” (nature, 2021), it is interesting to underline that a similar understanding has been increasingly gaining prominence in contemporary scholarship, especially in the field of the Environmental Humanities. Referring to a similar definition as “obsolete”, the OED (unintendedly) signals how the dualistic understandings of nature – along ‘pastoral’ binaries such as country/city, urban/rural, human/nature, nature/culture, and so on – remain rooted in (Western) culture despite the great contribution of ecocriticism and related scholarship in negotiating them during the past few decades.

To stress the relationship between ‘nature’ and ‘pastoral’, I propose that their intertwining can be metaphorically assimilated using the phenomenon of the ‘communicating vessels’: in a set of connected containers, a liquid will distribute itself between the vessels so as to maintain the same level in all of the containers, notwithstanding their shape or volume. Likewise, I argue that the concepts of ‘nature’ and ‘the pastoral’ are connected and that the conceptual, semantic variation of one term corresponds to a modification of the other along the same line. Adopting this image to clarify the dynamics between the two concepts allows for better understanding how the extended critical effort of ecocriticism in re-figuring ‘nature’ in the last few years represents a valid tool for conducting a critical operation in the pastoral in a similar way. This operation, however, does not necessarily mean dismissing the traditional understanding of both ‘nature’ and the pastoral completely. Rather, through the
perspectives offered by current ecocritical scholarship, these terms should be approached more critically, thus being reevaluated and reconceptualized.

To observe how the concept of ‘nature’ has evolved since the establishment of ecocriticism, and for better understanding how to conduct my postanthropocentric and postdualistic reterritorialization of the pastoral, the following paragraphs provide a concise overview of the significant scholarly contributions in rediscussing ‘nature’ since the early stages of ecocriticism. This discussion serves three main purposes: 1) to provide a theoretical scaffolding for the main argument of this study, based on a revisionist (Clark 2011, xiii) stance toward rooted, traditional conceptualizations of the pastoral; 2) to reduce the risk of possible misunderstandings when encountering the word ‘nature’ and correlated terms such as ‘natural’ and ‘natural world’ in the present work, and to avoid contradictions in regard to the postdualistic stance I have advocated; 3) to ensure the focus of this thesis remains the idea of human-nonhuman connectedness, which also represents the leading concept in my reterritorializing.

Reconceptualizing ‘nature’ in ecocritical terms: an essential evolution of the concept

Outlining an all-encompassing investigation of the conceptual transformations that ‘nature’ has undergone, from the notion of physis as determined by pre-Socratic Greeks until the most recent discussions on human-nonhuman enmeshment – albeit undoubtedly fascinating – far exceeds the purpose of the present thesis. This is a difficulty when venturing into a deep critical investigation of this term that has also been underlined by Raymond Williams, who called ‘nature’ “perhaps the most complex word in the English language” (Williams 1976, 184). However, this effort remains of primal importance for effectively engaging with the argument of this thesis. Therefore, an overview of the evolution that the concept of nature has undergone will be enacted by examining selected some works, which are also beneficial for providing a useful framework for guiding my reconceptualization of the pastoral.

Attention to the implications expressed by the different ways of understanding the term ‘nature’ has been pivotal since the dawn of ecocriticism. This observation has been expressed, for instance, by Michael P. Cohen, who underlines that: “[a]t bottom, ecocriticism needs to import scientific authority in order to combat two positions, 1) that
culture can be a refuge from nature, and 2) that nature is merely a cultural construction” (2004, 18). Cohen’s consideration stresses that ‘nature’, as a term, carries an array of inferences, preconceptions, and conceptual biases which, while providing a limited perspective on the environment, are (still) widely diffused in Western culture. Furthermore, considering that the complexity of the notion of ‘nature’ also relates to the fact that it is “culturally mediated, intersocially and intertextually constructed” (Speek 2000, 162), approaching this concept through a keen critical lens appears fundamental.

In the early phases of ecocriticism, a far-ranging scholarly effort aimed to disclose latent, exclusivist, and discriminatory patterns that the concept of nature conveyed within the domains marked by the human/nature divide. This operation proceeded both by spelling out these latent implications and by proposing possible pluralistic alternatives to them. Bill McKibben is among the first critics to explicitly embrace this perspective by discussing how a (traditional) understanding of ‘nature’ seems incompatible with a real attempt to solve the current environmental crisis. As he explains in his seminal work *The End of Nature* (1989), conventional definitions of nature not only imply, but also constantly reinforce, the sense of separation of humans from the rest of (nonhuman) living beings. While proposing “mankind” is “a part of nature” (McKibben 1989, xx) in contrast to understanding it as being *apart from nature* (Marx 2008, 18), McKibben advocates for a more pluralistic figuration of the term. McKibben also fosters his claims with his reference to a “postnatural world” – a world in which nature ended “both as a discrete biophysical entity and as a meaningful concept” – which serves for emphasizing that the idea of nature as “unaltered by man” is superseded (McKibben 1989, 47). In this way, McKibben has paved the way for developing alternative perspectives on traditional, anthropocentric dichotomies regarding the environment, while suggesting that a critique should also regard the language and conventional classification.

McKibben’s critique towards traditional uses of the notion of nature, and its dualistic implications, resonates with a wider revisionist approach that matured in the same period through the rise of ‘ecosophy’. The expression denotes a wide theoretical approach, which was established in the late 1980s, and which was represented by the almost simultaneous – albeit separate – appearance of the neologism in the works of

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9 For a further discussion on ‘ecosophy’, and for a concise definition of it, see “Ecosofia” in Rozzoni 2021d, 152-153.
philosophers Arne Naess and Félix Guattari in 1989. On an etymological level, the term ‘ecosophy’ is derived through the blending of Greek words *oikos* (‘household’) and *sophia* (‘wisdom’), which expresses “a philosophical world-view or system inspired by the conditions of life in the ecosphere” (Naess 1991, 38). While Naess’ and Guattari’s understandings of the term are independent, this explanation works well for both of their visions since it unites their shared attention on rediscussing key concepts in the study of culture connected to the figuration of the natural world, of which ‘nature’ is a representative case.

Naess’s perspective was fundamental for encouraging the development of a wave of critical thinking aimed at displacing human supremacy over other forms of life and the hierarchical terms recalled by implicit echoes of the Aristotelian *Scala Naturae*, which has been discussed in the previous chapter. The so called ‘Great Chain of Beings’ represents the symbolic structure, from which come all forms of life constructing the hierarchical social and cultural episteme of the Western thought (Ferrando 2019). In relation to this vision, ecosophy seems to suggest, it is only by deconstructing any ontological hierarchies in the figuration of the relationship between humans and nonhumans that a more adequate understanding of the natural world can be developed.

Ecosophy, according to Naess, operates upon the philosophical axioms of Western thought in such a way that it allows us to negotiate rooted and essential assumptions. In this way ecosophy is closely connected to the notion of ‘Deep ecology’: a term which, derives from Naess’s scholarship, and which, as Pepper suggests, refers to a perspective on the environment which “fundamentally rejects the dualistic view of humans and nature as separate and different […] since it] holds that humans are intimately a part of the natural environment” (Pepper 1996, 17, emphasis in original). By refusing anthropocentrism, for the sake of more inclusive paradigms in evaluating the human and nonhuman relationship, ecosophy thus appears as an explicit alternative approach aiming at rethinking traditional domains of knowledge production in Western culture.

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Analogous reflections derive from Felix Guattari’s discussion on ecosophy in his study *The Three Ecologies* (1989). In this work, the philosopher emphasizes the interrelation between material and large-scale phenomena connected to global environmental crises and immaterial mental processes, while affirming that their relationship is fundamental in the formation of human subjectivity. For the scope of the present study, it is particularly interesting to report the following words by Guattari: “now more than ever, nature cannot be separated from culture; in order to comprehend the interactions between eco-systems, the mechanosphere and the social and individual Universe of reference, we must learn to think ‘transversally’” (Guattari, 2000 [1989], 43). This is helpful for clarifying even further how the traditional understanding of nature has evolved in the past few years, and how the pastoral can be understood accordingly: that is, by revising the anthropocentric and dualistic *a priori* assumptions in which both these concepts – ‘nature’ and ‘pastoral’ – are rooted.

While early ecocritics generally adopted a similar revisionist perspective when regarding the concept of ‘nature’ and related issues – thus proposing an alternative understanding of it – more critical, radical positions also started developing, which suggest dismissing traditional vocabulary for its apparently unsurmountable limits when attempting to respond to the current environmental crises. Timothy Morton, for instance, epitomizes this (wide and idiosyncratic) trend in ecocriticism by explaining, in essence, that the term ‘nature’ is not compatible with the sense of environmental awareness that has matured in contemporary times. In his seminal book, *Ecology Without Nature* (2007), Morton, in fact, affirms that ‘nature’ is “a transcendental term in a material mask, [which] stands at the end of a potentially infinite series of other terms that collapse into it […]: fish, grass, mountain air, chimpanzees” (2007, 14). In this way, Morton highlights the limits of this term when it is associated with a single, undefined referent, while underlining that it functions as a collector of an array of different issues. Supported by the idea of ‘dark ecology’, the scholar re-addresses that “irony, ugliness, and horror” should be taken into account when one reflects on ecology (Morton 2010, 16) as a way for re-imagining ‘nature’ alongside the concept of ‘mesh’ – the interconnectedness of living and non-living beings. Hence, Morton offers a counter-narrative to popular ecological perspectives that primarily have a celebratory intent and idealistic visions of
the natural world, aiming to put “hesitation, uncertainty, irony, and thoughtfulness back into ecological thinking” (2010, 16).

In addition, it is relevant here to report how Morton provides a critique of the assets of traditional notions of ‘nature’ with his neologism ‘hyperobject’ (2013a), an expression that identifies concepts of such an extended temporal and spatial dimension that they become unable to produce actual meaning. Specifically, in regard to ‘nature’, Morton observes how “wherever we look for it, we find all kinds of objects – biomes, ecosystems, hedges, gutters and human flesh. In a similar sense, there is no such thing as Nature. I’ve seen penguins, plutonium, pollution and pollen. But I’ve never seen Nature (I capitalize the word to reinforce a sense of its deceptive artificiality)” (2013b, n.p, emphasis in original). Through this consideration, Morton suggests that discussing ‘nature’ as an hyperobject brings attention to the necessity of coming to terms with the many referents to which it connects while determining a more attentive re-conceptualization of which resonates with current ecocritical epistemology.

Another scholar who provided a valuable contribution to this debate is Bruno Latour: when discussing the term ‘nature’, Latour underlines how the term often paralyses the development of effective political ecology. For Latour, in fact, “nature is not ‘wilderness’ nor the outside, nor the harmonious providential balance, nor any sort of cybernetic machine, nor the opposite of artificial or technical” (Latour 2015, 221). In this regard, as Latour suggests, “it would be much more expedient to forget entirely the word ‘nature’ or the use it in William James’s definition: ‘nature is but a name for excess’” (Latour 2015, 221). According to Latour, the apparent impossibility of overcoming the conceptual biases embedded in the concept of nature, derived from dichotomic thinking, represents a signal for the necessity to abandon the very use of the term as a strategy for enacting an ethical response to the environmental challenges of our times. This idea is also supported by other scholars, like Gianfranco Marrone, who, in Addio alla Natura (Farwell to Nature, 2011) affirms that to “distance oneself from Nature is the best way to save the environment, our lives, and the future” and that “by getting rid of it, calmness will return in order to give authenticity back to our human and social experience.”

However, considering the premise of this current thesis, in which I stress the affirmative stance that I intend to pursue, the idea of dismissing the traditional dualistic

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11 My translation from Italian.
and anthropocentric assumptions of the notion of ‘nature’ does not mean dismissing the use term ‘nature’ completely. Whereas several scholars have suggested this radical solution, I argue that establishing a postdualistic and postanthropocentric vision of nature represents a proactive alternative. This method, I suggest, succeeds in challenging the traditional dualistic implications that are embedded in the notion of ‘nature’, while also contributing to fostering the idea of interconnectedness among living beings that ecocritical epistemology attributes to the concept. Therefore, in alignment with what Jonathan Bate observes in his ecocritical re-reading of Romantic poetry, I believe that “‘Nature’ is a term that needs to be contested, not rejected” (1991, 56). Adopting a similar perspective for reconceptualizing the pastoral allows one to put in practice the core of the revisionist perspective characterizing the ecocritical modus operandi, in the sense established by Timothy Clark when underlying the progressive stance in the movement’s “revisionist challenge to given modes of thought and practices” (2011, xiii).

A final useful contribution that regards the reconceptualization of the notion of nature in contemporary scholarship is Donna Haraway’s notion of ‘natureculture’. Grounding her observation on the necessity to negotiate the nature/culture dichotomy rooted in Western culture, Haraway proposes this thought-provoking blending, which has majorly impacted many approaches in the Environmental Humanities. Through ‘natureculture’, Haraway makes explicit that what is commonly identified as ‘natural’ is, in fact, determined by culture, here intended to mean a series of historical, material, and political conditions of possibility. Specifically, Haraway observes that “[t]he invention and reinvention of nature […] represents perhaps the most central arena of hopes, oppression, and contestation for inhabitants of the planet earth in our times” (1991, 1). Hence, Haraway’s notion encourages scholars to embark on a critical discussion of traditional, dualistic approaches such as ‘nature’ vs. ‘culture’, while stressing the importance of exploring the hybridity offered by their liminality. This consideration appears as a valid tool for addressing the limits of the Cartesian legacy that traditional understandings of the notion of nature entail: by offering a conceptual alternative to this legacy, and by defying the often-unconscious way in which nature is perpetuated in culture, Haraway’s approach represents an effective example of how a paradigmatic shift from binary thinking to a more pluralistic viewpoint can be realized.
As this sub-chapter has demonstrated, especially in the past few decades and particularly since the rise of ecocriticism, increasing scholarly attention has been dedicated to questioning the *deep*, dualistic, and anthropocentric philosophical axioms that characterised the traditional figuration of ‘nature’ in order to rediscuss them in a more pluralistic sense. However, this procedure is still not as well-established for what concerns the many concepts associated with ‘nature’, starting from the pastoral. I therefore intend to propose a reconceptualization of the pastoral, by drawing from the critical perspectives discussed. Before delving into this operation, it is beneficial to clarify how the traditional understanding of the pastoral is rooted in dualisms, which appear as another missing link in the scholarship on the pastoral.

### 2.2 (Re)Current Binaries in Pastoral Literary Criticism

As discussed in the previous paragraphs, decentring the human in the understanding of the concept of ‘nature’ represents a fundamental ethico-onto-epistemological operation (Barad 2007) in light of the urgencies of our time. Yet it remains an undoubtedly challenging task considering the rootedness of dichotomic figurations of the environment in (Western) culture. Likewise, the idea of defying the anthropocentric and dualistic assumptions embedded in the concept of ‘pastoral’ is a compelling effort in need of an equally adequate methodology if it is to be achieved. The logic of deterritorialization becomes crucial again as a “breaking of habits” when considering the pastoral – due to the fact that this methodology facilitates challenging prolonged dualistic and discriminatory biases by “forming new habits” (Smith and Protevi 2020, par. 9). Similarly, *deterritorialization* here becomes a useful tool for enacting a reconceptualization (and *reterritorialization*, in Deleuze and Guattari’s sense) of the pastoral. The usefulness of addressing to deconstructivism for pursing a reconfiguration of the pastoral seems to be confirmed by the way the pastoral has been discussed as possessing a “constructive power” (Buell 1995, 32, emphasis added) as well as capacity to “remythify the natural environment” along ever-renewing, idiosyncratic and sometimes even contradictory perspectives, including “activat[ing] green consciousness” and “euphemiz[ing] land appropriation” (Buell 1995, 31). Following Buell’s words, therefore, engaging critically with the (conceptual) legacy of the pastoral, and its processes of building certain figuration of the environment, represents an opportunity for
“ecocritical interpreter[s)” (1995, 32) to highlight long-standing, latent ideological trends in the evolution of the pastoral.

This operation will proceed in the following paragraphs by delineating an essential cartography\(^\text{12}\) on some key (still) influential texts in literary pastoral theory, which present evidence of how the pastoral has travelled along dualisms throughout history. Scanning the long-standing and diversified evolution of the pastoral in literary theory is an(other) challenging effort that cannot be achieved within the limits of this thesis; narrowing down the scope of my cartography, both in reference to the time span and the number of critical works involved, is therefore fundamental. Keeping this aspect in mind, the following paragraphs will outline the essential, representative stepping-stones for tracking the \((re)current\) binaries in the conceptualization of the pastoral through a diachronic perspective.

**A Cartography of Pastoral Criticism**

From a temporal viewpoint, one can reflect on how the history of pastoral criticism overlaps with the history of pastoral poetry. Early forms of theoretical discussion on this poetic genre and mode are, in fact, already visible in ancient times, particularly following Virgil’s *Eclogues* (c. 41-39 BC). The pastoral was, for instance, mentioned in Horace’s *Ars Poetica* (Art of Poetry) (c. 19 BC), one of the most influential critical work of antiquity: while expanding Aristotle’s argument in his *Poetics* (c. 335 BC), in which he Greek author discussed literary genres and their internal functions, Horace’s inclusion of the pastoral among other genres – such as lyric, satire, epigram, and elegy – is representative of the growing relevance of this literary phenomenon in the ancient Latin world. This success is unsurprising considering that the pastoral had already found fertile soil in Ancient Greek culture, both due to Theocritus’s *Idylls* and the works of poets like

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\(^{12}\) Ilaria Santoemma discusses ‘Cartography’ as the privileged analytical tool of posthumanism not only because it “allows one to wear ever-new lenses for a critical evaluation of the present”, but also because it “extends its view beyond the perspective of modern rational science, while opening multilevel horizons which allows one to take into account the complexity of a posthumanist world”. Moreover, cartography is a “transdisciplinary methodology of posthumanism: it allows one to transport and erode rigid schematisms which divided hard and humanistic sciences, while hybridizing arts, sciences – as well as virtual, ethic-political, and philosophical perspectives in its own mapping” (See Santoemma 2021, 96-97. My translation from Italian).
Bion and Moschus. During antiquity, the pastoral also started developing some traits that would later become apparent as the conventions of this genre, including the notion of locus amoenus (Geymonat 2005, xii-xiii). In his commentary on Virgil’s Aeneid, Servius already refers to conventional pastoral ideals by reflecting on the peculiar environmental representation of Virgil, considering, for instance, his reference to the imagery of a green area full of pleasures, conceived of as primarily favouring the experiences of love rather than being seen as an agricultural location for sustenance (VI 638).

A more systematic, critical focus on the locus amoenus develops during the Middle Ages, and can be found in the work by Spanish scholar and cleric Isidore of Seville (560–636). In his Etymologiae or Originum sive etymologiarum libri XX (c. 636), he discusses this natural, fictional location through an analysis of Latin author Marcus Terentius Varro, who adopts the expression locus amoenus in order to describe “pleasant places [which…] promote love only and draw to themselves things that ought to be loved” and which do not contain anything like business, for in them “no profit is rendered” (Isidore 2006, 299). It is interesting to reflect on how these critical assumptions resonate with the environmental imagination evoked in the rural representation of the already cited pastoral ‘otium/negotium’ dualism, as well as with modern ideas of the pastoral locus amoenus. Today, this location is in fact observed as “an idealized landscape with three fundamental ingredients: trees, grass and water” (Ruff 2015, 92), or which typically contains “trees and shade, a grassy meadow, running water, song-bird[s], and cool breezes” (Spawforth et al. 2012, 854). Therefore, one can consider how, since antiquity through the work of Aristotele and Horace, not only are critical perspectives of the pastoral visible, especially in regard to the strategies of the representation of the environment in literary texts, but also that these perspectives are predominantly dualistic.

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13 Bion of Smyrna (c. 100 BC) presents pastoral characters in the remaining fragments of his Epitaph of Adonis and the Lament of Aphrodite, while Moschus (c. 150 BC) presents pastoral evidence in the remaining fragments of The Lament for Bion. Bion and Moschus, together with Theocritus, are considered the most representative authors of Greek bucolic poetry – also known as pastoral – which had a major role in the development of the pastoral in Latin time, starting from Virgil’s recuperation of Ancient Greek bucolic tradition. For a further discussion on this topic, see Holden 1974.

14 See Servius’s commentary on Virgil’s Aeneid, which includes the following expression: “Loca solius voluptatis plena... unde nullus fructus exsolvitur”, or, “amoena virecta autem quae solum amorem praestant.” (My translation from Latin: “A place only full of pleasure...from which one cannot get fruit; ...grassy, pleasing places which favours only the development of love”). (See Cataudella and Bianchetti 2001, 847).
also due to the establishment of the pastoral. By determining what the *locus amoenus* is (not an area for business, but primarily for pleasure), Varro fosters the association of the pastoral landscape with a dualistic figuration of the countryside, which was already discussed in regard to the dualistic implications of the practice of *villeggiatura*. In this sense, it is evident how, also in antiquity, certain values are associated with the natural world, such as relaxation, pleasure, and tranquility, while opposite values are involved with the figuration of the urban realm.

A similar narrative did not solely characterize proto-understandings of the pastoral in the ancient world, but it progressed also during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance – the Golden Age of the pastoral literary production due to the rediscovery of Virgil and the Classics, and the emulations of their stylistic features all over Europe. During the Renaissance, a prolific production of pastoral theory began flourishing, which laid the foundation for critical activity in later periods. Considering the rapid evolution of the pastoral as a literary and cultural phenomenon since the fourteenth century in different European countries, the diversified origins of the critical works which I will cite in the following paragraphs should not be seen as surprising. In fact, even though my focus remains on British literature and culture, providing a critical study on pastoral criticism cannot be limited to one sole cultural context: the pastoral remains a transnational and transcultural phenomenon. In spite of this diversification, however, it can be observed that critical discussions on the pastoral occurred along some common axes and trajectories throughout Europe. This idea is also suggested, among others, by James E. Congleton, who, in his work, *Theories of Pastoral Poetry in England, 1684-1798* (1952), highlights some core developments in the evolution of the pastoral, which allow

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15 Virgil’s *Eclogues* had a major impact on the development of pastoral poetry in Europe during the Renaissance, starting from Italian authors Dante, Petrarch, and Giovanni Boccaccio, who recuperated Virgil’s work in their literary pastoral production in thirteenth-century Italy. The development of pastoral romance novels in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe (as is the case of the work by authors like Jacopo Sannazzaro and Miguel de Cervantes) and the development of the pastoral drama (as is the case of works by Torquato Tasso and Battista Guarini) corroborated the relevance of the pastoral in the European Renaissance landscape. For what concerns the British milieu, the sixteenth century saw the development of the pastoral due an array of authors starting from Edmund Spenser’s *Shepheardes Calender* in 1579, and Philip Sidney’s *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* (1593). Pastoral subjects can be also observed in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* (1623) and in the works of an array of later poets. For a further discussion on the development of the pastoral in the context of the British Renaissance, see Chaudhuri 2018.

16 Congleton’s study has served as a fundamental source for this chapter, considering both the scarcity of recent studies on the evolution of pastoral criticism in the period under examination, and the wide, grounded, and extensive discussion offered in the book. I am indebted to the work of Congleton for my cartography on the pastoral, as my multiple references to his study testify. Yet, despite referring to his work
for combining and discussing together works of different authors, from different times and origin. In regard to this, Congleton affirms:

Petrarch, Boccaccio, Sebillet, Vives, Barclay, Spenser, and the other humanists, thinking that the primary function of the pastoral is to deal with ecclesiastical and political matters, vitiated their pastoral with allegory. Vida, Scaliger, Rapin, Chetwood, Walsh, and Pope developed the neoclassic pastoral, which oftentimes is hardly more than an imitation of the ancient pastoral, especially Virgil’s eclogues. Fontanelle, under the influence of the Cartesian rationalism of his time, refuted the neoclassicists and argued that the sole purpose of pastoral poetry is to satisfy the active man’s innate longing for love and indolence, while – on the other hand – Dr. Johnson, under the influence of a more empirical rationalism, demanded that the tests of ‘truth’ and ‘nature’ be applied to the pastoral (Congleton 1952, 6).

On the one hand, Congleton’s words are useful for reflecting on the intricacy and the ever-changing dynamics of the pastoral. On the other hand, however, Congleton’s observation underlines that its complexity does not prevent one from determining wider all-encompassing considerations: in this sense, the following paragraphs will delineate dualistic trajectories in the evolution of the concept since the seventeenth century.

As said, English pastoral criticism before the Restoration is fragmentary primarily because pastoral critical production primarily appeared in short commentaries to different works, including prefaces and dedications to treatises on the art of poetry. While in the Middle Ages the pastoral was generally discussed as “preponderantly allegorical” (Congleton 1952, 298), after the re-discovery of the antiquities in the Renaissance, debates on the topic started developing along a twofold vision, epitomized by the contrasting critical positions of French critics René Rapin (1621 – 1687) and Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657 – 1757).

Thanks to the relevance of his Dissertatio de Carmina Pastorali (1659), Rapin can be considered a representative advocate of so-called “Neo-classical theory” in the study of pastoral poetry. According to his perspective, the Ancients, particularly Virgil and Horace, are conceived of as the ultimate authorities for both the production and the critical study of literature. Rapin argues that Classical Latin and Greek poetry should be

several times, I include original aspects in my discussion by adopting my critical (postdualistic and postanthropocentric) lens to examine his argument, thus providing comments and readapting references to Congleton’s work for the sake of my cartography.
regarded by his contemporaries as the primary source for writing pastoral poetry, which, therefore, should represent an imitation of the life of shepherds in Virgil’s Arcadia (Congleton 1952, 300). In this regard, the pastoral is intended by Rapin as “a product of the Golden Age” that should “show the most innocent manners of the most ancient Simplicity” (Rapin 1674, 52, cited in Congleton 1952, 301). Beyond these aspects, what is more interesting for the sake of my cartographic discussion is the fact that Rapin stresses that pastoral poems should reflect “the simplicity and innocence of the Golden Age” (Congleton 1952, 301) both in terms of imagery (e.g., sentimental issues, life in the countryside) and language (favouring simple formulations). This consideration reveals a reliance on the already mentioned dualism rural/urban in relation to which the pastoral is often discussed. Rapin’s version of the pastoral, in fact, appears to be connected to the attribution of certain features to the rural, which counter those (generally) characterizing the urban, just like Raymond Williams observed in his seminal The Country and the City (1973). This clarification makes it evident how the popular pastoral country/city dichotomy is already significant in the eye of Renaissance critics. Furthermore, considering that, as Congleton affirmed, “[n]o other critic so greatly influenced the theory of pastoral poetry in England as Rapin”, (Congleton 1952, 53) it is no surprise that this dualistic dynamic endured during the following centuries – as my discussion on the evolution of pastoral criticism aims to make explicit.

Fontanelle’s rationalistic critical production, despite being considered by Congleton as opposing the neo-classical visions proposed by Rapin, provides an analogous discussion. In his Discours sur la nature de l’églogue (1688) and Of Pastorals (1965), Fontanelle approaches the pastoral following the logic of “the Natural Light of Reason” (Fontanelle 1695, 295, cited in Congleton 1952, 302) by which he claimed that poems should contain certain ‘objective’ standards (e.g., images, stylistic features), rather than appearing as simple imitation of literary works from antiquity, in order to be appreciated critically. However, when approaching Fontanelle’s work critically, there emerges a certain emphasis on how the pastoral is for him still a partial representation of rural life: while the pastoral is discussed as referring to “a quiet life, with no other business but Love” (Fontanelle 1695, 283, cited in Congleton 1952, 302) it becomes clear how the classical otium/negotium trope is still present in Fontanelle’s vision, thus revealing its dichotomic essence in the figuration of the environment. Hence, aspects of commonality
can still be determined in the alleged opposite visions on the pastoral offered by the two French critics. While Rapin’s and Fontanelle’s “essays became the primary sources of the two opposing schools which reflected an interest in the revived pastoral near the turn of the century” (Congleton 1952, 71), one should also consider them as valuable sources for exploring their shared corroboration of a dualistic approach to the pastoral, even though this consideration has remained disregarded by critics.

During the seventeenth century, a critical discussion echoing the Rapin-Fontanelle dispute in the previous century emerged in the context of English literary criticism in reference to the contrast between neo-classicists and empiricists in the evaluation of the pastoral. Traces of this debate are visible in Knighty Chetwood’s (1650-1720) preface to John Dryden’s influential translation of *The Works of Virgil* (1679). In this text, Chetwood provides a critique of Fontanelle by accusing him of betraying the authority of the ancients in his evaluation of the pastoral. In fact, according to Chetwood – who embraces a neo-classical perspective – the French writer “ignores the Ancients completely and develops his theory on premises that are subjective and psychological,” resting on the idea that pastoral poetry should give a picture of tranquillity and quietness (Congleton 1952, 70). In other words, by overcoming Rapin’s objective approach Fontanelle allegedly initiated a more individual and subjective standard in understanding the pastoral. Beyond the parochialist postulations of a similar observation, what is interesting to underline here is the fact that, just like the Rapin and Fontanelle’s dispute survived in the following decades, the dualistic core embedded in the pastoral, which emerges in both their visions, also extended into the following centuries. Evidence of this prolongation, in fact, clearly emerges from Raymond Williams’s discussion on the English literary phenomenon of the country house poems – a trend in seventeenth century poetry that comprises poems with celebratory intent in regard to wealthy patrons or friends through the idealized description of their rural estates. In *The Country and the City* (1973), Williams’s analysis establishes how in country house poetry a dichotomic understanding of spatiality is visible, which contributed to idealizing the image of landed gentry while distracting readers from reflecting on the social injustice occurring toward the peasants working there. Hence, further evidence of dualistic figurations of the pastoral can be acknowledged in the pastoral poetry production of the seventeenth century, an
observation that supports the idea that a similar conceptual bias was characteristic of the period under examination.

From the early eighteenth century, Alexander Pope’s (1688 – 1744) *A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry* (1704), represents a relevant study for observing the endurance of a dichotomic conceptualization of the pastoral in literature. This aspect can be observed in Pope’s identification of the pastoral as “an imitation of the action of a shepherd,” or as “an image of what they [Greek and Latin authors] call the Golden age” offering “some Knowledge of rural affairs” (Pope 1871, 4-5, cited in Congleton 1965, 81-82): from these works the pastoral emerge in relation to the fact of dwelling in quietness and in tranquillity in the countryside – a vision that, again, recalls evaluations of the *otium/negotium* binary already discussed. Other works by Pope seem to be connected to a similar assumption, starting from his “Essay on Man” (1734), in which the author stresses an ontological separation between human beings from the rest of the natural world.

This trend continues in the so-called English rationalistic school, of which Samuel J. Johnson’s (1709 - 1784) work *The True Principles of Pastoral Poetry* (1750) represents an interesting text in the context of the present cartography. In this essay, Dr. Johnson explains how pastoral poets should not be “confined to the images of the golden age” (Johnson 1857 [1750a], n.p., Cited in Congleton 1952, 306), and, therefore, to a mere static replica of past imaginary location or “objective standards derived from classical authority” (Congleton 1952, 310). Contrarily, Dr. Johnson’s idea of the pastoral develops relying on subjective criteria involving rationalistic process. In addition to this observation, his attempted definition of the pastoral provides further information stressing a dualistic assumption: Dr. Johnson determines the pastoral in reference to “poem[s] in which any action or passion is represented by its effects upon a Country life” (Johnson 1857 [1750b], n.p., cited in Congleton 1952, 307). Even through these few words one can reflect on how Dr. Johnson identifies the pastoral in the depiction of rural locations according to certain features, which identifies it in opposition to other (urban) spaces. Hence, the fact that issues of separateness emerge from one of the most defining texts of English pastoral theory in the eighteenth century testifies, once again, to the rootedness of dualistic figurations in the Western conventional understanding of the phenomenon.

A first, albeit feeble, challenge of this trend appears during the late eighteenth-century with the pre-Romantic tendency to “look on nature with heightened emotion;
endow primitive life with benevolence and dignity; and assign more weight to sentiment and feeling” (Congleton 1952, 115). This increasing sensibility towards the environment, compared to previous epochs, became manifest through artists’ increasing attention to issues of relationality between human beings and their surroundings. It did not take long for this transformation to affect the evaluation of the pastoral, which, in this sense, became apparent as a site for exploring a growing sense of human-nonhuman connectedness. Reference to this process is visible, for instance, in Stuart Curran’s discussion of “[a]ll the major Romantic poets who approach pastoral either in terms of specific generic conventions or even as a mode tend to internalize it, making it a psychological perspective or conceptual arena” (1989, 211). This consideration suggests that, despite the innovative (pre-)Romantic focus on the relationality between humans and nonhumans, there remain traces of anthropocentrism in the these (pre-)Romantic manifestations of the pastoral – as a human-centred perspective prevailed. Congleton proposes a similar consideration by stressing how “Rousseau, Gessner, Blair, Aikin, Wordsworth, and other Romanticists believed that pastoral poetry is of value largely because it portrays the primitivistic lives of its subjects and describes the beauty of external nature” (1952, 6). Reflecting on these words critically, therefore, the image of the natural world as an entity that is (still) forcibly separated from humans thus emerges as a signal of the extension of dualistic evaluations of the pastoral in (pre-)Romantic literary criticism.

In the past few decades, however, this assessment has started to become increasingly challenged due to the contribution of several ecocritics who approached the study of the Romantics through a more environmentally oriented perspective. The work of Jonathan Bate is representative of this trend: his re-discussion of Wordsworth as a nature poet (cf. Bate 1991) – in response to the neo-Marxist readings that dominated his critical undertaking until that moment – highlights the poet’s attentiveness toward the idea of humans being integrated in the natural world. The relevance of Bate’s study in scholarship on the Romantics is such that this approach initiated a new ecocritical trend in the study of Romantic texts in the early 1990s. Among the most epitomizing traits of this critical trajectory is the evidence that a Romantic representation of the natural world does not simply resonate with the idea of expressing a sense of wonder and celebration toward the environment. Bate has made evident that (some) Romantics were aware of the complex set of relationships between humans and nonhumans. Specifically, according to
Bate, in response to the rooted idea that “man’s presumption of his own apartness from nature is the prime cause of the environmental degradation of the earth” (Bate 2000, 36), Wordsworth and other Romantics should be regarded as being capable of informing readers of the sense of connectedness that affects humans and the natural world. Considering how Wordsworth’s pastoral poems also produce this effect, Bate’s critical work becomes useful for demonstrating the presence of latent narratives in the interpretations of old, traditional, pastoral poems, which have therefore become useful for defying solely dualistic understandings of the phenomenon.

While Bate’s ecocritical insights on the Romantics remain a modern perspective about a past period, one should keep in mind that dualistic (and anthropocentric) figurations of the pastoral prolonged during eighteenth-century literary criticism. An example of this trend involves the influential essay on the pastoral in (European) Romanticism by Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), titled On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry [Über naïve und sentimentalisiche Dichtung] (1795). Overall, the philosopher’s argument is based on the idea that the evolution of poetry mirrors the development of a human being, thus moving from childhood to maturity. According to Schiller, just like childhood can be conceived of as a pure natural state of life facing gradual corruption during one’s progress to maturity, poetry evolves accordingly. Based on this assumption, Schiller proposes a dichotomy in the organization of works of art: by “relating the character of the artist’s product to his [or her] attitude of mind – his Empfindungsweise” Schiller divides all art – past, present, and future – into two basic genres, the Naïve and the Sentimental (Marley 1956, 237). The first term, naïve, identifies a kind of poetry in which there is an overlap between the ideal of representation (Vorstellung) and the perception (Empfindungen) connected to the real, material world. As Tilottama Rajan summarizes, ‘naïve’, in Schiller’s view, is the expression of the works of a poet “who is united with his world and art” (2000, 232). This category pertains, for instance, to the works of ancient poets who, as Schiller believes, possessed a more direct perception of the natural world. In fact, as G. A. Wells explains, Schiller was struck by the fact that, “in ancient Greek literature up to the time of Sophocles nature is depicted without any comparable enthusiasm” (1966 491), which is different from what characterized the description of nature during his time, when, in fact, a sense of wonder prevailed. As Wells clarifies, “Homeric characters do not feel that nature is beautiful, sublime or inspiring”; this aspect
only occurred when “Greeks lived mainly in cities [, when] nature lost its terrors, and they could pay more attention to its beauties” (1966, 491).

Oppositely, ‘sentimental’ poetry is the result of “the inevitably increasing complexity of human existence [which] has prevented the poet from attaining a state of rational-sensuous harmony” and which leads a poet to “express Nature only in the form of an ideal, an aspiration, an abstraction distinct from actual reality” (Marleyn 1956, 237). Sentimental poetry thus appears as the expression of a sense of longing for an idealistic representation of the environment which cannot occur in real life. This categorization applies, for example, to a poet “who is estranged from nature and seeks ‘idea and object’ which have ‘disappear[ed] from human life as experience’” (Rajan 2000, 232). The pastoral, according to Schiller, is to be associated with sentimental poetry since, in his view, it regards the representation of a state of nature that has been lost in reality – a harmonic coexistence with the natural world that civilization has made impossible to perceive. Through the pastoral, therefore, the representation of the environment is seen as depicting a now-lost primordial condition with which the poet wishes to reconnect. From these considerations, it is therefore evident how conventional pastoral notions such as ‘return’ and ‘retreat’ are crucial in Schiller’s vision: they are indicative of the idea that there is a conceptual distance between an idealized past within which the idea of a pristine natural world prevails, and the assumption of a present made problematic by the rise of civilization. Based on the awareness that Schiller’s essay “constitutes the intellectual foundation for all modern approaches of pastoral” (Halperin 1983, 43), it is easy to imagine how a dualistic pattern in the understanding of the pastoral also regards its understanding in nineteenth century European Romanticism and beyond. These two notions – ‘return’ and ‘retreat’ – in fact, predominate in a number of modern works of pastoral criticism, from Sales’s pastoral Rs – Refuge, Reflection, Return, Requiem, and Reconstruction (Sales 1983, 17) – to Gifford’s discussion of the pastoral (1999).17

At the turn of the twentieth century, therefore, it should be no surprise that a dichotomistic understanding of the pastoral is still visible. In the 1906 treaty Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama by Walter Wilson Greg, for instance, emphasis is placed on the

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17 Terry Gifford’s seminal work on the pastoral (1999) highlights the importance of two pastoral r-concepts – ‘retreat’ and ‘return’. Gifford acknowledges them as the “fundamental pastoral movement, either within the text, or in the sense that the pastoral retreat ‘returned’ some insights relevant to the urban audience” (Gifford 1999, 2).
notion of nostalgia when discussing the pastoral, which illustrates how it regards the representation of a state of the natural world which is no longer available in the present, and for which human beings long. In the first few decades of the twentieth century, eminent – and still influential – scholar William Empson appears to develop a similar vision in spite of the originality of his perspective in Some Versions of Pastoral (1935). His famous discussion on how “the pastoral process” consists of “putting the complex into the simple” (Empson 1995 [1935], 23) has been affirmed by Louis A. Montrose to “ha[ve] given sinews to the modern study of pastoral” (1983, 417). The pastoral, according to Empson, does not apply only to poems depicting shepherds’ lives, but can also be discussed in the case of different literary scenarios, including Lewis Carroll’s novel Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865). In this sense, as Erbacher et al. explain, “Empson, develops an understanding of proletarian literature as pastoral in the sense of ‘folk-literature, written ‘by the people, for the people, and about the people’”” (2015, 14-15). Consequently, for Empson, the pastoral becomes a broad conception connected to proletarian literature that is “not dependent on a system of class exploitation” (1960 [1935], 2), which testifies to the fact that, at the turn of the twentieth century, the pastoral embraces original and innovative perspectives compared to previous studies on it. However, even Empson does not escape the dynamic of binary thinking in spite of his innovative outlook on the phenomenon: dualistic figurations are still visible, for instance, in his insistence on the idea that the pastoral uses allegories, which relate to characters of opposite features such as old and young shepherds interacting, or the idea that “the pastoral has a unifying social force […] of bridging differences and reconciling social classes” (Alpers 1978, 101, emphasis added).

Toward the middle of the twentieth century, issues of separateness and the reliance on traditional dualisms in the understanding of the phenomena are also evident. An example of this trend can be found in Frank Kermode’s English Pastoral Poetry. From the Beginnings to Marvell (1952), in which the author adopts a retrospective glance in order to evaluate the development of the pastoral in English literature through a primarily sociological perspective. While engaging with a more culturally oriented analytical lens compared to past studies on the pastoral, this influential work still maintains the idea that the pastoral emphasizes the opposition between the rustic and the urban, specifically, by fostering the assumption of “the social aspect of the great Art-Nature antithesis which is
philosophically the basis of pastoral literature” (Kermode 1952, 37). Therefore, dualisms such as the country/the city are also apparent in these ‘modern’ pastoral figurations. Another piece of evidence of this tendency during the 1950s appears in Renato Poggioli’s study. Whereas on the one hand the scholar’s adoption of a psychological and psychoanalytical perspective on pastoral was saluted as an innovative contribution to pastoral criticism, on the other hand, when evaluating the core issues of his version of pastoral, dualistic outlooks nevertheless resurface. This is visible, for instance, in Poggioli’s reliance on the notion of “retreat”, which allows him to address the pastoral as the representation of an idealized world. A similar effect resonates in the way Poggioli acknowledges “the psychological root of the pastoral [as] a double longing after innocence and happiness, to be recovered not through conversion or regeneration, but merely through a retreat” (Poggioli 1975, 1, emphasis added).

Dualistic strands are also characteristic in the conceptualization of the pastoral throughout the second half of the twentieth century, a period of which Peter Marinelli’s Pastoral (1971) remains a representative work. In it, Marinelli underlines, again, the idea of “return” as essential for determining pastoral alongside the idea of homecoming. As he affirms:

a central and unchanging core of meaning in the pastoral convention itself [is visible] in all of the examples enumerated by Gregg [where] the theme of return is sounded again and again: return to nature, to the primitive simplicity of the Church, to primitive freedom from passion, to primitive enjoyment of passion, to primitive modes of feeling and thinking (Marinelli 1971, 13).

Or, among other examples, one can consider Charles W. Hieatt’s observation that nostalgia is a highly representative concept for the pastoral, which, therefore, appears as “the universal symptom of the pastoralist” (Hieatt 1972, 2): the contrast between the idea of an (often) idealized past and the challenges of the present resonates with the dualistic essence of the pastoral already discussed.

However, the 1970s represents the turning point for the evolution of the pastoral, in tandem with the growth of environmentalist movements, which inspired the maturation of more critical perspectives on the pastoral in alignment with discussions on the relationship between humans and nonhumans. This renovated tendency was destined to
tackle the dualistic implications of the pastoral prevalent until that moment, which proceeded– almost undisturbed – over the past centuries.

The Turning Point of Ecocriticism in the Understanding of the Pastoral

Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) is commonly considered as a fundamental step for the development of the environmental movement in the U.S. during the 1960s and the 1970s. However, the establishment of ecocriticism would not occur until the early 1990s, a time in which related critical readings of the pastoral also appeared among the first (eco)critical considerations, such as in the work of Glen A. Love (1990) and Lawrence Buell (1995). Since a concise overview of the engagement of ecocriticism with the pastoral has already been provided in subchapter 1.2, I will limit myself here to referring to particularly relevant works for the sake of my cartography. Specifically, I will focus on how the development of ecocriticism favoured the challenging of the rooted conceptual dualisms characterizing this topic.

A criticism of pastoral dualisms – albeit not explicit – can in fact, be identified in Terry Gifford’s discussion on the post-pastoral (1999). He describes how this concept reveals a criticism toward dualistic standpoints in the attempt to “[find] a language to outflank those dangers with a vision of accommodated humans, at home in the very world they thought themselves alienated from by their possession of language” (Gifford 1999, 149). Gifford’s words make it evident how the ontological premises brought in by ecocriticism allowed for delineating new possibilities of conceiving the pastoral both in regard to contemporary poetry – as responding to the pressure of current environmental philosophy – and for what concerns revisiting past works with new epistemologies. This is the case, for instance, in Ted Hughes’s *Cave Birds* (1978), which Gifford discusses as an example of post-pastoral poetry since its protagonist is put on trial for having neglected his inner self and for his alienation from the forces of nature in and outside himself (Gifford 1999, 169). By paving the way for a wider array of studies on the pastoral along new perspectives aiming “to achieve a vision of an integrated natural world that includes the human” (1999, 148), Gifford’s post-pastoral enthused several contemporary scholars to embark on an implicit critique of the dualistic legacy in the conceptualization of the pastoral.
Among other scholars, the work of Louise Westling is useful in this sense, for it takes into account the insights offered by recent observations on the theory of evolution, which can be also used for rethinking traditional pastoral domains. If, conventionally, the pastoral setting is regarded as static spatiality imbued with specific (dualistic) values and implications, Westling considers that “[s]een in evolutionary terms, however, pastoral space cannot be understood as separate from ordinary human settings. Instead, it must include all of the earth, with homo sapiens only one among myriads of interrelated and interdependent species of living creatures” (2005, 336). Westling’s approach calls for integrating the achievements of the natural sciences into literary studies, as a way for enacting a more complex, transdisciplinary evaluation of phenomena connected to environmental representations offered by the pastoral. This perspective is useful for acknowledging the necessity of disclosing latent narratives from traditional pastoral works, within the scope of contemporary sensibility, which the legacy of conventional dualisms has made less visible. Among these narratives, for instance, is the idea of the human-nonhuman intertwining, which places emphasis on how animals and animate forces of the planet are addressed or evoked in pastoral poetry.

Another example of new ways of conceptualizing the pastoral is found in Joshua Corey and G. C. Waldrep ‘postmodern pastoral’, published in the anthology *The Arcadia Project: North American Postmodern Pastoral* (2012). In it, Corey and Waldrep focuses on the possibility of rethinking the pastoral as responding to “the fatal gap between our fading sense of paradise and the system – call it late capitalism, call it globalization, call it the limits of ecology themselves” (2012, 2). Corey here discusses the importance of reflecting on (contemporary) pastoral poetic forms in which humanity appears undivided from nature, and which are aware of the discursive and social reality behind idyllic representations. Hence, it becomes evident how recent studies on (contemporary) pastoral poems offer expressions of a mature awareness of the fact that the dualistic legacy of conventional theoretical premises of the pastoral necessitates that it be rediscussed in light of the epistemology offered by ecocriticism.

Along this line is also McSweeney’s discussion on the ‘necropastoral’ (2014): starting from directly addressing the dualistic figuration of ‘nature’ that Western tradition employs and reiterates, McSweeney explains that the notion of necropastoral as a:
political-aesthetic zone in which the fact of mankind’s depredations cannot be separated from an experience of ‘nature’ which is poisoned, mutated, aberrant, spectacular, full of ill effects and affects. The Necropastoral is a non-rational zone, anachronistic, it often looks backwards and does not subscribe to Cartesian coordinates or Enlightenment notions of rationality and linearity, cause and effect” (2014, n.p.).

In this sense, it is visible how the premises of her version of the pastoral are not only subverted in comparison with traditional domains, but that this notion should be expanded and reassessed on the basis of the domains brought in by contemporary ecocritical positions. In fact, according to McSweneey, “the Necropastoral is not an ‘alternative’ version of reality, but it is a place where the farcical and outrageous horrors of Anthropocenic ‘life’ are made visible as Death” (2014, n.p.). In this account, issues such as decay, decomposition, and smells connected to death in poems become central for providing an awareness of dynamics of human-nonhuman connectedness within the domains of ecocritical figurations challenging dualisms.

The notion of ‘dark pastoral’, proposed by Heather I. Sullivan, represents another significant contemporary figuration of the pastoral that highlights, and aims to negotiate, the artifice of traditional, idealistic expressions of the natural world. As Sullivan affirms, ‘dark pastoral’ represents a “tool for describing our imagination, and enactment, often human-environment relationship specifically in the fossil-fueled Anthropocene” (2017, 26). Dark pastoral, therefore, becomes an effective notion for rethinking traditional pastoral domains in a more pluralistic sense. Among the number of neologisms that could have been reported here in order to highlight alternative trends in the evolution of the pastoral, the necropastoral, and the dark pastoral are effective for demonstrating that a dualistic vision is a dominant trait in traditional conceptualizations, and that contemporary ecocritical-inspired approaches wishes to negotiate them. In fact, while these neologisms serve first and foremost for challenging the dichotomic core of the pastoral, they also inform critics of the burden of this legacy: the dualistic binary on which the evolution of the pastoral has been prolonged for centuries.

Although it can be said that every epoch developed its own idea of pastoral, this cartographic journey demonstrated how certain dichotomies – namely country/city, human/nature, nature/culture, rural/urban, and human/nonhuman – have lied at the core
of the concept for centuries. These dichotomies have become a persistent aspect of the pastoral, at least in its manifestation within the domains of literature, in spite of the ever-changing dynamics that this phenomenon has undergone concerning the evolution of styles, discourses, and aesthetics. Hence, the notion of pastoral, just like the notion of ‘nature’ – when regarded in its traditional conceptualization(s) – is not innocent, as post-structural philosophers would argue. The pastoral, instead, is inextricably intertwined with the idea of separateness, which leads to reifying a vitiated perception of the environment as an entity forcibly separated from humans.

From a more attentive look at recent studies in pastoral theory, a new understanding of this phenomenon has come forth, which acknowledges the importance of also discussing issues of connectedness when calling the pastoral into account, particularly in reference to the complex enmeshment of humans with nonhumans in (both past and contemporary) pastoral environmental representations. The notion of connectedness becomes particularly useful as an operative theoretical device on the pastoral because it favors a reconceptualization of it by exceeding the binary thinking typical of traditional modes of knowledge production (Braidotti 2019). Specifically, one can reflect on how current ecocritical epistemology, in dialogue with the postdualistic and postanthropocentric insights of posthumanism, allows for problematizing the idea that “[a]t the root of pastoral is the idea of nature as a stable, enduring counterpoint to the disruptive energy and change of human societies” (Garrard 2012 [2004], 56).

Using these premises as a guiding light for challenging the rooted dichotomies at the core of the pastoral, this concept becomes a site capable of accommodating a number of narratives regarding the relationality between the human and the nonhuman. It is my intention to discuss, in the following paragraphs, how the pastoral can be seen as a locus that allows for exploring modes of interactions between shepherds, sheep, and other animals, but also with the inorganic elements that compose the essence of its landscape representation.

By transcending the tradition of dualisms, this work is therefore able to place attention on the liminality of dualisms that have come forth, which invites readers to inquire about the relationality among the several entities dwelling in the pastoral spatiality presented in pastoral poems. Specifically, in the next paragraph, I discuss how the pastoral can be reterritorialized along similar considerations, thus shifting the focus of the concept
of the pastoral from the idea of a sense of separation of the country and the city, the rural and the urban, the human and the natural world – to the idea that it can be investigated in regard to issues of relationality and connectedness among living and non-living beings represented in a certain pastoral locus.

2.3 Reconceptualizing the Pastoral Negotiating Dualism(s): The Pastoral as Ecosystem

When Donna Haraway suggests that “we need stories (and theories) that are just big enough to gather up the complexities and keep the edges open and greedy for surprising new and old connections” (2016, 101), she invites scholars to go off the beaten track in the investigation of literary and cultural phenomena by considering them from ever-new, non-conventional perspectives. The Environmental Humanities, as discussed, have addressed this urgency by proposing a combinatory and transdisciplinary approach that embraces different viewpoints and fields of study in order to more effectively tackle the intricacies of environmentally related issues. Exposing the pastoral to these visions, therefore, allows scholars to not only dissect its intricacies, but also to determine an updated figuration of it, aligned with current epistemologies. The reconceptualization of the pastoral in light of the achievements of ecocritical and posthuman studies, thus represents my proposal for opening “surprising new and old connections” (Haraway 2016, 101) in the evaluation of a longstanding literary and cultural phenomenon that remains crucial in our time.

As already discussed, my reconceptualization of the pastoral does not intend to produce a new definition, or a new neologism, following the critical trend that developed during the past few years. In reterritorializing the pastoral, instead, I aim to demonstrate that its traditional dualistic domains can be regarded under a different light on the basis of the concerns and challenges introduced by current environmental crises. With an eye to negotiating the traditional Western and dualistic axioms at the core of this phenomenon, which were made evident in the previous subchapter, I suggest that new investigative questions can and should be introduced that focus on the exploration of the liminality of established dualisms in literary pastoral representations. In this way, I show that the pastoral becomes useful for aligning with the necessity of embracing the “responsibility […] for the lively relationalities of becoming of which we are part”, as
Karen Barad observes (Barad 2007, 393) – while aligning with current ecocritical and posthuman epistemology. Hence, this subchapter proposes to redirect the focus in the study of the pastoral to kinds of human-nonhuman relationships which, despite being present in these literary representations, have remained neglected due to the presence of dualistic trajectories.

The premises of this theoretical operation rely on the awareness that, during the last three decades, the growing (eco)critical perspective on the pastoral has favoured the emergence of new ethical questions in its regard, which focus on how it can inform readers about the relationship between human beings and their surroundings. Consequently, as has been widely discussed, this deep revisionist (Clark 2011, xiii) stance developed in recent pastoral theory has begun questioning the dualistic ontology that traditional pastoral entails. The dualistic pastoral axioms, therefore, have started appearing more permeable and porous. Consequently, hand in hand with the growing scholarly critique of the limits of binary thinking in the Humanities (Braidotti 2019), the dualistic essence of the pastoral has begun to erode, favoring the emergence of virtually infinite possible re-figurations of it. But while increasing critical attention has been dedicated to these new understandings of the pastoral in contemporary literature, such as the necropastoral (McSweeney 2014) or the astropastoral (Tabas 2021),18 here I intend to consider new ways of approaching the pastoral in past poems, which, therefore, do not present direct references to current environmental concerns and conceptual framework of ecocriticism.

As widely discussed in the field of posthuman studies, the adoption of a post-dualistic approach is helpful for highlighting the symbiosis that dichotomies entail (Ferrando 2019, 54), which favors the emergence of new narratives in the liminality of the binary couples, allowing us to see a connection between apparently opposite concepts. Hence, through this lens, new issues can be derived from the three dominant pastoral dichotomies already presented in subchapter 2.2 – human/nonhuman, country/city, and rural/urban. Specifically, one can argue that while these dichotomies apparently represent

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18 See Brad Tabas’ discussion on the ‘astropastoral’, a pastoral neologism relating to the idea that “in the future, what is now a barren corner of space might become a garden world. It refers to the astropastoralist ideology, which argues that we can and should terraform alien places into garden worlds.” It is visible in science fiction novels, including Robert A. Heinlein’s Farmer in the Sky (1950) and Kim Stanley Robinson’s Green Mars (1993). For a further discussion on this topic, see Tabas 2021, 194.
an *a priori* condition for the pastoral: the two terms composing them cannot solely be discussed in terms of opposition, but also in terms of ‘agreement’, ‘consensus’, and ‘alliance’. In other words, abandoning the idea that the human/nonhuman *separateness* — evoked by the reiteration of labels such as ‘nostalgia’, ‘refuge’, and ‘retreat’ — is the sole, representative characteristic of the pastoral when adopting a posthuman-ecocritical stance, I invite other scholars to think of the pastoral along the idea of *connectedness*, thus inquiring how the terms of this dichotomic opposition dialogue with each other. Therefore, I suggest that, when considering the pastoral, the discussion of the country in opposition to the city leaves space for reflections in which the pastoral locations can be observed as a spatiality per se, to inspire a discussion on the relationality between the human and nonhuman entities that inhabit it.

In order to better understand this vision, a reflection on the limits of conceiving the pastoral as a landscape is beneficial. In her popular account of the effects of capitalism on the environment, Anna Tsing observes how “telling stories of landscape requires getting to know the inhabitant of the landscape, human and nonhuman” (2017 [2015], 159). In this sense, reflecting on the pastoral landscape becomes useful for enacting an investigation of the interplay of the many organisms dwelling in pastoral environmental representations. When discussing ‘landscape’, as the OED suggests, one generally refers to “[a] picture representing natural inland scenery” or “[t]he background of scenery in a portrait or figure-painting” (“landscape”, 2021). This last definition is particularly relevant for re-conceiving the well-established, traditional, notion of the pastoral landscape — in the sense of a pastoral environmental representation — as an all-embracing perspective on natural entities, in the background, detached from (generally human) subjects appearing in the foreground. Discussing the pastoral in this sense is common especially in regard to concepts like Arcadia or the *locus amoenus*. In this regard, Suzanne Carroll has observed how the pastoral landscape is commonly (and primarily) referred to as a refuge, or a retreat, or an escape (Carroll 2011, 71), thus appearing to be (generally) the result of a limiting, dualistic figuration that does not take into account the complexity of a current ecocritical epistemology.

In recent years, however, new perspectives on the notion of landscape have developed, which support my reconceptualization of the pastoral through a postdualistic and postanthropocentric lens. Sally Weintrobe, for instance, introduced the notion of
“non-split natural landscape” (2012, 206), which allows scholars to intercept more ecological narratives in textual landscape representation by focusing on the issues of co-existence between different forms of life. Specifically referring to the notion of the pastoral, Weintrobe observed how, from the idea of a “retreat from [the] hard reality of the urban world”, the pastoral as a non-split landscape can be conceived of as a “common ground […] shared between self and other humans and between self and nonhuman species” (2012, 206). In addition to this remark, she underlines how “this common ground supports feelings of empathy, humaneness and solidarity with other life forms, particularly in relation to issues of life and death” (Weintrobe 2012, 206). Configuring the pastoral as a non-split natural landscape, thus, enhances a more pluralistic perspective that acknowledges a pastoral natural representation as a co-habitation of different forms of life, human and nonhuman, organic and inorganic, within such a literary locus. This awareness, consequently, reallocates importance to the nonhuman entities in the pastoral, challenging anthropocentric considerations of it, and allowing for negotiating its sole dualistic critical evaluation.

Therefore, when approaching the idea of a (pastoral) landscape along this line, new questions arise that transfer readers’ focus from pastoral dualisms to the complexity of environmental representations as conglomerations (or assemblages) of different entities composing it, instead of seeing it only as a single, opaque, and indistinct unit. And with the idea that “existence is entangled, symbiotic, hybrid” (Ferrando 2014, 168), the current state of ecological awareness enhances the necessity to rethink the classical domains of the pastoral. Hence, here I suggest that scholars move away from the tendency to focus on the pastoral in terms of a dualistic ‘landscape’ while adopting a more effective metaphor for expressing the pluralism that it entails and the emphasis it places on their relationality. In the following paragraph, I therefore discuss the pastoral as an ecosystem—a metaphor for reconceptualizing the pastoral through a postdualistic and postanthropocentric lens, and for re-territorializing the concept’s dualistic survival, which has been prolonged by literary criticism, toward alternative, pluralistic figurations.

The Pastoral as Ecosystem

The notion of ‘ecosystem’, despite being developed only recently, has become a key term in ecology and environmental studies. As the OED discusses, in general terms, it refers
to: “[a] biological system composed of all the organisms found in a particular physical environment, interacting with it and with each other” (“ecosystem”, 2021). The term was first introduced by English botanist Arthur G. Tansley in his seminal study, *The Use and Abuse of Vegetational Terms and Concepts*, published in 1935. By stressing the idea that organisms cannot be separated from “the habitat factors […] with which they form one physical system” (Tansley 1935, 299), Tansley determined that “there is constant interchange of the most various kinds within each system, not only between the organisms but between the organic and inorganic” (1935, 299). It is interesting to consider that the term ‘ecosystem’ was first commissioned by Tansley from Arthur Roy Clapham, with the request to develop a term that could express that the physical and biological elements composing an environment are intended to exist in relation with one another (Ayres 2012, 128). This observation underlines even more how using the metaphor of the ecosystem to discuss issues of human-nonhuman relationality when considering the pastoral may be beneficial for the sake of my reconceptualization. Through Tansley’s perspective, in fact, it becomes evident that the many entities comprising an ecosystem are involved with multiple connections, which put a strain on possible hierarchical conceptualizations. Tansley’s view challenges a strict anthropocentric perspective by placing attention, indistinctively, on both human and nonhuman entities as equally relevant elements for the all-encompassing perspective on organisms that comprise an ecosystem. For instance, by taking inorganic elements, like rocks and soil, into account when discussing an ecosystem, one can reassess their relevance in response to the traditional evaluation offered by the Aristotelian *Scala Naturae*, which limited them to elements of subordinate importance compared to human beings.

Even though the term ‘ecosystem’ entered into wide circulation in the 1930s, the idea of a system comprised of the wide array of organisms found in a certain environment can be detected since antiquity (Egerton 2012; Schliephake 2016), and far beyond the Western world (DeLoughrey and Handley 2011; Chaudhury 2006; Callicott and McRae, 2014). In fact, the spread of similar notions is such that the concept of ecosystem can be said to possess the character of “universality among mankind” (Major 1969, 11). However, the fact that the term ‘ecosystem’ appeared and flourished in the 1920s is a sign that, at that time, scholars were aware that they needed a more critical figuration of the environment, compared to traditional dualistic understandings prevailing until that
moment. This thesis serves my aim to demonstrate how signs of a similar maturation can also be traced in literary and cultural phenomena produced in the same period, dedicated to representations of the environment – as exemplified in the case of pastoral poems in the anthology *Georgian Poetry* (1912-1922). The temporal and geographical coincidence between the development of this collection and the emergence of the notion of ecosystem in British culture fosters the hypothesis that Georgian pastoral poems may reveal latent characteristics of modern environmental sensibility from the 1920s. These characteristics, therefore, can be interpreted as signs of a growing “mature environmental” (Buell) consciousness, which would be more clearly determined with the development of the environmental movement and ecocriticism, only a few decades later.

It is finally relevant to report that the notion of ecosystem developed in response to the idea of the “superorganism”, which represents another all-embracing figuration for pointing to a group of organisms collectively. However, a fundamental difference needs to be here clarified: as Derek Woods discusses, in fact, ‘superorganism’ is “the ecosystem described as an organism at a larger scale than any life form, we can observe directly”, and thus as a term functioning both as a synecdoche for an array of entities in a certain environment, and as an organism in its own right (2019, 119, emphasis added). In response to this belief, Tansley’s discussion of the ecosystem places more emphasis on the sense of relationality, which negotiates transcendental categorizations when one considers phenomena and entities connected to the natural world. The same stress is central in my intent to reconceptualize the pastoral, which, therefore, aims to highlight how in a (Georgian) pastoral poem, prominence should be given to a reflection on issues of human-nonhuman relationality rather than only on solely human-related issues, thus shifting away from dualistic, anthropocentric traditional evaluations.

Though conceived within the domains of biology, the use of the term ‘ecosystem’ is widespread today: one should consider that this notion was lauded as being the first of the fifty most important concepts of ecology following a survey proposed by the British Ecological Society in 1989 (Cherrett 1989). Yet, in order to regard ecosystem as a concept within the domains of literary and cultural studies – and specifically, as a notion for studying the pastoral – its diffusion is less effective, and further clarifications are needed. I suggest that reflecting on the idea of ‘ecosystem’ as a tool for approaching a critical study of the pastoral, invites scholars to investigate the relationship among the many
organic and inorganic entities comprising the natural environment represented in a (pastoral) poem. Specifically, my approach points to issues of relationality among the many entities dwelling in the pastoral locus. Therefore, for instance, by shifting one’s attention from shepherds and sheep to their relationship – or from single plants, animals, and rocks to the dynamics of interconnection that they entail – a reader is invited to investigate and reflect on the sense of continuity and connectedness the ecosystem represented in the pastoral refers to and inspires.

The idea of relying on the notion of ‘ecosystem’ when engaging in the analysis of poetry is not entirely new. Johnathan Bate has, in fact, adopted the metaphor of ecosystem for analyzing the representation of certain environments in literary texts. In his discussion on the ecocritical implications connected to the Romantics, he made use of the notion of ‘ecosystem’ for shedding light on how texts inform readers about the nexus between the humans and the nonhumans represented in a poem. For instance, when discussing “To Autumn” by John Keats, Bate reflects on the landscape that the poet describes as an ecosystem, which becomes a way for unleashing the poem’s ecocritical potential. Limiting oneself to consider such a representation as a mere environment, according to Bate, “presupposes an image of man at the center, surrounded by things” (2000b, 259). In contrast, when seeing it as an ecosystem, a “network of relations” comes forth in the understanding of both that spatiality and the whole poem itself (2000, 259, emphasis in original). Moreover, in Bate’s words, the notion of ecosystem is useful for conducting a critical reflection on other fields of studies connected to ecocriticism, such as modern biology. In reflecting on the usefulness of adopting Darwin’s theory of evolution for discussing literature, Bate underlines how new insights can be disclosed on “how evolution operates at the level of the ecosystem” (2000a, 229). However, in my elaboration of the notion of ecosystem, I aim to concentrate on rediscussing the predominance of pastoral dualisms, while disclosing new narratives concerning the relationship of the organisms depicted in a certain pastoral environmental representation.

The notion of the ‘pastoral ecosystem’ is also not completely new in academia. Due to the great polysemy that the term ‘pastoral’ possesses, the expression ‘pastoral ecosystem’ can be found, with different implications, in reference to an array of studies dedicated to material practices of nomadic herding activity. R.S. Reid et al., for instance, adopted this expression in their study on how changes in land tenure and related economic
policy affect ecosystem structures when it comes to pasturing activity (2005, 64). Or one
can consider M. B Counghenor’s study (1992) on the African pastoral ecosystem as a
prototype for modelling drought. My discussion on the pastoral ecosystem does not relate
to these considerations. My focus, instead, remains attached to a more philosophical
assumption, as well as on the idea of the pastoral as a literary and cultural phenomenon.
Specifically, while my attention on the pastoral still relies on the idea of herding (and the
many professions cited in pastoral poems, such as fishing, farming, and agricultural
activities), my discussion investigates its ethical implications related to human-nonhuman
relationality, which pastoral poems narrates. Specifically, I discuss that considering the
pastoral landscape as an ecosystem allows critics and readers to more effectively focus
on the kind of bond established between the several entities dwelling in a given pastoral
story world – whether they are human or nonhuman – instead of discussing these entities
as if they were (ontologically) detached from the ‘surroundings’. In this way, it becomes
clear how establishing the ontological (intra-)connectedness (Barad 2007), which the
notion of ecosystem supports, challenges merely anthropocentric and dualistic figurations
of the pastoral, thus enacting its reconceptualization.

In reference to the dualisms – human/nonhuman, country/city, human/nature –
that my cartographic account has identified as the fundamental axes on which traditional
figurations of the pastoral are based and prolonged along centuries, the following two
main considerations have developed. First, by adopting the notion of ‘pastoral ecosystem’
as an analytical scope for investigating the pastoral, emphasis is placed on exploring the
peculiarities of the nonhuman entities depicted in a certain literary pastoral landscape. By
abandoning a solely anthropocentric viewpoint, the ecosystem depicted by a pastoral
poem brings readers to interrogate themselves about the features of, for instance, trees,
animals, rocks, and other elements comprising the locus amoenus, rather than conceiving
them as solely indistinct elements of an idealized spatiality. As the OED reminds us,
‘idealize’ means “to represent in an ideal form or character; to regard as an ideal of
perfection or excellence” (“idealize”, 2021) and the notion of ‘ideal’ refers to something
being “[c]onceived or regarded as perfect or supremely excellent in its kind; answering
to one's highest conception” (“ideal”, 2021). Treating the pastoral landscape as an
ecosystem, instead, shifts attention away from the all-encompassing, indistinct, and
unrealistic representation of the nonhuman realm, while inviting readers to investigate the
dynamics of entanglement occurring within it, among the many entities comprising it. Questions that may rise in this view are, for instance: how do humans and nonhumans relate in certain pastoral representations? In which way can a pastoral representation offer models for ethical relationships between human beings and other organic and inorganic entities?

Second, discussing the pastoral as an ecosystem also becomes useful for exceeding the limits of traditional heuristic domains, which usually leads the environment in the pastoral to be discussed in alignment with the rural/urban or country/city dichotomy. I have explained elsewhere that in bypassing the dualistic sense of the country and the city, an array of latent narratives embedded in pastoral texts emerge, which allows for determining ecocritical reflections on the way humans and nonhumans relate. Particularly, the notion of ‘cittagna’ – a rising neologism derived from the blending of the Italian terms città (city) and campagna (country), both in literature and urbanism – reveals the growing relevance of the topic of human-nonhuman connectedness in contemporary space and place figurations (Rozzoni 2022). In the same way, distancing the pastoral from the country/city dichotomy re-centers the issue of relationality among organisms dwelling in a given literary pastoral environment, while negotiating the a priori dualistic and anthropocentric assumptions in one’s analytical perspective. If the rural is not seen as a mere contraposition to the urban, more in-depth attention can be dedicated to exploring its characteristics. Hence, a question that may be asked in this sense is: how does a rural pastoral location inform readers of possible modes of ethical relationality between human beings and the environment?

Many other reflections could surface when one adopts the notion of ecosystem for regarding the pastoral. However, within the scope of my thesis, attention remains attached to adopting ‘ecosystem’ as a conceptual tool for both reconceptualizing the pastoral and for challenging prolonged forms of anthropocentrism and dualism engaged with it. Hence, by shifting one’s attention from certain aspects of pastoral to others, new considerations become possible. While “the contrast between the rural and the urban” or the idea of the pastoral “idealization of the natural world” (Gifford 1999, 2) remain the main trends for identifying the pastoral, exploring ‘the pastoral as ecosystem’ represents an opportunity for enacting a deterritorialization of rooted axiomatic assumptions, which
thus situates the pastoral as a site for disclosing ethical figurations in the understanding of the complex enmeshment between humans and nonhumans.

As a preliminary, fundamental step for applying a postdualistic and postanthropocentric lens to the study of the pastoral, this chapter has clarified how this concept can be used to move beyond long-standing, traditional, and dualistic assumptions rooted in the Western thought. The practice of de-territorialization, in fact, revealed how the pastoral has developed in history along dichotomic axioms and binaries, including country/city, nature/culture, and human/nature. As my cartography on the pastoral theory has revealed, these binaries have survived despite constant transformations and the many cultural evolutions brought about in different epochs. However, since the development of ecocriticism, a growing challenge to them has become visible, which offered new, increasingly pluralistic understandings of the phenomenon in a growing number of publications, studies, approaches, and neologisms dedicated to the topic.

The evolution that the notion of nature has undergone through the past few decades, under the pressure of ecocriticism and related studies, was necessary for delineating a reconceptualization of the pastoral. The term ‘nature’, in fact, has been recently exposed to an array of critical perspectives which have re-conceived it, shifting from the idea that it represents an entity ontologically separated from the human realm, to one to be conceived as being enmeshed with it. Old dualistic figurations of nature, therefore, have been supplanted by a wider and more complex sense of human/nonhuman intertwining. A similar process, this chapter has argued, can be conducted when reconceptualizing the pastoral.

Considering that there is no deterritorialization without reterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), this chapter suggests a possible way for bypassing the anthropocentric and discriminatory, dualistic assumptions embedded in traditional understandings of the pastoral, while exploring the in-betweenness of dualistic concepts. Proposing the idea of the pastoral as an ecosystem becomes useful for re-addressing scholars’ aims to reflect on the issues of human and nonhuman relationality that the pastoral landscape is engrained in. Seeing the pastoral as an ecosystem, in fact, inspires
an observation of the several entities composing a pastoral landscape depicted in a literary work, while interrogating their relationship: this effect, I suggest, highlights the pluralistic dimension of the pastoral, and underlines the sense of connectedness of the many entities inhabiting this landscape.

Therefore, by proposing a reconceptualization of the pastoral as an ecosystem, I reassess the pastoral and situate it as a site for providing a critical discussion of the ethical challenges caused by the Anthropocene: seen though this perspective, the pastoral offers narratives emphasizing human-nonhuman enmeshment in response to the need to reconstruct new ethical forms of relationality between them, which current crises have made evident.
3. Re-Framing Pastoral Criticism through (New) ‘5Rs’

We must then have a theory as to what this influence is. But let us always remember – influences are infinitely numerous;
Virginia Woolf, *The Leaning Tower*

As discussed in the previous chapters, and as summarized by Lawrence Buell, the pastoral represents “a species of cultural equipment that western thought has for more than two millennia been unable to do without” (1995, 32). Despite this fact, critical approaches to the pastoral – particularly in literary criticism – have regarded it, throughout history, primarily through dualistic lenses. Therefore, embracing alternative hermeneutical practices remains a crucial operation for determining new critical approaches to the pastoral “worthy of our times” (Braidotti 2019, 17), especially when the environment is undergoing several crises. Incorporating the insights offered by ecocriticism and posthuman studies, I argue, represents an alternative approach to dominant tendencies in scholarship on the concept. Hence, in this chapter, I discuss a possible original analytical procedure for examining the pastoral, which resonates with the reconceptualization that I presented in Chapter 2. Just like the concept of pastoral can be regarded as a privileged site for investigating the relationship between humans and nonhumans by envisioning it as an ecosystem, I here aim to reframe traditional pastoral literary criticism accordingly, into a ‘sustainable’ alternative to conventional theories.

This chapter takes from Hubert Zapf’s discussion on ‘sustainable texts’ (2016), in which literature is discussed as an “ecological force” capable of circulating discourses and enhancing environmental ethics in culture, to conduct a meta-meta-literary discussion – that is, a critical investigation of (pastoral) literary criticism. Specifically, I call for a hermeneutical perspective that a) can recuperate disregarded narratives about human-nonhuman connectedness and relationality in past pastoral works, which classical critical approaches have made latent; and b) serves to reevaluate disregarded pastoral poems by acknowledging their topicality in responding to the ethical challenges placed by the Anthropocene.

Echoing the pluralistic, transdisciplinary assumptions utilized in the field of the Environmental Humanities, my reframing of pastoral criticism occurs through a transdisciplinary stance, namely by amalgamating literary studies and ecological
sciences. Attention will be placed on adapting the popular 5Rs-model – Reuse, Reduce, Recycle, Repair, and Rot – which represents a trademark in current ecological discourse, as a framework for analyzing pastoral poetry. These keywords, in fact, will be discussed as representing a provocative new set of ‘pastoral Rs’ as an alternative to the still relevant critical model theorized by Roger Sales (1983). His system, which, as it will be illustrated, relies on dualistic and anthropocentric assumptions, is composed of the concepts of Refuge, Reflection, Return, Requiem, and Reconstruction. In contrast, I provide a sustainable pastoral theory as a proactive operation for disclosing new insights in literary texts already ‘at hand’ in the Western tradition, while rediscovering them as objects of study for reflecting on environmental concerns of our times (Reuse). By weakening dominant anthropocentric perspectives and decentralizing the human in the re-reading of these texts (Reduce), and by disclosing narratives which link these pastoral lyrics to new ecocritical and posthuman discussions, recirculating them in the present-day world becomes beneficial (Recycle). Furthermore, adapting my sustainable analytical operation to the five-volume anthology Georgian Poetry demonstrates that its reliance on the pastoral – which has often been identified as a reason for Modernist critics to dismiss it at the time of its publication – can today be re-regarded as the very starting point for redetermining its critical literary value (Rot). Moreover, I argue that establishing a dialogue between the pastoral poems in this collection and the current ethical challenges brought about by the Anthropocene functions as another way for reevaluating and reassessing the literary value of these poems (Repair).

As discussed in Chapter 2, regarding the pastoral vis-à-vis the idea of ‘connectedness’ challenges its reliance on the dualistic core of traditional Western axioms and on dichotomies including human/nature, nature/culture, and country/city. By deterritorializing these conventional domains, a reterritorialization of the concept became possible and revealed how, by adopting a postdualistic and postanthropocentric lens, the pastoral could be ref logfile into a site for disclosing considerations about the relationship between humans and nonhumans. Specifically, my reconceptualization of the pastoral as an ecosystem established it as a literary depiction of the entanglement among the many forms of life. This indication invites current readers and critics to consider the pastoral a locus from which one can unveil considerations about how to reconstruct a sense of human-nonhuman connectedness, which has become weakened during the Anthropocene.
Yet the notion of ‘connectedness’ also guides the analytical approach proposed by this study, in the idea of studying pastoral poetry through a postdualistic and postanthropocentric perspective. The notion of connectedness, in fact, can be applied to the original analytical methodology with which I propose to negotiate traditional assumptions in the study of the pastoral. This chapter in fact proposes a new pastoral literary hermeneutics along two premises: first, by outlining a methodological approach in which the sense of ontological entanglement between humans and nonhumans remains crucial. Second, the issues of complexity, claimed by many scholars in the Environmental Humanities, will be intended here as an operative guideline for my theorizing and reframing of pastoral criticism.

In the first case, one can reflect on how a postdualistic, postanthropocentric figuration of the pastoral exceeds the limits of binary thinking and allows one to negotiate the discriminatory, humanistic, anthropocentric implications rooted in Western culture, which traditional readings of past pastoral have also relied upon. In regard to the second point, which addresses the hermeneutical approach adopted in the Environmental Humanities, this thesis aims to develop a critical perspective by combining insights from different fields and disciplines. In this sense, it is useful to cite Ursula Heise, who argues that the contribution of the Environmental Humanities in present-day scholarship should resonate with the idea of “combin[ing] humanistic perspectives and methods that have already developed” as they moved across disciplines (2017, 1). Along the line that she proposes, a reframing of pastoral literary criticism, which I now engage with in more detail, suggests an enmeshment between literature and ecological sciences for developing an original analytical approach to conduct an ecocritical and posthuman reevaluation of the anthology Georgian Poetry.

“Reframing” pastoral literary criticism

Before proceeding further, an expansion of the concept of ‘reframing’ in the domain of pastoral literary criticism is necessary for clarifying how this study intends to engage with the analysis of Edward Marsh’s anthology. As the Oxford English Dictionary establishes, “to reframe” means “to frame again or differently, to refashion; to provide with a new frame” (“reframe”, 2020). This definition reveals that the word does not refer to modifying or re-determining the very essence of the object contained in a certain frame,
but, rather, to changing the frame in which it is presented. Considering the metaphor of the frame within the context of fine arts, it is useful to observe that, while a painting does not normally change its visual features, the use of different frames produces different perceptions of it in the eye of an observer. Specifically, changing the frame of a picture draws attention to certain details over others in a picture, thus producing different effects on the observer. Daniela Ferrari and Andrea Pinotti (2018) expand on this idea, and they, among others, have observed how frames valorize, bring attention to, and highlight certain aspects of a work of art without making any material alterations to it. Transferring this idea to the context of literature, and, particularly, to metaliterary discussions on pastoral literary criticism, reframing literary criticism involves adopting a new framework for highlighting certain aspects in the poems themselves rather than focusing on how a different evaluation affects a reader’s perspective.

Nora Berning, Ansgar Nünning, and Christine Schwanecke (2014) have discussed the concept of reframing in the context of literary and cultural studies. Based on the increasing scholarly attention toward issues of complexity in this field, Berning et al. underline the importance for critics to “establish a dialogue, not just between traditional approaches and recent theories, but also between theory and criticism proper” (2014, 2). In a time when cross-disciplinary trends prevail in literary and cultural theory, the metaphor of reframing does not limit itself to discuss concepts, literary texts, or cultural objects. Reframing, instead, has also come to appear beneficial for developing ever-new critical perspectives. Specifically, as Berning et al. suggest, the notion of reframing is to be considered as an “epistemological too[l] that enable[s] researchers to conceptualize and account for change, perform abstract reasoning by conceptualizing concepts and work with metaphorically structured (meta)concepts” (2014, 9). In other words, reframing is not simply a process through which literary and cultural phenomena occur, but applies to the drawing of new conclusions from the discussion on the evolution of pastoral criticism, especially if one considers the reconceptualization of the pastoral offered in the previous chapter.

Rediscussing pastoral literary criticism following the insights by current ecocritical and posthuman epistemology paves the way for negotiating dualisms and anthropocentrism that have corroborated traditional approaches to the pastoral for centuries. Reframing pastoral criticism, in this sense, invites critics to intercept, in poems,
elements that allow one to develop ecocritical and posthumanist interpretations. In this work, I will specifically focus on textual aspects that support the idea of the pastoral as an ecosystem. This includes bringing attention to those features that reference the relationship between vegetal and animal (human and nonhuman) entities and their sense of ontological continuity. Just like Berning et al. observe when affirming that “at moments like the present one, when a heightened degree of interdisciplinary and internality makes it necessary for whole disciplines to shift their focus, to initiate or take part in, paradigm shifts” (2014, 22), I believe that integrating literary criticism with practices of observation derived from ecology is beneficial since it resonates with the paradigm shift advocated both in the fields of ecocriticism and posthumanism.

Before expanding this discussion, it is useful to stress how enacting a ‘reframing of pastoral criticism’ to reassess the importance of literary criticism responds to the need to develop new reflections for coping with the environmental crisis. While literature – here conceived, in general terms, as “the result or product of literary activity; written works considered collectively (“literature”, OED, 2021) – has represented the main object of the study of ecocriticism since the dawn of the movement (Glotfelty and Fromm, 1996), literary criticism has obtained less attention through meta-literary investigations. I therefore aim to inscribe in this gap the critical discussion on pastoral literary criticism offered by this chapter. Specifically, I intend to do so by stressing that reregarding the methodology of textual analysis of pastoral poems also serves for responding to the ethical challenges connected to the Anthropocene. I suggest that a pastoral text represents an inexhaustible source for debating current issues only if it is exposed to a specific (eco)critical lens. In other words, if, on the one hand, it is true that “stories about the environment significantly influence experiences of that environment” (James and Morel 2020, 1), on the other hand, one can consider how different ways of reading a story about the environment lead to very different ways of experiencing that environment. Consequently, by pursuing a reframing of pastoral criticism, I intend to attribute prominence to dismissed topics in the domains of pastoral theory, which demonstrates that the pastoral offers models of ethical human-nonhuman relationality when exposed to adequate critical lenses.

Having clarified the understanding of ‘reframing’ in my discussion on pastoral criticism, the following paragraphs delve more deeply into the idea of ‘sustainable’
criticism, thus building on the theoretical scaffolding of this thesis, which will be later adopted in the analysis of the pastoral in Edward Marsh’s *Georgian Poetry*.

### 3.1 Toward a ‘Sustainable’ Pastoral Literary Criticism

The well-established notion of ‘sustainable texts’, from which I took inspiration for conducting my reframing of pastoral literary criticism, derives from Hubert Zapf’s study on cultural ecology (2016). Taking from Gregory Bateson’s seminal *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972) – which first determined analogies between the functioning of the human body and ecological thought – Zapf develops a comparative and transdisciplinary approach for reading literary texts, which sees literature as a form of transformative cultural agency and aesthetic force on culture, especially regarding ecological issues. According to Zapf, literature is an “ecological force” since it serves as a “reintegrative interdiscourse”, in which dichotomy of the mind and the body, intellect and emotion, culture and nature are overcome” (Zapf 2008, 865). This evaluation underlines how literature offers opportunities for reflecting on the present and for developing ways for facing the issues raised by environmental crises. While, in general terms, the notion of “ecology” can be seen as “the branch of biology that deals with the relationships between living organisms and their environment” (“ecology” OED, 2021), Zapf’s discussion employs a wider understanding of it: in his view, in fact, the expression “ecological” encapsulates both the thematic reference to the relationship between organisms and their surroundings, and the possibility of conceiving literature as a complex system or a net, which is included, in its turn, in a wider system of cultural manifestations. Zapf’s notion “cultural ecology” presupposes that “aesthetic forms of communication represent a special potential as a sustainable cultural practice because of their ‘heightened sensibility’ to the connectivity and the complexity of the natural as well as the cultural worlds” (2016, 20). Based on these assumptions, it becomes evident how, in Zapf’s vision, cultural practices like literature are sustainable when they serve as a transforming force operating on culture, impacting the ways in which humans relate to the natural world using language, artistic imagination, and literary critique.

For what concerns the notion of sustainability, in fact, Zapf uses it in relation to the power of everyday (micro)practices which hold a transformative power over culture,
and which are complemented by practices of environmental justice and activism. In this sense, Zapf discusses how:

literature and art provide one medium of cultural representation and communication in which this more complex, self-reflexive, and ethically responsive concept of sustainability or “sustainable becoming” (Braidotti, 393) is part of its generative potential and transformative function within the larger discursive system of cultural knowledge and semiotic practices. (2016, 19)

Therefore, evidence is provided for the role that literature plays in determining an impact on culture, while contributing to producing ethical responses to the challenging issues of current ecological crises and pathways of transformation in the context of human-nonhuman relational practices.

The notion of ‘sustainable criticism’ that I propose possesses similar potential, even though it transports the concept of sustainability to the level of hermeneutical practices on literary texts rather than on the very effects of a literary text on culture, as Zapf instead illustrates. In my argument, in fact, the term ‘sustainable’ continues to refer to the general principle of “designating forms of human activity (esp. of an economic nature) in which environmental degradation is minimized, [...] by avoiding the long-term depletion of natural resources; of or relating to activity of this type” (“sustainable” OED, 2021) – by establishing it as a key concept for determining an original literary critical perspective. I now wish to clarify two ways in which the notion of sustainability can be intended as an attribute of literary criticism: on a literal level and metaphoric level.

The first way – a literal understanding of the notion “sustainable literary criticism” – refers to a scholarly approach to texts that aims to disclose narratives referring to ecological principles. Specifically, I discuss a kind of critical perspective that focuses, for instance, on how a text informs readers on possible strategies to increase the sense of connectedness between humans and nonhumans, or how a poem allows one to explore more in-depth the sense of complexity comprising the representation of the environment within current ecocritical epistemology. In reference to the possibility of enacting pastoral sustainable criticism, my reframing intends to apply similar queries to the study of pastoral texts. Remaining on a literal level, it covers, for instance, a focus on passages of a pastoral text inspiring the adoption of ethical behaviors toward the environment. Or it explores how the pastoral idyll can be intended as the enmeshment of the many entities
populating it, favoring a more collective consideration of the ways they interact with one another and with human beings.

The second way of delineating sustainable forms of (pastoral) criticism relies on a more metaphoric interpretation of the notion of sustainability. Specifically, this interpretation implies that sustainability does not solely involve the mere contents of a literary text, but also refers to how texts connect and relate one another. Just like ‘ecosystem’ refers to “[a] biological system composed of all the organisms found in a particular physical environment, interacting with it and with each other” (“ecosystem” OED, 2020), literary texts can also be conceived of as being part of a network of interaction. This effect has been discussed by Angela Locatelli, who designates literature as an “ecological space” (Locatelli 2007). In parallel with how ecology implies the coexistence of different forms of life, Locatelli suggests that literature can be regarded as a pluralistic ensemble of forms, issues, and discourses. Along this line, literature becomes visible as “a landscape which invites being inhabited with a sense of multiple perspectives” (Locatelli 2007, 49), and which finds its raison d’être in the constant process of transformation that texts undergo when they are being discussed within different critical frames. As Locatelli also explains, literature and literary criticism do not merely rely on issues of “preservation [of] canonical and non-canonical texts” (2007, 49), but rather on the possibility of offering ever-new readings, defying hegemonic assumptions of an interpretative hierarchy.

Providing different interpretations of pastoral texts allows for negotiating hierarchies among them and for resurrecting potentially valuable poems that other critical standpoints have neglected or dismissed. Similarly, rediscussing texts by stressing the ecocritical significance of some passages that other critical perspectives have overlooked provides evidence of aspects of critical value for the capacity of a text to dialogue with urgent issues of the present-day world. Along this line, theorizing sustainable pastoral literary criticism refers to the idea of “minimizing degradation” (see “sustainable” OED, 2021) of texts within a certain literary environment – that is, preventing them from being neglected, dismissed, and disregarded in a certain cultural context. Specifically in this thesis, this effect relates to a selection of pastoral poems appearing in the anthology Georgian Poetry, which not only have been limitedly studied by critics, but which have suffered from a harsh critical framing leading scholars to perceive them as primarily
traditionalist and conservative works. Instead, I call for adopting a critically sustainable perspective that allows for their resurgence by adopting alternative (ecocritical and posthuman) standpoints able to readdress critics’ attention on their latent value. Therefore, I discuss sustainable literary criticism as a reintegrative discourse (Zapf 2016) but that recuperates past texts by highlighting their capacity to provide ethical narratives to cope with current environmental crisis.

The following paragraphs explore in more detail which among the many concepts developed in the field of ecology will be adopted here as useful metaphors for establishing new, alternative sustainable practices of textual interpretations of pastoral poetry through a postdualistic and postanthropocentric perspective. My discussion is built on a recuperation of the so-called “5 Rs of ecology” – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rot, Repair – as the baseline for reframing pastoral literary criticism while entailing the transdisciplinary epistemological practices claimed by the Environmental Humanities.

Towards New “Five Pastoral ‘Rs’”

The use of engaging slogans that combine a selection of verbs starting with the letter ‘r’ has been a popular communication strategy since the early environmental movements in the 1970s – used for the purpose of raising awareness of the importance of introducing more sustainable practices into a person’s life. The trend of the environmental “Rs” began with the popular three-word compound “Reduce, Reuse and Recycle”, which introduced simple actions that could be integrated in one’s daily routine in order to reduce waste and improve its management. Even though there is no definitive origin of the 3Rs slogan, it is commonly established that its first use occurred during the first Earth Day, on April 22, 1970, which led to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, enacted by the U.S Congress in the same year, in which these three words are also mentioned (Crume 2018, 578).

The success of the R-word model as an effective rhetorical device stem can be gleaned from the fact that this strategy has been adopted for referring to several issues detached from ecology, from education to politics. The summative capacity and clarity that distinguish this formulation can provide a plain and easily accessible explanation of actions that are beneficial in a certain field of study. For instance, one can consider the use of 3Rs in the field of education (reading, (w)riting, and (a)rithmetic, see Smith 2013),
parenting strategies (reading, regulating, redirecting, see Capaldi 2019) or even political perspectives (Smith 2004). For what concerns the ecological Rs, as David T. Brown affirms, “[t]here is a definite and logical hierarchy to the three Rs, reflecting the effectiveness of each approach at controlling waste generation” (Brown 2013, 467). This consideration is important for emphasizing how behind the apparent simplicity of this linguistic formula lie keen, sophisticated philosophies that have the capacity to influence human behaviors while producing a positive impact on the environment.

The success of the 3Rs model derives from its adaptability to an array of material practices, both on a small and large scale, from daily domestic waste management to waste production of companies. Moreover, the effectiveness of the 3Rs motto, in general terms, is evident if one considers the many variations on this formula in a number of fields of study and in topics connected to ecology. The 3R-model has, in fact, been adopted for discussing ‘waste management’ (Brown, 2013), environmentally oriented strategies of architecture (Echarri and Brebbia 2016, 190), and sustainable fashion (Strähel and Müller 2017, 14), among many other issues from different sectors. Despite the diversity of the fields and questions to which this model is applied, a common denominator remains visible: the ecological 3Rs entail the promotion of ethical behaviors towards the environment based on a sense of responsibility of human beings towards their surroundings.

The notion of responsibility has often been evoked within ecocritical considerations to refer to the fact that the environment’s health “depends mostly on us, on our ability to organize in time and space a ‘being-in-the-world’ that is shaped through processes of production and consumption, of transformation and reduction of natural resources to their metabolic waste” (Iovino 2010, 29), as Serenella Iovino reminds. In recent years, the concept of responsibility has been further expanded by Donna Haraway who – along with other feminist, new materialist scholars such as Karen Barad and Vinciane Despret (Bozalek and Zembylas 2017, 63) – introduced the neologism “response-ability”. This term, in short, refers to one’s sensitivity towards ethical modes of relationality with the nonhuman and the capacity to respond accordingly. Haraway, in this alignment, establishes “response-ability” as “cultivating collective knowing and doing” and as a form of “sympoiesis’ (making-with)” (2016, 58), which refers to the capacity of humans and nonhumans to develop relationships of care with each other. This
effect lies at the core of the sense of sustainability evoked for a postanthropocentric and postdualistic literary criticism, in the sense that it presupposes the idea of human-nonhuman connectedness and ethics as a central aspect of interest when inquiring about the specificity of their relational dynamics.

The efficacy of the R-model is also proven by the fact that, over time, more extensive combinations of environmentally oriented R-words were developed. Specifically, the 5Rs model appears as another viral environmental slogan for inspiring models of ecological behaviors, which, compared to the 3Rs, offers a broader elaboration. Yet there are several versions in which the basic 3R could be integrated with two more R-words: for instance, one can consider the use of the concepts of ‘Respect’ and ‘Rethink’ (Pariatamby and Tanaka 2013, 15), or ‘Redesign’ and ‘Repurpose’ (Campos et al. 2014, 47) for what concerns studies on waste management. Or one can consider the notions of ‘Refuse’ and ‘Rot’ emerging as integrative R-concepts in the context of the growing ‘Zero Waste movement’ (Johnson 2013), which aims at developing a lifestyle that contributes to reducing the production of domestic waste. Furthermore, the terms ‘Repair’ and ‘Regulate’ are also becoming increasingly relevant within the 5Rs environmental model, especially for what concerns the establishment of business strategies linked to sustainability (Borland et al. 2018, 68). These are only few of the many possible examples that underline the extensive use of the 5Rs model for examining ecological issues in today’s scholarship. Eventually, among the many possible variants of the ecological Rs, several scholars have far exceeded the limits of five keywords when proposing a new environmental motto by adding new concepts – all beginning with letter “r” – to the basic 3Rs slogan: it is the case, for instance, in Salah M. El-Haggar’s 6Rs and 7Rs Golden Rules for accomplishing zero pollution waste management systems (Haggar 2007, 12), or of the 10Rs model suggested by Rebecca Hawkins and Victor T. C. Middleton, which determines the founding principles for enhancing eco-tourism (Hawkins and Middleton 1998).

Considering the extensive use of this rhetorical device in different contexts, it is evident how the R-model should be regarded as a particularly productive tool for enhancing environmental considerations within a wide array of fields, in addition to its role in underlying the transdisciplinary character of ecological discourse. Along this line, literary criticism can be discussed as representing an effective area of knowledge
production when it comes to the application of the R-model for determining strategies of
textual analysis inspired by ecological principles. In referring to what was discussed in
the previous paragraphs, about the notion of ‘sustainable criticism’, I suggest that the 5Rs
model offers scholars the opportunity to engrain an alternative hermeneutical discussion
in the pastoral by systematizing five assumptions that they could follow for enacting a
postanthropocentric and postdualistic analysis of pastoral poetry.

The effectiveness of a similar operation is given support by the fact that other 5R-
models have been discussed in the field of literary criticism, and specifically in pastoral
theory. In his monograph, English Literature in History 1780-1830: Pastoral and Politics
(1983), Roger Sales illustrates what he considers the most prominent features of the
pastoral that should be kept in mind when assessing a critical evolution of it, which he
summarizes in five R-keywords: Refuge, Reflection, Rescue, Requiem, and
Reconstruction (15). In outlining his perspective, Sales reveals his attachment to
Just like Williams observes the pastoral as a “literary elaboration [which] maintains its
contact with the working year and with the real social conditions of country life”
(Williams 1976 [1973], 16), Sales’s study centers on the idea that the pastoral contributed
to creating a false ideology in eighteenth and nineteenth century England by prolonging
the status quo of the British landowning class. Through his five keywords, in fact, Sales
places emphasis on the dynamics through which the pastoral – and pastoral poetry
specifically – can be seen as “a propagandist reconstruction of history” (1983, 17): an
alleged, false, idyllic representation of the reality in the British countryside, as a bucolic
realm in tranquility, or a nostalgic retreat from the harsh conditions occurring in the
actual, material rural world. Sales studies how, in the period under his examination, the
pastoral developed along with the idea of an evasion, or the “desire to escape” (Sales
1983, 17). This suggests the pastoral allows for passing from “urban complexity to rural
simplicity”, but also other forms of retreat, such as the innocence of childhood from
adulthood, which he also links to the concept of ‘Refuge’ (Sales 1983, 15-16). Connected
to this conception, is Sales’s idea that the pastoral engages with reflexive and intellectual
activity aiming at “rescu[ing] certain values from the past” while transferring them “back
into the modern world” (1983, 16). This consideration underlies the notion of
‘Reflection’.
‘Requiem’ becomes another “strategic device” for the pastoral according to Sales (1983, 17). He suggests that the pastoral favors the promotion of certain values, like innocence and simplicity, which seal off their opposite meanings only when “they are quite literally still or death” (Sales 1983, 17). Aligned with this consideration is the concept of “Rescue”, which Sales investigates in reference to the alleged purpose of the pastoral to preserve certain domains in the moment in which they are at stake – like, for instance, the privileges of the British rural gentry during the period under his examination. Here, again, Sales’s reading shows the pastoral as promoting a false sense of security and duration (which he refers to as the pastoral “great lie”, 1983, 17), through which aristocracy fostered its political propaganda for maintaining its privilege. Sales attributes this discussion to the term ‘Reconstruction’, in the sense that the pastoral refurbishes the “false sense of empirical security” in the establishment of rural aristocracy (1983, 17).

Sales’s Marxist-oriented approach was successful in later studies on the pastoral, as it is visible, for instance, in the fact that Terry Gifford’s seminal work on the pastoral highlights the importance of two pastoral r-concepts related to his study – ‘retreat’ and ‘return’. Gifford acknowledges them as the “fundamental pastoral movement, either within the text, or in the sense that the pastoral retreat ‘returned’ some insights relevant to the urban audience” (Gifford 1999, 2). However, in spite of its popularity, Sales’s approach is not without limitations, particularly when one views it from an ecocritical and posthuman perspective. Within the framework of this dissertation, Sales’s pastoral Rs appear to lack any ecological intent, instead informing readers of their rootedness in dualistic axiomatic figurations in the reiteration of dichotomies like ‘idealized/real place’ (as seen in discussing ‘Reconstruction’), ‘human/nature’ (in ‘Rescue’), and ‘country/city’ (as in ‘Refuge’). Furthermore, Sales’s perspective reveals a deep reliance on traditional Western anthropocentric assumptions, due to his primary focus on investigating the realm of human experientiality, as is visible in my previous discussion. As the purpose of this thesis is to develop a postdualistic and postanthropocentric alternative to traditional, dichotomic perspectives on the pastoral – discussing a new, different set of pastoral Rs becomes beneficial: my new pastoral Rs, therefore, represent an alternative framework to reread dismissed pastoral texts while addressing critics’ attention to issues of relationality and connectedness between humans and nonhumans.
In addition to basing my proposal on the well-established 3Rs in ecology – Reuse, Reduce and Recycle – I have selected two other verbs among the many variants in the 5R-combinations available in today’s scholarship. Specifically, I selected two concepts which, in my view, appear particularly adaptable for conducting the retrospective aims of this dissertation along the idea of reevaluating the archives of Western literature through an ecocritical lens (Zapf, 2020): ‘Rot’ and ‘Repair’. In addition, considering that this thesis centers on recuperating pastoral poems suffering from a dismissive critical reputation, namely those from the anthology *Georgian Poetry*, these two R-verbs convey the idea of resurgence, both on a material/biological level and in a more figurative sense.

In the next subchapters, the five concepts of Reuse, Reduce, Recycle, Rot, and Repair will be discussed by drawing parallels between their inferences in the field of ecology and operations of literary analysis in the study of past pastoral poems. Stress, therefore, will be placed on how the implications expressed by each R-word allow for reevaluating *Georgian pastoral* poetry through an original critical lens, inspired by intersections of ecocriticism and posthumanism.

### 3.2 Reuse: Readdressing Disregarded Pastoral Texts and Narratives

Since the 1970s, the notion of “reuse” has appeared among the most popular principles of environmentalism due to the fact that it featured in the already discussed 3Rs motto. Reuse generally refers to the idea of “us[ing] [something] for a second or further time; to make use of again” (“reuse” OED, 2021). In the context of waste management, in which the 3Rs model is primarily employed, the term describes a particularly effective strategy for decreasing the production of waste: instead of being discharged, in fact, the utility and functionality of certain objects or materials can be prolonged by being employed repeatedly. For instance, one can think of reusable plastic bags, glass jars, and other containers that are projected to have multiple usages, thus entailing a long lifespan. By being used multiple times, these products avoid becoming the discarded materials in landfills, and consequently, further causes for the dissipation in the environment.

Moreover, the notion of ‘reuse’ is often adopted in reference to natural resources like water, which favors being utilized multiple times due to proper management techniques for making it fresh after its use. In fact, cleansing water treatments have allowed people to make wastewater usable again without losing it natural properties, thus
avoiding increasing hydric pollution. In this regard, Ana Arahuetes has discussed that making discharged water usable is “economic, energy and environmental saving” (Arahuetes 2016, 380). Reusing, therefore, makes fundamental and sustainable behavior possible, both on a small and broad scale. Moreover, this positive impact on the environment involves the fact that it reduces the level of pollution and waste, and that it contributes to spreading environmentally friendly ethos in daily habits.

The notion of reuse also responds to a problematic custom for the ecosystem, which has come to represent the epitome of advanced capitalistic societies: throwaway consumption – that is, disposal of products after a single or limited usage, only to replace them with new ones. As an attempt to cope with the idea that “consumption patterns across the industrialized world are unsustainable, demanding an excessively fast throughput of materials and energy” (Cooper 2010, 28), Tim Cooper discusses the notion of reuse for reflecting on the importance that Western societies begin realigning their preferences towards long-lasting products instead of disposable materials. To achieve this goal, Cooper suggests that emphasis should be placed on ensuring the quality of a product, for instance, by investing in the high-standard properties of their materials or in processes of generating new objects that are capable of defying their short-term obsolescence. Moreover, as Cooper claims, in order to resist throwaway consumption, it is important to ensure the longest lifespan of a product possible also by improving the relationship between humans and objects. In response to short-term disposal of products, Cooper urges for the development of “sustainable consumption” (2010, 29), in the sense that people should begin cultivating a lifestyle aimed at minimizing waste and degradation and, consequently, decreasing the long-term depletion of natural resources through more environmentally conscious buying habits.

Applying these principles to literary criticism, with the purpose of theorizing a form of sustainable literary criticism, one can reflect on how, just like many objects in western society, several texts are also being discharged. This effect, for instance, refers to the fact that by dismissing a certain literary work, critics determine its obsolescence allowing it to fall into oblivion. Critics, in fact, play a relevant role in determining the success of a literary work and supporting its circulation among readers. Consequently, among other reasons, it can be observed that the fact that certain texts obtain more prominence than others in influencing culture is also caused by critics.
In addition, it is interesting to stress that the work of critics is always based on the effect of certain (critical) lenses, which, by their very nature, shed light on specific textual features while neglecting others. Therefore, one can consider that while under a specific scope a text could end up appearing critically irrelevant – e.g., no innovative or original aspect is determined – the adoption of another perspective can lead to different evaluations. Because of this, I suggest that sustainability in the context of literary criticism regards the idea of reassigning attention to those works that have been disregarded or dismissed by critics with the purpose of disclosing aspects of value in them by adopting new, alternative critical lenses. As Angela Locatelli has discussed, literature remains an ecological phenomenon, considering the possibility of constantly re-reading texts through ever-new lenses (2007) However, it is important to consider that this effect is always the result of a critic’s efforts to reread, with a different focus, texts that have not received positive evaluations in the past, especially since a text per se cannot provide its own critical evaluations.

The constant re-reading of texts – and thus employing practices of sustainable criticism – can become a strategy for determining the quality of a literary work on the basis of the progress of its lifespan. Just like the possibility of reusing an object continuously reveals its degree of material quality, literary objects can be said to work accordingly. This consideration resonates well with both specific literary works and literary forms. One can consider, for instance, the quality of the sonnet as a literary form: since its ‘invention’ during the Renaissance, it has not stopped being ‘reused’ in an array of different contexts and it has been readapted to ever-new tropes. In this sense, as a literary form, the sonnet can be said to appear particularly sustainable for its capacity to be employed continuously, thus avoiding falling into oblivion.

However, discussions about the lifespan or the re-usability of a certain literary work can be also related to its resurgence in ever-new texts, along with the discussion on intertextuality, which, in general terms, regards “the need for one text to be read in the light of its allusions to and differences from the content or structure of other texts” (“intertextuality” OED, 2021). While intertextuality is a complex concept that cannot be fully discussed here without straying too far from my argument for sustainable pastoral criticism, it is still important to consider that this phenomenon is rooted in the idea of making use – and thus re-use – of elements and sections from other works. In fact, as
suggested by Graham Allen, intertextuality regards issues of “relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence in modern cultural life” (2010, 5), a consideration that also stresses the sustainable character of this practice. In fact, Allen’s employment of concepts like “relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence” (2010, 5) reveals an overlap with the vocabulary common to ecology when describing the correlation between human and nonhuman entities.

The notion of intertextuality is particularly beneficial for discussing sustainability in the pastoral, considering that this practice appears as a prominent characteristic of this literary phenomenon, as discussed in Chapter 1. Pastoral tropes, imagery, and characters, in fact, are often revived by authors from different epochs in the writing of new pastoral poems, thus ensuring the survival of certain conventions throughout history. One could consider, for example, the pastoral tropes of the *locus amoenus*: while originally introduced in the context of ancient Greek literature and in the representation of the countryside by Theocritus, it has continued to inspire writers when describing ‘pastoral’ environments throughout centuries. This trope, therefore, is visible in many literary texts from antiquity up to contemporary times.\(^{19}\) Or one can consider that typical pastoral literary forms, such as the eclogues, continue to reappear as conventional traits of pastoral literature in modern times. For instance, pastoral eclogues are distinctive features in Seamus Heaney’s collection *Electric Light* (2001), which, as I have discussed elsewhere, represents a valuable case for discussing references to the pastoral in light of current ecological concerns (cf. Rozzoni, 2021a).

The fact that the pastoral, both understood as a set of imagery (e.g., *locus amoenus*, but also Arcadia, idyllic countryside, shepherds) or formal features (e.g., the eclogues), maintains a strict connection with the idea of intertextuality has been extensively discussed by Thomas K. Hubbard. As already discussed, in his seminal study *The Pipes of Pan* (1998), he explores how many pastoral texts are related to each other by direct and indirect citations. This effect, for instance, is visible in the repeated presence of certain characters in pastoral works from different epochs: shepherd Moeris, in fact, appears in

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\(^{19}\) Beyond the several uses and misuses of this trope that Carsten Meiner identifies in his study regarding European literature between 1850 and 1930 (Meiner 2019), the *locus amoenus* allows one to bring an apparently old-fashioned image associated with ancient literature into the postmodern fantastic developing in contemporary literature, as Patricia García’s study on postmodern fantastic in contemporary literature also demonstrates (García 2018).
Theocritus *Idylls* and Virgil’s *Eclogues*, as well as in later poetic productions. Hubbard has linked this effect to another phenomenon which he considers typical of the pastoral – “literary filiation” – which captures the idea that a genealogy can be traced among the analysis of pastoral intertextual references, since they allow for retracing the development of certain pastoral trends throughout the centuries. Literary filiation invites critics to determine how certain (pastoral) texts have functioned as sources for other works, hence stressing which one functions as a prominent text for making possible further elaborations. In this regard, one can reflect on how Virgil’s *Eclogues* appears to be a prominent, prolific work as they have introduced a widely reused trope in literature: Arcadia, which, since its first appearance in the Latin world, has constantly re-appeared in a wide number of later pastoral poems – including Sannazzaro’s and Sir Philip Sidney’s eponymous pastoral works— is a useful notion for investigating literary filiation in the pastoral. As Allan Ruff also clarifies, “it is important to understand how Arcadia and the pastoral tradition has shaped, and continuous to influence, our design and appreciation of the landscape” (Ruff 2015, xi) as evidence of the relevance of certain pastoral tropes that never stop circulating in contemporary culture. Arcadia therefore can be said to represent a useful case study for acknowledging the sustainability of the pastoral on the basis of its repetitive employment (reuse) by authors. Thus, a form of criticism attentive to this aspect represents a form of sustainable literary criticism.

Discussing (pastoral) sustainable literary criticism invites scholars to reflect not only on how certain features of the pastoral have survived for centuries by constantly resurfacing in pastoral texts. Moreover, sustainable literary criticism sheds light on how these intertextual connections represent a way of acknowledging the contribution of certain works in prolonging the lifespan of (pastoral) forms and functions, rather than discussing this evidence as only repetitious and old-fashioned cliché. Through a ‘sustainable’ lens, in fact, the reiteration of certain modes and tropes underlines the productivity of the pastoral, and, therefore, determines them as elements for assessing the quality of this literary phenomenon. This consideration becomes relevant in my discussion on Edward Marsh’s *Georgian Poetry*, considering that, among the harsh critiques that it received at the time of its publication, there was the accusation of

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20 See, specifically, Jacopo Sannazaro’s *Arcadia* (1504) and Philip Sidney *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* (end of XVI Century).
prolonging surpassed tropes and literary functions from past epochs instead of bringing about aspects of innovation. While this topic will be discussed more attentively in Chapter 4, it is useful here to consider how, among the main expressions of dismissal toward this collection, persisted the idea that *Georgian Poetry* possessed a conservative and traditionalist spirit in contrast to the innovative character of Modernist poetry developing during and after World War I. Of this view was, among others, T. S. Eliot, who accused the Georgians of being late-Romantic – “Wordsworthian”, “decorative, playful or solemn minor-Keatsian” (see T.S. Eliot’s review, titled “Verse Pleasant and Unpleasing”, *The Egoist*, March 1918, pp. 43-44, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 215). Hence, the alleged (late-)Romantic references of certain Georgian pastoral poems appeared primarily as aspects that lowered the critical quality of the collection. In response to this evaluation, I suggest that a sustainable literary criticism can provide a different assessment.

When adopting a sustainable critical perspective on the pastoral, a revision of the (mis)assumptions and (mis)interpretations of Edward Marsh’s anthology can be reassessed as signs of literary quality. Hence, the pastoral becomes useful for extending the life span of Georgian poems by making them significant for a current public to read. Or attention can be dedicated to reflecting on how the link between the Georgians and the Romantics represents a baseline for establishing a dialogue between Marsh’s collection and present-day ecological issues, particularly after scholars established ecocriticism as a legitimate way to reexamine Romanticism and see it as possessing valuable potentials in this sense. An example of this approach is Jonathan Bate’s ecocritical reexamination of Romanticism through an ecocritical lens (1991), which underlined how the Romantics – particularly Wordsworth – exhibited a keen ecocritical sensibility. I suggest that Georgian pastoral lyrics echoing his works should be accordingly aligned with this perspective. Another example is Stuart Curran’s observation that “[a]ll the major Romantic poets who approach pastoral either in terms of specific generic convention or even as a mode, tend to internalize it, making it a psychological perspective or conceptual arena” (1989, 111). Along this line, one can consider Romantic references in Georgian poetry as aspects that allow for investigating the authors’ “psychological perspective” especially when it concerns environmental issues, considering that the “pastoral [represents] a locus of natural values” (Curran 1989, 111).
Hence, by following the insights offered by the concept of reuse, my proposal to develop a sustainable criticism in order to achieve a postdualistic and postanthropocentric discussion of pastoral poetry invites scholars to focus on disregarded poems by reassessing the critical value of their references to previous texts or trends. In particular, intertextuality serves as a useful element for reevaluating disregarded pastoral literary works as an indicator of the quality of literary works, trends and tropes, by assessing their capacity to survive throughout centuries, to be reused, and readapted to ever-changing urgencies.

3.3 Reduce: Weakening Anthropocentrism for a More Pluralistic Pastoral

“Reduce”, which also appears among the popular 3Rs of ecology, serves as another useful concept for determining an alternative ‘sustainable’ form of literary criticism capable of engaging with the study of pastoral poetry in a postdualistic and postanthropocentric way.

In a general sense, this concept relates to the following idea: “to lower, diminish, lessen; to make smaller; (also) to limit” (“reduce” OED, 2021) especially in regard to one’s attempt to establish a lifestyle aimed at decreasing levels of production and consumption for the sake of the environment. In fact, reducing the numbers of products often leads to a minor usage of (natural) resources, while less consumption normally lowers the rate of pollution, as has been widely discussed in different studies on sustainability in reference to multiple sectors (see, e.g., Huutoniemi and Tapio 2014; Fam et al. 2016). The notion of ‘reducing’ also appears in contraposition to the habits characterizing Western contemporary societies, which center around purchasing, consuming, and producing beyond actual needs. Of note in this discussion is Jeff Dondero, who signposts this dynamic as a feature of the consumption trends of the Baby boomer generation. Specifically, Dondero defines the latter as “the only generation that simultaneously fought for a greener world and at the same time created a throwaway culture capable of hurrying itself in its own garbage” (Dondero 2019, xiii).

While the American environmental movements in the 1960s and the 1970s already provided evidence of the necessity to enact a shift in the behavior of capitalist society along the notion of “reduce” – this concept still plays a key role in current times, for it indicates a path toward achieving a more sustainable future. In fact, the notion of reduction, especially when applied to waste and pollution production, is often evoked
within the growing debate on new possible economic models, movements, and lifestyles as alternatives to the logic of the already discussed throwaway culture. One example is the so-called ‘circular economy’: a consumption and production model that “minimizes the actual amount of waste [and that is] generally opposed to a traditional, linear economic model, which is based on a ‘take-make-consume-throw away’ pattern” (Sillanpää and Chaker 2019, 9). Circular economy has been proposed as a possible alternative to dominant economic models in the present-day world by different scholars and sectors, including Christian discourse.\footnote{Circular Economy is one of the main economic concepts discussed in Pope Francis’ \textit{Laudato Si’} (Pope Francis 2015), the encyclical letters that have initiated a world-wide confrontation among economists and scholars regarding the possibility of rethinking the traditional domains of economics in the way one approaches the natural world from a Christian perspective. They are inspired by the philosophy of Franciscanism. While Rosi Braidotti discussed it as Pope Francis “supplementing Catholic dogma on Natural Law, with Naomi Klein’s analysis of the destructive role of Capitalism” (Braidotti 2019, 66), the interest of the Catholic Church in the economic discourse – and in CE as an alternative system – has recently been developed within the movements entitled \textit{The Economy of Francesco}, which pursues the development of a new sustainable economic paradigm based on Franciscan philosophy (for further info see \textit{The Economy of Francesco} 2021).} Moreover, the idea of reduction as a strategy for rethinking mental and material habits can also be observed in connection to contemporary ecological movements. An example of this is the ‘zero waste’ movement, which aims to develop lifestyles with a minimum waste impact (Johnson 2013).

The concept of reduction involves the idea of reducing the environmental impact, thus showing the broader implications that this notion possesses not only in regard to daily habits and personal practices of consumption, but also in reference to wider discussions on planet Earth. The notion of reducing, in fact, works both at a micro- and at a macrolevel, thus offering evaluations that span from daily habits (e.g., reducing waste in household activities) to wider reflections concerning the global environment (e.g., reducing gas emissions for the benefit of the atmosphere).

‘Reduce’ can be applied in the context of literary studies, to refer to the idea that certain conceptual domains should be narrowed in order to give space to different evaluations – specifically to more pluralistic, ecological perspectives and practices. Just like the Anthropocene, for instance, can be understood as the outcome of dualistic and anthropocentric thinking (Ferrando 2019, 22), it becomes evident that limiting the influence of these perspectives favors the emergence of other (opposite) viewpoints. Several scholars in ecocriticism have already claimed that a limitation of anthropocentrism can encourage an improvement in environmental quality, as it can
inspire more ethical forms of relationality with the environment. Roberto Forns-Broggi, for instance, discusses how it is well established that “ecocriticism demonstrates notable progress with respect to limiting anthropocentrism's enormous influence, pointing out the asymmetrical power relations that have justified the mistreatment of animals” (Forns-Broggi 2016, 114) and other nonhuman entities. Hence, one can consider how reflecting on ‘reducing’ through a more figurative and philosophical viewpoint represents a valuable operation for delineating forms of sustainable future, among more material practices.

Posthumanism has embraced this discussion within the domains of philosophy. Donna Haraway (2008; 2016), for instance, has extensively discussed that responsibility and accountability are intellectual practices that allow for constraining dualistic figurations of the environment, as well as for prompting more ethical and pluralistic forms of relationality between humans and nonhumans. Or, as Bozalek et al. remind us in regard to the pedagogy of “response-ability” offered by Haraway, “taking responsibility means being accountable for the non-innocence in our intra-actions and the non-innocence of the agential cuts that are enacted” (Bozalek et al. 2018, 106). In this sense, being aware of the biases that can affect one’s perspective on one’s surroundings is essential for developing more sustainable practices, since it allows anthropocentrism, as a dominant cultural narrative in Western culture, to be rediscussed.

In this alignment, I suggest that in order to become sustainable, literary criticism should come to terms with all these aspects. That is, scholars should make explicit their intent to approach texts through a perspective that negotiates the anthropocentric assumptions embedded in Western thought. Specifically, I argue that in the study of literary texts, stress should be placed on those narratives in a text that center on nonhuman entities and their relationality with humans, instead of concentrating only on human-centered issues in more traditional scopes. Reducing anthropocentrism when pursuing a literary analysis, moreover, resonates with one’s capacity of maturing keener hermeneutical practices concerning issues of human-nonhuman connectedness. By expanding a critic’s perspective beyond the human – and humanist axioms – pluralism becomes central, which allows one to unveil valuable aspects of a text, favouring its critical reevaluation.
The pastoral can be observed as a particularly effective site for applying a similar approach considering the relevance that nonhumans play in pastoral representations. Despite having been predominantly regarded along dualistic figurations for centuries – such as human/nature, and rural/urban, as discussed in Chapter 2 – the establishment of a pluralistic critical viewpoint for literary analysis can still provide new evaluations of this phenomenon. In fact, as discussed, in recent years a critical revision of the traditionalist framework on the pastoral has been conducted thanks to ecocriticism, and it has more attentively focused on “the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty 1996, xviii). As discussed, neologisms such as the post-pastoral (Gifford 1999), the dark pastoral (Sullivan 2017), the necro-pastoral (McSweeney 2015), and the postmodern pastoral (Corey and Waldrep, 2012) all converge in highlighting more pluralistic perspectives on the environmental potentials that the pastoral entails. However, while a rediscussion of anthropocentrism occurs in several critical works on the pastoral, the specific use of postanthropocentric perspectives represents a missing link in this scholarship. In response to this gap, it is my intention to adopt the concept of ‘reducing’ for making explicit the attempt to provide more relevance to the role of nonhuman entities represented in a pastoral poem, thus disclosing the potentials of latent ecocritical narratives for alternative interpretations of pastoral poems.

Relating this discussion to the study of *Georgian Poetry* is particularly beneficial for revealing new aspects or values when decentering the human in the evaluation of the pastoral poems that the anthology includes. As has already been discussed, the Modernist critique between the late 1910s and early 1920s resulted in a negative evaluation of the collection by primarily reproving the Georgians for representing a “school of the wistful, the dreamy, the unsatisfied and the faint” (Ross 1965, 198). The Georgians’ reliance on the pastoral and natural imagery was fundamental for determining such an evaluation. In this regard, it is J. Middleton Murry’s famous affirmation that “the corporate flavour of the coalition is a false simplicity” (see J. Middleton Murry’s review, titled “The Condition of English Poetry”, *The Athenaeum*, 5 December 1919, pp. 1283-5, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 232) which addresses the idea that Georgians’ pastoral poems primarily represent replicas of traditional traits from previous eras. Murry’s perspective is also representative of how the use of the pastoral by the Georgians became a target of negative criticism, generally for its perceived distance from the prevailing (early) Modernist aesthetics.
Oppositely, it can be said that this aesthetics favoured the urban and sinister imagery developing in the same years, as exemplified by works such as T.S. Eliot’s *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (1915). In addition, the critical excerpts provided suggest that the Modernist critical understandings of the pastoral, at the time of the publication of Marsh’s collection, continued along a restricted, dualistic figuration based on the country/city or rural/urban dualism. As the modernist aesthetics at the time primarily focused on urban locations, references to the rural environment in poetry, which the Georgians displayed, seem to have been evaluated negatively. This attitude, I argue, can also be read as testifying to a prevailing anthropocentric attitude in the literary critical tastes of the period, which prevented Georgian pastoral poems from being conceived of within the domains of more environmentally oriented assumptions, that developed only a few decades later.

Reducing anthropocentrism in the study of *Georgian Poetry*, therefore, resonates with two main trajectories: on the one hand, this effect invites critics to move beyond anthropocentric perspectives when evaluating the collection, thus exceeding the aforementioned critical dismissal of this collection. By reducing this principle, on the other hand, new readings of (pastoral) Georgian poetry become possible, which favor the disclosure of the latent environmental trajectories that these poems contain, as references of the environmental discourse that was growing in early twentieth-century England (Sultzbach, 2016). Unveiling these environmental trajectories allows them to inform readers about the critical value of this overlooked anthology and to establish a dialogue between it and current ecocritical discourse.

Therefore, theorizing a ‘sustainable literary criticism’ for the study of pastoral poems, the notion of reducing anthropocentrism, and other traits typical of dominant Western figurations, becomes fundamental for allowing the emergence of latent narratives in past texts resonating with current ecocritical epistemology. In this sense, evidence is offered about the critical values of disregarded texts, which, considering their usefulness in providing models of ethical relationality between humans and nonhumans, can eventually appear as deserving to be reevaluated in present times.
3.4 Recycle: Recirculating Pastoral Texts and Tropes Due to Their Renewed Topicality

Recycle has perhaps become one of the most popular concepts in current ecological thought, as well as one of the most epitomizing actions for endorsing the development of a sustainable lifestyle in the contemporary world. The OED identifies it as a quite recent term: its first appearance, in fact, can be observed in 1924 as meaning “[t]o reuse (material) in an industrial process; to return (material) to a previous stage of a cyclic process” (“recycle”, 2021). However, it is only in the 1960s that the term was adopted in the context of waste management, in the sense of transforming waste “into a usable form [and] to make [it] available for processing into a reusable form” (“recycle” OED, 2021).

Concerning waste management, as Erns Worrell and Markus E. Reuter remind, recycling relates to “the reprocessing of recovered materials at the end of product life, returning them into the supply chain” (2014, 5). This definition sheds light on the lifespan of used or discharged materials when discussing ‘recycle’, hence focusing on how this process allows, in certain ways, for the prolonging of their lifespan by regularly re-introducing them into the cycle of production. In a broader sense, recycle becomes useful for rediscussing the very notion of ‘waste’ since the process that it refers to describes the transformation of waste into a re-source: instead of being discharged, for instance, certain materials, including plastic and papers, undergo specific treatment for realizing ever-new products. This process fosters sustainability in relation to the capacity of recycling to minimize environmental degradation through a considerable reduction of waste production.

If regarded through a broader scope, recycling can also be observed as a concept capable of affecting community lifestyles, from daily habits in domestic environments to wider economic paradigms. In this sense, Oswald J. Schmitz observes that “[s]ocieties actively participate by discarding all manners of products into recycling bins or other repositories. It has become a matter of course, and understood as a contribution toward environmental stewardship” (2017, 168). Moreover, the reliance of recycle on keen ecological principles allows one to see it as a crucial action for safeguarding the environment. This aspect is stressed, for instance, in Worrell and Reuter’s observation that “[r]ecycling is not a goal in itself, but rather an essential tool out of a whole toolbox to better manage natural resources” (2014, 9). It is also found in the idea that individual
recycling behaviors hide deeper environmental attitudes: Joanne Vining and Angela Ebreo’s collection dedicated to this topic expresses this notion by exploring the predictability of engaging with practices of recycling in communities on the basis of their attachments to ecological principles (cf. Vining and Ebreo, 1992). Therefore, recycling should be regarded as a complex topic endorsing an array of ecological implications. On the one hand, it refers to material, practical processes of transforming materials from waste to resources; on the other hand, it expresses deep environmental consciousness favoring the development of ethical reflections on the way humans and nonhumans should relate in order to pursue a sustainable future.

In the past few years, the concept of recycling has also been adopted, along similar perspectives, in the field of literary criticism. Different scholars have, in fact, employed this notion for developing more environmentally inspired approaches when evaluating literary texts. Specifically, increasing attention has been dedicated to the phenomenon of ‘waste aesthetics’, which critically explores the relationship between waste and ethics in an array of artistic manifestations, including literature, film, and theater (cf. Morrison 2013). Investigating how expressions of waste reveal the humanity that many communities around the world share (cf. Morrison 2015) or how it “foreground[s] the wide-ranging interactions between humans, machines and diverse matter” (Harrison 2016, 128) in theater performances are among the study objects of waste aesthetics. Hence, the concept of waste has increasingly acquired new implications in the present-day world. Beyond revealing a high level of complexity, this aspect stresses its importance in developing useful social, cultural, and ethical considerations regarding how one can cope with many challenges brought about by the Anthropocene connected to waste. For instance, along this line, one can explore how waste-related imagery in literature offers readers the opportunity to discuss current environmental epistemology while re-regarding Western canon through a more environmentally oriented perspective, as, among others, Morrison explains (Morrison 2015, 1). Inscribing the notion of recycle within the field of literary and cultural studies, therefore, allows one to attribute new values and implications to the image of waste both on a literal level (that is, the imagery in the text) and on a metaliterary level (as a tool for conducting literary analysis). In this second sense, it is possible to consider Kalaga et al.’s observation that this notion – recycle – is being increasingly adopted for investigating processes such as repetition,
renewal, and cyclicity in the production of new literary and cultural texts (Kalaga et al. 2011).

Therefore, through its metaphorical, ecocritically inspired understanding, the concept of recycle is useful for delineating a sustainable literary criticism in the sense of addressing the interest of critics seeking to recuperate disregarded phenomena, works, authors, and trends before recirculating them and reassessing their overlooked values. Despite losing their appeal and centrality in the critical discussion – thus becoming, in a sense, a form of literary waste – certain texts, can, in fact, still be reintroduced into contemporary critical discussions by shedding light on their literary values and capacity to dialogue with contemporary cultural discourses. In reference to the idea of pursuing a postanthropocentric and postdualistic literary analysis, therefore, I argue for a shift in the analytical processes that critics use towards a poem, for instance, by disclosing new narratives within it by discharging hegemonic humanistic interpretative patterns. This perspective resonates with Donna Haraway’s discussion on how, along a similar line, today “the transcendental authorization of interpretation is lost, and with it the ontology grounding ‘Western’ epistemology” (Haraway 1991, 152-153). Hence, by reassessing the centrality of human-nonhuman enmeshment when determining the evaluations of a literary text, new aspects of value can emerge from past texts, which dominant figurations at the base of critical Western traditions have obfuscated.

This discussion appears particularly effective when applied to studies on the pastoral and pastoral poetry. The pastoral’s engagement with representations of the environment, in the many possibilities in which this process can occur, represents a useful case study for reassessing the relevance of nonhumans when conducting a critical discussion. Even though traditional critical perspectives on the pastoral primarily involve figurations of the nonhuman through dichotomies, as observed in Chapter 2, a ‘recycling’ sustainable critical perspective calls for a revising of this critical trend in a more pluralistic sense. Particularly, I suggest that a sustainable critical pastoral perspective should proceed along the main reflections related to the two ways of interpreting the notion of ‘recycle’: first, a critical observation can occur similarly to treating discharged materials and reinserting them into the production cycle. In a more metaphoric way, I argue that the nonhuman entities that dwell in certain pastoral representations/poems – rather than being neglected when pursuing a critical evaluation – should be included anew.
in the understanding of a poem. Hence, a critic’s interest should not be solely dedicated to shepherds’ feelings and love dynamics between the human subjects inhabiting a pastoral scene, but also to how, for instance, the plants and the animals represented in the poem contribute to enacting certain effects.

The second aspect through which recycling can function as a metaphoric concept guiding an alternative perspective of pastoral poetry relates to how ‘recycle’ suggests the maturation of wider considerations on the environment. For instance, one could explore how pastoral texts function as tools for conveying ecological values in today’s culture. To clarify, this effect is similar to what Hubert Zapf observed when he stresses that literature acts as “cultural ecology” for its capacity to affect society and shape its relationship with the environment in a more ethical way (2016). In this sense, recycling is relevant because the recirculation of dismissed or overlooked pastoral works invites current readers to reevaluate them as sources for prompting new discussions on alternative behavioral praxis towards the environment, in response to the crises of the present-day world. However, this potential can also be acknowledged in a more retrospective way. In fact, recycling can be considered in relation to the rediscovery of the ecocritical value of certain disregarded pastoral poems, which allows one to acknowledge that traces of environmental awareness were already available at the time in which the poem was composed. Therefore, what a sustainable form of literary criticism allows for in contemporary times is recirculating the ecocritical potential of past texts, which, consequently, serve to inform today’s audience of the capacity of past pastoral poems to continue to affect contemporary discourses and lifestyles.

The anthology *Georgian Poetry* is particularly effective for conducting this operation. Though this will be more attentively discussed in the next chapter, it is necessary here to point out that the current critical reputation of the anthology is characterized by the general understanding that it represents a conservative collection of limited critical value. And despite the critical reputation of *Georgian Poetry* is grounded on what Robert H. Ross determined as “widespread acceptance of oversimplified stereotypes and half-truths” (Ross 1965, ix), it is undeniable how a certain critical framing operated by key (early-Modernist) literary critics in the first half of the twentieth century has contributed to grounding this limiting belief. As anticipated, many of the negative critiques of the anthology center on the fact that Georgians prolonged Romantic trends
by allegedly replicating past clichés (in regard to which the adoption of the pastoral remains crucial), in a time when this imagery was perceived as outdated. An example of this type of critique came from T. S. Eliot, who attacked neo-romanticism in the Georgians through expressions like “Keats, Shelley and Wordsworth punish us from their graves with the annual scourge of the Georgian anthology” in regard to *Vol. III* (see T.S. Eliot’s review, titled “Verse Pleasant and Unpleasant,” *The Egoist*, Marc 1918, pp. 43-4, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 214). As it will be more extensively discussed in Chapter 4, these considerations are not difficult to be conceived of as the result of the clash between different aesthetics, the (early) Modernist and the Romantic one, under many perspectives: among the most evident differences between them, one can consider T. S. Eliot’s adoption of deadly and crude scenarios of his early poems (e.g., *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (1915) and *The Waste Land* (1922)) significant distancing from the typical landscape representations of the Romantics. Yet it is important to stress that Modernism does not mean an absence of environmental sensibility or imagination: in fact, despite remaining latent for several decades, ecocritics have recently rediscovered this sensibility in many Modernist authors (Sultzbach 2016). This burgeoning scholarship fosters the idea that the assumptions of the dismissal of *Georgian Poetry* by its contemporaries are partial and somehow simplistic.

Hence, readdressing critics’ attention to a more ecologically oriented reading of the pastoral in *Georgian Poetry* represents a useful occasion for demonstrating a) the fact that multiple literary periods, phenomena, and trends still necessitate an ecocritical re-reading; b) that latent ecocritical trajectories can disclose valuable opportunities for informing current readership of the growing environmental sensibility present during the period of their composition; and c) that Edward Marsh’s collection can be reappraised as a relevant text for addressing pressing ecological issues of our times. Consequently, recycling the pastoral poems in *Georgian Poetry* and re-circulating them – together with their latent environmental trajectories – in and out the field of literary criticism, offers a unique opportunity to inform them about their topicality in light of current crises, which the environmental sensibility offered by the Georgians can contribute to approach attentively.
3.5 Rot: Reassessing the Pastoral as a Baseline for a Critical Reevaluation

While the previous R-words regarded concepts comprising the popular ‘reuse, reduce, recycle’ motto, the following two sections discuss two additional environmental keywords, among many others through which the 5Rs model has developed in different combinations. As anticipated, selecting which among the many possible additional R-concepts could be included in the present discussion on pastoral sustainable literary criticism was not an easy task. Eventually, a selection was made by choosing those R-concepts appearing particularly beneficial for developing a critical perspective on the pastoral, along the principles of postdualism and postanthropocentrism. “Rot”, specifically, appears as a valuable notion for enacting a textual reevaluation.

A general definition of it, in fact, determines rot as a process by which “dead body, flesh, or bones of a person or animal […] undergo natural decomposition, typically by the action of bacteria and other microorganisms” as well as a synonym of “to decay; to putrefy” (“rot” OED, 2021). This verb thus regards the material transformation occurring in an organism after its death, that is, after the alleged end of its lifespan. Considering what has already been discussed in reference to a product lifespan when discussing “reusing”, rot seems, at first, to postpone the discharging of a certain object or material. Rot, in fact, determines the status of a product that is undergoing processes of biological degradation. The negative implications associated with this process are also evoked in the second, more figurative definition of the term, which the OED describes as “decline or decay, esp. morally or socially; to diminish towards extinction, go to waste;” (“rot”, OED, 2021). In light of these considerations, one wonders: how can the concept of rot function as a guide for delineating a sustainable literary criticism when it is embedded within the notion of mortality, and when it is aligned to the production of waste?

While the concept of rot may appear to contradict the notion of sustainability – which aims at a minimization of waste production for the sake of the environment – through a more ecocritical perspective, the apparently negative implications associated with ‘rot’ can be revised, especially when embracing the reflections matured in the burgeoning field of new materialism. Just like new materialism claims a reassessment of the centrality of matter and materiality when conducting reflections on cultural phenomena (cf. Iovino and Oppermann 2015), there is evidence that traditional notions of life and death – the latter, particularly intended as “the permanent cessation of the vital
function” (“death” OED, 2021) – are also being rediscussed. In fact, on a material, biological level, discussing the death of a certain organism does not prevent one from observing the continuation of the biophysical alterations, alongside the process of decay and putrefaction.\(^{22}\) Hence, rot, in a new materialist perspective, assumes valuable implications that favor acknowledging processes of material transformation, occurring after the alleged death of an organism.

Furthermore, it is useful to underline that, in recent years, ecocriticism has begun focusing on processes generally attributed to the notion of ‘rot’ – including decomposition from actions of bacteria or fungi, putrefaction, and decay – for assessing more complex evaluations of the environment beyond the traditional constraining, dualistic evaluation. It is, for instance the case of “dark ecology” proposed by Timothy Morton, which delineates a new ecological aesthetics that “puts hesitation, uncertainty, irony and thoughtfulness back into ecological thinking” (2010, 16) and that welcomes apparently negative imagery in the figuration of the natural world. This effect responds to the illusory, limiting figuration of the environment as a pristine idealized world offered by, for instance, traditional pastoral perspectives. In this sense, according to Morton “ecological thought includes negativity and irony, ugliness and horror [...]. Ugliness and horror are important, because they compel our compassionate coexistence to go beyond condescending pity” (2010, 17). Hence, the imagery connected to the process of rotting becomes important for enacting a degree of complexity in current figurations of the environment, which aims to negotiate longstanding dualistic assumptions.

For what concerns practices of waste management, rot represents a useful conceptual tool for coping with excessive waste production, especially in the context of domestic consumption. As discussed, for instance, by Ayilara et al. (2020), dedicating oneself to the practice of rotting – and composting, in the sense of decomposing one’s own organic waste, for example, from cooking – allows one to produce natural fertilizer and to reduce the production of waste since the latter is transformed into new and useful material. Moreover, as suggested by many manuals on home gardening and sustainable practices (Campbell 1998, Pleasant and Martin, 2008), domestic rotting favors one’s

\(^{22}\) For a more attentive discussion on new materialisms’ destabilization of the ontological boundaries that have traditionally separated life and death, one can consider the studies of Braidotti 2013, 114-115; Mbembe 2003, 40; Morton 2016, 44-45. For what concerns forms of nonhuman life in both organic and inorganic matter that have previously been assessed as inert, see, for instance, Bennet 2009.
involvement with environmental-friendly behaviors and prompts deeper relationality with the nonhuman world. Gardening, self-production of vegetables, and other outdoor activities connected to composting are representative of a sustainable lifestyle, which therefore, allows one to see rot as a functional concept for guiding my refiguration of traditional dualistic pastoral literary criticism.

While rot describes acts of material decay and transformation, it also refers to the possibility to reflect on similar processes through a wider, figurative sense. Studies on the so-called “aesthetics of decay” are particularly beneficial in this sense. Dylan Trigg, for instance, observes how remnants of post-industrialism and postmodernism, particularly in reference to derelicts of industrial building, represent samples of new forms of aesthetic regarding contemporary spaces (Trigg 2006). With a more ecocritical stance, David G. Haskell explores rotting in relation to how “[t]he microbial life under our feet may be more richly beautiful than the obvious grandeur of a mountain sunset. In rot and scum we might find the slimy sublime. This is ecological aesthetics: the ability to perceive beauty through sustained, embodied relationship within a particular part of the community of life” (Haskell 2017, 275). This consideration makes evident how the notion of rot possesses valuable potentialities in addressing an array of topics and issues for a more complex understanding of human-nonhuman relationality.

Other discussions connected to the notion of rot in current scholarship, which are useful for delineating a possible sustainable pastoral criticism, come from, once again, Donna Haraway’s investigation on human-nonhuman relational ethics. In Staying with the Trouble (2016), the philosopher illustrates that ‘compost’ represents an important concept for emphasizing the nature of the entanglement between humans and nonhumans by affirming: “I am a compost-ist not a posthumanist-ist. Critters – human and not – become-with each other, compose and decompose each other, in every scale and register of time and stuff in sympoietic tangling, in ecological evolutionary developmental earthly worlding and unworlding” (2016, 97). In this discussion, Haraway stresses how the biochemical processes involved in the creation of compost – that is the decaying of organic material by rotting – are evidence of the symbiotic relationality involving different forms of life. Therefore, reflecting on imagery connected to rotting in literary texts is also beneficial for guiding a possible postdualistic and postanthropocentric textual analysis: readdressing discussions on biochemical processes of decaying and
decomposition appearing in a poem through an ecocritical viewpoint, therefore, invites scholars to acknowledge its potentials in offering a more attentive understanding of the environment and of the ethical forms of relationality between the human and nonhuman entities inhabiting it. Approaching this discussion on rot through a more meta-literary stance is also valuable for understanding how dismissed and neglected texts can still undergo processes of reevaluation. Just like organic discharged material, through rotting, finds new life in becoming fertilizer – forgotten or dismissed texts can instrumentalized to produce reflections which are beneficial and new.

Adapting these considerations on rot to the study of the pastoral appears particularly successful. In fact, one should consider how the pastoral has long been discussed in intertwinement with issues cognate to the idea of rot, such as mortality and putrefaction. Contrary to the limiting idea that the pastoral solely regards the representation of a bucolic, pristine realm, death has long represented a key notion in the understanding of the pastoral. Among the most relevant pastoral tropes in this sense is “et in Arcadia ego” (I too [lived] in Arcadia), an expression that has appeared in several different pastoral manifestations beyond the literary domain. As Erwin Panofsky observed in his seminal essay on this topic in the field of pastoral painting (1936), the elegiac tradition is representative of the pastoral since antiquity, and, consequently, critics should commit to consider this issue more attentively by focusing on the representation of death in the pastoral. While Panofsky’s perspective remains primarily anthropocentric since its focus relies first and foremost on human subjects dwelling in the pastoral realm, new discussions of the engagement between mortality and the pastoral have emerged in literary criticism. McSweeney’s study on the necropastoral, for instance, has made evident how the new ways of experiencing ‘nature’ in the Anthropocene led to novel ways of interpreting the pastoral, which became apparent as “a political-aesthetic zone in which the fact of mankind’s depredations cannot be separated from an experience of ‘nature’ which is poisoned, mutated, aberrant, spectacular, full of ill effects and affects” (2014, n.p.). McSweeney discusses how the pastoral is “not an ‘alternative’ version of reality but it is a place where the farcical and outrageous horrors of Anthropocenic ‘life’ are made visible as Death” (2014, n.p.), in which way she invites scholars to take into account texts in which death-related imagery, motifs, and themes offer new perspectives on the idea of the environment. These perspectives – echoing the principle that Timothy Morton
determined with the expression “dark ecology” (2016) – also become a way for rethinking and expanding the semantic boundaries of the pastoral. As McSweeney clarifies, the themes of decay, putrefaction, and transformation should become a baseline for critics to rediscover current ecological concerns in new expressions of the pastoral.

Discussions on death also relate to the pastoral in a more meta-literary sense: after great success, at least until Romanticism, the pastoral has seen a gradual loss of popularity and critical appeal. John Barrell and John Bull (1974) famously observed that the pastoral fundamentally dies after Hardy, only to resurge in conjunction with the rise of early ecological discourse, which, at the time, began manifesting itself. As the two critics affirmed: “with the current concern with ecology, it is not difficult to anticipate a revival of interest in the Pastoral – Industrial Man looking away from his technological Wasteland to an older and better world, a rural equivalent of the sort of middle-class nostalgia” (Barrell and Bull 1982 [1974], 432). Hence, thanks to Barrell and Bull’s words, it is possible to consider that – while the pastoral never actually stopped existing in culture – the development of ecocriticism has favoured its resurgence as a key phenomenon in contemporary times regarding the representation of the environment. This shift from a critical death to a new revival can be said to resonate dynamics of rotting.

Just like ecocriticism has favored a resurgence of the pastoral as an interesting literary case for investigating issues of human-nonhuman relationality, I posit that ecocriticism also favors the reevaluation of the pastoral poems contained in the anthology Georgian Poetry. In this sense, the notion of rot appears particularly valuable: the presence of the pastoral, in fact, is considered among the main reasons leading to the negative reception of the Georgians by the Modernist critique; but, in an ecocritical perspective, it represents the baseline for realizing the reassessment of their value. The rustic elements in the Georgians’ poems, for instance, brought Murry to dismiss their works and say, “the corporate flavour of the coalition is a false simplicity” (see J. Middleton Murry’s review, titled “The Condition of English Poetry”, The Athenaeum, 5 December 1919, pp. 1283-5, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 232). A similar stance can be detected in Amy Lowell’s discussion on how “[t]he English countryside is here [in Georgian poems] in all the old tones and colours”, by which Lowell emphasized that what she acknowledges as the pastoral possesses old-fashioned and traditionalist characters (see Amy Lowell’s review, titled “Weary Verses”, The Dial, 1920, pp. 424-31, reprinted
in Rogers 1977, 256). Aligned to this perspective is the reputation of the Georgians in later evaluations, where the pastoral is still indicated as one of the main reasons for their critical dismissal, as already discussed.

In the logic of rotting, however, this negative evaluation of the pastoral also represents the rationale for conducting a positive reassessment of their critical value. Just like rotting, as has been mentioned, is a process of “natural decomposition”, which involves breaking down and disintegrating organic materials, the pastoral in the Georgians can be said to have contributed to enacting – in a more figurative sense – a collapse of their literary work’s reputation. However, while rotting represents an apparently negative process, it simultaneously reveals positive effects: just like organic decomposing material become fertilizers, fostering an ecological cycle, the element assessing the negative reputation of Georgian Poetry – the pastoral – can become the element reassessing its critical value. In this sense, the pastoral becomes visible as the turning point for enacting the critical reevaluation of the anthology.

3.6 Repair: Restoring the Critical Reputation of Dismissed Pastoral

The concept of ‘repair’ concludes the 5R-structure through which I intend to delineate a possible form of sustainable literary criticism in order to re-discuss the pastoral in a postdualistic and postanthropocentric perspective. Concluding my argument with this concept stresses, again, the proactive attitude of my study in alignment with the affirmative approach inspired by Rosi Braidotti’s posthuman philosophy (2019), which I identified as a guiding light for conducting my study on the pastoral.

Repair can be understood primarily to mean “to restore (a damaged, worn, or faulty object or structure) to good or proper condition by replacing or fixing parts; to mend, fix” (“repair” OED, 2021). In this sense, central to the notion of repair is the aim of reestablishing an object to a status which characterized it before it somehow became damaged. Within my previous discussion on waste management in throwaway societies, the idea of repairing a broken object, rather than dismissing it, becomes an effective action, strategy, or habit in order to avoid the production of extra waste. When repaired, in fact, an object, obtains an expansion of its life-span – in alignment with what has already been observed when considering the previous ecological Rs. However, through
the notion of repairing, attention is dedicated to restoring the efficiency of certain products due to their obsolescence or after getting broken.

The concept of repairing is increasingly gaining relevance in advanced capitalistic societies as a strategy for enacting alternative sustainable practices. As John Wackman and Elizabeth Knight consider, for instance, fixers – that is people working to repair broken objects – have the capacity to influence habits of consumption culture while prompting ecological ethics by “reduc[ing] how much stuff goes into the waste stream” (2020, 4). Moreover, communities of fixers, which have grown in number in the past few decades, can also have an impact on affecting societies, alongside contributing to spreading values such as care and raising awareness of the worth of material objects. By observing, for instance, the growth of Repair Cafes in the United States, Wackman and Knight reflect on the notion of “repair” as increasingly influential for inviting members of communities to investigate their relationship with waste, while making them “mindful of [their] consumption, [their] relationship with ‘things,’ and [their] relationship with our Earth” (2020, 17). Hence, the notion of repair becomes useful for both determining sustainable material practices, and for eliciting ethical behaviors.

Along this line, Scott Keiller and Martin Charter investigate how ‘repair’ allows for enacting a wider net of connections between one person and the economic, social, and cultural systems around them. As Keiller and Charter state, beyond increasing a product’s longevity, repairing is also crucial for grounding sustainable notions such as Circular Economy (CE) “which can delay the generation of waste from disposal and slow down the consumption of resources in the production of replacement products” (2019, 270). And while CE can be determined as “an economic system that replaces the ‘end-of-life’ concept with reducing, alternatively reusing, recycling and recovering materials in production/distribution and consumption processes”, as Kircherr et al. affirms after examining the contents of 114 definitions of CE, it becomes evident how repairing also allows one “to accomplish sustainable development, which implies creating environmental quality, economic prosperity and social equity, to the benefit of current and future generations” (2017, 224-225). Therefore, a wide array of ethical aspects emerges when discussing the notion of repair which requires us to more than solely approach it as referring to material practices for minimizing waste production or environmental depletion.
This consideration regarding the notion of repair in current scholarship is also supported by the growing field of ‘repair studies’, which offers transdisciplinary reflections on the relationships between humans, nonhumans, and the material enmeshment of society, culture, and politics. As Valeria Graziano and Kim Trogal illustrate, today increasing attention is being paid to how “the labour of repair can extend solidarity politically and economically between human and non-human actors, creating and sustaining explicitly mutual and equitable forms of organization, that direct themselves towards degrowth economies and ecologically diverse futures” (2019, 221). In relation to this research, therefore, repair – and its multiple complex implications – reveals significant ethical potentials that can inspire practical effects in the development of new behaviors toward the environment. This effect is particularly interesting when it is considered alongside my discussion on sustainable criticism since it sheds light on the ethical potentials that adopting a repairing perspective of literary works may have, especially when functioning as a strategy for responding to some of the issues raised by current environmental crises. In a broader sense, I discuss that, through the notion of ‘repair’, literary criticism becomes sustainable when critics commit themselves to finding ways for reevaluating literary works that have been corrupted by certain limited critical framings. In response to this condition, the reevaluation that I aim for regards the possibility of adopting a new, alternative, critical lens, which can highlight overlooked aspects in a certain literary work through the framework of ecocriticism.

The notion of repair is not new in literary criticism. While it has not been explicitly discussed in reference to ecological principles, Mary C. Fenton and Louis Shwartz, for instance, have adopted the concept in their book To Repair the Ruin (2012) in order to clarify their intention to restore the critical value of John Milton by assessing the author’s rhetorical style. Specifically, the scholars observe how close reading functions as an attempt to close the gap between different time periods and as an act of repair that uses the past to reenvision a present (cf. Fenton and Schwartz 2012). As this reflection validates, the notion of repair comes to identify a possible metaliterary operation that allows for a reevaluation of an array of works, including those written by well-established authors, such as Milton. By underlying that specific textual features of a poem did not receive adequate attention in previous critical assessments, the concept of repair functions
as a guideline for undertaking the “revisionist” glance (Clark 2011, xiii) that ecocritics often evoke.

Similar observations are offered by Janet Fiskio, who, in her book Climate Change, Literature, and Environmental Justice. Poetics of Dissent and Repair (2021), examines the connection between climate disruption and white supremacy through reference to repair theories. Specifically, Fiskio analyzes frontline communities that fight against environmental racism by observing how the idea of repair is often included in texts by these communities. The presence of this concept, the author informs, serves as a signal for discussing the contribution of these communities in preserving their environment with acts of environmental justice. Therefore, even when approached as a topic-related search, the notion of repair functions as a helpful device for enacting a critical reevaluation of literary and cultural phenomena. Finally, it is useful to consider Héctor Hoyos’s critical study on practices and approaches of reading literary texts in the perspective of World Literature. Specifically, he claims that “[r]epairing the inequities of World Literature and adopting a truly cosmopolitan axiology require deeper engagement with the literary events of others” (2019, 60, emphasis added). Through these thoughts, the idea of repairing becomes evident as charged with critical, metaliterary implications, specifically in the sense of negotiating dominant trajectories in the evaluation of certain literary cases.

Approaching the pastoral through a critical lens inspired by the notion of repair – aligned with the inferences provided by the previous paragraphs – is therefore beneficial for my aim to theorize a form of sustainable literary criticism. In fact, while past manifestations of the pastoral often regard it as an old-fashioned trope with limited critical value, I argue that sustainable literary criticism should focus on how the pastoral in certain poems serves to establish a dialogue with the environmental urges of the present-day world, and that, consequently, these poems deserve to be rediscovered. This discussion should not be confused with the argument that Roger Sales offers in regard to the notion of “restore”, to which my sustainable 5Rs represents an ecocritical alternative. According to Sales, the pastoral appears as a form of spatiality that offers a healing effect to its author(s) and readers, in the alleged capacity of the pastoral to function as a (restoring) retreat from the troubles of (material) reality. Differently from Sales, my discussion on ‘repair’ produces more metaliterary and critical implications: when exposed to an
ecocritical lens, I suggest that the nonhuman entities that are included in a pastoral text gain wider attention. And while more stress is dedicated to discussions on their relationship with humans, a reflection becomes possible for coping with the environmental urgencies of our times, which sees in dysfunctional human-nonhuman relationship a main origin. In this perspective, even overlooked pastoral texts can be reevaluated for their topicality on contemporary ecological issues and their capacity to offer responses to these challenges: this condition leads to the need to reassess their critical value accordingly.

Based on what has been discussed, the case of Edward Marsh’s anthology appears particularly favorable for reflecting on how the idea of repair functions within sustainable pastoral criticism. As previously mentioned, the general critical evaluation of the collection was predominantly negative at the time of its publication, for which the pastoral in it was often perceived of as a sign of a lack of modernity. Considering repairing in reference to the critical reputation of the Georgians, therefore, results in a possibility for ‘restoring’ their (critical) reputation in the eye of current readership due to their capacity to inspire discussions on human and nonhuman connectedness – including references to modes of ethical relationality. Since this reflection resonates with the urgencies claimed by several studies in the field of the Environmental Humanities, elements of critical value become visible, thus preventing this collection from representing a form of literary ‘waste’ – in the sense of object of neglection and dismissal – within the domains of the archive of Western literature (Zapf 2020).

Exploiting the possibility of reframing dominant critical perspectives by approaching pastoral poetry through a postdualistic and postanthropocentric lens has served to elicit a metaliterary discussion on how principles from ecology can come to represent useful guidelines for assessing new hermeneutical trajectories in past, overlooked literary phenomena. The notion of sustainability represents a useful concept for theorizing alternative methods of literary analysis since it leads critics’ attention towards recuperating neglected works, by reassessing the importance of latent narratives – especially inspired by an ecocritical lens – while establishing their topicality in light of
contemporary cultural discourses. Specifically, just like sustainability involves changing one’s habits of production and consumption to minimize waste, a sustainable criticism aims to keep the critical discharging of literary texts at a minimum by demonstrating how overlooked texts can still offer contemporary audiences insights capable of responding to the ethical challenges raised by the Anthropocene.

In the previous chapter, I observed how interrogating pastoral texts beyond conventional dualisms, such as human/nature and country/city, among others, offers the possibility of identifying ecocritical potentials in past pastoral poems. In this chapter, I discussed a combination of the 5Rs of ecology – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rot, and Repair – as a way for delineating hermeneutical praxes over past pastoral texts through a metaphorical understanding of these concepts: their understandings in the field of ecology and waste management have been adapted to the field of literary criticism, establishing the following process that can be applied when approaching a pastoral text:

- **Reuse**: involves focusing one’s attention on past pastoral works that have been neglected by critics, by reassessing their critical value based on their capacity to touch upon contemporary environmental issues. Specifically, this concept regards acknowledging the productivity and long lifespan of the pastoral over time – as assessed by intertextuality – as a sign of the quality of this literary phenomenon.

- **Reduce**: involves re-reading a past, neglected pastoral poem by de-centralizing the role of human beings in its interpretation – that is, decreasing anthropocentrism in critical evaluations of pastoral texts. In this way, the concept of reduce sheds light on the relevance that nonhuman entities also possess in determining a critical evaluation of a poem, hence inviting critics to produce new interpretations of the poems based on a postdualistic and postanthropocentric perspective.

- **Recycle**: involves focusing on those pastoral texts that have been critically dismissed with the purpose of recirculating them again in contemporary literary and cultural debates, by acknowledging – and reassessing – their (eco)critical value as the result of applying ever-new critical perspectives on them;

- **Rot**: involves demonstrating how the elements that determined the critical dismissal of a text, such as the reliance on the pastoral in the case of Georgian Poetry, can become the very baseline on which one can operate a reevaluation of these texts by adopting a new
critical lens. This operation favors the emergence of new narratives, which consequently can re-establish the value of a dismissed literary work.

- Repair: involves a dedication of the scholars’ attention on fixing the negative reputations of certain pastoral poems based on the awareness that this result is due to the application of a specific, limited critical scope. In response to this effect, repair acknowledges the relevance of restoring the reputation of a disregarded literary work by applying a new perspective.

These five critical ‘Rs’ will be applied in the following chapters to conduct a sustainable literary analysis on a selection of pastoral poems from the five-volume anthology *Georgian Poetry*, with the purpose of enacting a reevaluation of it. Attention, therefore, will be dedicated to proving how re-reading these texts through a hermeneutical lens informed by current epistemology – and inspired by the dialogue between ecocriticism and posthumanism – allows for revealing latent narratives in this text as well as its capacity to address the ecological sensibility in the Georgian period. Hence, I wish to provide contemporary readers with valuable insights on the collection, which demonstrate its capacity to inspire ethical forms of relationality with the environment. In this way, I argue that a reassessment of this anthology in the archives of western literature is possible for the sake of maturing valuable considerations for responding to certain ethical issues that the Anthropocene has made evident.

Literature is no one’s private ground; literature is common ground. It is not cut up into nations; there are no wars there. Let us trespass freely and fearlessly and find our own way for ourselves.

*Virginia Woolf, The Leaning Tower*

When approaching a study of Edward Marsh’s *Georgian Poetry* in the context of the Environmental Humanities, the fact that a dichotomic understanding characterizes the dominant critical evaluation of the Georgians – as allegedly representative of a literary aesthetics countering Modernism – cannot be disregarded. In fact, just like this scholarship aims to challenge traditional dualistic assessments of literary and cultural phenomena, my study aims to reevaluate Georgian pastoral poems through a perspective that transcends binary thinking and reiterated critical (pre)conceptions on the environmental and the pastoral representations in the anthology.

By zooming in on the object of study of this dissertation, Chapter 4 provides a critical introduction to *Georgian Poetry Vol. I-V* through a more historical lens. This introduction is critical because it aims to negotiate the dismissive framing that still characterizes the leading evaluation of the anthology and that maintains that it is conservative, traditionalist, and detached from the historical context of the time of its publication. Modernist critics – particularly T.S. Eliot, J. Middleton Murry, and Edith, Osbert, and Sacheverell Sitwell – were crucial for establishing this reputation due to their trenchant activity in literary criticism in the late 1910s and 1920s. However, in spite of the rootedness of their evaluation of *Georgian Poetry*, in this chapter, I demonstrate the limits of a similar perspective by unveiling neglects aspects of the literary value of Edward Marsh’s anthology. On the one hand, this chapter (re)inscribes the collection within the environmental discourse which developed in early twentieth-century England, prompted, among other sources, by Darwin’s theories. On the other hand, I reassess the relevance of environmental narratives – especially pastoral ones – in the collection, by bringing forward disregarded reviews of the anthology, which somehow acknowledged a proto-ecological potentials of this work. In this sense, I discuss that, through an ecocritical lens, Georgian (pastoral) poems reveal aspects of modernity and topicality in the *milieu*
of early twentieth-century England in relation to their attentiveness to issues of human-nonhuman relationality, which emerge from their verses.

Precisely, subchapter 4.1 retraces the fundamental steps of the downward critical trajectory of *Georgian Poetry* by focusing on the reasons that led this work to be remembered primarily in negative terms. From an initial, generally positive feedback of the anthology as signaling an innovative trend in 1910s poetry, the collection obtained increasingly dismissive evaluations, especially since the rooting of the Modernist aesthetics during and after World War I.

Subchapter 4.2 problematizes the Modernist/Georgian dichotomy, which emerges as a popular narrative both at the time of the publication of Marsh’s anthology and in current evaluations. Specifically, this section addresses the limits of this dualism by stressing that the Modernist critique of the Georgians ignored the (eco)critical value of late-Romantic trends emerging in the anthology and its topicality in light of the growing environmental discourse of the early twentieth century.

Building on this evidence, subchapter 4.3 utilizes an ecocritical lens that re-interprets the late-Romantic trends that the Georgians embraced as eloquent traces of the growing environmental sensibility at the beginning of the twentieth century in England. To do so, a brief account of the environmental trajectory spreading between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is also offered in alignment with the achievement of ecocritical studies on Romanticism.

Subchapter 4.4 fosters the ecocritical reassessment of *Georgian Poetry* by discussing the anthology as a link between the growing proto-environmental discourses in the late nineteenth century and more modern ecological thought in the twentieth century. By relying on the recent attention of ecocritics to environmental narratives in Modernist writing, I examine the Georgians as anticipators of these trends. Eventually, subchapter 4.5 provides support for this evaluation by recuperating positive, overlooked reviews on the anthology which acknowledged aspects of interest in the green narratives emerging in *Georgian Poetry* – especially through the pastoral.

**4.1 (Re)Narrating the Georgians through a Critical Historical Lens**

Despite comprising dozens of writers active in the first few decades of the twentieth century and having been a major subject in the critical debate of the period, today,
Georgian Poetry represents a surprisingly disregarded work in English studies. A limited number of specific studies on this topic is available, and most of them date back to the 1960s when growing interest in this trend started to emerge after remaining neglected for decades. Current scholarly discussions on the Georgians are limited to brief entries and references in encyclopedias or handbooks of literature, which are also cohesive in proposing general evaluations on this literary phenomenon dominated by preconceptions and superficial evaluations.

As already discussed, today, the Georgians are, in fact, generally framed within a negative critical perspective, which often regards them as prolonging old-fashioned poetic cliches during a period of literary innovation – (British) Modernism. The alleged contraposition of the Modernist aesthetics and the Georgians can be observed, for instance, in the idea that the latter represented “minor poets, quite traditional in form devoted to what Robert Graves called ‘uncontroversial subjects’” (Baldick 2004, 140), or “poets who did not follow a modernist agenda” (Auger 2010, 126) while generally prolonging old-fashioned trends in the early twentieth century. Another key critique addressed toward the Georgians is that they contrasted with Modernists due to their apparent “indifference to the modern world” (Simon 1975, 2), and to the fact that they did “not recognize the modern situation […] the world of today, or the need to deal with it” (Spender 1963, 195, cited in Simon 1975, 3). In addition to this general evaluation, the

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23 For an essential bibliography on Georgian Poetry regarding works that already provide a critical perspective on the phenomenon, see: C. K. Stead’s The New Poetic: Yeats to Eliot (1964) and Robert H. Ross’s The Georgian Revolt: Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal, 1910-1922 (1965), which, as Myron Simon has affirmed, had the value of having corrected “the conventional characterization of the Georgian movement” in comparison to the dominant depiction in the previous fifty years (see Simon 1969, 121). In the 1960s, another useful source for discussing the Georgians was James Reeves’s edited collection, titled Georgian Poetry (1962), which assessed that “in many ways like the Romantics, the Georgian poets valued plain language and subject matter which reflected on the mundane and pastoral in contrast to the more complex language and philosophical speculations of the modernists”, as observed by Hawkins-Dady (1996, 564). Timothy Rogers’s Georgian Poetry: 1911-1922: The Critical Heritage (1977) is another useful source for discussing the Georgians, considering his attentive work on collecting reviews on Marsh’s anthology published during the 1910s and the 1920s. More recent studies on this topic include Hugh Underhill’s essay “From a Georgian Poetic to the ‘Romantic Primitivism’ of D. H. Lawrence and Robert Graves” and Gary Day’s contribution, titled The Poets: Georgians, Imagists, and Others (1993). In regard to scholarship published since 2000, it is interesting to report that James Richard Bridges wrote a PhD Dissertation in 2001 titled Georgianism Then and Now: A Recuperative Study, submitted to the University of Gloucestershire, which I unfortunately discovered during the very conclusive writing phase of my work. Finally, Marianne Thomählen’s study on “Modernism and Georgians” in her collection, Rethinking Modernism (2003), remains among the most recent, interesting works for supporting my rereading of Georgian Poetry, together with her rediscussion of Edwards Marsh in her 2020 essay, “Edward Marsh and Modern English Poetry”.

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dismissive reputation of the Georgians often regards their deployment of environmental imagery – especially the pastoral – insomuch that “Georgian” has come to represent “an often-arbitrary designation for a kind and insipid rural verse” (Millard 1991, 10).

As much as this evaluation of the Georgians is widespread and rooted, one should remember that this framing is only a limited depiction of a wider and complex phenomenon: this aspect is especially true if one intends to pursue a sustainable literary criticism, which, as presented in Chapter 3, invites scholars to regard disregarded or dismissed texts more accurately with the purpose of resurrecting their overlooked ecocritical potentials. In fact, by considering the critical reception of the Georgians at the time of the publication of *Vol. I*, it is possible to see that Edward Marsh’s anthology also received praise for its originality and innovative character, as will be later discussed.

In the following paragraphs, I therefore delineate the most significant steps of the evolution of the critical reception of this collection by illustrating its downward trajectory. While at first, the anthology gained approval from critics, after the publication of *Vol. III*, it gradually began to receive more negative assessments, which survive today. In presenting this account, I am indebted to the perspective offered by Robert Ross in *The Georgian Revolt: Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal, 1910-1922* (1965) which, in my view, remains one of the most attentive evaluations of this literary case, and the first to touch upon the influence of Modernist criticism about the anthology in the post-war years. However, I integrate Ross’s discussion with a more (eco)critical perspective by highlighting the limits of the early-Modernist dismissive critiques concerning the Georgians’ reliance on the pastoral, which did not take into account the innovative aspects of their discussions on the human-nonhuman relationship.

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24 Ross’s study serves as a pivotal source for this chapter, considering its contribution in providing one of the first critical assessments of *Georgian Poetry* in response to the dominant framing characterizing the evaluation of this anthology during the previous decades. Moreover, Ross’s argument about the “rise and fall” of *Georgian Poetry* in the critical literary environment of the 1910s and the 1920s appears particularly beneficial for my discussion on re-evaluating Georgian pastoral poetry through a postdualistic and postanthropocentric perspective: in fact, Ross’s vision supports my negotiation of the Modernist/Georgian dichotomy prevailing in dominant understandings of the Georgians at the time of the anthology’s publication. However, despite being majorly indebted to Ross’s work, as the multiple references to it show, I provide aspects of innovation in my work by repositioning Ross’s ideas within a critical reflection inspired by ecocriticism and posthuman studies: this approach guides my re-evaluation of the Georgians through the pastoral trajectory that runs through the collection.
‘Georgians’: a Terminological Clarification

Just like ‘pastoral’, ‘Georgian’ can be discussed as another “contested term” (Loughrey 1984, 8), considering the array of interpretations and meanings that have been associated with it throughout the decades. Even when limiting one’s attention to the context of English literature, this expression may, in fact, lead scholars to take different literary phenomena into account that have occurred in as many epochs: on the one hand, Georgian is often adopted to refer to the ‘Augustan literature’ produced under the reign of George I (1714-1727) and George II (1727-1760). However, the same expression also serves for addressing literary works written under the reign of George V (1910-1936). The latter represents the period under investigation in the present work.

This specification, however, is not sufficient for resolving the ambiguity that the label carries, considering the variety of artistic trends developing within the early twentieth-century English literary landscape. In a wider sense, ‘Georgian’ can, in fact, be ascribed to any literature produced between 1910 and 1936, from novels to poetry. In this perspective, the term designates a group of authors who were saluted as a breath of fresh air by many intellectuals of the time for offering a shift from prolonged traditionalist trends that originated in the Victorian period. For instance, one significant example of this understanding is Virginia Woolf’s praise of Georgian writers in her essay *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* (1924), in which she refers to those authors writing after 1910 as being representative of a new artistic impulse responding to the aesthetic domains of the Edwardians: while the latter “were never interested in character in itself; or in the book in itself” (1924, 105) Georgians, according to Woolf, provided a more attentive, deep exploration of the potentialities offered by literature through an innovative approach.

Yet other implications can be assumed when one reflects on the term ‘Georgian’ within the limits of British poetry in the first half of the twentieth century. In this regard, ‘Georgian’ presents (another) twofold interpretation: a) on a more temporal-based perspective, the label applies to the extraordinary abundance of poetic styles and movements that were during George V’s reign, from the literary vanguards to war poetry, passing through the literary experimentations, for instance, of T.S. Eliot; b) as a stylistic category, ‘Georgian’ refers to a specific trajectory within the complex network of poetic production under the reign of George V, often discussed as strictly connected to representations of the natural environment and trivial, intimate issues. This trend is
epitomized by the five-volume anthology titled *Georgian Poetry*, edited by Edward Marsh between 1912 and 1922, which is the object of study of my dissertation.

For what concerns the first evaluation, which discusses ‘Georgian’ through a more temporal-based perspective, it is important to remember that the years between the 1910s and 1930s represent one the most florid periods in the history of British poetry. Not only did an array of poetic movements, schools, and coteries flourish in this relatively short period – from the vanguards to more conservative trends; but a set of pivotal historical and cultural events took place in the Georgian era as well, from the World War I to an array of scientific and philosophical transformations. In this regard, it is useful to consider, again, what Virginia Woolf observed when affirming that: “on or about December 1910 human nature changed” (1924, 4). With this expression, Woolf acknowledges the scope of the renovative spirit that infused the English cultural landscape at the turn of the century, which led to what has been well-established today as the Modernist period.

With the term Modernism, it is a convention in literary criticism to refer to what Rachel Potter establishes as a wide array of “writers who exposed different views on writing, techniques, philosophy and form” (2012, 7) in response to the aesthetics typical of the Victorian period. This difference includes the spirit of innovation ‘to make new’ as Pound famously claimed, as well as a reassessment of the implications of literary tradition as T. S. Eliot illustrates in the seminal essay *Tradition and Individual Talent* (1919) among many other considerations. Modernism, therefore, represents a period of significant transformations in literature, involving both imagery and style that were perceived as enacting a break from traditional literary domains prevalent in the previous decades. It is not possible to offer a complete overview of this concept and literary category without the risk of providing a simplistic discussion. Moreover, this operation would exceed the purpose of the present chapter. The multiplicity of issues that Modernism entails – in terms of philosophical, stylistic, and cultural considerations, as well as the paradoxes and contradictions that comprise this topic – are, in fact, too extensive to be summarized in a few lines. I will therefore limit myself to discussing Modernism within the domains of British poetry, a circumscription which, however, does not want to overcome the problem of the pluralistic stance of this critical label.
As Giovanni Cianci has well established, when approaching this literary period, one should consider discussing it as *Modernisms*, in plural form, an expression that better accounts for the multiplicity of phenomena comprising it (1991, 15-40). In regard to this vision, it is also important to clarify that in my account of Modernism, especially in regard to the dichotomy Modernist/Georgian, I refer to the early phase of the movement starting from the late 1910s to approximately the mid 1920s, which primarily regards the aesthetics promoted by the writing of T. S. Eliot.

Yet I invite the readers of this dissertation to consider that the label Modernism cannot be confined to a similar evaluation, but it should be intended as embracing a much wider combination of processes, aesthetics and authors. In the course of this chapter, I will refer to the recent ecocritical attention dedicated to this Modernist literature, which, despite being a field of study still in its infancy, is useful for negotiating the main understanding of the expression Modernism which is rooted in the dichotomy Modernist/Georgian. Thanks to this scholarship, I suggest possible overlapping between these two apparently contrasting terms, as another way to stress the opportunity to enact a critical reevaluation of *Georgian Poetry*.

While reflecting on the term ‘Georgian’ in the second sense, thus conceiving of it as referring to a specific aesthetic category developing in the first half of the twentieth century, attention will be dedicated to a literary trend aligned with a wider renovative spirit characterizing that period, which, in British poetry, developed as a general “reaction against the ornate late-Victorian style in poetry” (Parker 1999, 1). The Georgians were undoubtedly distant from the spirit and the stylistic experimentation proposed by vanguard movements such as Imagism, Vorticism or Futurism; however, as will be later observed, Georgian poets expressed a certain similar resentment toward traditional fin-de-siècle literary forms and advocated for a more innovative writing style and artistic verve.

Another difficulty that emerges when discussing the Georgians regards the fact that this label refers to a broad and diversified group of writers that is too complex to be comfortably discussed in general terms. Even when limiting the perspective to Edward Marsh’s collection, ‘Georgian’ refers to almost forty authors active between 1911 and
who possessed very different styles and poetic interests. Moreover, one must consider that some of the poets attributed to this label, like D. H. Lawrence, are acknowledged as relevant names in Modernist literature, while others, like Rupert Brooke, are celebrated as representatives of the modern poetic spirit of the early twentieth century. In addition, the several volumes of the anthology obtained diverse critical evaluations, which make it difficult to determine a single, all-encompassing assessment of *Georgian Poetry* or of a supposed transversal ‘Georgian aesthetics’, contrarily to what is often indicated in the limited number of contemporary sources on this topic.

On this basis, it is evident how approaching the study of Georgian poetry means navigating through a complex intertwining of idiosyncratic critical evaluations, names, and poetic works. Therefore, establishing a clear principle when selecting the authors whom one intends to study when referring to Georgian poetry is necessary to avoid falling into the trap of perpetuating clichés and oversimplifications in regard to this literary trend. Therefore, I will focus on the poets and the works appearing in *Georgian Poetry*, the five-volume anthology edited by Marsh that was published between 1912 and 1922. This choice is due to three main reasons.

First, the fact that ‘Georgian’ represents a slippery label underlines the impossibility of determining which author writing between 1910 and 1939 can – or should – be considered as (a) Georgian. On the one hand, one can see how different critics determine some poets as Georgians, while others do not; on the other hand, certain poets who were considered to be Georgians did not acknowledge themselves as such. Therefore, instead of trying to determine certain characters for this label with the purpose of assessing ‘Georgian’ as a cohesive literary category, attention is placed on a specific, ready-made assemblage of poets and poems, which will be interrogated as a literary case, per se.

This consideration leads to my second reason for focusing my dissertation on Marsh’s anthology: this work represents a commercial and critical case within the poetic landscape between the 1910s and the 1920s, as well as a real trademark of the literature of the period in the sense that it fed, in different ways, the intellectual, literary debates of these years. Although the anthology contains only a small selection of the works

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25 For a detailed list of the poets appearing in Marsh’s collection, see the five volumes comprising the anthology published between 1912 and 1922.
published in the years 1911 and 1922 – which represents the timespan covered by the five volumes comprising Marsh’s collection – *Georgian Poetry* can be seen as representative of a specific aesthetics spreading in the era: this aspect can be understood considering the distinctive critical framing of this collection by contemporary critics, as it will be widely discussed in the following paragraphs. Moreover, considering the reliance of Marsh’s collection on environmental narratives and the pastoral, I argue that it is representative of its authors’ sensibility towards environmental discourses spreading during early twentieth-century England.

Third, the wide availability of materials regarding the reception of the anthology by its contemporaries (cf. Rogers 1977) allows one to investigate the impact of this project on the literary and cultural milieu of the 1910s and 1920s. Dissecting the negative reception that the anthology carries, and shedding light on the often-neglected trajectories related to it, facilitates my aim to conduct a critical reevaluation of the anthology, particularly when adopting an ecocritical perspective that attunes the pastoral in the collection to the growing ecological sensibility of early twentieth-century England.

**The Early Reception of *Georgian Poetry***

*Georgian Poetry* is representative of the broad spirit of literary and cultural renovation that marked England at the end of the 1910s. In response to the decadent *fin-de-siécle* atmosphere, which had prevailed in England since the end of the nineteenth century, many artists began calling for a new era, which could be more adequately representative of the increasing innovative atmosphere that infused European culture at the time. The early twentieth century was, in fact, a period of major cultural transformations, which involved all the areas of artistic production, from literature to painting, and which saw in the field of British poetry a particularly fertile site for development.

This innovative character of 1910s poetry developed in reaction to a period of stagnation that had characterized Britain at the turn of the twentieth century. At that time, in fact, the major names of Victorianism, including Matthew Arnold, Robert Browning, and Alfred Tennyson, had passed away, thus signaling the conclusion of a particularly prolific and successful era of British poetry. In addition, the establishment of a middle-class taste in the literary industry during the Edwardian era (1901-1914 ca.) set conservative standards, which manifested in the replication of literary models derived
from the previous successful literary generations. This effect, as Ross explains, determined, at the turn of the twentieth century, a prolongation of a general sense of pessimism and the spirit of hedonism typical of the decadence aesthetics, which is visible in the fact that Stephen Phillips and William Watson\textsuperscript{26}, for instance, can be considered as the most representative names of the identity of the English poetic landscape of that period (Ross 1965, 7). At the same time, theater and fiction, also due to the development of realism, witnessed an increase in popularity – as testified by the successful playwright activity of George Bernard Shaw and John Galsworthy.\textsuperscript{27} Poetry, instead, experienced a general lowering of interest which led, as said, to a ‘dormant’ period in poetry production (Ross 1965, vii). Yet this condition was destined to only last briefly, considering that, on the verge of the 1910s, British poetry became a successful site of exploration of the new literary aesthetics.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, a pluralistic generation of artists called for liberation from the literary conventions of the previous century through an array of movements. The rise of the literary vanguards exemplifies this momentum in their publications of manifestos illustrating new experimental forms of writing and values. Yet, within the artistic ferment of this new era, more provocative and radical forms of expressions combined less drastic – albeit still innovative – poetic trajectories. Among these were the Georgians, who, in spite of their distance from Futurism, Imagism, and Vorticism, received appreciation for their innovative character and originality, even by relevant intellectuals of that time. For instance, Henry James expresses approval regarding the vigor of the Georgians following the publication of \textit{Vol. I} in 1912, stating that: “They were all fresh and free and acute and aware and ‘in the world’, when not out of it” (James 1916, xxx, cited in Ross 1965, 15).

\textsuperscript{26} See Ross who, in reference to Phillips and Watson, observes: “Conservative to the core, with a ‘disconcerting fragrance of Wordsworth and Arnold about them,’ these men carried over into the new century some of the less happy aspects of the old: the tone and diction of Tennyson in the ‘Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington’, the ornateness and sentimentalism of Coventry Patmore; the Carlylean conception of the pot as \textit{vates}, but shorn of Carlyle’s power and fervor; the high seriousness of Arnold, but without Arnold’s understanding of the grand style; and a pseudo-Wordsworthian concept of nature, but lacking both Wordsworth’s majesty and his philosophic mind” (Ross 1965, 7).

\textsuperscript{27} See Ross’s comments: “In the age of Bennett and Wells, Shaw and Galsworthy, when most English non-poetic literature was oriented toward a sober, serious representational realism, it seemed a curious anachronism that poetry should have turned to little nature lyrics, pastoral effusions on the beauties of certain rural counties, or unconsidered trifles about moonlight and nightingales” (Ross 1965, 3).
It is in this spirit of novelty that Edward Marsh launched his anthology *Georgian Poetry*, insomuch that it can be considered as “play[ing] a part in the revolution in technique which overtook English poetry from 1910 to 1920” (Ross 1965, 239). The idea that the anthology belonged to a similar progressive environment emerges also in the preface that Marsh wrote for *Vol. I*, in which he establishes how the fact that “[t]his collection, drawn entirely from the publications of the past two years, may if it is fortunate help the lovers of poetry to realize that we are at the beginning of another ‘Georgian Period’ which may rank in due time with the several great poetic ages of the past”’ (Marsh 1912, i). These words provide evidence that, at least based on Marsh’s intentions, an innovative feature characterized the poems that he selected for his project, in the sense that, in his vision, they could delineate a new poetic trajectory signaling the development of a new poetic era.

However, it is fundamental to stress how, differently from other literary movements in vogue at that time, Marsh “did not intend to describe, strictly speaking, a new school of poetry much less launch a coterie. His proud adjective was more connotative than denotative. It was intended to distinguish his own poetic era from the Edwardian decade with had preceded it” (Ross 1965, 3). The anthology, therefore, should be considered more in reference to Marsh’s intention to highlight a spontaneous trend among young poets, which, in his view, deserved wider public acknowledgment within the frenzied literary landscape of their time, rather than as launching a new trend or school, or establishing certain aesthetic patterns. This aspect is visible in the fact that the Georgians cannot be discussed as a cohesive group and that no clear common features can be easily detected. Related, also, is the popular discussion on the fact that Marsh assembled a set of contemporary poets mainly in accordance with his own literary taste, rather than following a specific aesthetic manifesto, or a declared and recognizable organizational principle (Gale 1978, 72). Yet, this variety is significant when one intends to approach the Georgians – and particularly the anthology *Georgian Poetry* – as offering a glimpse of the literary and cultural era, within which the voice of poets are representative of emerging discourses. In the case of Georgians, I discuss that they were particularly representative of the environmental awareness developing at the time.

A brief focus on the figure of Edward Marsh is also useful for further highlighting the innovative character of the anthology. Marsh was a leading figure in the cultural
landscape of his time. On the one hand, he played important roles as a civil servant, including as Winston Churchill’s secretary. Moreover, having graduated from Cambridge, where he was also a member of The Apostles, he dedicated himself to different literary projects, from the collection *Georgian Poetry* to serving as Rupert Brooke’s literary executor. Recently, Marianne Thormählen has called for a more attentive evaluation of Edward Marsh by discussing him as “the indefatigable promoter of a fresh and vigorous kind of verse that breathed new life into English poetry in the early twentieth century” (2020: 727). This framing provides even more emphasis on the fact that both Marsh and his literary project should be seen as characteristic of the innovative spirit of 1910s British literature, differently from the dismissive narratives established by Modernist critics in the same period.

Timothy Rogers acknowledged that the authors included in the collection are “diverse both in quality and kind” (xii), while Marsh affirmed: “to my fond eye those who have graced these collections look as diverse as sheep to their shepherds” (Marsh 1939, 392 cited in Ross 1965, 216). However, in spite of the diverse works included in the collection, it is still possible to outline some transversal features among them. As Ross describes by paraphrasing Marsh, some points in common among the poems regard “spiritual euphoria, a sense of vitality, anti-Victorianism, realism, and freedom of poetic diction” (1965, 237). These aspects are useful for understanding the Georgians as a distinctive trajectory in early twentieth-century British literature. Moreover, far from being considered solely as secondary, minor authors in the period under examination, one should consider how several names included in the first volume of the anthology, such as Gilbert K. Chesterton, William H. Davies, and Gordon Bottomley were established figures in intellectual debates of the time.

Another aspect of the literary value of this editorial project regards the fact that another key personality of early twentieth-century British literature is involved in the project: Harold Monro, who served as the publisher of *Georgian Poetry*. Monro was the head of the Poetry Bookshop, a pivotal institution for the development of English modern

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28 The Apostles is the name of an intellectual society comprised of Cambridge University members. The Apostles organized weekly meetings to discuss an array of topics. The group, also known as the Cambridge Conversazione Society, was founded in 1820. Bertrand Russell, G. E. Moore, John Maynard Keynes, and Ludwig Wittgenstein participated in the Apostles discussion group. For a further discussion on The Apostles, see Lubenow 1998.
poetry. While Monro was “a friend to all the poets of his own generations” (Sitwell 1949, 34, cited in Grant 1967, 2) the Poetry Bookshop also became a hub for many intellectuals during its existence between 1913 and 1926. Monro’s Bookshop was much more than a place where people could buy poetry: it was a popular meeting point for public readings, intellectual debates, as well as a publishing house. This combination of different activities allows for seeing the Poetry Bookshop as another aspect for regarding Georgian Poetry as a pivotal literary case of early twentieth-century England. This brief overview should also help one to reflect on how the phenomenon of the Georgians should be considered within a wider nexus of literary and cultural phenomena, and that approaching the study of this collection with an attentive, broad glance is crucial.

Georgian Poetry was not initially planned as a long-term publication series, as is also proven by the very genesis of the collection. As Ross reminds, in fact, “the idea for that was to become Georgian Poetry originated, strictly speaking, not with Marsh but […] with Rupert Brooke” (Ross 1965, 92). Rupert Brooke, the young poet who was seen as a relevant voice in the future of British literature by his contemporaries, as well as “the best of all that Georgian group” (Pound 1950, 59, cited in Ross 1965, 93), met Marsh at Cambridge in 1906. A keen, intimate friendship soon transformed into a more professional one, considering how Marsh initiated Brooke’s tutelage and introduced him to the growing circles of poets and intellectuals forming around his persona, including poets such as Wilfred W. Gibson, Harold Monro, and Lascelles Abercrombie. The first volume of the anthology came into existence as the result of multiple discussions and evaluations between the two friends: while Brooke envisioned the collection as a possible volume of experimental verse, Marsh supported the idea of focusing on “fully evolved and finished works” considering that experiments “were best confined to the poet’s rough note-book” (Hassall 1959, 190, cited in Ross 1965, 98). This observation clarifies what is often considered as Marsh’s poetic taste inspiring the genesis of Georgian Poetry and suggests the line that the anthology maintained through the vivid literary ferment of the 1910s and 1920s. It was not a random combination of works, but rather an attentive

29 For a further discussion on the critical reception of Brooke’s work and on his appeal as a young poet in the literary landscape of 1910s Britain, see Nigel 2014; Miller 2017.
30 For a further discussion on the personal and professional relationship between Rupert Brooke and Edward Marsh, see Hassall’s biography on Edward Marsh (Hassall 1959) and Edward Marsh’s memoir dedicated to Rupert Brooke (Marsh 1918).
selection of representative poems published in the period. The same consideration is valid if one reflects on the divergence of Brooke and Marsh in regard to the idea of adopting the term ‘Georgian’ in the title of this project. While according to Brooke, the term “sounded too staid for a volume designed as the herald of a revolutionary dawn” (Hassall 1959, 189-98, cited in Ross 1965, 98), Marsh stressed that “the work contained multiple connotations of newness and vigor” (Ross 1965, 98); therefore, according to Marsh the term ‘Georgian [poetry]’ was somehow self-explanatory of a period which “was itself as new and hopeful as the renaissance in poetry” (Hassall 1959, 189-98, cited in Ross 1965, 98). Hence, the fact that Georgian Poetry was conceived of as an expression of literary innovation since its origin represents another element that contrasts with current evaluations of the collection as primarily a traditional and conservative work.

What also makes the study of this anthology relevant for the purpose of better understanding early twentieth-century British literature is the success that it obtained, particularly with the publication of the first two volumes. When Vol. I was launched in 1912, commercial acclaim did not take long before manifesting itself: only seven months after its launch, the book had reached its sixth edition (Ross 1965, 206). The sales of Vol. I became evidence that Marsh’s project had recognized the (evolving) taste of the public, which, as has been said, had remained primarily conservative in the first few years of the twentieth century. Consequently, Marsh’s collection – at least its first volumes – not only represented a case within the editorial landscape of its time but is also became a distinctive work epitomizing the cultural-literary spirit of the public during this period.

The success of the first volume was replicated with the publication of Georgian Poetry Vol. II (1913-1915) in 1915. This result fosters the idea that Marsh’s project represented “fresh evidence of the vitality of the new poetry” as well as a “confidence in a renascence, a new surge of creative energy in poetry” (Ross 1965, 120) particularly as a reaction to late-Victorian-age taste, despite taking certain aspects from poetry developed at the time. For instance, the fact that the dramatic poem appears as one of the most distinctive forms in Georgian poems may apparently contradict their attempt to react against “late-Victorian tediousness” (Ross 1965, 121) – considering the mastering of this poetic style by eminent Victorian poets such as Robert Browning. However, a distinction is to be made between the fin-de-siecle verse which emulated the style of Tennyson and Browning, which were “written too exclusively for the study” (1965, 122), and the
Georgian echoes of similar past stylistic features. As Ross in fact affirms, the Georgians can be aligned with Ezra Pound’s claim of the necessity for modern poetry to move against Victorian “poppycock” – including “painted adjectives impeding the shock and stroke of it” (Ross 1965, 120). The Georgians, in this sense, contributed to “liberate their poetry from what they considered the two major nineteenth-century vices: Victorian lushness – the ‘cult of decorated adjectives,’ as Richard Aldington called it – and fin de siècle enervation” (Ross 1965, 120).

As further evidence of the innovative character of the Georgians, especially in the early phase of their development, it is finally interesting to cite Harold Monro’s discussion on how the verve of the group could be summarized with the engaging motto: “Poets of the modern world! Write us plays, simple, direct, depended for their beauty, not on outward decoration, but on inward force of the spirit that conceives them” (Monro 1912, 132, cited in Ross, 1965, 122). However, the success of the first two volumes of the anthology was destined to shift in concomitance with another abrupt event that caused a major change in the cultural milieu of the 1910s: World War I. Not only did this event cause significant effects with new styles, imagery, and discourses breaking into the arts, but World War I also determined a change in the domain of literary criticism when new aspects of interest gained prominence.

4.2 Revising the Critical Evaluations of the Georgians through an Ecocritical Lens

It is interesting to observe how, in 1965, Robert Ross underlined that his study on the Georgians represented “little beyond some of the first, rough historical spade-work” to reorganize and provide a more attentive examination of the Georgian phenomenon (Ross 1965, ix). And in spite of his hope that future scholars would “turn their efforts toward evaluating the Georgian achievement in light of our contemporary critical norms” (Ross 1965, ix), the Georgians have remained rather neglected in English studies. This condition has not changed today in spite of the development of the ever-new trajectories offered by cultural and critical studies in literature, especially during the 1970s, which functioned as a particularly successful frame for revising and revaluing overlooked phenomena, authors, and works: no Marxist reading of Edward Marsh’s collection is available; and no one has revisited the anthology based on Gender or Postcolonial studies, even though
different aspects relevant to these viewpoints can be detected in it. Offering an ecocritical re-reading of *Georgian Poetry*, therefore, represents an original approach.

As discussed in Chapter 3, when illustrating the notion of reframing, establishing different assumptions when approaching literary or cultural phenomena offers scholars the opportunity to determine new evaluations of them. Accordingly, when proposing an alternative critical observation on early twentieth-century British literature that distanced itself from the dominant Modernist/Georgian dichotomy, new aspects of critical interest can be derived from many Georgian poems. In addition, transcending the primary, formal-oriented perspective guiding the Modernist evaluation of the anthology between the 1910s and the 1920s serves as an effective strategy for challenging critical hierarchies implicitly established by binary thinking (cf. Ferrando 2019). This effect, in fact, allows one to pursue a postdualistic overview of the Georgians in alignment with the purpose of this dissertation. By conducting this operation, the present sub-chapter aims to disclose latent narratives that allow for acknowledging aspects of ‘modernity’ in *Georgian Poetry*, especially in relation to how the pastoral enriches discussions on human-nonhuman connectedness and relationality. In this way, my work functions as a possible way for responding to Ross’s urge to develop updated, contemporary reading(s) of the Georgians that are capable of reassessing aspects of critical value in them while negotiating their limited, (still) dominant assessment.

The wide reliance of Georgians’ poems on environmental imagery, and specifically on the pastoral, supports the hypothesis that an ecocritical re-reading of the anthology is useful for conducting a reevaluation of the anthology. In fact, the conspicuous number of references to animals, plants, and natural landscapes throughout the collection informs readers about the (latent) ecocritical potentials in *Georgian Poetry* even from a quick glance. While this aspect will be investigated more attentively in the literary analysis proposed in Chapter 5, attention will now be placed on how reinscribing Marsh’s anthology within the environmental discourse characterizing the cultural landscape of their epoch provides evidence of a proto-environmental sensibility comprising them in the context of early twentieth-century England. This condition, I suggest, is particularly evident when it comes to exploring the way(s) in which the Georgians display a sense of ontological connectedness between humans and nonhumans in their poems. By shedding light on this neglected trajectory in the evaluation of the
anthology, following the idea of pursuing sustainable literary criticism, I wish to reevaluate the reputation of Georgian Poetry. By discussing the Georgians’ attunement to the environmental discourse developing at the time, it is thus possible to negotiate the claim that the Georgians’ deployment of the pastoral represents an attempt to escape the realities of their time, while instead discussing it as a baseline for determining the anthology literary value. In order to subvert the still-dominant critical framing of the Georgians, it is useful to offer a preliminary overview of the ecological discourse that was developing in early twentieth-century England to better identify the cultural substrata on which the environmental imagination of the Georgians matured.

Since the advent of ecocriticism, a growing number of scholars has been working on retracing evidence of (proto-)environmental discourse in fictional and nonfictional texts from past epochs. From this ongoing scholarship emerges the idea that traces similar to contemporary reflections on the relationship between humans and nonhumans can be found in literary works from potentially every epoch since antiquity (cf. Schliephake 2016). Past literary sources, therefore, have come to represent useful sites for developing reflections connected to present-day ecological pressures.

Jonathan Bate’s pioneering ecocritical study on Romantic poetry is particularly significant for demonstrating how traditional critical domains often prevented scholars from acknowledging the ecological values of certain past texts, due to restrictive – often dualistic – figurations of the natural world when conducting literary analyses. And while, along the line offered by Bate, more and more scholars have been re-regarding literary periods through an ecocritical lens, from Anglo-Saxon literature (Estes 2017; Paz 2017) to contemporary literature, there remain missing links. The period examined in this dissertation, a section of the Georgian period spanning from 1911 to 1922, is one of these still-neglected pages in the archives of Western literature by ecocritics. This condition is surprising if one considers that its endpoints – Victorian and Modernist periods – have obtained, or are in the process of receiving, significant (eco)critical attention in the past few years. The following paragraphs, therefore, respond to this gap by providing an overview of some of the most relevant traits of the environmental discourse on the verge of the twentieth century in England, as a preliminary operation for better retracing the ecocritical potentials offered by the Georgians’ environmental imagination.
My discussion begins by taking a few steps backward from the publication of *Vol. I* (1912) with the purpose of more attentively investigating the context in which the environmental sensibility of Georgians, as expressed in their poems, developed. By ‘environmental sensibility’ I do not refer to possible discussions on Georgian Poetry regarding pollution or other environmental concerns during the 1910s. Instead, I mean the attention that these poets dedicated to reflecting on representations of the nonhuman realm alongside issues of human-nonhuman relationality and connectedness. In reference to this understanding, perhaps the most representative occurrence in the British public’s discourse of the second half of the nineteenth century is related to the publication of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. Not only did this work represent a watershed for the maturation of early posthuman awareness, in the sense of rediscussing the dualistic axioms of Western thought in evaluating the notion of ‘human’, as conceived at that time (Braidotti 2019, 31); but also, despite criticism and ongoing re-discussions about it, *On the Origin of Species* still inspires scholars to pursue ecology-oriented studies on literature and culture. Before proceeding further, a brief clarification on the use of the expression ‘ecology’ is beneficial here.

The expression ‘ecology’ has not been deployed here superficially, but with the intent to stress how this concept began circulating in the very period under examination, as further evidence of the keen environmental potentials of the cultural milieu in which Georgians developed. It was, in fact, in 1866 that the term “ecology” (“Oecologie”, see Haeckel 1866, 286) was first adopted by the German zoologist, Ernst Haeckel, with the idea of describing the “the comprehensive science of the relationship of the organism to the environment” (Haeckel 1866, 286) or as a way for referring to a “branch of biology which deals with the relations of living organisms to their surroundings” (“ecology” OED, 2021). The introduction of this concept in culture is conventionally considered to be a turning point for the development of a wider, deeper (cf. Naess 1973; Naess 1991), and more mature (cf. Buell 1995) environmental awareness, both within and outside of the domains of scientific research, even though it is evident how similar sensibilities began appearing (much) earlier. One can consider, for instance, how intellectuals such as Alexander von Humboldt (1769 – 1859) and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744 – 1829) paved
the way for the maturation of future studies on ecology since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Or, through a wider scope, one can reflect on how theoretical evaluations aligned with Haeckel’s perspectives of ecology – in the sense of studies “deal[ing] with the relationships between living organisms and their environment” (“ecology” OED, 2021) – can still be traced in ancient times (cf. Egerton 2012). However, it is since the establishment of ecology as a discipline that a more systematic discourse on issues of relationality concerning organisms and their surroundings began to develop, even within wider cultural debates involving, among other fields, literature.

In the context of British culture, moreover, it is important to consider that this discourse was particularly vivid in the late nineteenth century. This country was the birthplace of an array of key figures who greatly contributed to modern ecological thought. Among these figures are Alfred Russel Wallace, Henry Walter Bates, Richard Spruce, Joseph Dalton Hooker, and Thomas Henry Huxley, who, in different ways, enhanced the awareness that the natural world should be regarded as a complex system. In this sense, it is no surprise that England is the country where the term ‘ecosystem’ was first introduced by botanist Arthur G. Tansley in his study, *The Use and Abuse of Vegetational Terms and Concepts* in 1935, which I already discussed in Chapter 2. Hence, when reflecting on the cultural context of England spanning from the second half of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century, it is important to acknowledge the vivacity of the environmental discourse, with which, I suggest, Georgians should also be aligned.

Due to the limits of this dissertation, my attention will be dedicated to a few, particularly representative texts that testify to the relevance of this discourse, of which, as anticipated, Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859) is by far the most significant. *On the Origin of Species* is universally considered to be the founding book of one of today’s still most accredited theories of evolution (the theory of natural selection), as well as a point of no return in the establishment of the issue of human-nonhuman connectedness, both on a material and a more conceptual level. As a scientific theory postulating that organisms evolve over time through natural selection, Darwin embraced the increasing attention towards theories of evolution emerging in these years, while assessing a critical response to the established belief on natural theology prompted by the Church of England. This traditional approach, in fact, primarily acknowledged natural
phenomena on the basis of what was established in scriptures and religious dogmas (cf. Robinson 2012; Francis 2012).

According to Morton, despite modern thinking remaining “willfully ignorant” of the British scientist, “it is Darwin who thought through many of the complex and hard-to-face issues that confront the ecological thought” even though the term ‘ecology’, as has been said, did not appear in this history until 1866 (Morton 2010, 18). Darwin labeled himself as a naturalist and his discipline as natural history. However, his attention towards patterns and processes that determine the organization of life through(out) evolution already provides evidence of how he exceeded the limits of this discipline, while somehow anticipating an awareness towards complex sets of relationships between organisms, which the notions of “ecology” and “ecosystem” would systematize a few years later. It is also important to consider that Darwin’s insights are not forcibly detached from the cultural context in which his research matured and that they should be inscribed into the wider nexus of studies that has been developing since the beginning of the nineteenth century. This broad and diversified scholarly field, in fact, revealed a cohesion in the idea of dissecting the complexity of the nonhuman world and associated issues of relationality with human beings. Hence, it is evident how discussing the environmental discourse characterizing a certain historical period cannot be done by taking into account a single work or person, but that, instead, a broader, pluralistic net of research and researchers should be considered, just like Devin Griffiths observed when stressing how Darwin “is much larger than any single work or idea” (2018, 62).

To understand this consideration, it is useful to address how, in posthuman studies, Darwin’s acumen pertains to a special kind of appreciation, among other issues, “as preliminary indications of the breakup of [the] unified Enlightened subject” (Bolter 2016, 1) typical of western traditional thought. Sigmund Freud, in fact, named Darwin as the second greatest affront to human narcissism after Copernicus. According to him, Darwin dramatically challenged the dominant, western anthropocentric perspective, while defying human exceptionalism and promoting a sense of ontological connectedness with

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31 Among them, for instance, is Frank Birkin and Thomas Poleise, who inscribe Darwin in a wider nexus of scholars influencing the scientific community during the period under examination, whose research, in different ways and under different scopes, converge along a general innovative understanding of evolutions, echoing Linnaeus’s studies: among these scholars were, for instance, geologist Charles Lyell (1797 – 1875) and the ornithologist Gilbert White (1729-1790). For a further discussion on the scientific community surrounding and influencing Darwin, see Birkin and Poleise, 2012, 88-96.
the nonhuman (Braidotti 2019, 31). Present-day scholars are also inclined to acknowledge Darwin and Darwin-inspired studies for their capacity to negotiate the rootedness of dualistic domains in traditional evaluations of human subjectivity (Serle 2013; Peters 2020), as further evidence of their relevance for the development of contemporary posthuman (and ecocritical) epistemology.

In this regard, one should keep in mind that science and biology do not represent the only areas of culture testifying to the spread of a new ecological sensibility in late nineteenth-century England. Traces of a growing ecological awareness should be also regarded in the broader cultural context, including the domains of literature. In the second half of the nineteenth century, evidence of the maturation of a keener sensibility towards issues of relationality between humans and nonhumans, and reconceptualization of the axioms of traditional western thought can be found, for instance, in the work of George Eliot. In addition to translating Baruch Spinoza’s *Ethics*, whose relevance for the development of current debates in (Critical) posthumanism has been discussed by Braidotti (2013; 2019), some of her novels also contain traces of the maturing environmental sensibility of the period: most notably *Middlemarch* (1874). This novel represents a multilayered study in human nature, which offers a portrait of a number of memorable characters; yet it also resonates with Spinoza’s thought (Fay 2017) in the sense that, just like Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have determined in their reinterpretation of the Dutch philosopher (Deleuze 1988 [1970]; Deleuze and Guattari 1988 [1972]), *Middlemarch* sheds light on how characters entertain relationships with the various environments in which they move, starting from the physical land they own or exploit (Tang 2020). Rosi Braidotti’s discussion of the novel within her studies on posthuman subjectivity (Braidotti 2019) is also relevant for assessing how George Eliot’s work testifies to the maturation of a modern sense of human-nonhuman connectedness in the wider cultural context of late nineteenth-century England.

Literature also appears as a useful context for evaluating the impact of Darwin’s insights on culture considering how traces of his thought can be found in the work of authors like Charles Kingsley (1819 – 1875), and Thomas Hardy (1840 – 1928), as discussed, among others, by Gillian Beers (2000). Scholarship on Darwin’s effect on literature exceeds the investigation of the influence of his theories on contemporary novels and poems, but also takes into account other topics. For instance, in his study,
Literary Darwinism (2004), Joseph Carroll regards the way in which Darwin’s studies can be applied when determining critical evaluations of works and periods. Or one can consider the scholarly interest in the literariness in Darwin’s writing. While many other trajectories can be identified in the interest of literary studies on Darwin, for the sake of my argument, it is important to underline that investigating the evolution of environmental discourses cannot be limited to determining certain relevant steppingstones. An array of other, less blatant yet eloquent, sources represents important an site for assessing the maturation of modern environmental epistemologies. Among these, I suggest is Georgian Poetry.

In this sense, while Georgian poems do not possess declared references to Darwin’s theories, nor to Spinoza’s Ethics, the fact that they were composed within a cultural and literary context where discussions on these authors were lively, suggests that both direct and indirect references can be found in their works. Hence, one can consider how the proto-environmental attentiveness on issues of human-nonhuman relationality and connectedness developing in the later nineteenth century is likely to have also inspired the maturation of the environmental imagination of the Georgians.

While the poetry analysis in Chapter 5 will validate this hypothesis, the following paragraphs focus on the so-called ‘late romantic’ trend, to which the Georgians have been often related. Specifically, I observe how, in contrast to the idea that this trend is representative of the alleged traditionalism and conservativism of the Georgians, Romantic echoes in Marsh’s anthology represent a(nother) source for disclosing the ecocritical potentials of this work.

Fin-de-siecle and the late-Romantic Stigma in Early Twentieth-century England

The expression fin-de-siecle refers to a moment of great cultural change occurring between the last decade of the 1890s and the beginning of the twentieth century. This period is generally discussed as spanning between the twilight of traditional values – in reference to the morals and the habits established during the Victorian period – and the

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32 Other useful studies about the reception of Darwin in literature are represented by Cathy Downs’s Science, art, literature, and reality: how Charles Darwin changed the way we look at things (2004); Gowan Dawson’s Darwin, literature and Victorian respectability (2007); Nicholas Saul and Simon J. James’s The evolution of literature: legacies of Darwin in European cultures (2011); Thomas Glick and Elinor Shaffer’s The literary and cultural reception of Charles Darwin in Europe (2014).
dawn of a new cultural era. Limiting the observation of this period to the evolution of the literary and the cultural landscape in England, the expression *fin-de-siècle* offers two main interpretations: on the one hand, it appoints the so-called aesthetics of decadence developing in those years, which Shearer West discusses as expressing a cultural malaise determined by a general sense of anxiety and uncertainty toward the future, along with the belief that this transitional time would bring decay and decline (Cf. West 1994). On the other hand, several scholars discuss *fin-de-siècle* as appointing the positive and progressive attitude welcoming the advent of a new era, as a moment of innovation for society (Teich and Porter 1990).

The simultaneity of these opposing interpretations has resulted in idiosyncratic evaluations of the period, which, however, converge in assessing it as a complex intersection of cultural transformations. The present sub-chapter navigates through this intricacy by focusing on the environmental discourse developing between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the purpose of further clarifying the cultural background that fed the environmental imagination of the Georgians.

In the cultural context of the United States, ecocritics have widely debated traces of a mature environmental sensibility (Buell 1995) between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, particularly by investigating the legacy of nonfiction nature writes like Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), and John Muir (1838–1914). However, the same attention has not yet been dedicated to the context of Britain in the same period. My attempt to zoom in on trajectories which testify to the rising of environmental awareness in the British *fin-de-siècle*, particularly by (eco)critically approaching the so-called late-Romantic progression (Hall 2016) from the end of the Victorian period to early Modernism, represents an opportunity to fill this gap.

As discussed in the previous paragraphs, the fact that Romanticism has gained prominence in ecocritical studies since the beginning of the movement is well-known. Starting from Jonathan Bate’s work in the 1990s, it has become established how poems by authors like Wordsworth and Keats possess significant ecological potentials, which, beyond providing contemporary scholarship with useful reflections on environmental ethics, have also allowed critics to refigure the label ‘Romantic’ in a more (eco)critical sense. A shift has occurred in the evaluation of Romantic authors who, today, do not solely appear to place “emphasis on feeling, individuality, and passion rather than [on]
classical form and order, and typically preferring grandeur, picturesqueness, or naturalness to finish and proportion” (“Romantic” OED, 2021), as a generalist, conventional definition of the label would suggest. Instead, through a more ecocritical lens, Romantics have become gradually established as voices who assess issues of human-nonhuman relationality and other proto-environmental reflections resonating with current ecocritical epistemology. In this sense, it is useful to consider how, as John F. Danby illustrated in his seminal The Simple Wordsworth (1960), the audacity of the Romantics results from their attentiveness toward the “relationship between mind and natural object, […] and the relationship between the constituents of a chemical reaction” (Coupe 2000, 15). Yet if, on the one hand, canonical Romantic authors have gained prominent attention from ecocritics, writers presenting traces of Romantic legacy, especially in the fin-de-siecle period, are still being generally overlooked by critics and often objects of limited critical perspectives.

Cases of British nature writing in the first decades of the twentieth century are generally regarded as prolongations of Romantic sensibility, often in negative terms. The Georgians, as has been said, are representative of this trend, considering the attacks that they received for their allegedly protracted, old-fashioned, and escapist tendencies, which were typical, in their critics’ view, of faded literary periods. In this sense, the Georgian’s environmental, late-Romantic narratives became targets of negative evaluations, especially through more or less explicit comparisons with experimental poetic trends developing in the period. T. S. Eliot’s reviews of Georgian Poetry, in this sense, are epitomizing of the early Modernist distaste for the Romantic legacy in early twentieth-century poetry.33

As Marshall Brown discusses, “Romanticism is often regarded as the root of contemporary attitudes” until “the beginning of Modernism, which, conversely, is viewed as late Romanticism” (Brown, 1). Traces and references to Romantic poetry are evident at the beginning of the twentieth century, especially in regard to the Georgians. While these echoes continue to be discussed in negative terms, considering that late romanticism tendencies in Georgian poetry proved the senescence of Symbolism in the English poetry

at that time (Morrison 2017), other scholars in the past few years have acknowledged aspects of critical interest in these trends. It is the case, for example in Shane Peterson’s investigation of the reception of Wordsworth’s sensibility in Siegfried Sassoon’s war memoirs and poems (Peterson 2015). By conducting an ecocritical and posthuman evaluation of *Georgian Poetry*, it is my intent to align this anthology with similar scholarly interests, acknowledging its relevance in prolonging proto-ecocritical narratives.

A disavowal of Romanticism, as John Isabell observes, is a prolongation of an already evident misappreciation of the movement at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when so-called ‘romantic irony’ was, in fact, in vogue, in reference to a generally negative attitude – if not distaste – towards the Romantics. As John Isabell explains, this trend can be seen as the outcome of a literary dispute occurring between Romantics and Neoclassicists in the previous decades (2004). Moreover, this tendency continued until the turn of the twentieth century, when, as Eberhard Alsen affirms, “the noun *romanticism* and the adjective *romantic* reacquired their original negative connotations” (2000, 2, emphasis in original). According to Alsen, this effect can be acknowledged when one considers the evaluation that certain Romantics received from pivotal intellectuals of the period, such as Henry James or Mark Twain. These authors, in fact, accused the Romantic spirit of an unwillingness to face reality, thus perceiving them as distanced both from the issues and the contents considered topical at the dusk of the twentieth century (Alsen 2000, 2).

An “antipathy toward the romantics” (Alsen 2000, 2) can be said to have survived in the following years, considering how analogous observations spread in reference to Georgians’ nature narratives, as already discussed. In relation to this effect, Russell Noyes observes that

the most hostile anti-romantic criticism has come from those who have assumed that modern science has made it rationally impossible to maintain romantic belief about man and nature. […] In such a world the Romantics appear to be childish dreamers; their picture of natural beauty, mere illustrations; their moral values, utter emptiness” (Russell 1956, xxxvi, cited in Alsen 2014, 2).

While this consideration provides surprising parallels with the critique often addressed towards the Georgians – including the idea that “the corporate flavour of the coalition is
a false simplicity” (see J. Middleton Murry’s review, titled “The Condition of English Poetry”, The Athenaeum, 5 December 1919, pp. 1283-5, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 232) – one can reflect on how a *querelle* between the (late-)Romantics and different aesthetics was prolonged in the first few decades of the twentieth century, along similar dynamics occurring for the already mentioned Romantic-Neoclassical critical dispute, discussed in Chapter 3.

Along with what was already presented in Chapter 1, in reference to the functioning of binary thinking, the negative Modernist evaluations towards (late-)Romantic trends appear as the result of dominant critical figurations of the literary landscape of that time. As Alsen also determines, “the word romantic retained its negative connotation until the middle of the twentieth century when there occurred a slow shift in a positive direction” (Alsen 2000, 2). And while this direction did not become apparent until the establishment of ecocritical studies on Romanticism, it is important to consider that the evaluations of Romanticism-related paths in neglected or critically dismissed works, such as *Georgian Poetry*, continued being discussed in the manner of a stigma. This tendency should therefore be considered among the main reasons that determined the downward critical trajectory of the anthology – especially after World War I, when Modernist, parochialist, and prejudicial evaluations on both environmental narratives and Romantic trends established themselves as the dominant perspectives in the critical British literary milieu.

### 4.3 Resituating *Georgian Poetry* between Late-Romanticism and early Modernism

As Hutchings observes, the nineteenth century provides evidence of how the Romantics developed proto-ecological trajectories in their works, an effect that occurred first and foremost in the awareness about nature’s ecological fragility in their poems (Hutchings 2002, 175). Another relevant observation in this regard is that many Romantics displayed a sense of deep human-nonhuman relationship in their poems. In reference to this issue, it is interesting to consider that, as Kate Rigby explains, canonical Romantic poets such as Wordsworth, Shelley, and Clare offer many opportunities to establish a dialogue with

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34 As already discussed, according to what Francesca Ferrando observes, within a dualism one term carries a power onto the other, expressing a form of prevalence, while the other/the Other, is regarded as inferior and subjugated (Ferrando 2019, 60-61).
contemporary scholars who reflect on the environment in the Anthropocene era due to their poems’ keen ecocritical potentials (2014, 17-39; 2020). Moreover, the idea that Romanticism played a significant role in the “deconstruction of Enlightenment science’s subject/object dualism” just for enhancing an “understanding of the complex interpenetration of subject and object worlds – anticipat[ing] postmodern theories of relativism and quantum dynamics” (Hutchings 2007, 178) has become increasingly established. In this sense, the contribution of Romanticism in taking a progressive distance from traditional, western domains when forming an understanding of the environment is today widely established accepted to the achievements of ecocriticism in this field. This, I suggest, should also be also considered in reference to the Romantic legacy in poems published after the nineteenth century, including *Georgian Poetry*. It has already been mentioned how several critics have discussed the Romantic echoes in Edward Marsh’s anthology primarily in negative terms, namely as signs of traditionalism in the Georgian period. Yet, based on the extensive ecocritical scholarship on Romanticism, I discuss how these late-Romantic echoes can be observed as reasons to conduct a reevaluation of *Georgian Poetry* in the context of the Environmental Humanities.

In support of this hypothesis, there is evidence that ‘romantic ecology’ is a term that has gained increasing prominence in the past few years for designating the ecological consciousness of Romantic writing as a privileged site for developing ecopoietic evaluations. According to Bate, as already observed, this term refers to a kind of poetics that “asks in what respect a poem may be a making (Greek *poiesis*) of the dwelling-place – the prefix eco- is derived from the Greek *oikos*, ‘the home or place of dwelling’” (Bate 2000, 75). By acknowledging the ecocritical potentials of Romantic poems, Bate shifted away from predominantly Marxist evaluations of these works, which had characterized literary criticism of this period until the 1990s. Through his innovative perspective, Bate determines, for instance, how Wordsworth’s pastoral poem *The Prelude* engages with the notion of harmonious interaction between human beings and natural economies or how “love of nature leads to love of mankind” (2000, 31). Other scholars have aligned with Bate’s perspectives on the Romantics. This is the case of Karl Kroeber, who investigated “proto-ecological views” of Wordsworth and Coleridge (1994); and James McKusick, who retraced the Romantic origins of American environmentalism (2000). Because of
these understandings, there emerges evidence of how Romantic writers were successful in “call[ing] into question earlier presumptions about the nature-culture dyad” (Hall 2016, 7) while engaging in a discussion that is more attentive toward their connectedness.

When considering late-romantic trends, such as those visible in Georgian poems, these ecocritical issues – starting from “the relevance of biotic concerns emanating from [the] nineteenth-century” (Hall 2016, 7) – are fundamental. Late-Romantic trends cannot be interpreted only as old-fashioned literary cliches addressing stylistic features that were in vogue during the nineteenth century, but also – and above all – as useful signs for assessing possible ecocritical reevaluations in later literary works. Consequently, the late-Romantic trends appearing in Georgian Poetry can be considered as another fertile baseline from which one can disclose latent ecocritical trajectories contrarily to the idea that these trends represented a literary stigma.

As Laurence Coupe affirms, “romanticism should never be severed from its historical context”, in the sense that traces of Romantic aesthetics should always come to terms with the related cultural landscape of the time. Therefore, investigating how “the growth of scientific knowledge [affected] Wordsworth[’s]” (2000, 15) writing represents a fundamental operation for assessing attentive understanding of Romanticism. Similarly, the fin-de-siècle late-Romantic trends appearing in Georgian Poetry should also be put in dialogue with the related historical context and, specifically, with the growing ecological discourse developing in early-twentieth-century England – which was brought about by the scientific and philosophical transformations occurring at that time. Moreover, considering that “we should not see romanticism simply as a retreat from the world: rather, it was a new way of comprehending the world” (Coupe 2000, 14), the connection between the Georgians and the Romantics, which emerges from several reviews on Edward Marsh’s anthology published between the 1910s and 1920s, should be regarded as a sign of their philosophical peculiarity. Late-Romantic traces in Georgian Poetry can be interpreted as evidence of their different Weltanschauung35 regarding the cultural context of that time, especially for what concerns environmental issues, as an anticipation of the environmental narratives that would spread during the 1920s.

35 As the OED suggests, the expression Weltanschauung can be intended as: “A particular philosophy or view of life; a concept of the world held by an individual or a group” (“Weltanschauung” OED, 2021).
As Pepper also argued, in fact, ancient environmental perspectives “never died out completely during the modern period: they persisted as minor, countercultural strands into the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and formed the basis of movements and ideas that can be directly traced into modern environmentalism” (1996, 5, emphasis in original). In this alignment, the environmental trajectories observable in Georgian poems should be regarded as proving the growth of a wider environmental sensibility spreading across early twentieth England, which not only fed the imagination of Georgian poets, but which also paved the way for further development of ecocritical issues in the following years.

The Georgians as Paving the Way to Modernist Environmental Narratives

As Ross discussed, the innovative character of the Georgians, especially in the prewar period, appears, among other circumstances, in the fact that they opposed the “poetic standards which had governed since the Romantic Revival [as] part of a larger and more widespread intellectual revolt against Humanism” (Ross 1965, 17). This evaluation determines, once again, the original character of the collection at the time of its publication, but also it prompts the idea that an almost proto-posthuman thread runs through it. Ross’s words in fact suggest that, in the context of the innovative poetic environment of the early twentieth century, there was evidence of how the leaders of this process “maintained that Western Europe had taken the wrong turn at the Renaissance, which made man, not God, the measure of all things” (Ross 1965, 17). This discussion, dating back to the late 1960s is surprising considering the parallel that it offers with current posthuman epistemologies – starting from Rosi Braidotti’s criticism towards established Humanistic trends following the idea of the centrality of the human “as the measure of all things” (Braidotti 2019, 14).

Therefore, the fact that Ross’s evaluation progressed during a time when posthumanist perspectives had not yet been systematically developed supports my hypothesis that a critical scope combining ecocriticism and posthuman studies represents a useful tool for conducting a reevaluation of Marsh’s anthology. Far from suggesting that the Georgians anticipated posthuman philosophy, or that Robert Ross was a proto-posthumanist scholar, it is still interesting to consider his reflections in the context of the idea that Georgian Poetry presents innovative characters in the way it addresses – and
somehow negotiates – traditional western axioms. In this regard, I show how (some) pastoral poems in Marsh’s collection offer narratives regarding the environment that defy solely traditional, anthropocentric, and dualistic figurations, while providing a more complex understanding of the natural world. Along this line, I also discuss how the Georgians represent an example of the literary and cultural substrata of the 1910s that led to the development of more mature and systematic post-humanist and ecocritical epistemologies, especially by paving the way for the development of environmental trajectories during the Modernist period. In fact, it is important to consider that, differently from the apparently anti-environmental perspective emerging from the early-Modernist critique toward Georgian Poetry, British Modernism is not devoid of attentiveness towards the environment.

Modernism is often discussed as being representative of a growing interest in urban aesthetics, insomuch that it is often perceived as being anti-environmental. This effect, for instance, is well-represented by the popularity, in Modernist literary works, of the character of the (urban) flaneur or flaneuse (Gluck 2003; Alver 2014) wandering around the cities, such as Clarissa in Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway (1925). Or one can think of the fact that some Modernist writers associated the natural world to often non-realist representations as well to unreal or imaginary locations: one can consider the environmental experience of Modernist writing as generally limited to symbolic evaluations as is the case of the rural imagery in The Waste Land by T.S. Eliot – one of the literary works epitomizing the urban aesthetics of Modernism. In addition, it is common to find critical works emphasizing the distance between Modernism and more ecological considerations. As Anne Raine observes, Modernism in literary studies is often aligned with the idea of “technophilic antinaturalism” (Raine 2014, 99) which emerges from Wyndham Lewis’s assertion in Blast that modern art technology made nature obsolete – and which is particularly evident. Yet there remain opportunities to defy similar evaluations, especially thanks to the recent achievements of ecocriticism in performing a green reframing of Modernist writing (Sultzbach 2016; Black 2018; Diaper 2022).

As already illustrated, Modernism is a highly polysemic label that involves multiple, idiosyncratic interpretations to such an extent that referring to Modernisms as a plural(istic) noun is crucial for avoiding prolonging limiting perspectives on this
phenomenon (Cianci 1991, 15-40). Moreover, considering ‘Modernism’ as a porous concept has the consequence of also defying strict dichotomic evaluations – such as the Modernist/Georgian one – as a way for avoiding the risk of prolonging limited and fictitious perspectives concerning the period. The burgeoning ecocritical scholarship on Modernism represents the latest among the different critical perspectives aimed at dissecting its complexity. Reassessing the relevance of environmental narratives in the literary production of British Modernism will be here considered as an opportunity for investigating the liminality between the Modernist/Georgian dichotomy: this effect is based on identifying the commonalities of these terms for what concerns the attentiveness of ethical sensibility towards issues of human-nonhuman relationships in the respective literary production.

Modernist writers were far from neglecting environmentally-oriented considerations and ethical reflections concerning the natural world in their works. Raine, in fact, determines how “modernist texts offer rich resources for ecocriticism because modernist writers were [...] self-conscious ‘witness[es] of the profound changes in the human relations with the planet that ha[d] become visible in ‘their century,’ after sharing a sense of having experienced a ‘revolutionary change’ in ‘the ‘given’ [that] we call nature’” (Raine 2014, 101). It therefore becomes clear that by adopting an ecocritical lens, neglected or latent green trajectories in Modernist writings can reemerge in order to determine the “new productions of nature, new articulations of relationships among human and nonhuman beings and phenomena” (Raine 2014, 101) which developed during the 1920s and the 1930s.

Within the growing ecocritical re-discussion of Modernism, Carol Cantrell also explores how several writers contributed to challenging the Cartesian dualistic figurations of the environment based on the notion of ‘the human’ in contrast to ‘nature’. Specifically, Cantrell observes how Modernists adhere to the idea of ‘embodied perception’ by fostering representations of human-nonhuman connectedness (1998). Or, one can consider Elizabeth Black’s study focusing on how, despite having been neglected in the field of English studies, British Modernist poetry reflects a sustained interest in the natural world. According to Black, this includes a preoccupation with environmental issues and reflections on how to achieve physical, psychological, and artistic reconnection with the natural world (2019).
Kelly Sultzbach’s *Ecocriticism in the Modernist Imagination* (2016) has also shed light on the involvement of key names of Modernism, including Edward M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, and Wystan Hugh Auden, with environmental reflections. In her study, Sultzbach refuses to regard Modernism only as “a singular movement away from one end of the binary, a Romantic foregrounding of organic nature, toward its opposite, the rise of an urban culture of detached aestheticism” (2016, 4). Instead, she stresses that Modernist texts “are pressed through a sieve of ecocritical theoretical questions, [and] they often offer startling representations of a more-than-human world that is in the midst of naming and breaking such binaries” (Sultzbach 2016, 4). Through these considerations, Sultzbach invites contemporary scholars to pay more attention to the nature narratives in the Modernist period, progressively abandoning the idea that this period regards only the exaltation of urban aesthetics.

Equally, it is important to consider that the Modernist focus towards environmental issues did not appear suddenly, but rather, was the result of a wider sensibility that had been spreading around the cultural context of Britain for years. As Sultzbach in fact observes, “the modernist layers of thought build from earlier strata and provide the groundwork for existing ideology shaping twenty-first-century environmental consciousness” (2016, 10). Consequently, conducting an ecocritical study on *Georgian Poetry*, which covers a period spanning from 1912 to 1922, is useful for evaluating how this trend contributed to fostering the establishment of the environmental even in Modernist texts.

Therefore, since Modernist and Georgian literary works can be said to align along similar trajectories – attention towards the environment and related issues of human-nonhuman connectedness – the opportunity to acknowledge an overlapping of these two periods becomes visible. This consideration, I suggest, is fundamental for negotiating the Modernist/Georgian dichotomy when evaluating *Georgian Poetry*. Along this line, the negative assessments often addressed to the Georgians in the reviews published in the 1910s and 1920s – which often stressed the alleged traditionalism of Marsh’s anthology due to its reliance on natural imagery and the pastoral – lose their efficacy. In fact, through an ecocritical lens, this imagery in *Georgian Poetry* becomes an eloquent trace of an environmental sensibility developing in British culture at the time. Moreover, when dismissing the Modernist/Georgian dichotomy in evaluating the Georgians, the
predominantly formally oriented critical perspectives prompted by the early-Modernists, and the related prejudice over late-Romantic literary aesthetics can also be rediscussed. Through an ecocritical lens, these prejudices become the starting point for a reevaluation of traces of environmental discourse in literary works published during the first few decades of the twentieth century.

To further stress the critical values of the environmental trajectories in *Georgian Poetry*, the following paragraphs explore how their relevance was already evident at the time of the anthology’s publication in an array of reviews, even though the latter has been often disregarded in critical evaluations of Marsh’s anthology.

### 4.4 Recuperating Positive ‘Missing’ Evaluations on *Georgian Poetry*

It is undeniable how some critical voices are more insightful than others when determining the framing of literary periods or phenomena. In every epoch, in fact, some critics appear to be more or less significant for assessing the positive or negative reputation of literary works. Scholarship on canon formation, in the past few decades, has assessed that power issues are involved when establishing certain hierarchies among texts and influencing their reception (cf. Morrissey 2005).36 Yet these studies have also underlined how a critical evaluation of texts is a process in constant fluctuation: critical evaluations are objects of constant rediscussion based on the development of ever-new critical scopes for approaching literature. This resonates well with my intention to reflect critically on the deterioration of the reputation of *Georgian Poetry*, by underlying the limited assumptions of the critical dismissal that Marsh’s anthology underwent during and after World War I. In response to this effect, a different critical approach should be considered when regarding *Georgian Poetry*, which is able to disclose aspects of literary interest that went overlooked by early-Modernists, primarily due to the limited perspective connected to the uses and abuses of the Modernism/Georgian dichotomy.

While the previous section investigated the limits of the Modernist critical scope on the evaluation of the Georgians, this subchapter focuses on resurrecting past critical,

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36 Regarding the engagement between canon formation and power, Lee Morrissey argues that: “it is sometimes argued by enthusiasts of “theory” that deconstruction, in particular the work of Foucault, introduced the issue of power into literary discourse and thus raised the problem of canon formation” (2005, 179).
positive evaluations of the collection circulating at the time of its publication. While
dominant early-Modernist critical perspectives have neglected similar evaluations,
recuperating these literary reviews is now beneficial for demonstrating that discussions
on the literary value of *Georgian Poetry* already occurred during the 1910s and the 1920s.
Moreover, it is interesting to consider how, in these positive evaluations, the role of
environmental narratives in the anthology is considered crucial for assessing the value,
originality, and innovative character of Marsh’s anthology. While this discussion could
potentially address an extended array of reviews, my observation will focus on some
particularly significant passages which, better than others, serve for conducting a
reevaluation of Georgian (pastoral) poetry in the context of the Environmental
Humanities.

In his discussion on the “rise and fall of [the Georgian] ideal,” (1965) Robert Ross
observes how the positive appraisal of the first two volumes of the anthology became
supplanted by an increasing negative critical evaluation since the publication of *Vol. III*. As
Ross explains, this effect mainly occurs since the imagery that the Georgians proposed –
environmental imagery – was not perceived as being adequate to express the shocking
trauma of World War I experienced by England (Ross 1965, 143). Nevertheless,
considering that each era, or cultural period, appears to encompass a broad nexus of
occurrences, discourses, and beliefs, the environmental imagination of the Georgians
represents a valuable trajectory for assessing the complexity of the cultural *milieu* of early
twentieth-century England.

Positive evaluations of the environmental narratives in Marsh’s anthology have
not been difficult to identify since the reviews dedicated to the first issues of the collection
appeared. In these texts, the late-romantic tendencies emerging in the anthology are often
discussed as evidence of how the Georgians had “broken away from Victorianism in a
manner as well as in matter” (see Lascelles Abercrombie’s review, titled “Victorians and
Moreover, as John Buchan observed regarding *Vol. II* “[the Georgians] seem to us, too,
to show a wholesome revolt against poetic clichés, a desire for directness and simplicity
both of feeling and expression” (see the unsigned review by John Bucham, titled
“Georgian Poetry”, *The Spectator*, 18 January 1913, 107, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 72,
emphasis in original). From this comment, one can reflect on how, even relying on
everlasting literary tropes, such as simplicity and feeling – especially through the pastoral – the Georgians were able to display an innovative character with their poetry.

One of the most interesting observations regarding the discussion on the environmental narratives in *Vol. I* is offered by Edmund Gosse, who assesses how:

There seems to be traceable in most of these poets a conviction, or a vague belief, that Nature as seen in the external world and the mind of Man as cultivated without the human individual are parallel to an extent which may be partly discerned by our own senses, so far as these are quickened by imagination and sympathy. This is a curious feature of the new school, and stamps them as Pan-psychical” (see Edmund Gosse’s review, titled “Knocking at the Door”, *The Morning Post*, 27 January 1913, 3, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 76).

This evaluation is significant for stressing how, in the perspective of some critics, the environmental sensibility that the Georgians expressed through their poems presented a degree of complexity insomuch that their works could hardly be parallel to the old domains of environmental imagination from previous epochs. The expression “Pan-psychical” is particularly effective for clarifying the extended, innovative, critical scope of the Georgians in the eye of their contemporaries, particularly regarding the notion and representation of the environment (“Nature as seen in the external world”), which was pluralistic and all-embracing (“Pan”). And while, in the words of Gosse, the presence of this aspect did not exclude the prolongation of traditional individual feelings and sensation towards the environment in their poems (“Nature as seen in [...] the mind of Man”), the Georgians appeared to prompt innovative pathways in the literary landscape of their time.

For what concerns the pastoral, the positive evaluations presented in reviews of *Vol. I* cannot be disregarded when determining the long-standing – albeit overlooked – appreciation of the Georgians. For instance, Walter de la Mare acknowledges the emphasis of these poets on the pastoral as a new trajectory in contemporary poetry: “green pastures, among the mares? If English poetry is indeed renewing its youth, does the phenomenon imply a promise of even wider significance: the stirring and awakening of the whole national imagination, a widening desire to escape” (see Walter de la Mare’s review, titled “An Elizabethan Poet and Modern Poetry”, *The Edinburgh Review*, April 1913, 377-86, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 107). Through these words, one can consider how
the pastoral is one of the most evident trends of the growing Georgian aesthetics at the time. Moreover, de la Mare’s comments inform readers of how this trend was to be regarded with interest by critics, especially considering the importance of the countryside in British cultural domains. As Angela Locatelli has discussed, in fact, the countryside has played a relevant role in the construction of British national identity, through forms of collective imaginary identification (Cf. Locatelli 2003). This aspect seems to emerge in de la Mare’s comment on Vol. I as a way for clarifying how the pastoral in Georgian Poetry should be considered as a site for investigating multiple issues concerning British culture at the time. Moreover, de la Mare’s evaluation distances itself from the hypothesis that references to nature narratives in Georgian Poetry can be merely discussed as testifying to an old-fashioned character of the collection, while, instead, they should be regarded for assessing its positive critical evaluation, due to its engagement with culture.

Vol. II also received praise in reference to the distinctive character of the Georgians at the time of their publication. As an unsigned review appearing in The Spectator on 5 February 1916 reveals, “it must be admitted that there is a great deal of conscious art and of high poetic intention in much of the Georgian verse” (see the unsigned review, titled “Georgian Poetry 1913-1915”, The Spectator, Review, 5 February 1916, 190-1, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 137). The reference to “high poetic intention” is self-explanatory of how, despite the pluralistic identity of the collection – which gathered works by different authors – a generally positive evaluation of the anthology is possible when considering the general trajectories running through it, among which the pastoral is one of the most representative. Other reviews of Vol. II underline similar considerations regarding the role of pastoral in Marsh’s collection. For instance, an unsigned review appearing in The Times Literary Supplement, published on 9 December 1915, emphasizes that certain poems, including Lascelles Abercrombie’s “The End of the World”, represents “modern rustics” (see the unsigned review, titled “The Young Poets”, The Times Literary Supplement, 9 December 1915, 447, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 123), a comment which clarifies how the pastoral character of the Georgians maintained aspects of innovation (“modern”) in comparison to previous pastoral poetic trends. Or it is useful to consider how, in the same review, Ralph Hodgson’s poem, “Bull”, is depicted as distancing itself from the possible accusation of prolonging Romanticization, since, according to some reviewers, its author “does not attempt to prettify [the subject of the
poem], but he talks no scandal about bull-nature. He treats it seriously, and it seems to be a poem about a bull written by a bull with the gift of poetry” (see the unsigned review, titled “The Young Poets”, The Times Literary Supplement, 9 December 1915, 447, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 125)

Reviews dedicated to Vol. III include similar evaluations, thus demonstrating how, even at the time of the most critical attacks to the collection – see, for instance, the already discussed T.S. Eliot review in The Egoist, 1917 – different, positive understandings of the book could be observed. In fact, while the Georgians did not “turn their backs on the tradition” they “[took] up their heritage, as an heir takes his estate, and ma[de] what changes they will” (see the unsigned review, titled “Georgian Poetry”, The Times Literary Supplement, 27 December 1917, 646, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 212) By stressing the originality through which Georgians allegedly re-elaborated a longstanding, traditional literary trope such as the pastoral, this observation finds support in Holbrook Jackson’s consideration that “[t]he book [Vol. III] is an example of skilful choice and thoughtful, critical appreciation’ (see Holbrook Jackson’s untitled review in To-day, January 1918, 197-8, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 213).

In regard to other positive evaluations of the nature narratives in Georgian Poetry, it is useful to cite Siegfried Sassoon’s observation that Edward Shanks’s poem “A Hollow Elm”, featured in Vol. IV, represents “the finest tribute to a tree since the revival of half-timbered domestic architecture” (see Sigfried Sasson’s review, titled “A Poet’s Experiment in Candid Criticism”, The New York Times, 29 February 1920, Book Section 2, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 250). Or, as Edward Marsh also underlines in his prefatory note to the issue, the presence of natural imagery in the volume should be regarded as one of its most representative traits. This consideration can be understood from Marsh’s claim that Georgians’ poems resonated with the idea of being “peace poetry”, in the sense that this poetry “has brought [the Georgians] time and leisure of mind to digest, amend, and heighten their work” (see A Williams-Ellis’s review untitled review in The Spectator, 31 January 1920, 143-4, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 242). The pastoral jargon of this comment is effective for determining the impact that the pastoral in this volume had on the reception of Vol. IV, thus corroborating the idea that this topic represents a crucial issue for conducting a critical (re-)evaluation of the Georgians.
Reviews dedicated to *Vol. IV* further stress how the Georgians were useful in considering that “the condition of England in the affairs of poetry at the present time […] is obviously a healthy condition” (see Neville Cardus’s review, titled “Representative Anthologies”, *Voices*, February 2020, 36-9, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 245), as Neville Cardus observed. A similar consideration also emerges from the American critical reception of the early issues of the collection, which also underlines the relevance of nature narratives in *Georgian Poetry*. Without losing focus on *Vol. IV*, Robert Graves not only affirms that the issue represents “a very arboreal book” – thus underlining the relevance of natural imagery in it – but also that it “remarked on the apparent instability of all the elms as contrasted with the enormous vitality of the nightingales” (quoted in Hassall 1959, 473). These words suggest that instead of solely appearing as inadequate to the post-war sensibility, the natural imagery employed in the anthology, in certain cases, possesses aspects of critical value and innovation. Hence, the environmental imagination of the Georgians could not be perceived solely as a (negative) alternative to the dominant war narratives spreading in the 1920s, but rather it can be regarded as a signal of the multilayered literary and cultural milieu of the time. And while there remain critical voices that discuss the Georgians’ attention to nightingales as an occasion for dismissing the anthology, the attention to issues of human-nonhuman relationality assumes different implications when regarded through the lens of ecocriticism and posthuman studies.

Positive assessments of the environmental sensibility of the Georgians can also be found in reference to the closing volume of the anthology. While reviewing *Vol. V*, the author of an unsigned review, appearing in *The Times Literary Supplement* on 11 December 1923, determines how one “may congratulate [E.M.] on proving once more that English poetry is alive and giving us some very useful hints of where to look for it” (see the unsigned review, titled “Georgian Poets”, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 11 January 1923, 24, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 303). Acknowledgments on the critical value of this issue are also determined by the fact that *Vol. V* makes evident how the Georgians “observe the small details of Nature with a kindly curiosity and report of her with a dainty

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37 For instance, see Amy Lowell, who established, in regard to *Vol. IV*, that “Nightingales and thrushes abound, but seldom does the poet get them alive on the page” (see Amy Lowell’s review, titled “Weary Verses”, *The Dial*, 1920, pp. 424-31, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 256).
daring” (see the unsigned review, titled “A New Anthology”, *The Times*, 19 December 1922, 18, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 269) as indicated in an unsigned review published in *The Times* on 19 December 1922. This consideration allows one to reflect on how the attention of the Georgians to the natural world is not to be considered merely as a replica of classical domains or imagery, but rather as a more complex evaluation of this realm, and that this consideration represents a constant throughout the five volumes comprising the anthology.

Before drawing conclusions from this discussion, as a further emphasis on the importance of resurrecting positive evaluations of environmental narratives in the Georgians, it is useful to take into account some reviews that appeared a few years after the publication *Vol. V*. An all-embracing perspective on the five-volume anthology, in fact, stresses even more the idea that a trajectory runs throughout the collection which, in parallel with my initial hypothesis, highlights the importance of nature narratives in Edward Marsh’s literary project as an element of conducting a reevaluation.

For instance, L.A.G. Strong’s review, published in 1934, recognizes the Georgians with the merit that they “discovered the English countryside” (see L.A.G. Strong’s review, titled “English Poetry since Brooke”, *The Nineteenth Century*, October 1934, 460-4, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 340), in the sense that the relevance of rural imagery in their works is such that it needs to be considered a distinctive character of their aesthetics and of their impact on a wider cultural discourse spreading in society at that time. The significance of the countryside, and related natural images, is further stressed by Strong, who discusses the possibility of a “Georgian Nature poetry” as a clear-cut strand in the literary landscape of early twentieth-century England, which “remained divisible even after the movement’s decline” (see L.A.G. Strong’s review, titled “English Poetry since Brooke”, *The Nineteenth Century*, October 1934, 460-4, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 339-40). Moreover, Edmund Blunden, in a review from 1935, identifies a green pastoral trend among the Georgians as a distinctive character of 1910s poetry, by illustrating how “in 1910, and for some time afterwards, the kind of beauty enshrined by poets was that of ‘Flora and the country green’” (see Edmund Blunden’s review, titled “Poetry of the Present Reign”, *John O’London’s Weekly*, 27 April 1935, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 344).
That green narratives and reliance on environmental imagery should be regarded as eloquent signs of the literary value of the anthology is also demonstrated by a 1946 unsigned article published in *The Times Literary Supplement*, which reports how the Georgians have their roots in the Wordsworth tradition, but the new romanticism is on a broader basis; they are well-aware of man and his doubts, spiritual and intellectual, with an awareness sharpened by the war. The Nature they appeal to is stronger and more realistic than Wordsworth dared to suggest, partly because the years between have threatened so much that Nature has become a more significant and permanent valuation of man’s existence (see the unsigned article, titled “Poetry between Wars”, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 16 March 1946, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 352).

From these words, evidence emerges that the representation of the natural world in Georgian poems does not solely express a conventional sense of retreat, as more traditional understandings of the pastoral would suggest. Contrarily, as the author of this article suggests, the Georgians revealed an original, intimate sense of entanglement with the natural world which distinguishes them from their predecessors and even their contemporaries. Hence, the way in which they express their experientiality with the natural world can be considered not only as a representative trait of the environmental discourse of that time but also as a valuable feature of the anthology on which a reevaluation can be enacted. B. Rajan’s words in a 1948 review are clarificatory in this sense: while it cannot be denied that Georgians “were not radical” and that they can “hardly be modern” – at least in reference to a certain way to approach Modernism, such as along T.S. Eliot’s aesthetics – it “would be misleading if they suggested that pastoral poetry is impossible in our time and that all modern pastoralists are therefore insincere” (see B. Rajan’s review, titled “Georgian Poetry: A Restrospect”, *The Critic*, Autumn 1948, 7-14, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 367). Along the same line, Rajan also provides evidence of how the pastoral can function as a valuable tool for conducting a possible reevaluation of the anthology:

> [the Georgians] may help us to understand more clearly the stringent requirements which a pastoral poet must satisfy. It is not enough to write of nature exactly or to feel genuinely moved in the presence of rivers and sunset. It is not even enough to wed those emotions (as no Georgian poet has wedded them) to a passionate
disbelief in urban values. Pastoral poetry can only succeed when the sensibility which nourishes it is such that it can be wholly externalized in the objects of nature with no sacrifice of intelligence or complexity (see B. Rajan’s review, titled “Georgian Poetry: A Restrospect”, *The Critic*, Autumn 1948, 7-14, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 367).

This critical assessment, which seems to anticipate more attentive evaluations of the Georgians occurring in the past few years, testifies how the elaboration of the pastoral in the Georgians represents a site on which different discourses enmesh, and therefore it serves as a complex phenomenon that requires an attentive critical perspective to be disentangled. Hence, one can consider how while dominant Modernist narratives led the pastoral in the Georgians to appear as a stigma, today it can be reassessed as the very baseline on which to determine a critical reevaluation of this collection. Specifically, ecocriticism and posthuman studies are useful tools for showing evidence of certain modern characters in Georgian poems – in the sense of innovative aspects within the literary and cultural environment of that period. In this sense, one can considers B. Rajan’s observation underlying how: “[t]he poetry of the Georgians can hardly be called modern though several echoes of it can certainly be heard in poems which are otherwise fanatically modern” (see B. Rajan’s review, titled “Georgian Poetry: A Restrospect”, *The Critic*, Autumn 1948, 7-14, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 362).

And while, as also occurred in regard to *Vol. V*, many negative reviews still based their assumption on the idea that the pastoral in many Georgian poems presented old-fashion characters, under the scope of the Environmental Humanities different implications can be determined, as was observed in my discussion offered in Chapter 3 on sustainable pastoral criticism.

Addressing the literary reviews dedicated to several issues in *Georgian Poetry* has made evident how signs of proto-ecocritical values were already visible at the time of the anthology’s publication. Resurrecting these evaluations, which have been widely

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38 See, for instance, Edmund Gosse’s observation that, regarding *Vol. V*, some poets “were under the spell of John Clare” (see Edmund Gosse’s review, titled “The World of Books”, *The Sunday Times*, 17 December 1922, 6, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 289).
neglected in critical assessments on the Georgian, represents an opportunity to stress the ecological sensibility of Marsh’s anthology as a way for reevaluating their works in light of current ecocritical and posthuman discourses. Hence, by highlighting the critical appraisal that the collection obtained after the publication of the first volumes – within which adjectives like ‘new’, ‘modern’, and ‘energetic’ prevailed – I provide a counterbalance to dominant (Modernist) evaluations of the collection – in which stress is placed on Georgian as ‘old-fashioned’, ‘outworn’, or worse” (Ross 1965, 235). In fact, it shows how the latter is just a limited consideration among many other critical framings. In this sense, one can consider that not only are Georgians much more than rural writers contrasting the Modernist aesthetics, but also that they can be considered as testifying to that sensibility towards the environment that can be traced in many instances in early twentieth-century England. Similar considerations finally regard the discussion on the pastoral, which also becomes the object of discussion of several scholars providing a critical review of the collection at the time of its publication.

As the discussion offered in Chapter 4 highlighted, when adopting an alternative perspective on the critical reception of Georgian Poetry, new critical framings of this literary work become possible. In the dominant critical narrative of the anthology prompted by reviews published in the 1910s and the 1920s, Georgians appear as primarily conservative and traditionalist, and their reliance on the environmental imagery and the pastoral is cited as alleged proof in these dismissive evaluations. The general negative assessment characterizing the Georgians, rather than being an absolute, categorical condition, however, is the result of a primarily formal-oriented approach to literature inspired by the perspective of a few early-Modernist critics, including T.S. Eliot, J. Middleton Murry, and Edith, Osbert, and Sacheverell Sitwell, who were particularly successful in the late and post-war period.

When problematizing their negative evaluations, by stressing the limitations involving the dichotomy Modernist/Georgian – which is predominant in early-Modernist critical receptions of Marsh’s anthology – latent aspects of certain values are disclosed: these considerations offer scholars the chance to enact a reevaluation of the anthology in at least two ways. On the one hand, it becomes possible to acknowledge the ecocritical value of the late-Romantic trends, which characterize many poems in the collection. In fact, references to the natural world in many Georgian poems, their lyrical tone and their
reliance on the pastoral are not only visible as signs of conservativism, but rather, they also reveal ecocritical potentials, especially when regarded along the line offered by Jonathan Bate’s scholarship on Romantic ecocriticism. On the other hand, negotiating the Modernist/Georgian dichotomy favors assessing the environmental narratives that Georgian Poetry presents as a sign of the topicality of this anthology at the time of its composition in reference to the growing environmental discourse spreading in early-twentieth-century England.

In regard to this last aspect, this chapter discussed how, in the cultural milieu in which the Georgians operated, discourses circulated that seem to anticipate the ethical and epistemological considerations that would later and more maturely develop in the fields of both ecocriticism and posthumanism. These discourses include Darwin’s theories and their references in literature and culture, as well as Spinoza’s philosophies echo in different literary works. Among other evidence, the literary and cultural context of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Britain witnessed a growth of an ecological sensibility to which the keen environmental imagery and narratives in Georgian Poetry can also be ascribed. While this connection has been generally neglected by critics, re-inscribing the Georgians within this proto-environmentalist context serves for reassessing the relevance of the late-Romantic trends emerging from the anthology, their reliance on natural imagery, and their stressing of the pastoral. These tendencies, representative of the Georgian aesthetics, become visible as baselines for reevaluating this collection, rather than resulting (only) in a stigma assessing their alleged traditionalist character.

This hypothesis has found support in my discussion in the several critical reviews dedicated to the anthology, which testify that the value of the environmental narratives was already acknowledged in the 1910s and 1920s. An array of critical voices, who have been rather neglected in the past few decades, not only assess the relevance of similar green trajectories in the several volumes comprising Georgian Poetry, but they also affirm that these traits represent aspects of innovation and originality – and therefore, of critical value – in the context of early twentieth century poetry.

On the basis of these observations, the following chapter will provide evidence of the significance of environmental narratives in the five volumes of Georgian Poetry through a literary analysis of selected pastoral poems. Building on my discussion on sustainable literary criticism in Chapter 3, I investigate a pastoral trajectory running
through the anthology to determine its affinity with current ecocritical and posthuman epistemologies, as a way for claiming a reevaluation of this neglected and dismissed work.

As discussed in reference to the critical reception of Georgian Poetry, the pastoral represents a salient feature of the anthology. In alignment with the theoretical framework delineated in Chapters 2 and 3, my investigation intends to exceed the idea that references to the pastoral in the collection only serve for declaring its alleged conservative and traditionalist character. Instead, in this chapter I explore how pastoral trajectories running through the anthology reveals traces of environmental maturity (Buell 1995, 32) in the poetic imagination of the Georgians. Moreover, I discuss how these trajectories work as opportunities to conduct a critical reevaluation of this literary work, considering its modernity and topicality in the context of early twentieth-century England.

Along this line, in Chapter 5, I also explore how Georgian pastoral poems resonate with issues of relationality between humans and nonhumans, which allows for a discussion of Marsh’s anthology in alignment with current ecocritical and posthuman epistemology. In this way, I attempt to avoid interpreting the pastoral in the anthology as referring solely to “the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban” or as “an idealisation of the reality of life in the country” (idealized depiction of the natural world (Gifford 1999, 2), while adopting a ‘sustainable pastoral criticism’ already presented in Chapter 3. Therefore, through my analysis, I will shed light on some long-disregarded literary narratives running through the five volumes of Georgian Poetry published between 1911 and 1922, which have been concealed by the dominance of a Modernist-Eliotian reception of the work.

On a methodological level, there are three preliminary aspects that need to be clarified: first, the analysis will be conducted by focusing on each of the five volumes separately. While a general, all-embracing conclusion will be presented in regard to Georgian Poetry as a single – albeit pluralist – literary work, the peculiarities of each volume will be tackled through attentive, specific observations.

Second, the analysis will focus primarily on the ecocritical and posthuman thread running through a selection of pastoral poems, which more evidently engage with the topic of human-nonhuman connectedness. It is important to underline that my selection does not have the pretense of being an exhaustive study on the pastoral in Georgian Poetry; my observations, instead, will be dedicated to 5-6 poems for each volume, which
are particularly valuable to sustain my argument. For the selection of my case studies, I
relied upon the features of the pastoral elucidated in Chapter 1. On some occasions, my
focus regards more thematic issues (e.g., the country/city dichotomy) or classical tropes
and images pertaining to the pastoral tradition (including animals, plants, or shepherds).
In other cases, I focus on the literary structures characterizing the pastoral (as is the case
of the eclogue).

Third, to favor a more culture-oriented analytical approach, less attention is
dedicated to the stylistic and formal qualities of the selected poems; instead, emphasis is
placed on how their images and the themes that they evoke mirror traits of modern
environmental sensibilities.

With this in mind, each sub-chapter is organized as follows: an introduction
provides a summary of the cultural and historical contextualization regarding each
volume. Moreover, this section includes a quick overview of the main trait of the critical
reception of the book under examination. Then, the ecocritical literary analysis of the
selected poetic passages is presented. Finally, a conclusion recapitulates the results of my
investigation. After discussing the five volumes separately, at the end of Chapter 5, a
summative section encapsulates the most relevant aspects derived through my critical
analysis, which serves to provide evidence of how identifying pastoral trajectories serves
as a fundamental practice for reevaluating *Georgian Poetry*. In this way, I wish to make
evident how this anthology represents a useful literary case helping current readership to
reflect on human-nonhuman relational ethics in response to the challenges of the
Anthropocene.

5.1 The Pastoral among the Vanguards: *Vol. I (1911-12)*

*Georgian Poetry 1911-1912* (1912) is the result of Edward Marsh’s work to collect the
most representative poems published in the eponymous two years, signaling “the
beginning of another ‘Georgian period’ which may take rank in due time with the several
great poetic ages of the past” (Marsh 1912, n.p.). His selection occurred primarily

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39 All the poems’ excerpts of this section (5.1) refer to Marsh, Edward. 1912. *Georgian Poetry 1911-1912.*
London: The Poetry Bookshop. Therefore, my reference to the source will be limited to indicating the page
number of the selected excerpt in parentheses.
according to his own poetic taste in regard to the multifaceted and idiosyncratic poetic revival occurring around 1910 in England.

The collection combines thirty-six poems by seventeen poets of different generations, both affirmed and established (Chesterton, Sturge Moore) and emerging (Rupert Brooke, D. H. Lawrence) in the literary landscape of the time. This first volume should be acknowledged for its additional merit in delineating a new possible trend among many other artistic – more or less radical and innovative – trajectories in the period, which often appeared as systematic and structured schools built around manifestos, like the case of Imagism and Vorticism. Considering the lack of a subversive literary attitude, as well as the fact that the poets involved in Marsh’s collection were not part of a group or coterie, Georgian-ism has always represented a controversial phenomenon in the eye of critics. Many critics referred to it in very different terms, and no cohesive perspective exists regard a univocal understanding of this phenomenon. Moreover, the distance of this anthology from the literary experimentation of the vanguards contributed to perceptions of it representing a traditionalist and conservative poetic tendency. In spite of this dominant critical narrative, aspects of innovation can still be found in the collection, which, in fact, openly aimed to respond to certain (late-)Victorian stylistic features, just like many other innovative literary trends of the time.

In this sense, several of the critics who reviewed Vol. I acknowledge its contribution in shedding light on a novel, promising, and growing literary sensibility in early-twentieth-century England, especially in the context of a general poetic revival in the period. Of this opinion, for instance, is John Bucham, who discusses the Georgians as showing “a wholesome revolt against poetic cliches, a desire for directness and simplicity both of feeling and expression” (see John Buchan’s unsigned review, titled “Georgian Poetry”, The Spectator, 18 January 1913, 107, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 72). Similar sentiments were expressed by Lascelles Abercrombie, who affirmed how the book “completely [broke] away from Victorianism in manner as well as in matter” (see Lascelles Abercrombie’s review, titled “Victorians and Georgians”, The Manchester Guardian, 6 January 1913, 5, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 61). Moreover, in spite of the multivocal nature of the collection, a few transversal characters of the Georgian phenomenon became relevant in the eye of its early readership. Among these, for instance, is the idea that Marsh’s poets demonstrated a powerful poetic imagination in the
sense of “the power of the poet to grasp the things of earth and to transfigure them, to take the world of the sense and to recast it – to send it forth glowing from the furnace of his own heart” (see Henry Newbolt’s untitled review, *Poetry and Drama*, March 1913, 44-45, reprinted in Rogers, 1977, 99). Other reviewers stress that they showed an “overwhelming sense of joy, joie d’être, joie de vivre” (Emphasis in the original. See DH Lawrence’s review, titled “The Georgian Renaissance”, *Rhythm*, Mach 1913, xvii-xx, reprinted in Rogers, 1977, 104). As already observed in Chapter 4, negative criticism primarily referred to the idiosyncrasy of the collection and to the fact that, when compared with more radical literary experiments occurring in the same years, *Georgian Poetry* prolonged more ‘traditional’ imagery and trends.

For what concerns the role of nature narratives in the collection, in particular to those related to the pastoral, there was an awareness that a keen sensibility for the environment represented a trend-mark of the group, as became clearer in the following years. Although this topic has not yet been explored by the (few) scholars who have investigated *Georgian Poetry*, my analysis of *Vol. I* addresses the pastoral nature narratives as anticipating later ecocritical traits in Modernist literature. Particularly, the identification of issues of human-nonhuman relationality in *Vol. I* serves here as a way for reevaluating *Georgian Poetry* along two main lines a) the volume can be discussed as anticipating ecological issues, which would appear later in literature and ecocritical epistemology; b) the volume provides evidence of a raising ecological sensibility in early-twentieth-century English literature.

The literary analysis of *Vol. I* is divided into two main parts. The first section discusses some selected passages of poems that refer to formal and conventional images of the pastoral as derived from classical tropes, including the country and the city, as well as sheep and shepherds. These images will be examined in reference to how they engage with issues of human-nonhuman relationality and related ethics in James E. Flecker’s *Joseph and Mary*, Gordon Bottomley’s *The End of the World*, and Sturge T. Moore’s *A Sicilian Idyll*. The second part focuses on how other pastoral poems included in the volume negotiate traditional and dualist pastoral figuration while testifying the existence of a more mature understanding of the environment in the poetic landscape of early 1910s Britain. This section focuses on Rupert Brooke’s *The Old Vicarage, Grantchester* and *Town and Country*.
With his popular quote “no shepherd, no pastoral” (1986, 45) Leo Marx reminds readers that among the most distinctive images of the pastoral, sheep and shepherds play a crucial role. This consideration is also valid for what concerns Georgian Poetry 1911-1912, in which the several references to these subjects become evident as signposts to delineate the pastoral trajectory running through the anthology. While similar observations appear with reference to several non-strictly pastoral poems of the collection, as I have discussed elsewhere\(^{40}\), an interesting ecocritical evaluation of sheep and shepherd-related images is offered in the pages that follow through an analysis of Joseph and Mary by James Elroy Flecker. The following section will also serve as an opening, preliminary consideration of my analysis of Georgian Poetry Vol. I.

Joseph and Mary describes a non-canonical dialogue occurring between Saint Joseph and the Virgin Mary after the birth of Jesus. While the presence of shepherds in this scene may appear as not particularly relevant, for they are elements of the classical domains of the nativity play, focusing on the poem as a pastoral work to be regarded through an ecocritical lens provides them with further implications. The relevance of the pastoral in the poem is stressed on several occasions, starting from the opening description of Mary as a country girl, considering her skills and knowledge in the field of rural occupations. In the first few lines, in fact, Joseph introduces her as “[a] sweet and rustic girl”, and as a “little maid / Who plucked me flowers in Spring” (87). Mary also depicts herself as “a village maid”, thus emphasizing aspects of pastoralism associated with her persona, and the dynamics of the contrast between the country and the city. Since this aspect is uncommon in classical representations of Mary in the context of the nativity, readers are invited to explore the peculiarities of the pastoral in the event described by the poem. This observation is reproposed throughout the work, in which issues of

\(^{40}\) In my previously published article (Rozzoni 2021c), I discussed this theme in relation to Wilfred Wilson Gibson’s The Hare, featured in Vol. I. The long poem illustrates the relation between a human being and the eponymous animal, which intermingles with a metaphorical account of a sensuous relationship with a woman. Issues of human-nonhuman connectedness, however, are emphasized in the poem by the fact that the hare assumes an ambiguous identity: at times, the description of the animal becomes equivocally confused with that of a woman, who, in her turn, is involved in an intimate entanglement with the lyrical voice.
complexity are evoked in regard to how one could or should consider pastoral-related issues.

An example is provided by the contrast in the depiction of Mary and Joseph, which is apparent in the following passage:

Mary (inattentive to his words)
A stranger came with feet of flame
And told me this strange thing,--
For all I was a village maid
My son should be a King.

Joseph:
A King, dear wife? Who ever knew
Of Kings in stables born! (87, emphasis in original)

This excerpt suggests a discrepancy between Mary’s awareness of having given birth to a King (“my son should be a King”), and Joseph’s striving to acknowledge it. This distance attributes positive implications to ‘rustic’ Mary: she is self-aware, secure, and disinterested in issues other than her son, as the specification “(inattentive to his words)” presents. These characteristics are in contrast with the way Joseph appears inattentive and confused regarding what is going on. The same dynamic is reproposed at the end of the poem with reference to the appearance of shepherds around the stable who celebrate the birth of Jesus, in accordance with the traditional religious account. While Joseph expresses his discontent in regard to their approaching (“The shepherds I despise”), Mary’s words offer an opposite, positive attitude toward them: “And strong and tall, with lifted eyes / Seven shepherds walk this way”. Thus, Mary’s pastoralism seems to attribute to her the capacity to appreciate shepherds in a way that differs from those who do not have a similar inclination.

The closing lines of the poem are clarificatory in this sense: they determine the relevance that shepherds play in the poem while stressing the limits of Joseph’s understandings in their regard. To her husband, Mary states, “You know not what a shepherd sings, / Nor see his shining eyes” (88). Again, the poem makes evident how Mary possesses a kind of knowledge that Joseph lacks. As she suggests, the shepherds’ singing (“what a shepherd sings”) and their emotional involvement (“his shining eyes”) possess deeper meanings than one could understand at first sight, as in the case of Josef. Consequently, the idea of simplicity attributed to the pastoral and its traditional elements
are here rediscussed by presenting shepherds as complex characters possessing an array of implications that are not easily accessed by non-experts in the pastoral domains.

Through the lens of ecocriticism, combined with the theoretical framework proposed in this dissertation, this consideration becomes a useful meta-literary insight that parallels what was discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Specifically, this poem offers the reader the possibility to reflect on the complexity that the pastoral presents in the anthology, and which should be teased out through an attentive, critical eye. The poem highlights the capacity of the pastoral Mary to access in-depth understandings of pastoral-related issues occurring around her, and this analysis intends to adopt a similar perspective by exploring other pastoral references in the collection in order to unveil their deep, hidden meanings.

Another relevant case of how the pastoral references in Vol. I favor useful ecocritical considerations is offered by Gordon Bottomley in *The End of the World*.41 The fact that Jeremy Black presents Bottomley as an early environmentalist (Black 2012, 261) fosters the possibility of approaching the poem through an ecocritical lens. *Vol. I* includes a section describing a wintry rural landscape at dawn, where a white snowpack thwarts the identification of the several elements composing it: “The dawn now seemed neglected in the grey / Where mountains were unbuilt and shadowless tress / Rootlessly paused or hung upon the air” (25). The almost colorless scenario presented in the poem (“neglected in the grey”) creates a sense of fusion and confusion in the reader, considering the several elements forming it. Moreover, the scenery described appears, in general, as being suspended and still (“pause or hung upon”) within a similar vague setting. Likewise, the several entities comprising this environment seem to have lost their concreteness and defined shape under the weather condition described. Trees, for instance, cannot cast their shadows anymore (“shadowless trees”) while mountains cannot be specifically distinguished from their surroundings (“mountains were unbuilt”). Furthermore, a similar ambiguity emerges from the lack of almost any signs of life in this description, with the exception of a few feeble – albeit not clearly identifiable – sounds.

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41 Part of the following analysis of *The End of the World*, by Gordon Bottomley has already appeared in my previously published article (Rozzoni 2021c) dedicated to the Georgians and the environmental imagination.
One of them is the bleating of a sheep, ("Until a sheep called once"), which is also the element that reinscribes Bottomley’s picturesque poetic overview in the pastoral domain. The relevance of this animal call, however, is weakened by the way it is narrated, both through an acoustic and visual perspective. In the first case, the narrator stresses that the animal only called “once”, thus trivializing the presence of this sound within the vast overview; in the second case, one can reflect on how the color of the sheep’s mantle – traditionally white – gets lost in the whiteness of the snowy background. Therefore, the way the sheep’s bleating is depicted can be read as a strategy to highlight how, in the poems, the establishment of fixed and well-defined identities is at stake, and that a sense of continuity prevails in the representation and conceptualization of the several entities composing the environment. These insights are also useful to demonstrate that the idea of the pastoral as an ecosystem – as discussed in Chapter 3 – well relates to this poem, thus fostering the possibility that the reader may read the natural world in this work as a deep entanglement between different life forms.

Deeper ecocritical considerations, however, can be determined in regard to the human figure described a few lines later. As the following excerpt suggests, the poem elaborates on the concept of vagueness and blurriness also when it attempts to describe human beings:

Someone passed down the valley swift and singing,  
Yes, with locks spreaded like a son of morning;  
But if he seemed too tall to be a man  
It was that men had been so long unseen,  
Or shapes loom larger through a moving snow. (25)

In the passage, the poet fails to properly recognize a human being while he or she is walking in the snow. Uncertainty prevails regarding the nature of the figure moving across the overview (“he seemed too tall to be a man”). This condition leads the speaker to ponder the identity of this subject on the basis of external visual clues provided by the narrator, including height and shape. The difficulty of determining and categorizing the “shape” moving in the snow as a human being, on a more conceptual level, unleashes interesting ecocritical and posthuman reflections. This situation, in fact, evokes striking parallels with current discussions in the fields and related scholarship regarding the impossibility of determining an absolute ontological boundary between the concepts of human and nonhuman. Just like Darwin’s theory challenged the strict, absolute split
between the two realms, and posthumanism(s) – including new materialism(s) – defy a similar absolute ontological detachment between them, the wintry landscape presented in the poem favors a similar consideration. Along this line, the pastoral locus of Bottomley’s poem becomes eligible as a metaphor to reflect on the impossibility of establishing an absolute conceptual divide, which forcibly separates humans and nonhumans, while, oppositely, stressing their intertwining.

The opportunity for discussing similar issues is reiterated throughout the poem by a series of linguistic effects emphasizing the already discussed idea of vagueness, in relation to which the poetic voice interrogates himself or herself about his or her surroundings. The possibility of this reflection appears in the lyrical voice’s inquiry on some snow falling from a tree branch: “Shaking the tree, it might have been a bird / Slipping in sleep or shelter, whirring wings;” (25, emphasis added). In these lines, the use of “might have been” occurs as a formulation expressing a low degree of possibility and high uncertainty. A similar effect is used a few lines later, in the narrator’s indecision about the origin of a certain noise that he or she heard: “The dog had howled again – or thus it seemed” (26, emphasis added). The verb to “seem”, again, undermines a definitive identification of the sound, thus fostering the sense of uncertainty in the classification of the several entities and occurrences in this realm. The expression “[w]atching the strangeness of familiar things” (26) which the lyrical voice presents a few lines later, epitomizes this discussion as an opportunity for circumventing what Rosi Braidotti would define as “rejecting the mental habit of universalism as a way of acknowledging the partial nature of visions of the human that were produced by European culture in its hegemonic, imperial and Enlightenment-driven mode [by…] [s]uspending belief in a unitary and self-evident category of ‘we humans’” (Braidotti 2019, 15). In other words, the adoption of a different paradigm allows for exceeding mental habits and familiar considerations on certain concepts, which, through a different lens, acquire new meanings and values: this effect seems to relate to the dynamics characterizing the lyrical I when observing the landscape after snowfall. “Familiar things” no longer fit within an old perspective; hence, there is the fact that the boundaries between the several elements composing the landscape are made porous both on a visual and conceptual level. The difficulty of distinguishing and defining ‘humans’ in this context has primal ecocritical
implications, which this example of the Georgian environmental imagination allows to stress in alignment with current critical philosophical discussions.

While the observations about *Joseph and Mary* and *The End of the World* regard the pastoral with reference to imagery and themes, other poems contained in the collection engage with it primarily in a more formal way. *A Sicilian Idyll* by T. Sturge Moore\(^{42}\) represents an interesting case study in this sense since it displays the classical pastoral literary form of the eclogues. As the *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates, the word ‘eclogue’ derives from the Greek verb *eklegein* (to pick out), and refers to pastoral literary dialogues (Hanks et al. 2010, 557) that are similar to Virgil's *Eclogues*. The notion of ‘dialogue’ (from the Greek *dialegesthai*, that is ‘converse with’) is particularly useful to highlight possible ecological implications of the eclogue: its dialogical form, in fact, emphasizes, on a formal level, the issue of relationality on which the present analysis is based, particularly in reference to two subjects involved in the poetic conversation.\(^{43}\) In Moore’s poem, this dialogue regards “the despair of Delphis at seeing an attractive boy taken from him – first by the ebullient Hipparchus and later by a normal young wife” (Gwyrm 1951, 107) while presenting, at the same time, an array of other characters and topics. Among the several episodes recounted in this work, some appear particularly interesting for the ecocritical discussion offered by this study.

While recounting his adventures, Delphis offers descriptions of certain natural locations that provide the reader with the opportunity to reflect on the strict contact occurring between the human and the nonhuman entities inhabiting the poetic pastoral realm. Among them is a section describing a seaside location, in which Delphis admires his beloved while swimming and which presents significant rhetorical strategies for an ecocritical analysis:

> And perked his head like an inquisitive bird,
> As gravely happy; of all unconscious save
> His body's aptness for its then employment;
> His eyes intent on shells in some clear pool

\(^{42}\) Although Sturge Moore was forty-two – and thus over the general age limit of thirty-five to forty established for appearing in the issue – Marsh included his *A Sicilian Idyll* in the anthology, giving him more space than any other poet. Sturge Moore is no Georgian, and Marsh rightly excluded him from succeeding volumes (along with Chesterton, Trevelyan, and two others). See Gwyrm 1951, 49.

\(^{43}\) The discussion on the pastoral dialogue developing in the following paragraph relates to my previously published article dedicated to eclogues in Seamus Heaney’s *Electric Light* (Rozzoni 2021a).
Or choosing where he next will plant his feet.
Again he leaps, his curls against his hat
Bounce up behind. The daintiest thing alive,
He rocks awhile, turned from me towards the sea;
Unseen I might devour him with my eyes.
At last he stood upon a ledge each wave
Spread with a sheet of foam four inches deep;
He gazing at them saw them disappear
And reappear all shining and refreshed:
Then raised his head, beheld the ocean stretched
Alive before him in its magnitude. (146)

The depiction of Delphis’s lover while swimming occurs through linguistic effects that emphasize the sense of the connectedness between the boy and the nonhuman realm surrounding him. First, we should consider the opening analogy between the boy with a bird (“like an inquisitive bird”), which reinforces both the idea of the human-animal intertwining and that of the blurring boundaries between them, similarly to what was discussed in Bottomley’s poems. Furthermore, the metaphor “[t]he daintiest thing”, here adopted to describe the young boy, can be read as another piece of evidence of how Delphis’s envisioning of his lover relies on a sense of enmeshment between humans and nonhumans. The word ‘thing’ defies a strict anthropocentric figuration, while the selection of verbs describing the boy’s movement – including “leaps”, “curls”, and “rocks” – stress this issue even further: these actions, in fact, could apply to both humans and nonhumans. Hence this lexical choice fosters the possibility of interpreting the character as epitomizing the sense of unity with the nonhuman realm, which becomes another example of how this poem offers valuable ecocritical narratives stressing the notion of human-nonhuman connectedness. Finally, the constant appearing and disappearing of the boy up and down the water’s surface (“He gazing at them saw them disappear / And reappear all shining and refreshed”) offers the reader an image where, again, a sense of fusion and confusion of a human entity with the surrounding world is presented. The emphasis on issues of hybridity, therefore, seems to prevail in the description of Delphis’s object of desire. This awareness becomes useful for underlining the relevance of this theme when evaluating the complexity of the pastoral in this poem.

The fact that a similar issue appears in another section of *A Sicilian Idyll* makes this ecocritical and posthuman pastoral narrative even more relevant. A few lines later, in fact, Delphis appears to bring out a postdualistic narrative while describing his life as a
farmer in Sicily. Beyond listing the rural activities in which he is involved while dwelling in the Sicilian countryside, Delphis’s words assume a particularly relevant ecocritical connotation for their stress on the intimate relationship with the natural surroundings enforced by the location:

[...] I serve his father,
A farmer well-to-do and full of sense,
Who owns a grass-farm cleared among the pines
North-west the cone, where even at noon in summer,
The slope it falls on lengthens a tree's shade.
To play the lyre, read and write and dance
I teach this lad; in all their country toil
Join, nor ask better fare than cheese, black bread,
Butter or curds, and milk, nor better bed
Than litter of dried fern or lentisk yields,
Such as they all sleep soundly on and dream,
(If e'er they dream) of places where it grew.--
Where they have gathered mushrooms, eaten berries,
Or found the sheep they lost, or killed a fox,
Or snared the kestrel, or so played their pipes
Some maid showed pleasure, sighed, nay even wept.
There to be poet need involve no strain,
For though enough of coarseness, dung--nay, nay,
And suffering too, be mingled with the life,
'Tis wedded to such air,
Such water and sound health! (149)

Delphis describes a rural location featuring a particularly fertile land, which generously offers food and other resources for his livelihood (“Join, nor ask better fare than cheese, black bread, / Butter or curds, and milk, nor better bed / Than litter of dried fern or lentisk yields”). If one ponders over the sense of relationality occurring between the humans and the nonhumans cited in these lines, it is possible to exceed the idea that this poem, again, solely represents a traditional version of the countryside in contrast to the city. In opposition to a similar limited figuration on the pastoral, the excerpt cited above allows one to reflect on the fact that, within the sense of pleasantness characterizing the Sicilian locus, ethical models of human/nonhuman relationality are also evoked. This occurs in regard to the actions of care by humans toward animals (“found the sheep they lost”, “snared the kestrel”), but also to the positive atmosphere that characterizes the human dwelling in the environment. Experiencing life in the country, the poem suggests, ensures inspiration (“There to be poet need involve no strain, / For though enough of coarseness,
dung--nay, nay,) and health (“And suffering too, be mingled with the life, / 'Tis wedded to such air, / Such water and sound health!”). Therefore, once again, the pastoral domain represented in the collection favors considerations that establish it as a powerful ecocritical tool in Marsh’s anthology. Specifically, beyond being seen as a solely idealized realm, the pastoral location depicted by T. Sturge Moore allows for considering the Georgian poetic imagination as stressing an intimate experience of relationality with the environment that presents positive benefits.

This non-simplistic representation of the environment in Georgian pastoral poems returns in several other works of the collection and in relation to other traditional pastoral tropes. It is the case of the country/city dichotomy, whose negotiation will guide the second part of my analysis dedicated to the pastoral in Vol. I. While traditionally, as observed, the pastoral is set in a predominantly dualistic figuration, when regarded through the idea of the pastoral as an ecosystem – as delineated in Chapter 2 – new considerations can emerge. Rupert Brooke’s The Old Vicarage, Grantchester offers several passages that particularly benefit from being analyzed along this line.

Brooke’s poem can be considered a panegyric of the eponymous rural location, in which emphasis is placed on its quietness and on the deep enmeshment with the natural world that Grantchester ensures, as is visible in the following passage: “Here am I, sweating, sick, and hot, / And there the shadowed waters fresh / Lean up to embrace the naked flesh” (33). From these lines, one can draw parallels between the vicarage and the classical pastoral trope of the locus amoenus, the ‘pleasant place’ of literature par excellence. It is described as an idyllic landscape typically containing “trees and shade, a grassy meadow, running water, song-bird, and cool breezes” (Spawforth et al. 2012, 854) or “an idealized landscape with three fundamental ingredients: trees, grass and water” (Ruff 2015, 92). Moreover, the locus amoenus is often cited as a refuge in accordance with some other critics (Carroll 2011, 71). As the line “shadowed waters fresh” in the poem reveals, a parallel can be established between the description of the vicarage and the notion of locus amoenus. This parallel also fosters the idea that this poem largely relies on the traditional pastoral dualism “country/city”, although certain aspects favor the development of alternative narratives. For instance, it is relevant to observe how the excerpt also informs the reader about the possibility for human beings to experience a
strict, physical contact with the natural world, which invites readers to reflect on issues of human-nonhuman relationality already discussed.

The reliance of the description of Grantchester on classical pastoral elements is offered a few lines later, focusing on the presence of several mythological characters common to pastoral poems from antiquity:

Some, it may be, can get in touch
With Nature there, or Earth, or such.
And clever modern men have seen
A Faun a-peeping through the green,
And felt the Classics were not dead,
To glimpse a Naiad's reedy head,
Or hear the Goat-foot piping low ... (34)

From this excerpt, the presence of classical pastoral figures – like fauns (“A Faun a-peeping through the green), muses (Naiad), and even the god Pan playing music (Goat-foot piping) – aligns Brooke’s poem with traditional, ancient lyrics which, for instance, can be found in Theocritus’s *Idylls*. In this sense, it reinforces the awareness that this poem draws from traditional stylistic features and, in the same way, that its representation of the rural realm appears primarily as idealized. Moreover, the direct appearance of the capitalized term ‘Nature’ can be considered as stressing this consideration, for this effect sheds light on the concept’s primarily dualistic and abstract figuration.

However, the possibility that these lines invite current readers to reflect on the issues of the human-nonhuman relationship in the poem by adopting a more (eco)critical approach to the pastoral, brings my analysis to disclose further narratives within Brooke’s work. Beyond the limits of a mere dualistic approach, the represented environment is also visible as a place where a real, concrete sense of connectedness can be determined, as the expression to “get in touch / With” evokes. Furthermore, the fact that the word “Earth” follows the more abstract concept of “Nature” seems to provide a more material reconfiguration of the environment. In this way, by adopting a more ecocritical stance, the rural essence of Grantchester appears to suggest possibilities of acknowledging a more ‘mature’ figuration of the environment where both humans and nonhumans compose it, in their enmeshment.

Along the same line, other sections of the poem, which at first glance only emphasize a limited vision of the countryside, primarily as a counter-term of the city,
suggest a more modern epistemology. An example can be observed in the following section, which discusses Grantchester in contrast to a series of urban locations:

For Cambridge people rarely smile,  
Being urban, squat, and packed with guile;  
And Royston men in the far South  
Are black and fierce and strange of mouth;  
At Over they fling oaths at one,  
And worse than oaths at Trumpington,  
And Ditton girls are mean and dirty,  
And there's none in Harston under thirty,  
And folks in Shelford and those parts  
Have twisted lips and twisted hearts,  
And Barton men make cockney rhymes,  
And Coton's full of nameless crimes,  
And things are done you'd not believe  
At Madingley on Christmas Eve. (35)

A list of more urban locations, including Cambridge, is offered, which is combined with a series of negative adjectives underlining their aspects of criticism. The alleged negative characteristics of these places include the morally questionable values characterizing their inhabitants (“guile”, “fierce”, “mean”, “twister hearth”, “full of nameless crimes”) and the appearance of their environments (“black” – probably in relation to industrialization – “dirty”). From this description it is not difficult to determine the idea of the city in alignment with what Raymond Williams acknowledges as a typical trait in Western culture, that is as: “a place of noise, worldliness and ambition” (Williams 1973, 1).

However, with a particular reference to the symbolic implications of Cambridge, deeper ecocritical considerations can be assumed from the poem. While Cambridge holds a privileged reputation for representing an important center for education, the narrator seems to criticize this trait, or at least to show its limits, in the evaluation of other locations. The following passage is explanatory in this sense:

For England's the one land, I know,  
Where men with Splendid Hearts may go;  
And Cambridgeshire, of all England,  
The shire for Men who Understand;  
And of that district I prefer  
The lovely hamlet Grantchester. (35, emphasis in original)
While the poem acknowledges the relevance of Cambridgeshire for its connection to the intellectual activities and the prestige brought in by the popular academic background (“The shire for Men who Understand”) the humble vicarage of Grantchester is still appointed as the favorable location for the lyrical I to dwell in. From an ecocritical and posthumanist perspective, the expression “Men who Understand” can be interpreted as revealing certain satirical traits, especially in regard to the fact that, in spite of this virtue, Cambridgeshire still holds an inferior appreciation when compared to Grantchester. Therefore, the limits that the lyrical I determines with reference to the idea of ‘understanding’ seems to parallel the ecocritical and posthumanist critique to the philosophy of Rationalism, whose main dualistic figurations still pertain to the dominant traits and narratives regarding to the environment (Braidotti 2019). The idea of “Men who Understand” seems to resonate with the traditional figuration of the “Man of Reason” often recalled as a metaphor of (traditional) Western thought. Hence, just like ecocriticism and posthumanism criticize the dualism and anthropocentrism of a similar dominant Humanistic Western figuration of the environment, the negative connotation attributed to Cambridgeshire in favor of Grantchester invites the reader to consider the latter as supporting a more adequate conceptualization of the world. And considering how Grantchester fosters a sense of human-nonhuman connectedness, emphasis on a more complex understanding of the environment, beyond the dualistic domains of the country/city pastoral dualism becomes evident in the poem.

A few lines later, the abundance of natural elements in the description of Grantchester, and the stress on their capacity to positively affect the life of human beings dwelling there, strengthens the value of the human-nonhuman intertwining in the vicarage:

But Grantchester! ah, Grantchester!
There's peace and holy quiet there,
Great clouds along pacific skies,
And men and women with straight eyes,
Lithe children lovelier than a dream,
A bosky wood, a slumbrous stream,
And little kindly winds that creep
Round twilight corners, half asleep. (36)

Not only does this excerpt affirm the positive qualities – and moral values – of the people living in Grantchester (with women having “straight eyes” and children being “lovelier
than a dream”), but also the fact that “quietness” and a “slumbrous” atmosphere are ensured in the vicarage fosters the positive connotations. The presence of natural elements (“A bosky wood”), moreover, stresses even further the idea that the value of this location relies on the very sense of relationality with the nonhuman realm that is offered here. Therefore, once again, a complex and mature figuration of the environment can be assumed while reading this poem: beyond a mere replica of the country/city dualism, the poem invites readers to reflect on the countryside as a spatiality where humans and nonhumans engage with different forms of interactions. While the dualism between city and country is not overcome, the country seems to foster an awareness of the interconnectedness of humans and nonhumans. This consideration not only sheds light on valuable ecocritical and posthuman considerations, but the terms in which they are described also invite readers to reflect on the ethical values of similar conditions.

Another poem by Rupert Brooke proposes similar narratives, which more explicitly invite readers to critically reflect on the pastoral dualism under examination. *Town and Country* is an eight quatrains poem, divided into two sections dedicated, respectively, to the description of an urban and a rural location. While the echo of classical pastoral dualism is evident – starting from the title – the poem offers one the possibility to determine alternative postdualistic interpretations. The rural and the urban location in the poem, in fact, are not depicted in strict contrast with each other along the line presented, again, by Raymond Williams. Instead, there are similarities between the two locations in that both of them ensure forms of relationality with the nonhuman realm. A first trace of this dynamic emerges in the way the urban is represented:

Here, where love's stuff is body, arm and side  
Are stabbing-sweet 'gainst chair and lamp and wall.  
In every touch more intimate meanings hide;  
And flaming brains are the white heart of all.

Here, million pulses to one centre beat:  
Closed in by men's vast friendliness, alone,  
Two can be drunk with solitude, and meet  
On the sheer point where sense with knowing's one. (43)

As these lines reveal, the “Town” has a positive connotation as the engagement with emotions including “love” and other “intimate” feelings indicates. Moreover, the town appears to be a vivid place full of inputs (“million pulses to one centre beat”), which allow
a person to never feel alone because of one’s constant engagement with other forms of life, human and nonhuman. The stress on the idea of “friendliness” and the verb to “meet” in the second stanza makes this evaluation effective. Rather than being depicted as solely a material and lifeless spatiality, the urban realm in this poem instead appears as centering around a concept of connectedness with the surroundings through sets of material forms of entanglements. The way in which the town is represented in the poem presents aspects of originality if compared to more traditional evaluations, thus indicating another possible trait of ecocritical modernity in the evaluation of *Vol. I*.

The following section of the poem, which is dedicated to the “Country”, includes similar innovative narratives:

Stay! though the woods are quiet, and you've heard
Night creep along the hedges. Never go
Where tangled foliage shrouts the crying bird,
And the remote winds sigh, and waters flow!

Lest--as our words fall dumb on windless noons,
Or hearts grow hushed and solitary, beneath
Unheeding stars and unfamiliar moons,
Or boughs bend over, close and quiet as death, – (43)

From these lines, it is evident that an array of nonhuman entities populates this location. While the concept of “quietness” associated with the natural surroundings (“woods are quiet”) may remind readers of the traditional image of the pastoral as primarily a space of tranquility, the presence of animals and plants – including a “bird”, “hedges”, but also “winds” and “waters” – and the focus on their intertwining invites the reader to reflect on it as an ecosystem. Through this perspective, even when a person wanders solitarily in this location, he or she is to be considered as always accompanied by something else, as the final lines also reiterate when indicating the presence of “stars”, “moons” and other plants (“boughs”).

Again, a sense of relationality and connectedness is given prominence in the poem, which, by recalling similar considerations that emerged in regard to the first two stanzas (dedicated to the town), stresses how the focus of this poem is on the engagement of humans with their material surroundings. Therefore, rather than presenting a strict, limiting dualistic figuration of the country/city, which is typical of the pastoral antique tradition, one can reflect on how Brooke’s *Town and Country* favors a discussion of more
modern environmental evaluations, which determines this poem as another case for supporting possible ecocritical and posthuman evaluations of Edward Marsh’s collection.

**Conclusion**

The analysis of the selected traces of the pastoral in *Georgian Poetry 1911-1912* has underlined how this topic is particularly valuable to conduct a reevaluation of the volume in the context of the Environmental Humanities. On the one hand, the presence of traditional pastoral images and tropes – such as sheep and shepherds, but also the dichotomy country/city – shows how the selected poems align with conventional literary trends; this aspect resonates with the dominant critical evaluation of the collection. On the other hand, the critical lens proposed in this study has favored the disclosing of latent, alternative narratives. An attentive analytical look at the relationship between the human and nonhuman entities in the pastoral landscape presented by the selected poems allows us to acknowledge how Georgians possess traits of what Lawrence Buell would define a mature environmental aesthetics (1995). This is especially visible in the fact that Georgians’ representation of the natural world involves the notion of connectedness between the human and the nonhuman, which echoes current ecocritical epistemology in response to solely dualistic, traditional perspectives on the environment.

This aspect emerges, specifically, in James Elroy Flecker’s *Joseph and Mary*. Much more than a replica of the pastoral traits in the nativity play, in fact, shepherds in the poem can be regarded as elements for demonstrating the oft-neglected level of complexity regarding the pastoral. Similarly, beyond appearing as a mere cliché, the sound of a sheep in *The End of the World* by Gordon Bottomley serves as an occasion for negotiating a strict conceptual separation of the natural world from the notion of the human, while favoring the exploration of the liminality between the two. Attention to forms of relationality between humans and nonhumans also appears in other explicit pastoral poems such as *A Sicilian Idyll* by T. Sturge Moore. Here, one can demonstrate that the entanglement between human characters and the landscape is material, conceptual, and linguistic. Furthermore, the possibility of refiguring the classical country/city dichotomy in a postdualistic sense is offered in Rupert Brooke’s *The Old Vicarage, Grantchester*. In this poem, the reference to the binary is re-imagined by the
emphasis that the poem places on the relationship between human beings vegetal, and animal entities as well as organic and inorganic elements. Both through linguistic and thematic effects, this entanglement is evident when the poet represents the rural realm, which exceeds a merely idealized version of the countryside in contrast to the city. Rather, the country appears in the poem as a location favoring ethical forms of relationality between different organisms. The same consideration occurs in another explicit pastoral poem by the same author, *Town and Country*, which also defies an apparent dichotomic evaluation while stressing the relationship existing between people and their material surroundings.

Therefore, with an emphasis on the idea of connectedness, which is typical of current ecocritical perspectives, a negotiation of the strict, traditional pastoral dualisms is offered, which determines the issue of human-nonhuman intertwining to be a significant narrative running through *Vol. I*.

### 5.2 The Pastoral at War: *Vol. II* (1913-1915)

The second volume of *Georgian Poetry* was published in 1915, three years after the successful launch of the opening volume of Marsh’s anthology. Similar to the positive reception of its forerunner issue, *Vol. II* obtained both a critical and commercial acknowledgment soon after its publication (Ross 1965, 107). The collection features several established authors who already appeared in *Vol. I*, including William H. Davies, Walter de Mare, and D. H. Lawrence. In addition, Marsh also welcomed the voices of new poets such as Francis Ledwidge, Ralph Hodgson, and John Drinkwater, a choice that provided a sense of novelty. Furthering the trend initiated with *Vol. I*, *Vol. II* exhibited an array of different topics, literary forms, and styles, thus corroborating the pluralistic nature of the label ‘Georgian’.

When considering the critical reception of *Vol. II*, one notices a generally supportive trend, which is epitomized, for instance, by an unsigned review published in *The Spectator* on 5 February 1916 praising the collection in the following terms: “it must be admitted that there is a great deal of conscious art and of high poetic intention in much

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44 All the poems’ excerpts of this section (5.2) refer to Marsh, Edward. 1915. *Georgian Poetry 1913-1915*. London: The Poetry Bookshop. Therefore, my reference to the source will be limited to indicating the page number of the selected excerpt in parentheses.
of the Georgian verse” (see the unsigned review, titled “Georgian Poetry, 1913-1915”, The Spectator, 5 February 1916, 190-1, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 137). Another example is Arthur Waugh’s review, which describes the Georgians as “young innovators” and as writers in relation to whom it was necessary to “estimate the effect which their influence seems likely to exercise upon English poetry in the immediate future” (see Arthur Waugh’s review, titled “The New Poetry”, Quarterly Review, October 1916, 365-86, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 142). These comments underline that the poems included in this issue were seen by their contemporaries as possessing a degree of literary maturity and quality, fostering the idea that the Georgians were representative of a wider, innovative spirit characterizing the literary and cultural landscape of mid-1910s Britain.

Vol. II was published during the period of World War I. At the time of its publication, the conflict had not yet reached its worst, brutal stages. In fact, in 1915, Britain’s perception of war was still primarily influenced by the enthusiasm furbished by public discourse concerning issues such as heroism and patriotism (Monger 2012; Rodic and Rosenthal, 2014; Beckett 2007). The echoes of the conflict featured in Vol. II align with this aesthetic, as testified by the presence of Rupert Brooke’s war poems in the volume. Other scholars (Kendall 2006; Miller 2017; Regan 2019) have established how Brooke played a major role in feeding the British patriotic spirit, primarily due to his collection 1914 and Other Poems (1915)45, one of the first literary works from a soldier directly involved in World War I. The presence of some of his war poems in Vol. II, including The Soldier – perhaps the most representative among the British war sonnets – is sufficient to demonstrate the engagement of the second issue of Marsh’s anthology with the topic of World War I, contrary to the later accusation that Georgians ignored the conflict in their poetic expressions, as well as neglecting their own cultural, historical context (Simon 1975, 2; Spender 1963, 195, cited in Simon 1975, 3). My focus on war themes in Vol. II is informed by intent to conduct a reevaluation of Georgian Poetry along the principle established with my 5Rs in Chapter 3: particularly, I explore World War I related issues in order to stress the engagement of the Georgians with the cultural mileu of the time in which they published their poems. While my perspective remains dedicated

45 The popularity of Brooke as a rising literary star in the British pre-war poetic landscape increased after his death in the Aegean and the related process of the mythification of his persona, along the narrative of a ‘young poet who died young’ which followed. For a further discussion on the process of mythification of Rupert Brooke after his death, see Jones 2014.
to an ecocritical and posthuman perspective on the pastoral, a more historical consideration regarding World War I cannot be disregarded, even though it does not appear the key understanding of my analysis.

Furthermore, aspects in *Vol. II* regarding the cultural milieu of the mid-1910s can also be discussed in reference to the traces of environmental discourse which the volume contains. As already observed in Chapter 4, environmental narratives did not disappear in literature during the years of the conflict, even though they often remained latent at that time. As will be discussed in the following sections, in *Vol. II*, the pastoral often relates the topic of human-nonhuman connectedness to the imagery of the conflict, thus becoming a way for reflecting on the Georgians’ mature and complex sense of the environment and spirit of their time and elaboration of the pastoral.

My analysis of the pastoral in *Vol. II* is divided into two main parts. First, I focus on some pastoral poems that represent evident traces of war-related imagery enmeshed with ecocritical narratives. Specifically, my attention will be dedicated to Rupert Brooke’s *Tiare Tahiti* and *Heaven*. Second, I discuss some poems, which, without providing specific reference to the war, presents ecological traits in elaborating on the topic of the human-nonhuman connectedness: this is the case in *Of Greatham* by John Drinkwater, Francis Ledwidge’s *A Rainy Day in April*, and James Stephens’s *The Goat Paths*. Through my twofold observation, I illustrate how, in a period deeply affected by the advent of World War I, evidence is present of the endurance of the environmental discourse in literature, of which the pastoral trajectory in *Vol. II* remains crucial. This aspect will be discussed as testifying to the originality of Edward Marsh’s anthology and topicality regarding the cultural context of the years 1913-15.

One of the most significant authors featured in the collection is Rupert Brooke. His relevance in the context of *Vol. II* is demonstrated by the fact that the poet received a special mention in the preface of the volume as well as in the dedication of the book – together with James Elory Flecker, who also prematurely died in 1915, due to health issues. In addition, in his prefatory note, Marsh openly acknowledged the quality of his literary work.46 Brooke’s poems are useful for my attempt to conduct a reevaluation of

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46 See Marsh’s “Prefatory Note” to *Vol. II* in Marsh 1915, n.p.: “Two of the poets – I think the youngest, and certainly not the least gifted – are dead. Rupert Brooke, who seemed to have everything that is worth
the collection considering that their elaboration of the pastoral possesses original and peculiar characteristics which benefit from being regarded through an ecocritical lens. On the one hand, we’ll see that the selected pastoral poems by Brooke present non-traditional pastoral scenarios; on the other hand, the description of his pastoral loci resonates with my discussion on the pastoral as an ecosystem which proves valuable for disclosing in his poems considerations on relational ethics between humans and nonhumans.

*Tiare Tahiti* (in English “flower of Tahiti”) is the first poem by Brooke that will be discussed from this perspective. The poem develops the pastoral by offering a celebration of the eponymous island in Polynesia. While, conventionally, the pastoral regards the representation of rural areas – often referring to the mythical, imaginary location of Arcadia – the *locus amoenus* at the center of Brooke’s poems is both geographically located and set in a maritime scenario. Developing the pastoral in spatialities different from the countryside, specifically, as a seascape, cannot be considered as a completely innovative choice, considering the long-standing literary trend of *piscatorial* pastoral since antiquity. Yet the uniqueness of this choice in relation to the anthology makes *Tiare Tahiti* a useful case study for investigating the peculiarities of the pastoral in Marsh’s work as an element stressing the modernity of the project.

Among these characteristics, the fact that the pastoral in the poem intermingles with references to World War I, cannot be disregarded, as the following excerpt reveals:

Mamu, when our laughter ends,
And hearts and bodies, brown as white,
Are dust about the doors of friends,
Or scent ablowing down the night,
Then, oh! then, the wise agree,
Comes our immortality.
Mamu, there waits a land
Hard for us to understand. (51)

These lines provide evidence that the described location is not simply an idealized natural reality forcibly separated from any possible negative connotation, as often occurs in traditional pastoral representations of the country (Williams 1973). Instead, this excerpt

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47 Piscatorial pastoral poems usually take place in sea-, lake- or other aquatic locations.
makes evident that suffering, death, and toil are also present in Brooke’s pastoral representation: while Tahiti is still depicted as an “Ideal Reef”, a more complex understanding of this location is offered through the idea that it represents “a land / Hard for us to understand”. The complexity of the pastoral in this description is prompted by the poem’s engagement with dead-related vocabulary (“laughter ends”, “dust”) in illustrating what occurs in Tahiti: this effect subverts the classical tone of wonder and praise that characterizes the natural world in pastoral domains, alongside the conventional notions of ‘retreat’ and ‘requiem’ already discussed (Sales 1983, Gifford 1999).

Beyond showing aspects of exoticism, another original feature of the pastoral in Tiare Tahiti regards the ecological implications provided by the description of the natural world, which allow for a possible rereading of the pastoral along the approach delineated with my pastoral 5Rs:

Stars and sunlight there shall meet,
Coral’s hues and rainbows there,
And Teilra’s braided hair;
And with the starred ‘tiare’s’ white,
And white birds in the dark ravine,
And ‘flamboyants’ ablaze at night,
And jewels, and evening’s after-green,
And dawns of pearl and gold and red,
Mamua, your lovelier head! (52)

In this excerpt, Tahiti appears as a spatiality favoring forms of interaction between human beings and their nonhuman surroundings. First, the plurality of the nonhuman entities presented in the selected passage suggests that the representation of the natural world resembles an ecosystem, in which multiple, different forms of life – including animals (“birds”, “coral”), and inorganic materials (“pearl”) – coexist and relate to each other. Second, ecocritical implications emerge from the stress on the idea of interactions between these entities, as suggested by the use of verbs like “meet,” in the first line, or by the anaphoric repetition of the conjunction “and,” which literally expresses “connection” (“and” OED, 2021). These lexical choices, therefore, underline relationality as a relevant theme in the poem, especially in regard to the pluralism of nonhuman entities to which the above cited rhetorical strategies refer (celestial topics like “stars” and animal realms, like “coral”). The complex representation of the environment proposed by this
pastoral poem, consequently, emerges as an ecocritical value to which current readership should evaluate attentively as aspects of ecocritical value of this literary work which favor a critical reevaluation of the poem.

Similar considerations emerge from Heaven, another poem by Brooke featured in the collection. As the title suggests, this work offers a representation of an afterlife, and, in parallel with Tiare Tahiti, this depiction occurs through a pastoral waterscape. An aspect of originality of this poem is the fact that it develops through the voice of a nonhuman omniscient narrator. Specifically, differently from conventional pastoral trends, which usually present shepherds – or in general, human beings – as narrators, Heaven deploys a fish as its narrative voice. As the following passage clarifies, the poem opens with the image of the animal involved in an eschatological self-interrogation:

Fish say, they have their Stream and Pond;  
But is there anything Beyond?  
This life cannot be All, they swear,  
For how unpleasant, if it were!  
One may not doubt that, somehow, Good  
Shall come of Water and of Mud;  
And, sure, the reverent eye must see  
A Purpose in Liquidity. (58)

In alignment with the previous poem, this excerpt presents a creative revisitation of traditional pastoral imagery characterizing the imagery of Western Christian spirituality by subverting the traditional natural, rural environment scenario often evoked in the Bible (e.g., the Garden of Eden) into an aquatic one, through an array of expressions pertaining the semantic field of water (“Stream and Pond”; “Water and [...] Mud”, “Liquidity”). In addition, the fish-narrator recalls the traditional Christian spiritual practices in its discussion (as the formulation “But is there anything Beyond?” expresses), only for adapting them to the perspective of an organism living in the water. One can consider, in this regard, expressions like “Stream and Pond”, which determine the limits of the narrator’s experientiality to underwater habitats, or the line “Good / Shall come of Water and of Mud” as a way to recontextualize Messianism into an aquatic environment. Along this same line, determining “Liquidity” as the very drive of one’s life (“the reverent eye

48 For a further discussion on pastoral imagery in Christian settings, see Flahault 2012.
must see / A Purpose in Liquidity) is eloquent in its almost parodic re-adaptation of
traditional, anthropocentric pastoral domains characterized by Christianity, through a
nonhuman lens. This aspect provides relevance to the role of nonhuman (animals) in
Brooke’s pastoral figuration and fosters the idea that the poem involves
multiperspectivism in its development of the pastoral.

The lexical choice determining the original re-telling of the pastoral through the
perspective of a fish extends throughout the poem through the enmeshing of a traditional
solemn Christian rhetoric with a terminology belonging to the nonhuman aquatic world:

Mud unto mud!--Death eddies near--
Not here the appointed End, not here!
But somewhere, beyond Space and Time,
Is wetter water, slimier slime!
And there (they trust) there swimmeth One
Who swam ere rivers were begun,
Immense, of fishy form and mind,
Squamous, omnipotent, and kind;
And under that Almighty Fin,
The littlest fish may enter in. (58)

The expression “Mud unto mud!” followed by the reference to death (“Death eddies
near”), echoes the popular formula “Dust to dust, ashes to ashes” – the ritual sentence
adopted during Christian burial and appearing in the Book of Common Prayer since 1549
(Society of Archbishop Justus, “The Book of Common Prayer - 1549”). Through this rite,
Christians stress the transitory nature of terrestrial existence in view of the eternal life in
heaven. The poem refers to the same consideration by making use of a similar linguistic
formula which, however, readapts, again, the original to an aquatic scenario, where no
such thing as dust can exist since in contact with water it transforms into “Mud”.

The same effect occurs in regard to the reference to God, which returns in the
poem through fish-related readaptations. One can consider, in this sense, expressions like
“Almighty fin” or combinations of adjectives such as “omnipotent” and “squamous” as
further examples of the revisiting of traditional Christian narratives in a
postanthropocentric way. This form of linguistic hybridization, combining terms deriving
from the Christian classical domains and the semantic field of the nonhuman aquatic
world can be interpreted as a metaphoric enactment of the idea of human-nonhuman
connectedness. This effect, consequently, serves as evidence of how the poem possesses
latent environmental narratives, which can be identified by adopting a postdualistic and post anthropocentric perspective. This effect, moreover, can be considered as further evidence of the ecocritical and posthuman value of Georgian pastoral poems.

With a less apparent reference to the conflict, but equally engrained in the dynamics of the pastoral, is Of Greatham by John Drinkwater – another poem that testifies to the strength of ecological trajectories in the collection. Almost drawing a parallel with Rupert Brooke’s The Old Vicarage, Grantchester discussed in Vol. I, Drinkwater’s lyric is a celebration of the eponymous rural village through the domains of the pastoral. The beginning of the poem, in fact, suggests its reliance on an idealized description of a rural location:

For peace, than knowledge more desirable,
Into your Sussex quietness I came,
When summer's green and gold and azure fell
Over the world in flame.

And peace upon your pasture-lands I found,
Where grazing flocks drift on continually,
As little clouds that travel with no sound
Across a windless sky. (90)

These stanzas present numerous elements pertaining to traditional pastoral imagery, starting from displaying the basic outline of the locus amoenus – “an idealized landscape with three fundamental ingredients: trees, grass and water” (Ruff 2015, 92) – which is visible in expressions such as “summer’s green” and “pasture-lands”. Moreover, emphasis is placed on the notion of “quietness” – another pastoral classic – by the clarification that, in the locations described by the poem, even clouds “travel with no sound” (emphasis added). The same consideration is valid for the reference to “grazing flocks”, which, again, belongs to traditional pastoral imagery. However, as the poem proceeds, the reader is offered an array of linguistic effects that encourage a more ‘sustainable’ reading of this apparently merely conventional pastoral imagery:

Out of your oaks the birds call to their mates
That brood among the pines, where hidden deep
From curious eyes a world's adventure waits
In columned choirs of sleep.
Under the calm ascension of the night
We heard the mellow lapsing and return
Of night-owls purring in their groundling flight
Through lanes of darkling fern. (90)

These lines reveal that the location described in the poem is inhabited by an array of different nonhuman entities (“birds”, “pines”, “owls”), leading one to consider how (bio)diversity characterizes the pastoral world depicted. The first stanza presents the poem’s *locus* similarly to an ecosystem. In it, mating (“birds call their mates”) and other kinds of birds entertain relationships, and the presence of a wooded location (“Out of your oaks” / “Through lanes of darkling fern”) is functional to these practices. Emphasis on the concept of the ecosystem is placed through the pluralism expressed by the use of collective nouns (“birds”, “pines”), which convey the idea of quantity in regard to birds dwelling this pastoral location. Or one can consider the expression “columned choirs”, which is metaphoric of a sense of relationality involving animals and plants described in the poem. This expression, in fact, identifies the trunks of the trees on which birds sit and sing (“columned”) and the image of a group of animals singing together (“choirs”) *in combination*, as if they have attained an ontological relationality.

While the image of a lively and crowded natural landscape is central in the first part of the poem, the second section presents a more introspective, nostalgic tone which, however, still favors ecocritical considerations, as the following section demonstrates:

I sing of peace who have known the large unrest
Of men bewildered in their travelling,
And I have known the bridal earth unblest
By the brigades of spring.

I have known that loss. And now the broken thought
Of nations marketing in death I know,
The very winds to threnodies are wrought
That on your downlands blow

I sing of peace. Was it but yesterday
I came among your roses and your corn?
Then momentarily amid this wrath I pray
For yesterday reborn. (90-91)
The focus of these excerpts on a now-lost past—summarized by the concluding lines “I pray / For yesterday reborn”–appears as another element that aligns Drinkwater’s work with the traditional characteristics of the pastoral, particularly in reference to the nostalgic tone often associated to it. Yet further emphasis on the sense of connectedness involving humans and nonhumans allows one to identify aspects of innovation in the poem’s elaboration of ecocritical discussion. The metaphor of the “bridal earth” is particularly effective for conveying a sense of kinship between human beings and the natural world: the enmeshment between the image of the “earth” and a woman (bride) getting ready to become married to someone, here conceivable as a metonymy for human beings, fosters the idea that the poem fits with the theme of human-nonhuman connectedness.

For what concerns the topic of war, the second part of Drinkwater’s poem also provides relevant aspects of literary value. References to military jargon (e.g., “brigades”) and words related to the experience of soldiers at war—such as “unrest”, “bewildering”, and “death”—present a contrast to the quiet, peaceful pastoral scenario narrated in the first part of the poem. The emphasis placed on the notion of “peace” (through the repetition of the line “I sing of peace”) highlights the desire of the lyrical I to reach a condition of quietness in response to the turmoil of the conflict evoked, thus stressing the idea that this passage describes a condition in which peace is not yet occurring, but rather that it is something to be achieved and longed for. A similar consideration emerges from the nostalgic tone suggested by the expression “yesterday reborn”, which reminds readers of the traditional sense of ‘retreat’ and ‘return’ conventionally characterizing the pastoral (Gifford, 1999). While this discussion could support a reading that would construct the second part of the poem as prolonging the idea of the pastoral as a safe, quite spatiality separated from opposite values; when adopting a more ecocritical lens, further narratives can be identified. In fact, in the nostalgic account of the lyrical I dedicated to Greatham, the notion of relationality (between humans and nonhuman) is central (“I came among your roses and your corn”). Considering that this emphasis is absent in the war-like scenario prevailing in the second part of the poem reveals how the positive implications associated with Greatham not only regard classical domains associated with the rural (Williams, 1973), but that they also refer to the ecological dynamics connected to this spatiality—of relationships involving both humans and nonhumans.
Hence, Drinkwater’s *On Greatham* represents another example in *Georgian Poetry* that shows how the pastoral works as evidence of the environmental maturity of the Georgians, considering the relevance of the issues of human-nonhuman connectedness in it, which also function as further contact points between Marsh’s collection and current ecocritical epistemology.

In order to highlight how this consideration spreads throughout the anthology, in spite of the idiosyncrasies among the several writers and works included in it, it is interesting to consider Francis Ledwidge’s *A Rainy Day in April*. Ledwidge’s poem is, at first sight, a traditional lyrical celebration of a natural rural landscape during and after a spring storm. Yet, through an ecocritical lens, the typical pastoral scenario presented in the poem offers possibilities for discussing this pastoral *locus* as an ecosystem and for locating ecocritical considerations within it. One can reflect, for instance, on the following section:

When the clouds shake their hyssops, and the rain
Like holy water falls upon the plain,
'Tis sweet to gaze upon the springing grain
And see your harvest born.

And sweet the little breeze of melody
The blackbird puffs upon the budding tree,
While the wild poppy lights upon the lea
And blazing 'mid the corn.

The skylark soars the freshening shower to hail,
And the meek daisy holds aloft her pail,
And Spring all radiant by the wayside pale
Sets up her rock and reel. (162)

This excerpt presents the pastoral primarily by illustrating an example of cohabitation of different species of birds, “blackbird[s]” and “skylark[s]” within the same location, similarly to what was discussed in regard to John Drinkwater’s poem. In addition, the interaction of these animals with the surrounding vegetation (e.g., “upon the budding tree”, “daisy”) determines further patterns of relationality, which invite the lyrical I to interrogate him- or herself on the very nature of this co-existence. This consideration allows one to consider the *locus amoenus* much more than a mere pastoral cliché or in
dualistic terms, and instead as a location in which relationships between the several entities prevail.

An analogous discussion is initiated in James Stephens’s *The Goat Paths*, another poem in which the representation of the *locus amoenus* defies mere dualistic narratives of idealizations, only for stressing the relevance of issues of human-nonhuman connectedness through a focus on the shepherd-sheep relational dynamic. The poem begins with a conventional pastoral scene that presents a summery, flowery rural-scape, where a herd of goats is quietly grazing. The narrator observes the scene from a distance and reflects on it, imagining what it is like to be one of those animals:

The crooked paths go every way
Upon the hill — they wind about
Through the heather in and out
Of the quiet sunniness.
And there the goats, day after day,
Stray in sunny quietness,
Cropping here and cropping there,
As they pause and turn and pass,
Now a bit of heather spray,
Now a mouthful of the grass. (188)

These lines, as said, are representative of the classical qualities of the pastoral landscape in the trope of the *locus amoenus*, which is visible, again, in the presence of a “sunny” pasture. Moreover, the repetition of the words like “quiet”/“quietness” enhances the conventional character of the poem in its use of the idea of tranquillity that involves the pastoralism of the countryside, in contrast to the city, in traditional cultural domains. The second stanza strengthens this narrative since it reiterates the idea of the idyllic pastoral landscape as never-changing (“the place where nothing stirs”), and since it reiterates the concept of quietness in it (“Quietly in quietness, / In the quiet of the furze”).

However, these traditional assumptions are negated by the third stanza, which introduces an unexpected element of disturbance among the goats within this apparent, unalterable idyll: a human being. The following excerpt presents this interaction between the lyrical I and a group of goats [they]:

If you approach they run away,
They leap and stare, away they bound,
With a sudden angry sound,
To the sunny quietude; (188)

Even if the presence of a human entity in Stephens’s idyllic locus is only hypothetical (“If you…”) this intrusion sparks the animals’ defensive and aggressive response (“With a sudden angry sound”). As these verses suggest, human beings are perceived here as a threat and a possible danger by the goats. Whereas, seemingly, this scene can be understood as stressing the contrast between the human and the nonhuman realms, adopting a more attentive glance at this form of relationality allows for considering that this specification defies a mere anthropocentric perspective in the analysis of the relational dynamics within the pastoral locus. Stephens’s poem, in fact, sheds light on the idea that other forms of life populate the idyll and on how they play an active role in it. The reaction of the goats at the sight of the lyrical I shows that the different entities that inhabit the locus amoenus have different needs and spatial requirements, which have to be respected. In this sense, the pastoral landscape offered in this poem is not supposed to be amoenus, that is ‘pleasant’ only for human beings, but also for the many other entities present there.

In a similar way, the idea of ‘quietness’ reiterated in the poem entails multi-layered connotations if regarded through a postdualistic and postanthropocentric lens. Rather than appearing merely as a conventional pastoral device, this notion fosters the idea that the landscape represented in the poem can be assessed as an ecosystem. As already observed, ‘ecosystem’ stands for a community of organisms within a self-sustaining system of living and non-living elements (Narayan 2000) or, more specifically for “[a] biological system composed of all the organisms found in a particular physical environment, interacting with it and with each other” (“ecosystem” OED, 2021). Discussing ‘quietness’ in the sense of a condition of “absence of noise or disturbance” (“quietness” OED, 2020) aligns with the idea of a self-sustaining engagement of organisms, which, without being disturbed by external forces or entities, are balanced in their own standard relational dynamics. In this sense, Stephens’s pastoral landscape represents a self-sustaining and undisturbed community of nonhuman entities (goats) until an element of ‘disturbance’ appears, provoking a reaction in this environment. In ecological terms, “an event or force of nonbiological or biological origin, that brings about mortality to organisms and changes in their spatial patterning in the ecosystems” is described as an “ecological disturbance” (Paine 2019, n.p.). Hence, the sudden
appearance of the lyrical I in the pastoral system can be perceived as such, thus assuming negative connotations that further defy anthropocentrism in the evaluation of the poem.

Observing Stephens’s pastoral landscape through an ecocritical perspective, therefore, offers scholars the opportunity to reflect, in ethical terms, on the fact that forms of relationality between humans and nonhuman entities should always be considered from both perspectives. This consideration finds support in the fourth stanza of the poem:

If I were as wise as they
I would stray apart and brood,
I would beat a hidden way
Through the quiet heather spray
To a sunny solitude;

And should you come I’d run away,
I would make an angry sound,
I would stare and turn and bound
To the deeper quietude,
To the place where nothing stirs
In the silence of the furze. (188-189)

Parallel with present-day discourses of interspecies encounters and affectivity (Weik von Mossner 2017; Bladow & Ladino 2018), the narrator reflects on what it is like to be a goat (“If I were as wise as they”). Similar to what Thomas Nagel discusses in his seminal essay *What is it Like to Be a Bat* (1974) – which is about the limits for humans when accessing animal cognitive experience – the narrator considers his or her emotional response at the sight of a human, as if he or she were an animal. As the following comparison of stanza four and five demonstrates, the narrator assesses that his or her reaction would be very similar to the reaction of one of the goats.

(fifth stanza)

And should you come I'd run away,
I would make an angry sound,
I would stare and turn and bound
To the deeper quietude, (189)

(fourth stanza)

If you approach they run away,
They leap and stare, away they bound,
With a sudden angry sound,
To the sunny quietude; (188)
The repetition of the exact same words in the two stanzas (in bold) – one discussing a human perspective and the other a non-human perspective – supports the idea that a parallel is involved in the sphere of experientiality in these two realms. Not only does this observation, beyond being a simple anthropocentric approbation of the nonhuman emotional capacity, suggest the human’s empathic vicinity to the nonhuman realm; it also takes a distance from practices of ‘objectification’ and ‘naturalization’ of the nonhuman (Braidotti 2019, 14). These lines offer the opportunity to transcend traditional anthropocentric standpoints in the evaluation of these pastoral poems by determining aspects of environmental maturity in their emphasis on a special human-goat affective enmeshment. This aspect establishes this poem as particularly useful in creating a dialogue between relevant topics in contemporary scholarship, such as ‘nonhuman subjectivity’ and ‘nonhuman agency’, and traditional pastoral imagery, which, therefore, involves aspects of modernity in the way the pastoral imagination developed by the Georgians.

**Conclusion**

As the analysis has demonstrated, *Georgian Poetry 1913-15* offers several opportunities for discussing the pastoral through an ecocritical-posthuman perspective in order to disclose latent narratives centering on issues of human-nonhuman relationality. While at first sight the selected poems appear to prolong primarily dualistic, conventional pastoral traits, when regarded through a *sustainable* pastoral perspective, they are revealed to be based on a more complex understanding of the environment. Specifically, attention can be placed on how the pastoral in the selected poems allows for reflecting on the engagement of the Georgians with a keen sense of human-nonhuman connectedness and on the idea that that the natural world contains a pluralistic combination of different entities in relation with each other.

Rupert Brooke’s *Tiare Tahiti* provides an array of linguistic strategies that symbolically and metaphorically determine the enmeshment between human and nonhuman entities: through an ecocritical lens, these strategies recall the idea of an ontological connectedness between the two realms, in parallel with current epistemology. Moreover, considering the many references to the conflict that this pastoral poem
presents, it becomes possible to counter the well-established idea that the Georgians were detached from the historical cultural context of their time. Contrarily, the references to World War I that other poems in this collection also provide, and the combination of the latter with environmental considerations, allows for assessing the pastoral as a useful site for determining the indisputable engagement of the Georgians with the literary and cultural milieu in which they operated. The same consideration emerges from my analysis of Brooke’s Heaven, in which another linguistic enmeshment occurs, which mingles traditional religious lexicon and expressions pertaining to the semantic field of the marine world. Through this linguistic hybridization between the human and nonhuman worlds and related experientialities, it becomes possible to discuss Brooke’s piscatory pastoral poem as a metaphoric, linguistic enactment of the idea of human-nonhuman connectedness, as well as an original development of discussions on military rhetoric and commentary in a war period through environmental narratives.

*Of Greatham* by John Drinkwater further elaborates the experience of World War I within the domains of the pastoral, while engaging with proto-environmental reflections. This poem, in fact, elaborates on the traditional pastoral dualism by emphasizing the contrast between a rural village and a war context through references to the locus amoenus and nostalgia. Yet through an ecocritical lens, there emerges the possibility to consider how Drinkwater’s elaboration of the pastoral also relies on a discussion of ethical principles regarding issues of human-nonhuman relationality. The positive implications of the pastoralism of Greatham also regard the possibility of favoring forms of ethical relationality with the nonhuman realm, in response to the anthropocentric, individualistic attitude towards human and nonhuman others, which instead prevails in war-related scenarios.

And while *A Rainy Day in April* by Francis Ledwidge reminds readers how an apparently traditional pastoral scenario can be regarded as a pluralistic representation of the natural world, James Stephens’s *The Goat Paths* offers the opportunity to discuss the pastoral as an ecosystem and as demonstrating the importance of defying anthropocentrism when reflecting on nonhuman entities. This poem, in fact, invites readership to explore the sphere of experientiality of nonhuman animals by asking what it is like to be one; this effect allows readers to see the pastoral as a source for conducting a discussion on different forms of interactions between humans and nonhumans
(affective, ontological, material), which, consequently, may stimulate discussion on postdualism and postanthropocentrism.

Therefore, by offering multiple connections to current ecocritical and posthuman epistemology, the selected pastoral poems of Vol. II become valuable opportunities for rethinking traditional pastoral dualisms and for deploying discussions on human-nonhuman connectedness. And considering how, in several cases, these discussions engage with references to the conflict, the pastoral is representative here in its capacity to intercept, simultaneously, several discourses occurring in the cultural milieu of the poems’ composition. On the basis of these analyses, Vol. II can be assessed as a representative work for exploring some of the main narratives circulating between 1913 and 1915 and thus emphasizes the (ecocritical and posthuman) literary value of this collection.

5.3 The Pastoral in and out the Trenches: Vol. III (1916-1917)49

Vol. III of Edward Marsh’s anthology was the second to be published during World War I. In 1917, when the issue appeared on the market, the conflict had already resulted in some of its most devastating encounters, such as the Battle of the Somme (July-November 1916, when more than one million men got wounded or killed) and the transformation of the expected blitzkrieg into a long, exhausting trench war. These experiences eroded the idealization of the conflict that many British people had developed before and during its first phases, which had been supported by a widespread, patriotic national rhetoric affirming that the war would be “over by Christmas” (Wilson 2016, 32). Another aspect that ended this idealism is the fact that the months between 1916 and 1917 witnessed the publication of several literary works, especially by soldiers who experienced the war at the front, which testified the terrible conditions that the conflict had engendered on the battlefield. The prevalence of war-related images in the literary environment of that time, which many critics observed to be lacking in Edward Marsh’s collection, represents one of the main reasons for the dismissive reception of Vol. III by its contemporaries.

49 All the poems’ excerpts of this section (5.3) refer to Marsh, Edward. 1917. Georgian Poetry 1916-1917. London: The Poetry Bookshop. Therefore, my references to this source will be limited to indicating the page number of the selected excerpt in parentheses.
In addition to T.S. Eliot’s aforementioned negative evaluation of the volume, which was published in *The Egoist*, other reviews provided similarly dismissive comments on *Vol. III*, especially referring to the alleged lower quality of the issue compared to the previous volumes of *Georgian Poetry*. Observing the reviews dedicated to *Vol. III*, one of the main accusations addressed to the Georgians regarded the fact that the poems of this issue were considered too detached from the prevalent, dominant cultural narrative of the time – World War I (Simon 1975, 2; Spender 1963, 195, cited in Simon 1975, 3). Yet it is undeniable that, as much as the conflict represented a traumatic experience overshadowing other discourses occurring in that period, the cultural context of the second half of the 1910s remains complex and multifaceted. The plurality of themes emerging in *Vol. III* – including attention to the natural world, as well as a focus on personal and intimate experiences and feelings – are evidence of this complexity. Moreover, as Marsh indicated in his preface to the volume: “[t]his third book of Georgian Poetry carries to the end of a seventh year the presentation of chosen examples from the work of contemporary poets” (Marsh 1917, n.p.), a comment which suggests that the collection should be considered as the result of a survey of the literary landscape of that time and related themes. Among the different topics that the eighteen poets included in *Vol. III* illustrated, my attention will be dedicated here to some of the environment-related issues expressed through the pastoral.

That the pastoral represents a crucial literary pattern for discussing the Georgians is visible in its recurrence throughout the volume. While an array of poems could have been chosen for my analysis, my section will focus on two primarily pastoral trajectories. First, I will focus on pastoral poems centering on the nonhuman animal realm, and on how these poems represent opportunities to negotiate strict, traditional anthropocentric outlooks and attitudes towards them – including human exceptionalism, the sense of the human-animal ontological divide, and the hierarchical conceptualizations of living beings. Specifically, this section will focus on W. J. Turner’s *The Sky-Sent Death*, James Stephens’s *The Fifteen Acres*, and Harold Monro’s *The Bird at Dawn*. Second, my analysis will focus on representations of human-nonhuman connectedness in regard to both organic and inorganic nonhuman entities populating the pastoral landscape of the poems. With considerations regarding the entanglement between these entities and their material continuity with humans, I suggest that the pastoral poems under examination can
testify that the Georgians’ engaged with a mature environmental aesthetic (Buell 1995) in the 1910s. This section will focus on *Ecstasy* by W. J. Turner and Robert Graves’s *Not Dead*.

While the abovementioned themes and imagery still represent minor narratives compared to more established ones – starting from those concerning World War I – I argue that the relevance of the Georgians’ environmental issues becomes crucial in light of the later development of the Modernist ecological perspective. In addition, as further evidence of the topicality of *Vol. III* in the cultural *milieu* of the 1910s, contrarily to what many critics at the time affirmed, I retraced echoes of the war conflict in the selected pastoral poems. In this way, I discuss that the pastoral in *Georgian Poetry Vol. III* possesses even more aspects of originality and modernity for its capacity to enmesh discourses engaging with both proto-ecocritical epistemology and awareness of the world conflict occurring at that time.

By describing the death of a Greek shepherd due to a bomb dropped by an airplane, W. J. Turner’s *The Sky-Sent Death* is representative of how, even in *Vol. III*, there are poems which combine the pastoral with references to World War I.

The poem opens with a highly conventional pastoral vignette, in which a shepherd attends to his herds:

*Sitting on a stone a Shepherd,  
Stone and Shepherd sleeping,  
Under the high blue Attic sky;  
Along the green monotony  
Grey sheep creeping, creeping. (11, emphasis in original)*

Several elements in this passage refer to the traditional domains of the pastoral, starting from the summery cloudless sky (“high blue Attic sky”), to the stress on the natural environment as a setting (“green monotony”), passing through allusions to (ancient) Greek culture mentioning a location where the pastoral finds its roots with Theocritus’s
Idylls ("Attic"^{50}). This contextualization in the classical literary framework of the pastoral leads one to consider Turner’s poem as representative of traditional literary trajectories. This preliminary idea finds support in the fact that a similar pattern characterizes the first half of the poem where other references to conventional pastoral imagery are offered, which include pastoral music ("Pipe a song in that still air / And the song would be of crystal") and to the endurance of certain (pastoral) themes throughout time:

\begin{quote}
Sitting on a stone a Shepherd,
Stone and Shepherd sleeping,
Like a fragment of old marble
Dug up from the hillside shadow. (11, emphasis in original)
\end{quote}

By stressing the idea of stillness, metaphorically suggested by the shepherd remaining seated on a stone and by the simile connecting him to a marble statue ("Like a fragment of old marble"), this section reinforces the conservative character of this poem. That some features of the pastoral remain untouched over time is a popular idea in pastoral studies, as is also suggested by Lawrence Buell, who affirmed: "[p]astoralism is a species of cultural equipment that western thought has for more than two millennia been unable to do without" (1995, 32). Yet as Buell observes, in spite of its endurance, the pastoral undergoes constant changes over time; accordingly, the apparently timeless scenario that Turner presents offers in the second part of the poem aspects of innovation, as is evident, for instance, in reference to the advanced military technology characterizing World War I: airplane bombing. One can consider the following excerpt:

\begin{quote}
In the sunshine deep and soundless
Came a faint metallic humming;
In the sunshine clear and heavy
Came a speck, a speck of shadow –
Shepherd lift your head and listen,
Listen to that humming Shadow! (12)
\end{quote}

Similar to the sudden appearance of the train in the pastoral scenario narrated by Leo Marx in The Machine in the Garden (1964), as a metaphor for discussing the impact of technology and modernity in American pastoralism, Turner describes the abrupt

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^{50} Attica, or the Attic region, is a historical location in Greece that encompasses Athens, the capital, and its surroundings. Citing an area of Greece, existing since antiquity, can be interpreted as a metaphoric reference to ancient Greek poetry, a cultural context with which Theocritus is associated.
appearance of an obscure, indistinctive presence (“a faint metallic humming”) in the poem. A negative connotation is attributed to this element by using metaphors like “Shadow” and “speck”, which contrast with the bright, serene scenario in the first stanza, and are reiterated throughout the poem by the line “In the sunshine clear and heavy”. This negative connotation is accentuated in the following lines, which present a progressive darkening of the poetic scenario due to a change of the weather condition, after the appearance of the airplane:

In the sunshine clear and heavy  
Shadow-fled a dark hand downward:  
In the sunshine deep and soundless  
Burst a star-dropt thing of thunder –  
Smoked the burnt blue air's torn veiling  
Drooping softly round the hillside. (11)

Issues of ‘darkness’ stand out in this passage (“Shadow-fled”, “dark hand”) in contrast to the bright atmosphere at the poem’s opening, until a “thunder” breaks the obscurity and the silence, abruptly shifting the appearance of the sky (“a star-dropt thing”). As the airplane approaches, a change transformation from a typical locus amoenus sunny setup to a stormy one. This change reveals aspects of originality in the elaboration of the pastoral by Turner. Moreover, the fact that these weather changes occur in concurrence with the gradual proximity of an airplane dropping bombs – which, at the time of the poem’s composition occurred in the context of the air warfare of World War I – allows one to assess the adaptation of the pastoral by (some) Georgians to the domains brought in by the conflict. The following stanza clarifies this consideration by referring even more blatantly to the World War I imagery through the description of a bomb exploding and of its lethal effects on the living beings dwelling in the pastoral locus:

Boomed the silence in returning  
To the crater in the hillside,  
To the red earth fresh and bleeding,  
To the mangled heap remaining: (12)

Similar to the situation that a soldier experienced in the trenches, the burst of the bomb inflicts a fatal impact on the soil (“crater in the hillside”), which leads to the killing of humans and, one can assume, nonhuman beings, specifically the shepherd and his sheep (“red earth fresh and bleeding”). This mortal effect is described through a metaphoric
language offering both a visual (“red”) and acoustic (“boomed”) sensory experience to readers. These lines provide further evidence of a subversion of the traditional pastoral domains in Turner’s poem, an effect which also occurs in the concluding stanza, which repropose the opening lines of the poem with some changes that undermine the sense of amenity previously expressed:

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{Sitting on a stone no Shepherd,} \\
& \text{Stone and Shepherd sleeping,} \\
& \text{But across the hill and valley} \\
& \text{Grey sheep creeping, creeping,} \\
& \text{Standing carven on the sky-line,} \\
& \text{Scattering in the open distance,} \\
& \text{Free, in no man's keeping. (12, emphasis in original)}
\end{align*}
\]

The emphasis on the absence of human beings in the pastoral landscape (“no Shepherd” and “no man’s keeping”, emphasis added) after the bombing, in contrast with what is described in the poem’s opening, indicates that the apparent sense of immutability of the pastoral previously illustrated is, in actuality, illusory. As the excerpt demonstrates, the pastoral undergoes transformations under the pressures of external inputs, which, in the case of \textit{Georgian Poetry}, relate to World War I. In response to these inputs, the poem offers an original perspective of what the changes of the pastoral are when a shepherd is abruptly removed from a classical pastoral scenario. As the excerpts inform readers, without the presence of shepherds in the pastoral \textit{locus} there remains “Grey sheep creeping”, similar to what occurred in the past. However, without the presence of shepherds (“no men’s keeping”), the nonhuman animals are described as “Free”: this specification invites readers to consider the poem as offering a critique of anthropocentrism and the subjugation of certain animals by humans, which reveal ecocritical potentials.

Moreover, the major changes of the pastoral landscape after the dropping of a bomb can be interpreted metaphorically as an indication that the experience of World War I invites a reframing of one’s evaluations of the pastoral and of one’s experience with the natural world through a more pluralistic, postanthropocentric lens. This effect reassesses the values of the nonhuman realm in the evaluation of the pastoral, and, in general, of the environment, thus favoring a shift in the traditional critical understanding of it along with more ethical assumptions. Hence, Turner’s version of the pastoral, when regarded through
an ecocritical lens, can be related to the idea of negotiating anthropocentrism as a metaphorical reaction to an egoistic human perspective, which led to the outbreak of a conflict, as the echo of a bombing occurring at the time of the poem’s composition (World War I) reminds readers.

A similar discussion emerges from James Stephens’s *The Fifteen Acres*. In this poem, the stress on the nonhuman sensorial and perceptive capacity allows for challenging the traditional dualistic and anthropocentric domains characterizing traditional representations of the natural world in the pastoral, thus resulting in another innovation of the pastoral imagination of the Georgians. Stephens’s poem does so by describing the daily activities of a bird and narrating them through a first-person perspective:

I cling and swing
On a branch, or sing
Through the cool, clear hush of
Morning, O:
Or fling my wing
On the air, and bring
To sleepier birds a warning, O:
That the night's in flight,
And the sun's in sight,
And the dew is the grass adorning, O:
And the green leaves swing
As I sing, sing, sing,
Up by the river,
Down the dell,
To the little wee nest,
Where the big tree fell,
So early in the morning, O. (17)

This passage presents several verbs pertaining to the semantics of the avian world, specifically describing a bird’s habits, as is visible in the case of verbs such as “cling”, “swing”, “sing, sing, sing”, “fling my wing”, and other clarifications regarding where the action takes place, like “on a branch.” Since these expressions are all linked to the lyrical I’s experience, one can understand that this poem is narrated through the perspective of a bird.

The fact that this narration occurs through the domains of human language may lead one to consider it to be the result of an anthropocentric perspective supporting the poem, and consequently, the attribution of human features to nonhumans may appear as
a process of personification or objectification.\textsuperscript{51} However, I argue that, through an ecocritical lens, this effect can be interpreted as encouraging a reader to enter the domain of a bird’s experientiality, thus embracing more attentively the perspective of a nonhuman entity. As I have also argued elsewhere, the use of pathetic fallacy\textsuperscript{52} can be interpreted ecocritically as a way to enhance a sense of attunement between humans and nonhumans, which fosters a sense of connectedness on an affective level (Rozzoni 2021b). Moreover, the fact that the usual domains of the first-person speaker in a lyric depict human beings “indicat[ing] a preoccupation with the expression of individual feeling or emotion” (Lindley 1985, 2), the employment of a nonhuman first-person narrator becomes an original aspect that allows readers to familiarize themselves with other domains, namely the avian one. This effect, once again, resonates with Thomas Nagel’s reflection on the importance of acquiring familiarity with the experientiality of nonhumans (1974). Yet while, as Nagel affirms, this possibility can never be reached completely due to the alleged impossibility of overcoming the limits of the human condition, the poem allows readers, at least, to negotiate similar limitations, thus revealing further ecocritical potentials. This idea is also demonstrated through an array of linguistic effects that seem to draw one closer, acoustically or conceptually, to avian communication. The poem, in fact, introduces multiple effects of musicality, echoing the way birds communicate in reality by including rhymes (e.g., -ing ending words throughout the poem), alliterations (“cool, clear”; “sun’s in sight”), repetitions (“sing, sing, sing”) and anaphoras (“And the sun’s […] / And the dew […] / And the green leaves [...]”).

Hence, Stephens’ poem is representative of literary attempts to defy traditional, dualistic, and anthropocentric figurations of the pastoral in Vol. III, which offers a possibility of exploring the complexity of the natural, nonhuman world, and the several entities inhabiting it. Beyond appearing as a parallel to contemporary ecocritical

\textsuperscript{51} As I have already discussed elsewhere (Rozzoni 2021b) in regard to ‘Pathetic fallacy’, “anthropomorphism, personification, and prosopopoeia” are often adopted interchangeably (Burwick 2015, 217, original emphasis). Determining significant differences among these terms remains difficult: one can consider, for instance, the distinction between personification and anthropomorphism offered by James J. Paxson, who determines personification, in alignment with the notion of ‘prosopopeia,’ as “the translation of any non-human quantity into a sentient human capable of thought and language, possessing voice and face”; anthropomorphism, instead, is presented as “the figural translation of any non-human quantity into a character that has human form” (Paxson 1994, 42, original emphasis).

\textsuperscript{52} Pathetic fallacy regards the alleged misattribution of human features and capacities to nonhuman entities (see Ruskin 1856; Rozzoni 2021b, 116-122).
epistemology, this aspect is possible further evidence of the innovative characters that the pastoral in Stephens’s poem offers, as well as of its aspects of modernity due to its keen environmental sensibility.

Reflecting on bird singing as a way for investigating issues of nonhuman communication and the peculiarities of nonhuman experientiality is also the topic of Harold Monro’s *The Bird at Dawn*. The poem, which falls under the stylistic features of the pastoral primarily due to its reliance on conventional rural imagery, is a reflection by a (human) narrator after observing a bird.

The poem opens with a focus on the eye of a bird, which inspires the narrator to reflect on issues of human-nonhuman relationality:

What I saw was just one eye
In the dawn as I was going:
A bird can carry all the sky
In that little button glowing.

Never in my life I went
So deep into the firmament. (87)

The emphasis that the narrator poses on the *small* size of the bird’s eye (“little button”) and on its capacity to contain the *extent* of the sky (“a bird can carry *all* the sky”, emphasis added) expresses a paradox, which allows one to think that what, by appearance, seems trivial, in actuality possesses more complex implications that deserve to be regarded more attentively. On a more metaphorical level, when viewed through the lens of ecocriticism, the image of the bird’s eye invites readers to explore the apparent simplicity – and even limitations – of the traditional understanding of the nonhuman animal world, e.g., deriving from the Cartesian dualistic heritage – while pursuing a more attentive investigation of its intricacy.

This idea is, in fact, brought forth by the narrator’s emphasis on the notion that he or she has never gone “So deep into the firmament”, expressing relative superficiality in his or her evaluations of the nonhuman world. This verse, therefore, invite readers to reflect on how, in this poem, the lyrical I reflects on his or her understanding of the nonhuman realm by displaying a self-criticism in regard to how he or she generally adopts a limited (superficial, in the sense of ‘not deep’) perspective towards nonhumans. With a surprising parallel with current philosophy, this reflection resonates with the principle
which lies behind Arne Naess’s notion of ‘deep ecology’ which, by claiming for a “rejection of the dualistic view of humans and nature as separate and different […] since it] holds that humans are intimately a part of the natural environment” (Pepper 1996, 17). Far from assessing that Monro was aware of the notion of ‘deep ecology’, I suggest that some point of contacts can be determined between his visions of the environment, suggested by the poem, and the evaluations offered by ecosophy: in this sense, the excerpt under examination appears relevant for my ecocritical reevaluation of the pastoral in *Georgian Poetry*. Along this line, in fact, readers are invited to pursue an exploration of the environment-related issues which are present in this poem, and that prompt a revisiting of western dualistic axioms, alongside contemporary ecocritical epistemology.

To support the idea that questioning well-established paradigms in the evaluation of nonhumans is relevant in this poem, reviewing the following section of Monro’s poem is beneficial:

> And he purposely looked hard at me,
> At first, as if to question merrily:
> ‘Where are you going?’
> But next some far more serious thing to say:
> I could not answer, could not look away.

In this excerpt, the lyrical I reacts to the bird’s looking at him or her by starting to wonder about what the bird’s thoughts may be. This attempt to enter the bird’s mind, or, paraphrasing, again, Nagel’s essay (1974), to understand what it is like to be a bird, suggests new evidence of the engagement of this poem with investigations on nonhuman (animal) experimentality. Far from considering birds as traditional, romanticized poetic images, or as mere decorative elements for enriching a natural poetic scenario, in Monro’s poem these animals result as opportunities for conducting a complex, ecocritical consideration on the nonhuman realm. Specifically, through reflecting on birds, the narrator claims to be involved in “serious thing(s)” that cannot fully be answered (“I could not answer”). Again, alongside Nagel’s sense of limits for human beings to access a complete comprehension of nonhuman experience, this poem signifies a deep environmental awareness that resonates with current epistemology.

Further evidence of the ecocritical and posthuman potentials of these lines is the fact that the episode presented by the poem offers surprising parallels with the philosopher
Jacques Derrida’s discussion in *L'Animal que donc je suis* (2006), which includes his realization that, while naked, he is being observed by his cat. Just like Derrida interrogates himself on the liminality between categorizations such as ‘human’ and ‘animal’ after his experiences of being the object of his cat’s gaze, the lyrical I in Monro’s poem is brought to explore and question the domains of the nonhuman realm more attentively after engaging with a bird’s eye looking at him or her. This effect, beyond serving as an attempt to negotiate the predominance of anthropocentrism in the evaluation of the surrounding environment and the different entities composing it, represents another way for the narrator to introduce evaluations of issues of human-nonhuman connectedness. The following lines present similar implications:

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If no man had invented human word,
And a bird-song had been
The only way to utter what we mean,
What would we men have heard,
What understood, what seen,
Between the trills and pauses, in between
The singing and the silence of a bird? (87)
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The first line of this excerpt clarifies how this poem invites readers to negotiate hierarchies associated with dichotomic, anthropocentric thinking by shedding light on the latter’s limitations in evaluating the nonhuman world. Not only does the lyrical I circumscribe human communication (“human word”) to a single, limited, cultural construction (“m[e]n invented human word”) among different forms of possible communication; but the narrator also regards anthropocentric thinking as a paradigm preventing humans from adequately understanding their surroundings. The final question can, in fact, be interpreted as the narrator’s investigating the complexity of bird’s communicative dynamics, voiced and silent (“Between the trills and pauses, in between / The singing and the silence of a bird”), as a strategy for accessing a deeper knowledge of the complexity of the many entities dwelling in the surrounding environment.

Hence, by stressing the limitations that humans face when trying to develop a full understanding of the nonhuman world, the poem invites readers to question the rooted domain of anthropocentrism, while prompting one to embrace a wider, critical scope on the multifaceted dynamics of the environment and the plurality of entities it is composed of. This urge can therefore be seen as further evidence of aspects of “maturity” (Buell
1995) in the environmental imagination of the Georgians, as well as an aspect of innovation in the context of 1910s English poetry that needs to be regarded more attentively by ecocritics.

Within the pastoral trajectory running through *Vol. III*, which resonates with issues of human-nonhuman relationality and figurations of the pastoral as an ecosystem, a selection of poems emerges that more attentively focuses on the sense of the ontological continuum comprising the human and nonhuman realms. In the following paragraphs, I discuss two poems – *Ecstasy* by W. J. Turner and Robert Graves’s *Not Dead* – to explore how, if regarded through the scope of the Environmental Humanities, these poems provide reflections that resonate with current ethical discussions developed by different scholars in the context of the Anthropocene.

Within the framework of a sea-side location – which recalls what was discussed about the piscatorial pastoral illustrated in *Vol. II* – *Ecstasy* by W. J. Turner describes a group of young boys playing on a beach, a scene that becomes the pretext for exploring the relationship between human beings and their natural surroundings. The pastoral dimension of this poem is visible in the opening lines, in which a seascape is described alongside the conventions of the (traditional) pastoral:

I saw a frieze on whitest marble drawn
Of boys who sought for shells along the shore,
Their white feet shedding pallor in the sea,
The shallow sea, the spring-time sea of green
That faintly creamed against the cold, smooth pebbles. (5)

Using the pastoral theme of the *otium*, the poem depicts several boys involved in pleasing, free-time activities on the beach, seeking “for shells along the shore,” which contrast with working obligations characterizing the dynamics of *negotium*, usually associated with urban locations. As already discussed, as it emerges in early references to the pastoral in ancient culture – especially in the context of the Roman practice of *villeggiatura* – experiencing leisure time (*otium*) in countryside villas was conceived in opposition to dwelling urban centres, conceived of as locations for productivity and business (*negotium*). This *otium/negotium* dualism resonates with the country/city pastoral dichotomy discussed by Raymond Williams in *The Country and the City* (1973). As a further proof of the pastoral with the notion of *otium*, it is useful to report that, as Paul Alpers observes, the pastoral often regards multiple
conventions of the *locus amoenus*\textsuperscript{55}, it still aligns with traditional pastoral processes of idealization and romanticization, the latter referring to a type of depiction intended to make something “seem better or more appealing than it really is; to describe, portray, or view in a romantic manner” (“romanticize” OED, 2021). This effect is visible in the use of the superlative form “whitest” to describe the quality of “marble drawn”, or the adjectives “shallow” and “smooth” for characterizing the features of the sea and its pebbles. This last example conveys the idea that this location is safe and pleasing on both a conceptual and a material level. However, as the poem progresses, the description of this location assumes increasingly original ecological characteristics, considering how emphasis is placed on highlighting a sense of connectedness occurring between the humans and the nonhumans described in the poem’s story world:

Their naked, pure, and grave, unbroken silence  
Filled the soft air as gleaming, limpid water  
Fills a spring sky those days when rain is lying  
In shattered bright pools on the wind-dried roads,  
And their sweet bodies were wind-purified. (5)

Beyond emphasizing the idyllic nature of this pastoral landscape, where an array of adjectives conveys a positive connotation with the nonhuman entity composing it (e.g., “the air was thin”, “soft air”; “unbroken silence”; “limpid water”), the human beings dwelling in this *locus* also undergo a similar effect. Describing the bodies of the boys playing on the beach as “sweet”, or their limbs as “delicate” – thus emphasizing certain features using dynamics of idealization – signals a sense of connectedness between humans and nonhumans. The idea that amenity does not resonate only with the physical location on which the action takes place, as is often discussed when referring to the concept of the *locus* amoenus, but also with human beings, allows for reflecting on an ontological sense of continuity among humans and nonhumans. The stress on this relationality through this poem’s rhetorical strategies (idealization and romanticization) fosters the possibility of reading Turner’s pastoral as an ecosystem. In this sense, while,

\textsuperscript{55} As already discussed, the *locus amoenus* regards “an idealized landscape with three fundamental ingredients: “trees, grass and water” (Ruff 2015, 92), or which typically contains “trees and shade, a grassy meadow, running water, song-bird, and cool breezes” (Spawforth et al. 2012, 854).

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definition, including: “idyllic landscape, landscape as a setting for song, an atmosphere of *otium*, a conscious attention to art and nature” (Alpers 1997, 22).
on the one hand, the different entities comprising it are acknowledged in their singularity, on the other hand, they are depicted as simultaneously engaging with a sense of continuity, a consideration that resonates with the pluralistic sense of the human-nonhuman continuum also discussed in posthuman studies (Braidotti 2019).

The linguistic realization of the sense of human-nonhuman connectedness occurs even more explicitly in the following stanzas, where the lexical choices qualifying both human and nonhuman entities result in the juxtaposition between these two realms:

One held a shell unto his shell-like ear
And there was music carven in his face,
His eyes half-closed, his lips just breaking open
To catch the lulling, mazy, coralline roar
Of numberless caverns filled with singing seas. (5)

As this excerpt demonstrates, features that are usually attributed to humans are adopted in order to describe nonhumans, and vice versa. For instance, the first lines parallel the boy’s bodily features with the qualities comprising nonhuman-organic elements (“shell-like ear”; “carven in his face”). Or one can consider, in the concluding stanza of the excerpt, how singing capacity – normally attributed to human beings or animals – becomes attainable by the sea (“singing seas”). As already discussed regarding James Stephens’s The Fifteen Acres, this effect, which is generally referred to as pathetic fallacy, can be discussed in different ways when exposed to the lens of the Environmental Humanities. Specifically, I argue here that this linguistic strategy represents a form of human-nonhuman linguistic enmeshment, pointing to “a kinship between humans and the environment” (Rozzoni 2021b, 122) as well as to a sense of “fusion and confusion” (Rozzoni 2021c, 106-112) between human and nonhumans.

Evaluating this observation is useful for determining another parallel between Georgian poems and current discussions on the ontological continuum between different forms of

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56 See Braidotti: “the proper subject of the posthuman convergence is not ‘Man’, but a new collective subject, a ‘we-are-(all)-in-this-together-but-we-are-not-one-and-the-same’ kind of subject. This means that humanity is both a vulnerable and an insurgent category. Posthuman subjectivity can be understood as a process of becoming in its own immanence and not in binary oppositional terms. It is a becoming other-than-the Homo Universalis of Humanism or other-than-the Anthropos of anthropocentrism. To cope with it we need a subtler and more diversified affective range, which avoids the polarization between the apocalyptic variant of mourning and the euphoric variable of celebration” (2019, 44-45).

57 Pathetic fallacy can be considered as “a mode of description in which human emotions, sentience, or conduct are attributed to objects, animals and natural phenomena” (Burwick 2015, 217).
life – organic and inorganic – claimed by studies in ecocriticism and posthumanism, as a way for enacting a reevaluation of Marsh’s anthology in the context of the Environmental Humanities.

This sense of connectedness is also presented on an acoustic level. In the following lines, the wind appears to be spreading the voice of the boys playing on the beach: “Voices too fine for any mortal wind/To blow into the whorls of mortal ears.” This amplification of sound, I suggest, is visible as a form of human-nonhuman interaction. Or, as the conclusive stanza presents, a stress on the idea of continuity and connectedness is expressed, on a formal level, using anaphora, similarly to what was discussed, again, in regard to James Stephens’s poem:

And the wind came and purified my limbs,  
And the stars came and set within my eyes,  
And snowy clouds rested upon my shoulders,  
And the blue sky shimmered deep within me,  
And I sang like a carven pipe of music. (6)

Not only does the repetition of “and” at the beginning of each sentence conveys the idea of pluralism in the representation of the environment, but the specification of different nonhuman entities in each line (“wind”, “stars”, “clouds”, etc.) also suggests the extent of the nexus involving the (pastoral) ecosystem described by the poem. Through an ecocritical lens, this evaluation makes evident how this poem underlines the importance of evaluating the pastoral scenario as a multifaceted ecosystem, where different entities – human and nonhuman, organic and inorganic – are connected and ontologically bound. This awareness testifies to the capacity of this poem to disclose useful ethical figurations of the environment. Highlighting this effect when approaching this poem, current readership can become more aware of the functionality of re-reading this work for reflecting on and for responding to some of the ethical urges established by the crises connected to the Anthropocene.

Robert Graves’s Not Dead offers a similar opportunity to develop considerations on the continuity existing between humans and nonhumans, especially by putting on display images underlining a sense of (material) continuation between them. The poem

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58 If one considers the implications carried by the conjunction ‘and’, which refers to the idea of “to be taken side by side with, along with, or in addition to” (“and” OED, 2021), further evidence of the centrality of the notion of connectedness in the excerpt under examination can be determined.
does so by describing how the lyrical I perceives the presence of a lost friend by sensing him or her in the natural surroundings.

The opening of the short poem – which comprises only eleven lines overall – blatantly depicts this sense of connection:

Walking through trees to cool my heat and pain,
I know that David’s with me here again.
All that is simple, happy, strong, he is.
Caressingly I stroke
Rough bark of the friendly oak. (114)

While this excerpt provides a display of the classical features of the locus amoenus, as suggested by the expression “through trees to cool” as well as by the emphasis on simplicity and positive atmosphere (“simply, happy”), a more attentive look at how the human subjects evoked in the lines – the lyrical I and “David” – are represented allows one to determine aspects of ecocritical interest. David’s first introduction in the poem leaves no doubt or suspicion that he is a human being accompanying the lyrical I in his or her dwelling within the pastoral location. However, the fact that he is soon associated with the lyrical I’s act of “strok[ing a] / Rough bark” generates a sense of confusion in the reader, who is led to re-consider David’s human form while welcoming the possibility that David possesses a vegetal one. The use of the adjective “friendly” associated with “oak” prompts this ambiguity by attributing to a plant some qualities that are normally referred to with respect to human beings, or at least to nonhuman animals. In this case, the sense of confusion regards the impossibility of clearly determining the ‘nature’ of David, either as a tree or as a human being. Along the line of what has already been discussed in regard to ‘pathetic fallacy’ – with which the expression “friendly oak” can be associated – this passage can be interpreted as offering another poetic strategy for expressing a sense of continuity between humans and nonhumans, in the sense that a forcibly (ontological) separation between these two realms cannot be established. In an ecocritical sense, this evaluation appears as another powerful reference to current epistemology, in which this issue is crucial.

The sense of “fusion and confusion” (Rozzoni 2021c, 106-112) among vegetal and nonhuman entities prompted by Graves’s poem reemerges a few lines later in reference to some flowers:
A brook goes bubbling by: the voice is his.  
Turf burns with pleasant smoke;  
I laugh at chaffinch and at primroses.  
All that is simple, happy, strong, he is.  
Over the whole wood in a little while  
Breaks his slow smile. (114)

This section offers other parallels between the lyrical I’s lost friend and the nonhuman realm following the idea that “a [bubbling] brook” echoes David’s “voice”, or by the fact that he can be experienced within the presence of some flowers due to their qualitative affinities with him (“All that is simple, happy, strong, he is”). The stress of this last example on feelings and emotions strengthens the idea that a sense of affective attunement is also offered by this poem as a further example of human-nonhuman connectedness. This specification, therefore, allows one to reflect on another way that connects Graves’s poem to current discussions in Environmental Humanities scholarship – namely, affective ecocriticism (Weik von Mossner 2017; Bladow and Ladino, 2018) – in which the human-nonhuman divide is negotiated by assessing the affective communicative capacities of both groups.

All the images discussed, therefore, defy a strict categorization of David as either a human or a nonhuman entity, while presenting him instead as a hybrid subject who symbolically entails a material continuity between the two realms.

**Conclusion**

The analysis of the selected pastoral poems appearing in Vol. III has shown that a pastoral trajectory runs through the collection, which epitomizes the ecocritical values of this volume. The stress on the issues of human-nonhuman relationality, on the negotiation of human exceptionalism and on the traditional concept of the human-animal ontological divide, as well as on the emphasis on a sense of ontological and material continuity between human and nonhuman – and organic and inorganic – entities testify, once again, that the Georgians possessed traces of a mature environmental aesthetics (Buell, 1995). This supports my thesis that Marsh’s anthology allows for reviewing traces of the environmental discourse developing in Britain during the 1910s while reassessing the full engagement of these poets within the cultural context at the time of its composition, which has been negated – and neglected – by many critics. Evidence of this engagement also testifies to the idea that, while World War I is represented as a key narrative in poems
composed in the years under examination, there remain several discourses toward which a critical focus can and should be directed in order to explore the complexity of a certain (literary and cultural) period, like the Georgian one.

These signals have been discussed, for instance, in W. J. Turner’s *The Sky-Sent Death*: the poem represents a good example of how Georgian poets combined the issues of the world conflict with more environmentally-related reflections through original elaborations of the pastoral. The image of the shepherd killed by a bomb appears as a powerful metaphoric critique of the anthropocentric egoism that led to World War I. Through a metaliterary (and ecocritical) lens, this discussion calls into account human exceptionalism, which leads to destructive evaluations of both the pastoral and the understanding of the environment, while offering an ethical alternative based on the sense of human-nonhuman connectedness. A similar discussion emerged from James Stephens’s *The Fifteen Acres*, which, by emphasizing similarities between human and nonhuman sensorial and perceptive capacities, reflects an aspect of originality in the treatment of the pastoral, as well as showcases another parallel between the Georgian poetry and current ecocritical epistemology.

Harold Monro’s *The Bird at Dawn* provides further occasions for reflecting on issues of nonhuman communication and the peculiarities of nonhuman experientiality by re-elaborating popular pastoral tropes, such as birds and bird singing. Particularly, by stressing the human limits in developing a full comprehension of the nonhuman world, the poem invites readers to question the limiting domains of anthropocentrism when evaluating it, while, simultaneously, prompting the embrace of a wider, critical scope for investigating the complex dynamics of the environment.

With a more specific focus on the sense of ontological continuity that involves humans and nonhumans, *Ecstasy* by W. J. Turner and Robert Graves’s *Not Dead* demonstrate how Edward Marsh’s collection presents opportunities for discussing the topic of human and nonhuman engagements within (innovative) pastoral representations. In the first case, the description of a group of boys playing on a beach becomes the occasion for exploring the relationship between human beings and their natural surroundings, which results in both original linguistic, imagery-based, and rhetorical effects offered by poetry. In Robert Graves’s poem, instead, a sense of (material) continuity existing between humans and nonhumans emerges from the discussion on the
possibility of sensibly experiencing a lost friend in one’s vegetal surroundings in sensorial and affective ways.

Hence, these discussions of selected pastoral poems in Vol. III underline the capacity of this issue to support a reading of the ecocritical potentials of its environmental representations. And while it is evident that other – especially war-related – narratives were salient in the period, considering the involvement of many British soldiers in the trenches, re-assessing the significance of these green threads in 1910s poetry becomes an opportunity for shedding light on neglected cultural issues of the time. Consequently, adopting a lens inspired by a dialogue between ecocriticism and posthumanism in the field of the Environmental Humanities becomes a useful strategy for re-assessing the critical values of Marsh’s collection, which thus becomes visible as a useful source for allowing readers to respond to some of the ethical challenges created by the Anthropocene.

5.4 The Pastoral in the Post-War Period: Vol. IV (1918-1919)59

The fourth volume of Edward Marsh’s anthology was published in November 1919, a year after the armistice that determined the end of World War I.60 The war represented a watershed in the twentieth century in many areas: the aftermath of the conflict brought about swift and thorough cultural changes, from politics (including collapses of major empires and new political balances) to economics (including the effects of the costs of reparation on the populations and the instability of the market), passing through to society (including the trauma of violent deaths of millions of people).61 To gain an impression of the scope of World War I, it is important to report Samuel Hynes’s observation that the conflict represented “a gap in history” (1991, xi): with this term Hynes stresses the shift

59 All the poems’ excerpts of this section (5.4) refer to Marsh, Edward. 1919. Georgian Poetry 1918-1919. London: The Poetry Bookshop. Therefore, my references to this source will be limited to indicating the page number of the selected excerpt in parentheses.
60 The Armistice on the Western Front was signed on November 11, 1918. It represented the ceasefire that ended hostilities between the Allies and Germany. Even though the Armistice did not end the First World War, it represented the agreement that ended the fighting on the Western Front. Instead, it was the Treaty of Versailles, signed on June 28, 1919, which formally ended World War I after several months of negotiation.
61 For a further discussion on the socio-economic effects of World War I on Britain, see: Milwand 1970; Culleton 2000; Ferguson 2006.
in beliefs and values caused by this dramatic event which affected both the map of Europe and the ways in which women and men envisioned reality. This sense of transformation and instability characterizing the early post-war years can be also observed when regarding the mutations occurring in literature.

As discussed, in the British cultural context, and specifically in poetry, the pre-war period featured a great artistic ferment. During that time, new aesthetics and stylistic features developed alongside a general interest for innovation and for taking distance from traditional trends. During the post-war years, a similar spirit was still visible; yet it was rooted in different premises. As already observed, Modernism was boosted by World War I, which inspired several writers to highlight the necessity of developing new ways of writing, new imagery, and styles that more adequately responded to the urges and awareness prompted by the conflict. It is the case of Virginia Woolf, whose commitment to developing new forms of writing, for instance, aimed at responding to the paternalistic, chauvinistic, and fascist mentality which, in her view, led to the conflict. In this same vein, we can look at T. S. Eliot’s convictions that the tragedy of World War I made it necessary to shed light on the horrors experienced and produced by society while embracing new writing techniques and imagery able to express related sentiments.

In this context, the survival of stylistic features, images, and perhaps even literary projects almost untouched from the pre- to the post-war years – such as Georgian Poetry – quickly became synonymous with conservativism and lack of alignment with the cultural needs of the new post-war world order. Conservativism and traditionalism were therefore among the major accusations addressed by (Modernist) critics to Edward Marsh’s literary project. These observations became quickly rooted considering that critics of the caliber of T.S. Eliot and J. Middleton Murry were among the promoters of this perspective, but also because the editorial market in the post-war years became dominated by a competitive and parochialist atmosphere, in which different coteries did not hesitate to harshly attack one another (Ross 1965, 198). In this sense, several negative considerations in reviews addressing Vol. IV presented the idea that even new authors included in the anthology lacked innovative characteristics, instead limiting themselves

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62 For a further discussion on the impact of World War I on the writing of Virginia Woolf, see Hussey 1991; Levenback 1999.
63 For a further discussion on the impact of World War I on the writing of T. S. Eliot, see Krockel 2011; Tearle 2019.
to prolonging the stylistic features which had already determined the *verve* of the first three volumes.

The fact that *Vol. IV* also protracted themes and imagery concerning the natural world, lyrical and daily experiences, as well reliance on the pastoral, fostered the already circulating unenthusiastic appraisal of the label ‘Georgian’ in post-war England. However, through the combination of a revisionist ecocritical and posthuman lens proposed by this thesis, a re-assessment of the literary merit of these features can be offered. First, I argue that the fact that the conflict became a dominant narrative of that period does not prevent one from acknowledging the relevance of other, simultaneous discourses – such as the environmental ones, which, in fact, feature prominently in Georgian pastoral poems. In this sense, the green trajectories running through *Vol. IV*, I suggest, can be considered as representative of the environmental discourse characterizing late 1910s British poetry, and accordingly, they need to be regarded seriously by today’s critics in light of the Anthropocene. Second, by considering these Georgians’ environmental trajectories in concurrence with the recent re-assessment of the ecocritical potentials of Modernist literature (Sultzbach 2016; Black 2018; Diaper 2022) the negative evaluations attributed to Georgians assume different connotations. Acknowledging the relevance of these narratives in *Georgian Poetry Vol. IV* allows scholars to observe them as anticipating and favoring the development of green trajectories in Modernism.

Keeping in mind these observations, the following analysis will focus on two main themes that emerge from five selected pastoral poems. The first regards how, through use of the pastoral, certain poems provide readers with complex figurations of the environment as a nexus between human beings and the many nonhuman entities populating the surroundings, or as illustrated in Chapter 3, as an ecosystem. This discussion proceeds by analyzing Robert Graves’s *The Voice of Beauty Drowned*, and John Freeman’s *Ten o’Clock No More*. Then, the second strand of my analysis on *Vol. IV* regards the idea that some pastoral poems allow for one to make references to a more conceptual, ontological continuum between the human and the nonhuman realm, which includes issues of material and affective entanglement. This section discusses Thomas Moult’s *Truly He Hath a Sweet Bed*, Fredegond Shove’s *The World*, and Harold Monro’s *Gravity*. Hence, by highlighting parallels between 1) current studies in ecocriticism and
posthuman studies and 2) selected pastoral poems featured in Vol. IV, it is possible to reevaluate the critical value of this collection in the context of the Environmental Humanities, in reference to the principle already discussed through my pastoral 5Rs.

A useful discussion on how the pastoral in Vol. IV can be observed as an ecosystem, in the sense of a complex nexus of relationships among human and nonhuman entities, is offered in Robert Graves’s *The Voice of Beauty Drowned*. This poem describes how, in a certain natural environment, different forms of life coexist, specifically by discussing a colony of birds. While, in general terms, this poem displays the traditional features of classical pastoral domains – such as the idealized representation of the natural world and an emotional, lyrical tone – ecocritical potentials can also be determined in the pluralistic perspective adopted by Graves for depicting the bird community at the center of the poem:

*Cry from the thicket my heart's bird!*

The other birds woke all around;
Rising with toot and howl they stirred
Their plumage, broke the trembling sound,
They craned their necks, they fluttered wings,
'While we are silent no one sings,
And while we sing you hush your throat,
Or tune your melody to our note.' (88, emphasis in original)

This excerpt from the poem opens with the lyrical I’s urge, addressed to a bird, to sing alongside the “other birds” dwelling in that scene: the imperative verb “cry” at the beginning of the first line underlines this command. The reference to the natural habitat (“thicket”) in which this action takes place, and on the quantity of the bird population (“The other birds woke all around; / Rising with toot and howl they stirred”) stresses the vitality and the crowing of the poem’s pastoral location. Consequently, one can consider that the environment represented in this poem possesses a pluralistic character. The environment, in fact, is represented here as a combination of multiple entities, while the vitalistic sense of this pastoral *locus* is emphasized by using verbs of movement, such as “crane(d)” and “flutter(ed).” This suggests that the Georgian imagination was
characterized by a mature, attentive glance concerning the complexity of the notion of ‘environment’, as already discussed.

The last three lines of the excerpt show a sense of connectedness among the several entities populating the pastoral scenario, particularly through the image of the birds singing. Far from being depicted as a solitary act, in Graves’s poems, bird singing is first and foremost an expression of the bird community populating the pastoral locus at the center of the poem, which therefore engages with the concept of cohesion and relationality. A sense of community is also expressed when birds are silent, a condition that can be also considered as a collective act. In Graves’ poem, “[w]hile [birds] are silent no one sings”, whereas “while [birds] sing” all entities are involved in similar activity.

The verb “[to] tune” in the last stanza is also useful for expressing social bonds, considering that the act of tuning – “to adjust the tones of (a musical instrument) to a standard of pitch” (“tune” OED 2021) implies the presence of at least two instruments. Hence, in reminding readers of the image of an orchestra, this verb again stresses the pluralistic, multivocal nature of the bird-scenery represented in the poem. This emphasis, beyond reiterating the idea of complexity in the evaluation of the environment depicted, stresses the importance of contextualizing a single (nonhuman) entity within a wider net of relationships, which supports the idea of observing this pastoral representation as an ecosystem.

The second and third stanzas propose a similar argument:

_Cry from the thicket my heart's bird!_

The screams and hootings rose again:
They gaped with raucous beaks, they whirred
Their noisy plumage; small but plain
The lonely hidden singer made
A well of grief within the glade.
'Whist, silly fool, be off,' they shout,
'Or we'll come pluck your feathers out.'

_Cry from the thicket my heart's bird!_

Slight and small the lovely cry
Came trickling down, but no one heard;
Parrot and cuckoo, crow, magpie,
Jarred horrid notes, the jangling jay
Ripped the fine threads of song away;
For why should peeping chick aspire
To challenge their loud woodland choir? (88, emphasis in original)
After proposing the same invocation at the beginning of the opening stanza, the lyrical I refers to the bird-community singing – expressed by the collective meaning of the pronoun “they” (“The screams and hootings rose again: / They gaped with raucous beaks, they whirred / Their noisy plumage […]”) – while shedding light on the different species that comprise it (“Parrot and cuckoo, crow, magpie”). Again, this specification appears to emphasize the pluralistic figuration of this community. Moreover, this principle is reiterated by negatively describing a bird whose singing disarranges the rest of the avian choir. In the second stanza, the choir of singing birds reacts to the one element that sings out-of-tune (“‘Whist, silly fool, be off,’ they shout, / ‘Or we’ll come pluck your feathers out’”). In the same way, a provocative question in the third stanza encourages a reflection on the importance of cohesion and attunement within the bird community: “For why should peeping chick aspire / To challenge their loud woodland choir?” These elements allow one to consider the poem’s emphasis on the sense of connectedness between the nonhuman creatures depicted in it, and on the complexity of representing both the structure of this nonhuman community and the social relationship between these entities. The innovative character of this representation, reverberating with a proto-environmental maturity, cannot be disregarded and should be seen as a valuable aspect for assessing the literary value of this Georgian pastoral manifestation.

John Freeman’s Ten o’Clock No More inspires a similar consideration, but it does so by extending this discussion to the vegetal nonhuman realm. The poem, using the dynamics of the pastoral, specifically the pastoral elegy, discusses the fall of a tree – named Ten o’Clock⁶⁴ – and its following death, after a storm. This event becomes an occasion for the lyrical I to reflect on the emotional, affective attachment that binds humans and nonhumans together, as the very base for developing ethical forms relationality between them, as is also widely discussed within current scholarship in the Environmental Humanities.

After a mainly descriptive opening providing a general contextualization – exemplified by the line “[t]he wind has thrown / the boldest of the trees down” – the lyrical I offers a more intimate consideration of the plant lying on the ground:

And the wind raught

⁶⁴ This consideration is fostered by an explanatory endnote to the poem’s title, reading: “Ten o’clock is the name of a tall tree that crowned the eastern Cotswolds” (Mash 1919, 64).
Her ageing boughs and caught
Her body fast again.
Then in one agony of age, grief, pain,
She fell and died.

Her noble height,
Branches that loved the light,
Her music and cool shade,
Her memories and all of her is dead
On the hill side. (64-65)

Several lexical choices in this passage stress a sense of emotional attachment and affective attunement between the humans and nonhumans portrayed in the poem. On the one hand, the presence of the possessive adjectives “her”, used here in reference to a tree, conveys a sense of proximity between the latter and the (supposedly) human narrator. Within the domains of lyrical, sentimental poems focusing on amorous relationships, this Freeman’s work highlights the intimate, affective relationality between a human and the tree. Rather than appearing solely as a strategy of personification, the use of “her” in reference to a tree seems to resonate with current discussions on empathy and affective attunement (Bate 2000, 23) that exist between human and nonhuman beings, as alternative forms of relationality for responding to the ethical challenges created by the Anthropocene.

This sense of attachment is also provided throughout the poem on a lexical level by the fact that the vocabulary adopted for describing the tree concerns the semantic field of human beings: not only is the trunk perceived as a “body” (“Her body fast again”), but the plant also becomes the addressee of the lyrical I’s “grief” and “pain”: while, in an anthropocentric perspective these mourning-related emotions are not called into account in regard to plants, extending these emotions to a vegetal entity signals the extension of

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65 One can consider, for instance, the relevance of the theme of love in the tradition of (Western) lyrical poetry as discussed by Edward B. Reed’s study, *English lyrical poetry, from its origins to the present time* (1967) and in Patricia B. Phillipp’s study, *Renaissance lyric poetry dedicated to love* (1995). Or one can reflect on Jen Kiefer’s observation that Petrarch’s sonnets to Laura “for roughly three hundred years […] constituted the most important point of reference for European love poetry [and…] it also represents the central way for transmitting emotion in lyric poetry” (Kiefer 2005, 16).

66 For a further discussion on human empathy towards plants – e.g., in the capacity of people to assume the standpoint of a plant and judge what happens accordingly – see Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina, 2017.

67 For a further discussion on humans’ mourning and grief for the environment, as a practice which reveals keen ecocritical implications, see Burton-Christie 2011. Furthermore, for a wider elaboration on the topic of mourning nature and relationship between loss, grief, and environment, see Cunsolo and Landman 2017.
the conventional affective scope of humans towards the nonhuman realm. This effect, consequently, allows for calling into account discussions on empathy, affectivity, and emotion as ways for fostering the sense connectedness between humans and nonhumans in the poem.

As already illustrated, while these occurrences could be related to examples of pathetic fallacy – for they refer to an alleged (mis)attribution of human qualities and emotions to inanimate objects of nature\(^\text{68}\) – through the theoretical lens established for this dissertation, an alternative evaluation is offered: the adoption of human-related vocabulary for describing nonhuman entities can be seen as an opportunity for metaphorically prompting a sense of human-nonhuman connectedness (Rozzoni 2021b). Support to this interpretation is also offered in the conclusion of the poem, which presents a blatant reference to the affective attachment existing between human beings and nonhumans. This relationship demonstrates a further aspect of modernity in this poem concerning the evaluation and depiction of the environment:

‘Ten o’clock’s gone!’
Said sadly every one.
And mothers looking thought
Of sons and husbands far away that fought: –
And looked again. (65)

Revealing the (nick-)name of the tree as “Ten o’clock” appears to be a further sign of affective attunement between human beings and nonhuman entities in the poem. The act of naming, in fact, possesses valuable ethical implications in this sense, since it represents an expression of care and attentiveness toward another form of life.\(^\text{69}\) The naming of the tree in this poem, using these very dynamics, can therefore be considered as an expression of a similar affective attachment. Moreover, the fact that the reaction of sadness affects an array of people (“Said sadly every one”) extends this affective relationship beyond the

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\(^{68}\) For a further discussion on the notion of ‘pathetic fallacy’ and on how a traditional understanding of this topic can be refigured through an ecocritical lens, see my argument in Rozzoni 2021b.

\(^{69}\) A discussion on this topic is offered by Ellie Hansen, who observes that “Naming animals is widely regarded as officially taboo within laboratories, because the personalization of animals evokes emotion and signals attachment” (Hansen 2021, 77). Or one can consider Rhoda M. Wilkie’s study on the connection between naming and its contribution in forming emotional attachments between humans and animals in animal farms (Wilkie 2010, 111).
experience of the lyrical I, which involves the wider community of humans around the tree.

As a result of these considerations, one can reflect on how John Freeman’s poem provides further evidence of the centrality of issues of human-nonhuman relationality in *Vol. IV* and, in a broader sense, in Edward Marsh’s anthology. Within the scope of current ecocritical and posthuman epistemologies, Freeman’s work, therefore, shows how the perspective on the environment developed by the Georgians can be connected to many issues that are topical today, specifically regarding the ethical challenges brought about by the Anthropocene. This condition, I suggest, assesses the anthology’s critical value.

Thomas Moult’s poem, titled ‘Truly He Hath a Sweet Bed’ also elaborates the pastoral through an elegiac mode and offers useful ecocritical reflections. Specifically, this poem is dedicated to reflections on human-nonhuman relationality by observing a corpse being buried in the soil. As the title suggests, by using the adjective “sweet”, the poem attributes a positive connotation to the soil. Moreover, referring to it as a seat of burial by the use of the word “bed,” enhances its positive implications further, since, as a conventional metaphor, this expression provides the idea that the burial space represents a comfortable resting location.

After a few lines introducing the general topic of the poem, the second stanza focuses on the peculiarities of the soil, from which attentiveness towards the nonhuman realm emerges:

The perfume shed  
From invisible gardens is chaliced by kindly airs  
And carried for welcome to the stranger.  
Long seasons ere he came, this wilderness  
They habited. (110)

In this excerpt, the description of the burial place presents characteristics of pleasantness, as visible in the reference to the perfume that this location possesses due to its flowers (“invisible gardens”) as well as to the abundance of vegetation (“wilderness”) in the nearby meadow. The use of the verb “welcome,” in reference to the possibility of soil hosting the body of a person also contributes to stressing the overcoming of a solely negative, restricted perspective on death, in a traditional sense, as a mere state of the termination of life. This evaluation parallels what has been discussed in reference to Robert Graves’s poem in *Vol. III*, titled *Not Dead*, about the fact that, in the context of
the Environmental Humanities – especially in the field of posthumanism and new materialism – death has become an object of re-discussion for negotiating the legacy of anthropocentric, dualistic understandings. Through the perspective offered by new materialism, for instance, considering death the termination of life *tout court* does not acknowledge the value of biochemical processes and new forms of entanglements between human bodies with the surrounding nonhuman entities appearing after that somebody is, for instance, ‘legally’ declared dead. These processes include, among others, the action of bacteria on corpses during decomposition of body tissues. Bypassing the idea that death possesses mere negative implications, new materialism provides a different narrative by assessing the continuation of body transformation after burial. Since these processes strictly depend on the engagement of organic matter with other (nonhuman) agents, the image of a body entombed in the soil as is presented in this poem, and the positive connotation attributed to this phase, is particularly effective for discussing the continuum comprising the human and the nonhuman realm, thus echoing new materialistic perspectives.

Beyond emphasizing the relevance of the soil, as the material container of the dead body (“Brown earth, sun-soaked, / Beneath his head / And over the quiet limbs....”), attention to human-nonhuman engagement is presented through the description of an array of entities dwelling in the pastoral *locus* of this poem, as is visible in the fourth stanza:

The brown earth holds him.  
The stars and little winds, the friendly moon  
And sun attend in turn his rest. 
They linger above him, softly moving. They are gracious,  
And gently-wise: as though remembering how his hunger, 
His kinship, knew them once but blindly  
In thoughts unsaid,  
As a dream that fled. (110)

The sky and the different celestial bodies mentioned in the excerpt foster the idea that a sense of human-nonhuman connectedness can be determined after one’s burial: in fact,

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70 For a further discussion on new materialisms’ destabilization of the ontological boundaries that, in Western culture, have traditionally separated life and death, one can consider the studies of Braidotti 2013, 114-115; Mbembe 2003, 40; Morton 2016; 44-45. For what concerns expressions of nonhuman life in both organic and inorganic matter that had previously been assessed as inert, see, for instance, Bennet 2010.
the stars, the wind, and the moon are described as “friendly”, thus revealing a sense of companionship with the human corpse at the center of the poem. Similarly, having the verb “attend” refer to the “sun” prompts the idea that the latter is involved in actions of care after somebody’s death, similarly to what people generally do over a dead person during wakes.

A sense of connectedness is made even more explicit by the reference to “kinship” regarding the (dead) human and his or her surroundings. This concept establishes another parallel between the poem and current philosophical discussions on new materialism, ecocriticism, and posthuman studies as, among others, Donna Haraway’s study *Staying with the Trouble* (2016). Haraway approaches “making kin” as an ethical alternative to egoistic human stances towards nonhuman-others which, according to the scholar, led to the anthropogenic crises in the present-day world. Specifically, stressing the importance of making “kin” with nonhumans, Haraway underlines the necessity, today, of maturing a posthuman sense of parenthood, which establishes relationalities among organisms of different species and fosters practices of care towards one another. Seen through a similar perspective, the poem therefore seems to invite readers to consider more attentively the sense of enmeshment and care that can exist between humans and nonhumans in different moments of one’s life, as well as between organic and inorganic elements. This consideration, consequently, enhances the ecological, ethical value of this poem.

The relevance of this sense of intertwinement is reiterated throughout the poem until the concluding stanza:

So is he theirs assuredly as the seasons.
So is his sleep by them for ever companioned.
...And, perchance, by the voices of bright children playing
And knowing not: by the echo of young laughter
When their dancing is sped. (111)

As these lines reveal, a sense of posthuman *companionship* (“for ever companioned”) – in the sense that it regards both human and nonhuman beings through a postdualistic and postanthropocentric way – characterizes the kind of relationship of the several subjects involved in this poem. This companionship is depicted as being prolonged in time (“for ever”) by the presence of people attending the burial place. The sense of community evoked by the image of “bright children playing” and of “young laughter” fosters the
positive connotation of one’s post-mortem experience, which becomes, in this sense, not an individual experience, but rather a collective one. This emphasis on post-mortem relationality fosters the ecological interpretation of the pastoral in Moult’s poem, which, by establishing another parallel between a Georgian environmental trajectory discussed in my analysis and current ecocritical and posthuman epistemology, becomes visible as an innovative characteristic of the collection.

Fredegond Shove’s *The World* solidifies these considerations by elaborating a discussion on the idea of connectedness among the several entities composing the natural world, which offers a more critical figuration of the environment that contrasts with traditional dualistic understandings of it. Within the domains of the pastoral, and relying on an apparently idealized description of the natural world, the poem presents planet Earth and the many beings dwelling on it from the distant perspective of an alien – in the sense of an entity coming from another, non-declared distant location in the universe. This narrator informs readers that he or she perceives the organic and inorganic elements on Earth as a complex *assemblage* that treats the planet as a pluralistic unicum. This form of relationship becomes visible in the following lines:

> I wish this world and its green hills were mine,  
> But it is not; the wandering shepherd star  
> Is not more distant, gazing from afar  
> On the unreapèd pastures of the sea,  
> Than I am from the world, the world from me.  
> At night the stars on milky way that shine  
> Seem things one might possess, but this round green  
> Is for the cows that rest, these and the sheep:  
> To them the slopes and pastures offer sleep;  
> My sleep I draw from the far fields of blue,  
> Whence cold winds come and go among the few  
> Bright stars we see and many more unseen. (158)

While this section contains multiple references to the traditional pastoral, the lyrical I’s account presents aspects of originality by associating the pastoral with different conventional locations, from green pastures to the countryside. The word “shepherd”, for instance, refers to a star in the sky (“wandering shepherd star”); the notion of “pastures” is adopted to describe the expanse of seas (“unreapèd pastures of the sea”); the expression “fields”, which generally indicates places for agricultural activities, is adopted here for referring to the sky (as the expression “far fields of blue” suggests). This original use of
conventional pastoral vocabulary also reveals that the locus at the center of the poem is not circumscribed to a limited, specific rural setting. Rather, it involves the whole world through a macro-perspective as is suggested by the multiple repetitions of “world” in the excerpts, and the presence of expressions like “round green”, “hills”, and “sea” – which pertain to the semantic field of planet earth. Consequently, the issue of relationality that is emphasized here by the combination of different nonhuman entities does not regard a specific environment, but the environment, in a wider, planetary sense. Within the poem, the latter becomes visible as a complex enmeshment of organisms, thus offering another piece of evidence of Georgian ecological awareness.

The second stanza expands on this, while fostering the sense of connectedness involving the different organisms dwelling on the planet:

Birds sing on earth all day among the flowers,
Taking no thought of any other thing
But their own hearts, for out of them they sing:
Their songs are kindred to the blossom heads,
Faint as the petals which the blackthorn sheds,
And like the earth – not alien songs as ours.
To them this greenness and this island peace
Are life and death and happiness in one;
Nor are they separate from the white sun,
Or those warm winds which nightly wash the deep
Or starlight in the valleys, or new sleep;
And from these things they ask for no release. (158)

The description of the earth as perceived by an alien – explicitly evoked by the expression “alien song” – emphasizes the notion of connectedness among the several entities inhabiting the planet (animal and vegetal, organic, and inorganic). This effect is visible, for instance, in the idea that bird singing occurs “among” flowers (a preposition expressing a sense of continuity), or in the fact that this singing is linked to blossoming (“Their songs are kindred to the blossom heads”). Furthermore, discussions on relationality appear from the stress of the poem in overlapping opposite concepts, like in the observation that, in the described location, “life and death and happiness [are] in one.” A sense of material continuity between the earthly environment (“greenness”) and the “sun” underlines the poem’s reliance on the concepts of organic-inorganic connectedness, just like it occurs in the narrator’s observation that the stars (“starlight”) are not “separate from the white sun”.

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Consequently, the sense of connectedness offered by the lexical choices that make up this poem invites one to consider the potentiality of this pastoral account to resonate with the idea of an ecosystem, as further evidence of the environmental maturity in the Georgians’ poetic imagination. In addition, the fact that planet Earth is central in Shove’s discussion on human-nonhuman relationality is useful for aligning this poem with modern, ecocritical and ecological scholarship.

Harold Monro’s *Gravity* is another work in *Vol. IV* that presents traces of modernity in its display of the environmental (pastoral) imagination, due to its elaboration of issues of human-nonhuman relationality on a planetary scale. While the poem does not present a specific conventional pastoral tone, except for some passages recalling rural locations and activities, *Gravity* remains a useful case for assessing the relevance of the environmental trajectory running through Marsh’s anthology, as has been illustrated in this analysis.

Overall, the poem is dedicated to discussing – and celebrating – the force of gravity: the first lines describe it as “the power / That holds our bodies safely to the earth” and that operates so intensively and constantly on the lives of the human and nonhuman entities living on earth that it can be seen almost as a divinity, a “master”, or even a “tyrant”.

Beyond the general descriptive tone offered in the first few lines of the poem, it is in the third and fourth stanzas that interesting ecocritical narratives develop by stressing how gravity fosters the (ontological) relationship between humans and nonhuman beings.

Sorting and re-arranging worlds of Matter
Keenly and wisely. Thus you brought our earth
Through stages, and from purpose back to purpose,
From fire to fog, to dust, to birth
Through beast to man, who led himself to brain –
Then you invoked him back to dust again.

By leave of you he places stone on stone;
He scatters seed: you are at once the prop
Among the long roots of his fragile crop.
You manufacture for him, and insure
House, harvest, implement and furniture,
And hold them all secure. (98)
The first lines of this excerpt are particularly effective in evoking a sense of continuum between humans and nonhumans through the expression “Matter.” This concept embraces virtually every entity dwelling on planet Earth. In fact, they’re united by being acted upon by gravity indiscriminately, despite their cultural hierarchical categorization. This generic and all-embracing notion, therefore, negotiates possible conceptual hierarchies that anthropocentric frames traditionally attribute to living beings by focusing on processes of materialization, typical for instance of new materialisms.\(^{71}\) By assessing the environment, upon which gravity acts, as a (pluralistic) unicum, one can consider that the alleged divide between human beings other entities, which is visible in traditional understandings of the pastoral, is here questioned. A sense of continuity, especially among human beings and animals, is also suggested by the line “Through beast to man, who led himself to brain,” which also seems evokes reference to Darwin’s theory of evolution. The second stanza reiterates this consideration by establishing human beings as undergoing the domains of other nonhuman forces (“you are at once the prop /Among the long roots of his fragile crop”). This specification suggests a reverse of the traditional Western dichotomic conceptualization, which generally determines humans as ‘subjects’ acting upon nonhuman entities (‘objects’). Contrarily to this vision, as the poem reveals in the line “You manufacture him [human/man],” gravity is presented as having agentic power, which destabilizes the human exceptionalism typical of the conventional humanistic domains, thus appearing as an original postanthropocentric figuration.

The sense of human-nonhuman connectedness in the poem is reiterated in the following lines, which, while introducing expressions like “You pull me with your hand”, “You keep my balance and my growth”, and “Control the smallest thing I do”, underline, in different ways, the subordinate condition that human beings have in regard to the force of gravity, just like any other material entity on earth. The concluding stanza clarifies this parallel by calling into account the topic of the (ontological) entanglement between humans and nonhumans:

I have some little human power  
To turn your purpose to my end,  
For which I thank you every hour.

\(^{71}\) It is useful here to stress that new materialism regards “new ways of thinking about matter and processes of materialization” by problematizing “any straightforward overture toward matter or material experience as naively representational or naturalistic” (Coole and Frost, 2-3).
I stand at worship, while you send
Thrills up my body to my heart,
And I am all in love to know
How by your strength you keep me part
Of earth, which cannot let me go;
How everything I see around,
Whether it can or cannot move,
Is granted liberty of ground,
And freedom to enjoy your love; (99)

Though you are silent always, and, alone
To You yourself, your power remains unknown.

The stress on the limits of the human capacity to act upon other nonhuman forces, such as gravity, (“I have some little human power”) allows for reflecting on the poem’s engagement with a critique of human exceptionalism by leveling the alleged condition of ontological superiority of human beings and by balancing it with all the other entities, equally subject to gravity. This aspect is clarified by the idea that gravity keeps one person (the lyrical I) “part / of earth”, an image that not only stresses the continuum between human beings and planet Earth, but that also evokes a sense of material entanglement between humans and nonhumans within the domains of the environment, when conceived through a pluralistic lens.

Yet the strength of gravity is not depicted as being submissive or possessing a negative context: this natural force is, in fact, seen as “grant[ing] liberty of ground / and freedom to enjoy your love”, thus disclosing certain ethical principles behind the form of relationality that gravity enacts. Therefore, beyond representing another example of the complex vision that the Georgians had of the environment and of its relational dynamics, the pastoral in Gravity results useful for another purpose: allowing current readers to conduct a re-reading of past pastoral poems through the scope of contemporary scholarship and concerns, which sees in ethical forms of the human-nonhuman relationship a fundamental aspect.

Conclusion

The selected poems of Vol. IV reinforce what was discussed in the previous subchapter of my analysis, which is that the pastoral in Marsh’s anthology provides useful narratives for reflecting on issues of human-nonhuman relationality if regarded through the
perspective of the Environmental Humanities. Aligned with this is the idea that adopting a sustainable critical perspective, as explained in Chapter 3, allows for a) stressing the original character of this anthology by highlighting its engagement with mature environmental considerations within the cultural context of 1910s England; b) observing the literary value of this anthology for its capacity to favor current hermeneutical praxis and to engage with current ecological urges and concerns. These aspects appear as useful elements for revising the still dominant, albeit limited critical evaluations of the volume, according to which the pastoral represents an element signaling conservatism and traditionalism in a context where Modernist aesthetics was obtaining more and more prominence. Contrary to this evaluation, as my analysis demonstrated, the pastoral in *Vol. IV* also represents a site for investigating innovative and original characteristics of the Georgians, which the generally hostile critical environment of the post-war period has made latent.

Robert Graves’s *The Voice of Beauty Drowned* showed these characteristics by stressing issues of human-nonhuman relationality and connectedness in developing the pastoral, through his descriptions of a colony of birds. Graves’s poem focuses on the sense of complexity comprising the representation of the environment, using the ideas of cohabitation and connectedness that characterize a bird community, in which a single entity is always inscribed in a wider nexus of relationships. John Freeman’s *Ten o’Clock No More* resonates with this discussion, as issues of human-nonhuman relationality are evoked when describing the effects of the death of a tree, on an affective level, on the community of people to which the tree belonged. Within the domain of the pastoral elegy, grief and a sense of loss become signals for discussing both the affective and material continuity between humans and nonhumans, which offers parallels with increasingly scholarly discussions on these topics in the field of the Environmental Humanities.

Thomas Moult’s poem, *Truly He Hath a Sweet Bed*, also develops within the conventional domains of a pastoral elegy, but it includes innovative characteristics in its focus on the material continuity of humans and nonhumans after death. Just like posthumanism and new materialisms determine the post-mortem as a period during which bodily transformations and relationships between the self and the environment are evident, the poem illustrates examples of the material continuity of a corpse buried in the
soil. This becomes a further opportunity for exploring the maturity of the environmental imagination of Georgians, testifying the ecocritical value of the pastoral in *Vol. IV*.

An emphasis on the sense of connectedness among organisms living on planet earth is offered by Fredegond Shove’s *The World*. By discussing an alien’s perspective of planet Earth, the poem presents humans and nonhumans as being involved in a nexus of relationalities that determines the planet as a pluralistic *unicum*. This image resonates with how current ecocritical and posthuman epistemologies – beyond conceptual hierarchies, dualism, and anthropocentrism – reflect the notion of ‘environment.’ Following a similar planetary perspective, Harold Monro’s *Gravity* offers the opportunity for detecting other innovative green narratives in the development of the pastoral in *Georgian Poetry* through a discussion of the effects of the force of gravity on the several entities dwelling on Earth. Since gravity affects any (human and nonhuman) bodies imbued with materiality, this poem contributes to re-discussions on traditional anthropocentric and dualistic figurations of the environment, at the same time as it challenges human exceptionalism characterizing traditional environmental pastoral representations.

Contrary to the idea that the pastoral is a sign of conservativism and traditionalism within a cultural context that witnessed the increasing establishment of the (early-)Modernist aesthetics, the pastoral narratives disclosed in my analysis offer a critical assessment. The various echoes of contemporary scholarship in the field of the Environmental Humanities – from posthumanism to new materialism – regarding the pastoral environmental narratives of *Vol. IV* demonstrate how the latter serve as evidence of the (eco)critical value of the collection. Hence, by highlighting the capacity of several pastoral poems to dialogue with current ethical urges at the time of the Anthropocene, the possibility of reevaluating *Georgian Poetry* is also fostered by the fact that it provides current readership with the possibility of corroborating the sense of human-nonhuman connectedness.

### 5.5 The Pastoral and the Moderns: *Vol. V* (1920-22)72

72 All the poems’ excerpts of this section (5.5) refer to Marsh, Edward. 1922. *Georgian Poetry 1920-1922*. London: The Poetry Bookshop. Therefore, my references to this source will be limited to indicating the page number of the selected excerpt in parentheses.
Edward Marsh’s literary project *Georgian Poetry* ended in 1922. After having five volumes and hundreds of poems published over a decade, the ambitious editorial idea which had aimed to “help the lovers of poetry to realize that ‘England was at the beginning of “another ‘Georgian period’” (Marsh 1912, n.p.) came to an end, still being accompanied by harsh commentaries and attacks by contemporary critics. As Marsh expressed in his “Prefatory Note” of *Vol. V*, it was evident how, at that time, many of the intellectuals who would initially support the anthology had begun to “very properly disapprov[e of his] choice of poems” due to the idea that “an insipid sameness is the chief characteristic of [the] anthology” (Marsh 1922, n.p.).

As Marsh observed when this project was first launched, the early Twenties still saw “a number of writers doing work which appeared to [him] extremely good, but which was narrowly known” (Marsh 1922 n.p.). Yet despite having newcomers73 in the collection, no aspects of innovation were evident in the eye of Modernist literary critics, whose attitude towards the anthology had irreversibly shifted since the publication of *Vol. III*, as has already been observed. In fact, among the most evident critiques that *Vol. V* received, there was the idea that “in comparing the output of 1922 with that of 1911 [...one] see[s] little evidence of evolution, of progress” (see Edmund Gosse’s review, titled “The World of Book”, *The Sunday Times*, 17 December 1922, 6, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 289). Or one can consider that Marsh became gradually described as “one of the best known of our literary dilettanti” (see the review by The Clubman’s Talk of the Town, titled “Eddie Marsh”, *Pall Mall and Globe*, 1 December 1922, 8, reprinted in Rogers 1977, 267): an evaluation which signifies how the generally negative assessment addressed to the volume was rooted and extended in the literary landscape of that time. Hence, combined with a significant decrease in sales, Marsh’s project came to an end accompanied by a general dismissive tone corroborated by an intense sense of partisanship that had intensified after World War I. As Ross observes, this phenomenon: made the struggle against the Georgians more bitter and perhaps more protracted than it might otherwise have been. Georgianism was not to be allowed to die a peaceful death in the natural course of poetic affairs but was to be hooted to its

73 As cited by Marsh in the preface of *Vol. V*, the newcomers of this issue were: “Armstrong, Blunden, Hughes, Kerr, Prewett and Quennell, and Miss Sackville-West” (Marsh 1922, n.p.).
grave by the unnecessarily derisive jeers of those self-appointed poets and critics who had mounted a death watch over Marsh's anthology (Ross 1965, 198).

And while the influence of Modernist criticism with a similar partisan and dismissive spirit persisted in the following years – at least until the Sixties, when a more positive appreciation for Marsh’s project began to develop – it is undeniable how Vol. V possesses aspects of literary value when exposed to the lens of the Environmental Humanities. Along the line proposed in the analysis of the previous issues of the anthology, Vol. V offers multiple possibilities for exploring latent ecocritical potentials within the pastoral trajectory running through it: this trajectory shows how issues of human-nonhuman relationality are relevant in Vol. V, which allows today’s readership to acknowledge parallels between the poetic environmental imagination of the Georgians and relevant aspects of current ecocritical and posthuman epistemology.

The following paragraphs are dedicated to observing how some pastoral poems in Vol. V signal the Georgians’ understanding of the environment, which is far from presenting it as a mere artificial, dualistic representation of the natural world, as typical in traditional pastoral explorations. This observation will be conducted by investigating five different poems: A Lover Since Childhood by Robert Graves, Walter de la Mare’s The Corner Stone, John Freeman’s Change, Wilfrid Gibson’s Worlds, and D.H. Lawrence’s Snake. These texts will be analyzed to determine how they inform one about the strict entanglement between humans and different forms of life while favoring the emergence of the Georgian critical perspective towards anthropocentrism. Assessing these issues in the above-cited poems, moreover, fosters the idea that the Georgians possessed a well-defined literary identity in the cultural context of early twentieth-century England: this aspect is significant for highlighting the environmental potentials of the group, even though the rising establishment of Modernist poetry and aesthetics has often concealed this character.

The relevance of the entanglement between humans and nonhumans in Vol. V is visible in A Lover Since Childhood by Robert Graves. The poem centers on the lyrical I’s memory of his or her lost youthful love. Ethical issues of human-nonhuman relationality
appear through an array of images and linguistic choices which associate the lover with the natural world. The latter, therefore, appears as a relief to the narrator’s love pains, as the first stanza clarifies:

Tangled in thought am I,
Stumble in speech do I?
Do I blunder and blush for the reason why?
Wander aloof do I,
Lean over gates and sigh,
Making friends with the bee and the butterfly? (85)

The opening adjective (“Tangled”) is an eloquent emphasis of the way in which this poem attributes a sense of unity to the lyrical I and his or her lover. The expression “tangled” reminds one of the idea of “entanglement” – a key concept in many contemporary reflections in the scholarship of ecocriticism and posthumanism for discussing issues of human-nonhuman connectedness. The possibility of this parallel is offered in the concluding line of this excerpt, in regard to a relationship occurring between the narrator and two animals (“the bee and the butterfly?”). The use of the word friendship (“Making friends with”) clarifies the nature of the lyrical I’s entanglement with his or her lover. Contrary to the reader’s expectations, which, according to the traditional domains of the pastoral, would determine friendship bonds primarily among human beings, this poem informs readers that forms of affective relationality can also occur between humans and nonhumans. Furthermore, even though the interrogative form of the last line expresses this consideration as a possibility – or as a way for indicating the narrator’s intent to question what is declared in the sentence – this stanza makes evident how human-nonhuman affective entanglements represent a possibility, for the lyrical I, to refigure his or her lost lover into a new kind of bond with the nonhuman.

The idea of engaging with new forms of (posthuman) relationship as a strategy for compensating for the loss of the narrator’s lover is reiterated throughout the poem:

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74 The concept of ‘entanglement’ has become particularly relevant in the fields of ecocriticism and posthumanism in relation to Karen Barad’s study *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007). In this work, Barad affirms that “matter itself entails entanglements – that this is the very nature. By ‘entanglement’ I don’t mean just any old kind of connection, interweaving, or enmeshment in a complicated situation. Crucially, my use of this term goes to the agential realist ontology that I propose with all its requisite refhirings of causality, materiality, agency, dynamics, and topological reconfigurations” (Barad 2007, 160, emphasis in original). References to the concept of ‘entanglement’ are extended in current scholarship as it appears, for instance, in the case of following publications: Holm and Taffel 2016; Ergin 2017; Cesaretti 2020.
If thus and thus I do,
Dazed by the thought of you,
Walking my sorrowful way in the early dew,
My heart cut through and through
In this despair of you,
Starved for a word or a look will my hope renew:

Give then a thought for me
Walking so miserably,
Wanting relief in the friendship of flower or tree;
Do but remember, we
Once could in love agree,
Swallow your pride, let us be as we used to be. (85)

While the lyrical I appears to still be overwhelmed by the sense of loss provoked by the disappearance of his or her lover, as is visible through an array of expressions concerning sadness and grief (including “Dazed by the thought of you”; “sorrowful way”; “this despair of you”, “so miserably”), the idea of engaging with the environment offers a possibility of relief. Specifically, relating to nonhuman entities (“early dew”, “flowers,” and “trees”) populating the pastoral environment is a way in which the lyrical I can liberate him- or herself from an emotional burden. In fact, while the lyrical I “miserably” walks around the natural landscape, “flower[s] and tree[s]” offer him or her a sense of “relief” through an assessment of forms of “friendship”. Hence, the emphasis on posthuman forms of relationality becomes visible as an opportunity for dealing with negative aspects of life, and for retracing a sense of affective fulfillment.

This possibility seems to resonate with the capacity that Roger Sales attributes to the (traditional) pastoral, when, in his 5Rs, he mentions “refuge” to describe how the pastoral engages with reflexive and intellectual activity aimed at “rescu[ing] certain values from the past” while transferring them “back into the modern world” (Sales 1983, 16). However, underling the role of human-nonhuman relationality in providing affective “relief”, the poem displays a sense of originality: this relief occurs not as a generic capacity of the pastoral, but rather in the possibility of establishing relationality with the many nonhuman entities dwelling in the pastoral environment. This stress on human-nonhuman relationality draws parallels between the Georgians’ poetic imagination and current environmental epistemologies. Just like Donna Haraway’s concept of “making kin” (2016), or, among other posthuman scholars, Angela Balzano’s “posthuman
parenthood” (2021) inform, affective relationship exceeds the limits of anthropocentrism. Similarly, this poem reassesses the relevance of entailing forms of affective relationality as ways for responding to a lack of similar engagements among humans.

The way in which Walter de la Mare’s *The Corner Stone* discusses natural entities possesses similarities to how the same occurs in Graves’s *A Lover Since Childhood*. De la Mare’s poem focuses on the vegetation growing at the bottom of an abandoned building, while offering a reflection on the multiplicity and, once again, on the entanglement between different life forms populating an apparently uninhabited place. The opening of the poem is clarificatory in this sense:

Sterile these stones  
By time in ruin laid.  
Yet many a creeping thing  
Its haven has made  
In these least crannies, where falls  
Dark's dew, and noonday shade. (54)

The expression “sterile,” in the first line, establishes a dramatic tone to the poem: the emphasis placed on the image of the “stones”, evoking the remains of an old building (“ruin”), presents the described location as being lifeless. However, this consideration is soon subverted due to the emphasis that, with a more attentive glance, a poetic locus is visible, which is inhabited by an array of life forms within the “crannies” of the stones. The adversative preposition “Yet” underlines this contrast, while informing the reader that there are “many a creeping thing” among these ruins. Hence, starting from the third line of the excerpt, the narrator enacts a zoom-in effect that highlights the presence of a living ecosystem located in the interstices of the ruins, involving an array of nonhuman entities, which recalls the idea of the pastoral ecosystem already discussed. In these locations, nonhuman entities thrive due to the presence of particular conditions, including “dew” and “shade”. The poem’s stress on these conditions and on the dynamics of nonhuman lives in the ruins appears as a further example of how the poem negotiates a mere anthropocentric perspective when developing the pastoral along more traditional trends.

The relevance of nonhuman entities in the poem is underscored in the following lines where a multiscale, nonhuman-oriented perspective prevails:
The claw of the tender bird
Finds lodgment here;
Dye-winged butterflies poise;
Emmet and beetle steer
Their busy course; the bee
Drones, laden, near. (54)

An array of nonhuman animals – including “bird[s]”, “butterflies”, ants [“Emmet”, in its archaic form of ‘ant’], “beetle[s],” and “bee[s]” appear to be involved in forms of relationships with one another within the apparently lifeless scenario of the ruins. This shows how, by expanding one’s scope beyond the limits of anthropocentrism, attention can be placed on the peculiarities of certain environments and on the complexities of the many life forms dwelling in them. The fact that this description primarily regards nonhuman entities underlines the non-strictly anthropocentric character of this poem, which becomes visible as a relevant ecocritical potential of de la Mare’s work. The passage which stresses that the ruins have become a ‘refuge’ for a bird is clarificatory in this sense (“the tender bird / Finds lodgment here”). In fact, while traditional perspectives on the pastoral would recall the pastoral idyll as a “refuge” primarily for human beings – starting from the (already discussed) homonymous notion by Roger Sales within his pastoral 5Rs (1983) – this poem underlines how this location also works as a shelter for nonhuman entities.

Another example of how this poem presents narratives that testify to an awakening of anthropocentrism is the fact that adopting a multi-scale viewpoint on a natural environment discloses features that would otherwise not be accessible to the human eye:

Their myriad-mirrored eyes
Great day reflect.
By their exquisite farings
Is this granite specked;
Is trodden to infinite dust;
By gnawing lichens decked. (54)

The reference to “myriad-mirrored eyes” for describing the visive apparatus of an insect allows for determining that the narrator has adopted a different perspective when describing his or her surroundings. Observing the specificity of the insect’s eyes and body features does not refer to what a person can normally observe with the naked eye. Instead, the idea that the narrator mentions a particular characteristic of a nonhuman body, which
is usually visible, for instance, with a microscope, invites readers to acknowledge the adoption of more accurate observations of the nonhuman domains. This is an effect that stresses a sense of proximity between humans and nonhumans in the poem. Similarly, the expressions “great day” and “infinite dust” suggest that the narrator engages with a different viewpoint compared to the one that he or she normally adopts as a human being. This change of scale allows the narrator to see like an entity of a smaller size, such as insects, therefore perceiving in bigger dimensions or in longer timeframes – perceived differently than within his or her human domains of experientiality. In this way, while recalling the discussion on moving across human and nonhuman experiential domains, as suggested by Thomas Nagel (1974), enmeshment between human and human perceptions becomes evident in de la Mare’s poem. Through an ecocritical lens, these strategies appear particularly effective for assessing the postanthropocentric and postdualistic character of this work.

The concluding lines of the poem express similar considerations while relying on death-related imagery, which allows the lyrical I to reflect on the impermanence of life forms thriving around the corner stone, as also previously described:

Toward what eventual dream  
Sleeps its cold on,  
When into ultimate dark  
These lives shall be gone,  
And even of man not a shadow remain  
Of all he has done? (54)

A sense of finitude is expressed in this excerpt through a series of adjectives pertaining to the semantic field of time (“eventual”, “ultimate”). This effect is corroborated by the emphasis placed on physical perceptions concerning the notion of death (“cold”, “dark”), which conveys a gloomy atmosphere in this section of the poem. However, this aspect is not limited to describing the nonhuman entities already mentioned in the previous lines, but it also involves humans (“And even of man a shadow remain [...]”). This specification makes evident that finitude marks every life form – human and nonhuman – while offering the possibility of removing human beings, once again, from a sense of exceptionalism compared to other entities.

By re-inscribing humans within a wider nexus of entities constituting the environment – and, consequently, stressing a sense of ‘ontological’ connectedness and
continuity among humans and nonhumans – the environmental imagination of the Georgians allows one to negotiate the anthropocentric and dualistic perspectives typical of traditional pastoral aesthetics. Specifically, highlighting the fact that, in the future, “all he [man] has done” is destined to disappear, emphasizes a critique towards human exceptionalism. By stressing that no human-made product or action is everlasting, the poem recalls the symbol of the ruins expressed in the title – having a human-made artifact getting affected by time highlights the poem’s stress on the alleged superiority and untouchability of the human condition along lines similar to current postanthropocentric figurations.

Another example of these traits of Vol. V occurs in Wilfrid Gibson’s Worlds. At first glance, the poem primarily aligns with the conventional domains of the pastoral, as is visible in the reference to the lyrical I’s staring at a forest:

Through the pale green forest of tall bracken-stalks,
Whose interwoven fronds, a jade-green sky,
Above me glimmer, infinitely high,
Towards my giant hand a beetle walks
In glistening emerald mail; and as I lie
Watching his progress through huge grassy blades
And over pebble boulders, my own world fades
And shrinks to the vision of a beetle's eye. (79)

While these lines offer a perspective of the enchantment experienced by the lyrical I standing in front of a natural scenario (“Above me...”, “Towards my giant hand...”, “Watching...”), adopting an ecocritical lens allows one to disclose ecological implications from it. In fact, beyond the hyperbolic description of the forest’s quality (e.g., “infinitely high”), which fosters the idealized tone of the poem typical of the pastoral tradition, the discussion on the “interwoven fronds” of the many trees dwelling in natural locations stands out as a reference to the concept of connectedness in the poem. This image, on the one hand, underlines the idea that Gibson’s work connects to what has already been discussed regarding the complex figuration of the environment running through Georgian Poetry (following the idea of the pastoral as an ecosystem); on the other hand, this image evokes the idea that a pluralistic continuum between humans and nonhumans emerges among the several entities composing the narrated pastoral scenario.

Moreover, the reiterated reference to the ‘greenness’ of this locus, (“pale green forest”, “jade-green sky”, “emerald mail”, and even “grassy blades”, which evoke the
color of the grass) also suggests that a sense of unity exists among the different entities within the location, thus determining the depicted environmental scene as pluralistic and characterized by a sense of connectedness. As the OED reminds us, the word “green” possesses a metonymic function when referring to “Vegetation, foliage, greenery” (“green”, 2021). Interpreting this excerpt accordingly reiterates the idea that the several vegetal entities described in the poem can be understood collectively. Hence, corroborating the idea of quantity and engagement of the nonhuman (vegetal) forms of life composing it, and their engagement with each other, the understanding of the environment shows parallel with contemporary ecological epistemology.

A similar sense of pluralism is evoked in the section of the poem focusing on a beetle. On the one hand, the zoom-in effect of the narrator is indicative of their adoption of a multi-scale perspective, which highlights further ecocritical potentials of the works comprising Marsh’s collection. On the other hand, the narrator’s attention towards the nonhumans’ perspective and experientiality (“vision of a beetle's eye”) – which parallels the gradual abandoning of their “own [human] world” – can be interpreted here as a criticism of anthropocentric perspectives when evaluating environmental issues.

The second half of the poem continues the negotiation of the traditional (dualistic and anthropocentric) idea of human-nonhuman separateness. The way in which the word “world” is adopted to describe the forest in the following excerpt is particularly useful for this assessment:

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Within that forest world of twilight green
Ambushed with unknown perils, one endless day
I travel down the beetle-trail between
Huge glossy boles through green infinity ...
Till flashes a glimpse of blue sea through the bracken asway,
And my world is again a tumult of windy sea. (79)
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The contrast between the expression “forest world” and the narrator’s “own world” indicated in the previous line seems – at a first glance – to evoke a sense of ontological division between human and nonhuman domains. Yet this consideration is soon challenged by the narrator’s stress on their effort to engage with a nonhuman perspective when investigating the beetle’s experience in the pastoral locus described: “travel[ing] down the beetle-trail between / Huge glossy boles through green infinity ...”. Moreover, the preposition “through,” and the idea of moving “from one end, side, or surface of
(something) to another” (“through” OED, 2021), which the preposition conveys, underlines, metaphorically, the intent of the poem to break the alleged divisions existing between the two worlds cited above – the forest’s and the narrator’s – while presenting them as being in dialogue, in connection with each other, and porous. This sense of blurring the boundaries between human and nonhuman domains, consequently, resonates with the postdualistic figuration of the nature-culture continuum (Haraway 2016; Braidotti 2019) which is central in current posthuman and ecocritical scholarship.

The closing line of this poem makes this sense of connection even more explicit by describing a sea-scape: both the image of “a glimpse of blue […] through the bracken asway”, and that of the “windy sea” convey, again, the idea of connectedness. In the first case, “blue” functions as a metonymy for the wider palette comprising the many colors of the sea, thus combining different elements and shades in one single, general, and symbolic tint. In the second case, the image of the windy sea allows one to reflect on the constant moving of the sea surface, which, by challenging a strict visual demarcation between the sky and the water, introduces, again, the idea of blurring boundaries between conceptually and visually diverse elements. This notion, therefore, appears as another example of the poem’s stress on relationality and connectedness and of related ecological considerations, which resonates with the postdualistic perspective offered by posthumanism and, with a different terminology, by ecocriticism.

Eventually, many of the ecocritical discussions emerging from the analysis of the previous poems resurface in D. H. Lawrence’s poem, *Snake*. This text appears particularly beneficial for sustainable critical analysis on the pastoral trajectory running through *Georgian Poetry* considering this poem’s capacity to summarize many of the several observations matured in my discussion on Chapter 5 regarding the ecocritical and posthuman implications of Marsh’s anthology. Beyond the fact that D. H. Lawrence’s poem has often received positive assessments, even by those critics providing an overall negative judgment of *Vol. V* (Ross 1965, 212), my interest in discussing this work derives from its wide reliance on the environmental imagination and surprisingly blatant references to current epistemology. Specifically, *Snake* resonates with the idea that Georgians abide by the deep environmental consciousness that negotiates Western dualistic and anthropocentric standpoints typical of the traditional pastoral while fostering

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75 See my discussion on ‘sustainable pastoral criticism’ in Chapter 3.
a sense of ontological, conceptual, and material connectedness among humans and nonhumans.

The poem discusses the encounter between a snake and the lyrical I in the proximity of a watering trough, which discloses a reflection on the relationship existing between human and nonhuman beings and the cultural biases associated with their relationship. After the introductory lines contextualizing the story world and the subjects involved, the poem clarifies the attitude of the lyrical I towards the snake. Contrary to the fear that an accidental encounter with a wild animal such a snake would generally cause, the lyrical I shows curiosity and respect towards this nonhuman, which is visible in the sentence: “Someone was before me at my water-trough, / And I, like a second-comer, waiting.” There are at least two significant aspects in this expression that prompt an ecocritical consideration. First, there is the use of the word “someone”, generally limited to human subjects, instead of “something”, which is the term often adopted in reference to animals. This choice favors rethinking the traditional categorizations – and related hierarchies – of living beings in Western culture, which attributes to animals a condition of ‘inferiority’ compared to humans, in parallel with the legacy expressed by the *Scala Naturae*, which has already been discussed. Second, in alignment with social conventions, the lyrical I waits for their turn before accessing the water trough and that the snake voluntarily and spontaneously leaves. This situation defies the hierarchical dynamics that anthropocentrism would normally ensure, and which envision humans as predominating over other beings in an array of contexts, starting from claiming the alleged right to benefit from natural sources to the detriment of nonhuman others. This deeply rooted dualistic and anthropocentric perception is, in fact, evoked in the following lines:

> The voice of my education said to me  
> He must be killed,  
> For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold are venomous.

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76 See Francesca Ferrando’s stress on the engagement of the Anthropocene with dualism and anthropocentrism, and on the need to negotiate this dualism as a way to respond to the crises brought about by this epoch: “Historically, [Philosophical Posthumanism] can be seen as the philosophical approach which suits the informal geological time of the Anthropocene. While Philosophical Posthumanism focuses on decentering the human from the center of the discourse, the Anthropocene marks the extent of the impact of human activities on a planetary level and thus stresses the urgency for humans to become aware of pertaining to an ecosystem which, when damaged, negatively affects the human condition as well” (Ferrando 2019, 22).
And voices in me said, If you were a man
You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at my water-trough
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,
Into the burning bowels of this earth? (118)

Issues of anthropocentrism and the reliance of the lyrical I on them result from the reference to their “education”, a term which the OED intends as “[t]he culture or development of personal knowledge or understanding, growth of character, moral and social qualities, etc., as contrasted with the imparting of knowledge or skill” (“education”, 2021). The reference to the image of an inner voice influencing one’s moral conduct (“The voice of my education”, “voices in me”), further stresses the rootedness of the influence that a certain education has on the construction of the lyrical I’s persona. This inner voice, in fact, represents a traditional image for expressing one’s conscience, here intended as the moral guidance of one’s behavior. The idea that the lyrical I’s education primarily relies on anthropocentric perspectives (“The voice of my education said to me / He [the snake] must be killed”) highlights a sense of mastery of humans over the nonhuman animals typical to traditional cultural domains. This education, as the poem suggests, includes having the right to make choices regarding nonhuman lives, such as killing them, and is reiterated in the line “If you were a man / You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off”. The use of the conditional form is clarificatory of the causal link between aggression towards nonhumans and the condition of being human (“man”), an idea upon which the lyrical I’s education seems to be based. Moreover, the use of the conditional also serves as an opportunity for criticism, for, in the sentence under examination, it connects the condition of being human with the idea of exercising aggressive behavior towards nonhumans. The fact that this consideration is proposed in an interrogative form can be interpreted as a way for questioning the very assumptions expressed, thus appearing as a further piece of evidence of the mature environmental spirit of the poem.

The poem’s friction between the conceptual bias of rooted anthropocentric practices and the possibility of a more pluralistic, post-anthropocentric form of an ethical
human-nonhuman relationship is suggested a few lines later by an array of ‘question’ on similar topics:

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?
Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him?
Was it humility, to feel so honoured?
I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices:
If you were not afraid, you would kill him.

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,
But even so, honoured still more
That he should seek my hospitality
From out the dark door of the secret earth. (118)

The lyrical I’s self-inquiry highlights his or her critical spirit regarding the idea that killing or harming a snake is an action that he or she should peruse to align with expectations regarding their condition as a human being. The reference to “cowardice”, if similar actions are not accomplished, reinforces the weight of similar cultural expectations, here specified as the aggressive attitudes towards nonhumans and related justifications. The idea of “perversity”, if one does not achieve similar actions, reinforces this principle, thus anticipating the negative light under which one falls (one can consider, in this sense, the negative implications that the notion of perversity possesses) if one does not live up to these very anthropocentric expectations.

The sentence “If you were not afraid, you would kill him” reiterates the extent of an anthropocentric legacy against which the lyrical I seems to fight. From the poem, in fact, there emerge two possible positions regarding the kind of relationship that one could keep in regard to nonhumans. On the one hand, there is the anthropocentric one, depicted as a cultural construct and expressed by the very (inner) “voices”, which are popular metaphors for reminding one person’s conscience, as already discussed. On the other hand, there are moral and ethical questions that contrast with this anthropocentric figuration by depicting possible experiences of coexistence and respect towards the nonhuman realm. This position is explored in the excerpt by the reference to issues of “hospitality” expressing the engagement of the snake with the lyrical I. Specifically, the notion of “hospitality” fosters a sense of connection considering the idea of co-habitation that this term carries and which, through an ecocritical lens, can refer to the coexistence
of humans and nonhumans. Delineating a sense of relationality and cohabitation in the same environment, therefore, appears as another ethical consideration for assessing the poem’s ecocritical potential.

The juxtaposition of these different – perhaps even contrastive – attitudes towards the nonhuman realm depicts the lyrical I as almost experiencing an internal struggle between social and cultural (anthropocentric) expectations and their own ethical (postanthropocentric) belief. This effect is repropose throughout the poem, as the following section makes evident:

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders, and entered further,
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing into that horrid black hole,
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing himself after,
Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher,
I picked up a clumsy log
And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.

I think it did not hit him,
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind convulsed in an undignified haste,
Writhed like lightning, and was gone
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-front,
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination. (119)

This long excerpt describes the lyrical I’s throwing of a log at the snake, either with the purpose of hitting or simply scaring the animal, followed by an immediate sense of regret. The first lines display the lyrical I’s anthropocentric attitude, while the ones occurring after the throwing of the log present more postanthropocentric reflections and figurations.

In the first case, the presence of several adjectives and nouns conveying negative connotations toward the snake’s withdrawal into its cave – as indicated by expressions such as “dreadful hole”, “horror”, “horrid black hole” – combined with similar effects caused by the chromatic vocabulary of this section – “blackness” – expresses equally negative evaluations on the lyrical I’s anthropocentric assessment of the animal. Similarly, the action of throwing a log at it (“I picked up a clumsy log / And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter”) serves as a metaphor representing aggressive human conduct toward nonhumans, as has already been mentioned. This very act of violence,
which also appears as the climax of the poem, on a more conceptual level symbolizes the effects to which anthropocentrism can lead, in the sense of enacting the exclusivist and hierarchical practices that dualisms involve. While in the domain of human-nonhuman relationships, for instance, this kind of mechanism can be connected to discussions on xenophobia, racism, and sexism, within the domain of nonhuman animals, this effect resonates with speciesism, in the sense of the “discrimination against or exploitation of certain animal species by human beings, based on an assumption of mankind’s superiority” (“speciesism” OED, 2021). Throwing a log is an image that encapsulates the implications provided by this definition.

Yet, within the twofold assessment of the poem, this anthropocentric stress is followed by a sudden shift of attitude in the lyrical I who, in fact, abandons themself to a moment of reflexivity in which he or she appears self-critical towards the anthropocentric bias evoked:

   And immediately I regretted it.
   I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!
   I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education. (119)

The expression “immediately I regretted it” clarifies the lyrical I’s change of attitude towards his or her act (throwing a log at the snake), showing, once again, a critique of the scope and effects of anthropocentrism. The negative evaluation of the lyrical I’s deed against the snake (an act that he or she addresses as a “vulgar” and “a mean act”) and the acknowledgment that similar effects are due to “human education” are also explicative of his or her ultimate negative evaluation of traditional cultural anthropocentric constructions. Similar effects return in the closing section of the poem:

   For he seemed to me again like a king,
   Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
   Now due to be crowned again.

   And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
   Of life.
   And I have something to expiate:
   A pettiness.

The reiteration of the concept of “king” in the two first lines of this excerpt refers, again, to the hierarchical evaluation of nonhuman entities echoing the domains of the Scala
Naturae already mentioned. Just like a king usually holds the most relevant position within a social pyramid of a certain community, the possible reference to human beings as “king” in the poem acknowledges, accordingly, an alleged higher positioning of the latter in comparison to nonhumans others. Yet the fact that the word “king” does not refer to a human being (or the lyrical I) but rather to the snake at the center of the poem suggests a subversion of the traditional anthropocentric domains by pastoral poems, which, once again, disclose further ecocritical considerations of D. H. Lawrence’s work.

Moreover, the fact that the snake can be interpreted here as a metonymy of a wide array of nonhuman entities fosters the idea that postanthropocentrism seems to be encouraged by this poem. This consideration is supported by the following lines, which acknowledge the snake as “one of the lords / Of life.”77 This description, in fact, attributes to the snake a wider representative symbol of the broad category of the nonhuman realm (expressed, generically, by the word “life”), with which the lyrical I confronts him- or herself and his or her own preconceptions. The result of this confrontation leads the lyrical I to acknowledge that he or she needs to expiate him- or herself for the very beliefs causing exhibiting anthropocentrism. Considering that the verb “expiate” reminds one of the idea of “extinguish[ing] the guilt of (one's sin)” (“expiate” OED, 2021), the interpretation offered by this analysis allows for observing that a negative connotation is attributed to the object of the expiation, that is, the legacy of the lyrical I’s anthropocentric perspective, which has already been discussed.

The reference to the closing word of the poem, “pettiness,” shows irony in at least two ways: first, this poem contrasts the tone of the solemn, almost religious, vocabulary adopted for the conclusive section (“lords”; “expiate”); second, the fact that this word indicates a “petty or trivial” (“pettiness”, OED 2021) object seems to contradict the complexity of the referent to which this noun refers, which, in fact, regards a complex paradigm and combination of values on the way one approaches the world. As the OED informs, however, the term “pettiness” can also be related to “an instance of small-mindedness” (“pettiness” 2021), thus referring to the idea of somebody not possessing a

77 One can reflect on how, in the poem, the concept of ‘life’ is not limited to the domain of human experientiality. Instead, this term seems to be conceived here as referring to nonhuman lives of different kinds. Just like posthumanism criticizes limiting the notion to human beings, while reassessing it as also regarding nonhuman entities (organic and inorganic), this poem suggests considering the same. For a further discussion on the notion of life in the context of posthumanism, see Braidotti 2013.
wider, progressive perspective, but rather a narrow and limited mind. Associated with anthropocentrism, the conclusive word of the poem further clarifies the critical tone of this work towards traditional Western (anthropocentric and dualistic) perspectives, a position that finds a direct connection to wider scholarly evaluations in the field of the Environmental Humanities today (which, consequently, this poem seems to somehow anticipate).

Therefore, fostering the ethical sense of relationality that exists between humans and nonhumans – which resonates with the pluralistic, nonhierarchical relationality occurring among living beings in an ecocritical and posthuman perspective – appears to result as an important ecological trait. Thus, D. H. Lawrence’s development of the pastoral not only presents aspects of innovation, while anticipating several discussions characterizing contemporary ecocriticism-related epistemologies, but it also allows for acknowledging aspects of value in Vol. V, when related to the current ethical challenges of the Anthropocene.

Conclusion

As the analysis has demonstrated, Vol. V offers several opportunities for exploring the proto-ecocritical narratives running through pastoral poems in Marsh’s anthology until its very last volume. Even though this issue received primarily negative and dismissive evaluations, and was followed by similar trivializing comments for several years after its publication in 1922, the discussed pastoral poems provide evidence of literary value when read through the lens of ecocriticism and posthumanism. Through these combined perspectives, an array of images and rhetorical effects emerge from several pastoral poems, which show a mature environmental aesthetics and present parallels with current epistemology in the above-mentioned scholarships.

In A Lover Since Childhood by Robert Graves there emerged the possibility of discussing issues of human-nonhuman relationality when observing the lyrical I’s emotional involvement with the nonhuman realm, whilst thinking of a youthful love. While this tension is experienced within the description of the affective entanglement that he or she entertains with the surrounding nonhuman environment, ethical issues of relationality become evident, which allows one to determine this pastoral poem as
fostering a sense of connectedness between human and nonhuman domains. Similar considerations return in Walter de la Mare’s *The Corner Stone*, where a zoom-in on the ecosystem thriving in the proximity of a building ruins suggests the narrator’s attentiveness to the specificities of the nonhuman world. This embracing of a multi-scale perspective is an effect of the poem’s stress on the complexity of environmental issues, which, consequently, reveals the sense of ecological maturity of the poem.

Along this line, Wilfrid Gibson’s *Worlds* is useful for reflecting on how the description of a classical pastoral trope, namely a forest, becomes useful for enacting a commentary on the idea that an ontological divide exists between humans and nonhumans. As the poem suggests, reflecting instead on the liminality of these two spheres allows for readdressing the complexity of the notion of ‘environment’, which does more than simply build a sense of forcible separation between human beings and nonhuman entities.

All these observations are finally developed in D. H. Lawrence’s *Snake*. The encounter of the lyrical I with the animal offers the narrator the opportunity to express critical considerations on anthropocentrism and its effects on human behaviors toward nonhumans. With an almost explicit discussion on the violence and aggression towards the environment to which human exceptionalism may lead – presenting surprisingly modern and environmental principles – this poem offers a critique of anthropocentrism while arguing for the development of ethical relationships with the nonhuman.

With these four poems, therefore, it becomes evident how the pastoral represents a significant site on which to explore characters of modernity and innovation of Marsh’s conclusive anthology issue, as well as its engagement with the deep, mature proto-ecological considerations developing in early 1920s Britain through the pastoral. These considerations, therefore, become visible as the antechamber of a more ecological spirit developing in British culture not only during the Modernist years but also, more prominently, in the following years in a more systematic manner, until today’s more recent ecological critical movements and scholarship.

As the analysis has demonstrated, *Georgian Poetry* offers many opportunities for observing the pastoral as a site for disclosing narratives stressing a) the sense of continuum between humans and nonhumans and b) the importance of developing ethical
forms of relationality between human beings and nonhuman entities. These narratives have been discussed as echoing current ecocritical and posthuman epistemology.

While my analysis has focused on the five volumes comprising Marsh’s anthology separately, the following conclusive paragraphs offer an all-encompassing consideration regarding the identified pastoral trajectory running throughout *Georgian Poetry*. Contrarily to the widespread negative critical reception of this work, which was grounded in several reviews published between the 1910s and the 1920s, my analysis has acknowledged the pastoral as an element stressing the anthology’s latent literary values, at least concerning two aspects: on the one hand, the pastoral testifies to the topicality of Marsh’s anthology in the context of early twentieth-century Britain, for its resonances with the rising environmental sensibility developing in these years. On the other hand, the environmental narratives emerging from my analysis assess *Georgian Poetry* as a (past) literary work that favors drawing parallels with current ecocritical and posthuman epistemology. These two aspects shed light on innovative and original characteristics of the pastoral by the Georgians, which determines this literary project as a favorable work to be reread through the scope of current scholarship and discourses on the Anthropocene.

For what concerns the first aspect of value of this collection – the fact that the pastoral in *Georgian Poetry* presents signs of proto-environmental maturity in early twentieth-century Britain – it is relevant to consider that many of the discussed poems possessed imagery and stylistic features referring to the notion of human-nonhuman connectedness. For instance, Rupert Brooke’s pastoral description of the rural location in *The Old Vicarage, Grantchester* (Vol. I) does not solely rely on the traditional country/city dualism, but the rural locations described present characteristics that underline the existence of relationships between the human beings and vegetal, animal, and other organic and inorganic entities dwelling there. Or one can consider James Stephens’s *The Fifteen Acres* (Vol. III), in which features that are usually attributed to humans (e.g., sensorial and perceptive capacity) are adopted to describe nonhumans, and vice versa: this effect serves a metaphoric linguistic strategy, symbolizing the aforementioned sense of human-nonhuman enmeshment.

Moreover, the Georgians’ mature understanding of the environment is visible in the stress dedicated to issues of ethical relationality between human beings and nonhuman life forms. This effect appears, for instance, in James Stephens’s *The Goat Paths* (Vol.
II): beyond underlining the importance of approaching the nonhuman realm with a non-strictly anthropocentric attitude – while also attempting to enter the nonhuman field of experientiality – the poem invites readers to familiarize themselves with the idea of avoiding ‘ecological disturbance’ in respect to a community of nonhuman entities inhabiting a certain spatiality. Considering these aspects, one can reflect on how the poetic imagination of Georgians relies on an attentive figuration of the natural world, which does not limit itself to reiterating strict dualisms such as human/nonhuman, typical of traditional Western thought, but rather that identifies and promotes the continuity between these two domains.

Another example attesting to the sense of environmental maturity in Georgian pastoral poetry regards the degree of complexity of representations of the natural world in many of the selected poems: rather than being conceived of as mere backgrounds for a human activity to occur, or as an indistinct, abstract unit in contraposition to the human realm, several of the depicted pastoral scenarios put forth a pluralistic figuration of the environment by underlining that it comprises an array of different interconnected entities – organic and inorganic – along the idea of a pluralistic unicium. This effect occurred, for instance, in Fredegond Shove’s The World, which stresses the intertwining of the many organisms living on planet Earth (Vol. IV). By describing a view of our planet from an alien eye, the poem depicts humans and nonhumans as involved in a nexus, unifying them into a shared, inextricably intertwined existence on Earth. This and many similar examples of human-nonhuman connectiveness were particularly beneficial for reflecting on the pastoral in Georgian Poetry as an ecosystem, along my reconceptualization illustrated in Chapter 2. In fact, while, at a first glance, the selected poems display (only) the characteristics of traditional pastoralism (e.g., emphasis on the contrast between the country and the city, and the idealization of the countryside, see Gifford 1999) through a more (eco)critical perspective, also inspired by my pastoral 5Rs, critics’ attention is readdressed to alternative, latent narratives involving issues of relationality among human and nonhuman beings.

Consequently, the peculiarities of these representations of the natural world challenge the idea that the authors comprising Marsh’s anthology were exclusively traditional and conservative, or that they were detached from the cultural context of their time. Instead, from my analysis, the Georgians emerge as authors who are able to intercept
the growing environmental sensibility of their time while adding to traditional pastoral expressions original aspects in alignment with cultural discourses, narratives, and occurrences manifesting in the 1910s and the 1920s. In this sense, it is worth mentioning that several references to World War I are visible in the selected poems, which also contribute to conveying peculiarity to the pastoral in Marsh’s collection. This presence, in fact, enhances the topicality of this anthology in the context of early twentieth-century Britain by also offering new opportunities for evaluating the impact of the world conflict on literature. The overlapping between environmental narratives and conflict-related imagery, moreover, represents another aspect of originality in the Georgian elaboration of the pastoral: the poems under examination often discuss the conflict as resulting from an excessive sense of egoism and prevarication, which lies at the core of dualism and anthropocentrism. One can consider, for instance, W. J. Turner’s The Sky-Sent Death (Vol. III), where a shepherd who is killed by a bomb is discussed as the outcome of anthropocentric attitudes. Or the same considerations occur in Rupert Brooke’s Tiare Thaiti (Vol. II), which combines the topic of human-nonhuman connectedness with war rhetoric.

For what concerns the second aspect of value of Georgian Poetry observed in my analysis – that is, the fact that the discussed pastoral trajectory favors a critical reevaluation of Marsh’s collection for its capacity to resonate with current ecocritical and posthuman epistemology – I have highlighted many references to the topic of human-human ontological connectedness in the selected poems. It is the case, for instance, of Wilfrid Gibson’s Worlds (Vol. V) in which the description of a classical pastoral trope, namely a forest, suggests that a sense of unity exists among the different entities comprising the described location, thus determining the depicted environment as pluralistic: this assessment leads to the impossibility of conceiving the ‘environment’ as a static, simplistic, and idealized entity, a traditional evaluation that leaves space for a more complex and multifaceted evaluation in parallel with a general consensus in the context of the Environmental Humanities. Similar effects were also visible in the emphasis on the human-nonhuman enmeshment expressed by the linguistic rhetorical strategies in Brooke’s Heaven (Vol. II), for instance: in this poem, a traditional religious lexicon combines with vocabulary pertaining to the semantic field of the marine world. Through this linguistic hybridization, Brooke’s piscatory pastoral poem is being re-
narrated in the perspective of a fish, which determines a metaphoric enactment of the idea of human-nonhuman connectedness.

The engagement of the pastoral environmental imagination of the Georgians and current epistemology also regards the promotion of ethical forms of relationality between humans and nonhumans. Several analyzed poems, in fact, illustrated how humans should pursue an attentive-ethical attitude towards nonhumans, both in terms of behaviors and affects. In the first case, one can consider James Stephens’s *The Goat Paths (Vol. II)*, which highlights the importance of defying anthropocentrism when engaging with animals: this poem, in fact, invites readership to explore the sphere of experientiality of nonhumans by asking oneself *what it is like to be* (cf. Nagel 1974) a goat or, more in general, one of the many entities dwelling in a certain natural environment. Along this line, Harold Monro’s *The Bird at Dawn (Vol. III)* provides opportunities for investigating issues of nonhuman communication by re-elaborating popular pastoral tropes, such as birds and bird singing. Particularly, by stressing the human limits in fully comprehending the nonhuman realm, the poem invites readers to question the limits of anthropocentrism when assessing and appraising the environment; simultaneously, it underlines the necessity of embracing a wider, critical scope for investigating its complex dynamics. Reflections on the possibility of enacting affective relationships among human beings and plants, animals, and minerals are also evoked in John Freeman’s *Ten o’Clock No More (Vol. IV)* while describing the effects of the death of a tree on a local community. Within the domain of the pastoral elegy, grief and mourning toward a nonhuman entity become representative of an affective and material sense of continuity of humans and nonhumans, in parallel with increasing scholarly discussions in the context of the Environmental Humanities, from new materialism to affective ecocriticism.

Or it is possible to reflect on how D. H. Lawrence’s *Snake (Vol. V)* employs multiple references to different forms of ethical relationality between humans and nonhuman in the description of the encounter between the lyrical I and eponymous reptile. Not only, in this way, does the poem disclose considerations on how anthropocentrism – and anthropocentric education – negatively influences human behaviors toward nonhumans, but it also denounces the violence and aggression to which human exceptionalism may lead.
These considerations enhance an ecocritical and posthuman re-reading of the pastoral in *Georgian Poetry*, which determines it as a tool for providing current audiences with ethical considerations in response to some of the urges placed on humans by the Anthropocene; these urges include the necessity to re-establish new forms of human-nonhuman relationships and to enact a paradigm shift where humans and nonhumans are conceived of as being connected. Far from assessing that the Georgians were pioneering ecocritics or posthumanists – which would lead my argument to be anachronistic – I observed that the Georgians somehow anticipated certain topics that are pivotal in this scholarship today, as these poets’ environmental imagination and sensibility informs. Therefore, rereading the pastoral in *Georgian Poetry* through an ecocritical and posthuman-inspired perspective is beneficial for (re)assessing the literary value of the anthology in the present-day world.

Without the pretense of having conducted an exhaustive study on the pastoral in *Georgian Poetry*, my analysis is nevertheless useful for showing how, by adopting a postdualistic and postanthropocentric lens, aspects of literary value emerge that favor a reassessment of this work in relation to both the cultural context of the 1910s and the 1920s and current cultural discourses. The pastoral in *Georgian Poetry* appears to have readapted its traditional forms and functions to topics and issues occurring in the early twentieth-century British milieu, from World War I to discourses on a growing environmental sensibility, the latter of which invites today’s readers to address this collection based on current environmental urgencies (Reuse). Moreover, as my analysis demonstrated, by applying a critical scope where anthropocentrism and dualism are weakened (Reduce), the pastoral in *Georgian Poetry* favors the development of narratives resonating with current epistemology, while offering models of ethical relationality among human and nonhuman beings. Therefore, re-circulating and re-reading these poems in the present-day world (Recycle) appears as a valuable act that possibly responds to some of the ethical challenges of environmental crises. Hence, the pastoral, which early-Modernist critics assessed as representing a stigma testifying the anthology’s alleged conservativism and traditionalism, becomes visible today – through the scope of my discussion – as a baseline for a reevaluation of the work (Rot), and for reassessing its critical reputation from the negative implications that characterized its past evaluations (Repair).
6. Conclusion

“It matters which stories tell stories, which concepts think concepts. Mathematically, visually, and narratively, it matters which figures figure figures, which systems systemize systems” (Haraway 2016, 35). Though these words, Donna Haraway highlights the importance that critics develop awareness of the epistemological stance and the hermeneutical approaches that they adopt when dissecting the complexity of cultural phenomena, narratives, and processes. Clarifying one’s standpoint and critical toolkit when engaging with literary and cultural analysis is particularly relevant in the case of research positioned in transdisciplinary fields of study, such as the Environmental Humanities (but also ecocriticism and posthumanism), or when focusing on transcultural phenomena, like the pastoral. This is due to the necessity to ground one’s research in situated intellectual practices (Braidotti 2019, 56) for validating one’s approach using the achievements of previous scholarship on a certain topic. Moreover, this clarification is important to show the limits of one’s perspective in regard to the many other standpoints which can and should be taken into account as essential complements for achieving a full comprehension of the studied phenomena.

Along the same line offered by Haraway, I argue that it matters what frames are adopted when approaching the pastoral, and therefore it matters to use postdualism and postanthropocentrism (Braidotti 2019; Ferrando 2019) to re-think it. It matters for acknowledging the ongoing influence of the pastoral, pastoral criticism, and pastoral poetry in the present-day world; it allows one to pay appropriate, mature attention to the sense of the human-nonhuman connectedness; and it inspires (new) ethical relationships among human and nonhuman beings, in response to the urges brought about by current environmental crises.

This chapter concludes by summarizing the key findings of my dissertation, by explicitly addressing the main research question: how does current ecological awareness – and the achievements of the Environmental Humanities – affect the understanding of traditional pastoral poetry? Following the tripartite structure of my thesis, I will clarify how my research determined a reconceptualization of the pastoral, a reframing of pastoral criticism, and how my rereading of the pastoral in *Georgian Poetry* enacted a reevaluation of Marsh’s anthology. Eventually, I will offer an overview of opportunities for conducting
future research emerging from the findings of my thesis, or connected to areas often neglected by scholars which my study identified.

Inspired by Mieke Bal’s observation that “concepts can become a third partner in the otherwise totally unverifiable interaction between critic and object” (2007, 36) I have structured my investigation along a tri-logue among three meta-concepts connected to some different understandings of the term ‘pastoral’: reconceptualizing the concept of pastoral, reframing pastoral criticism, and reevaluating pastoral poetry – by following a pastoral trajectory running though Edward Marsh’s *Georgian Poetry* (1912-1922). The first meta-concept guided a revision of the traditional domains which conceive the pastoral as “the contrast between the rural and the urban”, or as the “idealization of the natural world” (Gifford, 1999, 2). My thesis proposed a different figuration of it by focusing on the sense of relationality involving the several entities inhabiting a certain pastoral description. The second meta-concept, reframing, guided the creation of an original, alternative hermeneutical practice for analyzing pastoral poetry, which favors a negotiation of the rooted dualistic and anthropocentric dichotomies (e.g., country/city, human/nature, rural/urban) employed by literary critics when approaching the pastoral over the centuries. Finally, the third meta-concept of my dissertation, reevaluating, applied the findings presented by the previous meta-concepts to the rereading of selected pastoral poems in the five volumes that comprise the anthology *Georgian Poetry*. This analysis focused on the multiple references to the topic of connectedness and relationality among humans and nonhumans, as a way for assessing the topicality of this literary work in regard to both the cultural milieu of its publication and to today’s ecocritical and posthumanist critical discussions.

This threefold structure of my thesis was fundamental for conducting a systematic (re)discussion of the pastoral, pastoral criticism, and pastoral poetry through a postdualistic and postanthropocentric lens in order to reflect deeply (Naess 1973) on the topic, while enacting a paradigm shift worthy (Braidotti 2019) of the achievement of current scholarship in the Environmental Humanities. Fundamental for my study was the intertwining of a) more philosophical (posthumanism); and b) more literary-critical
(ecocriticism) perspectives: this combination represented a way for constructing a functional map for coming to terms with the complexity of exploring the liminalities of conventional, longstanding pastoral dualisms – country/city, rural/urban, human/nature – and for assessing traditional dualistic and anthropocentric figurations of the natural world. While several approaches in the Environmental Humanities converge on the idea that no such thing as an ontological separateness between humans and nonhumans exists, posthumanism and ecocriticism provide scholars with conceptual tools for re-tuning Western dichotomic figurations of the environment to the concept inter/intraconnectedness (Barad 2007). Using the more philosophical stances of Rosi Braidotti (2013; 2019) and Francesca Ferrando (2019), among others, I established the theoretical premises to dismantle the idea that the pastoral can be understood solely dualistically and anthropocentrically. Moreover, these perspectives determined the pastoral as a source for disclosing models of ethical relationality between humans and nonhumans based on their ontological intertwining. Through his more literary approach, Hubert Zapf (2020) inspired me to address the archives of Western literature as a site for enacting a similar development, while Jonathan Bate’s scholarship (1991; 2000) was crucial for validating the possibility to assess the eco-poiesis potentials of (past pastoral) poetry on the (present-day) material world.

In recent years, growing attention has been dedicated to revisiting the pastoral through ever-new post-pastoral lenses (Gifford 1991), as the rise of new neologisms – from the ‘dark pastoral’ (Sullivan, 2014) to the necropastoral (McSweeney 2015) – demonstrates. Yet a specific rediscussion of conventional pastoral dualisms and traditional investigative practices of (past) pastoral poems – in light of current, updated epistemology – had not yet been developed. My work offered a possibility to fill this gap.

For what concerns the concept of pastoral, the applications of a postdualistic and postanthropocentric lens demonstrated how ‘pastoral’ can have meanings beyond long-standing, conventional assumptions rooted in Western thought. By conceptualizing the pastoral without dichotomic conceptual axioms, a more pluralistic reterritorialization became possible. Just like the notion of ‘nature’ has undergone a wide reconceptualization in the past few years, passing from assessing it as an entity almost separated from human beings to a complex nexus of humans and nonhumans, I reconceptualized the pastoral accordingly through the notion of ‘ecosystem’. My discussion invites contemporary
readers and scholars to interrogate the relational dynamics involving humans, animals, and plants, but also the inorganic elements in a certain pastoral (literary) locus, rather than merely reflecting on how pastoral rural spatial representations resonate with their urban counterpart or with issues of idealizations of the natural world.

For what concerns the idea of reframing pastoral criticism, the adoption of a postdualistic and postanthropocentric lens served for negotiating the legacy of rooted dualistic hermeneutical practices when analyzing pastoral texts, well represented by Rogers’s Sales 5Rs – Refuge, Reflection, Return, Requiem, and Reconstruction (1983). Employing the theoretical paradigm outlined in my dissertation, I illustrated a new hermeneutics of the pastoral, specifically in literature, which is built around the notion of ‘sustainability’. Taking from the idea of minimizing environmental degradation, especially by avoiding the long-term depletion of natural resources (“sustainability” OED, 2021), and adapting Hubert Zapf’s discussion on “sustainable texts” (Zapf 2016) to the scope of my study, I developed the idea of a sustainable pastoral criticism. My reframing proposes a critical approach that aims at recuperating neglected and dismissed pastoral poetic works from the archives of Western literature (Zapf 2020), which nevertheless possess ecocritical and posthuman potentials for offering ethical reflections on human-nonhuman relationality to contemporary readership. In this way, I aimed to cope with ‘literary waste’, in the sense of the still neglected (ecocritical and posthuman) potentials of (past) pastoral poems for knowledge production in the context of the current environmental crises – that suffer from critical dismissal, being overlooked, or receiving a limited assessment.

In a more practical way, I delineated my sustainable critical praxis following the 5Rs of ecology developed from the environmental movements since the 1970s, while readapting the concepts of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rot, and Repair to literary studies and analyses. Specifically, I have discussed the relevance of readdressing past neglected poems in order to disclose environmental considerations for present-day issues, while acknowledging the productivity and long lifespan of the pastoral in representing an influential cultural source in light of ever-new ecological urges (Reuse). In addition, importance was attributed to envisioning a critical scope for approaching past pastoral texts by weakening anthropocentrism in one’s critical evaluations, thus decentralizing the role of human beings in order to leave space for considerations regarding both nonhuman
entities and issues of relationality between them and the human world (Reduce). Therefore, the idea of recirculating disregarded texts in current times comes forward as a way for assessing their latent potentials in prompting ethical reflections in the context of contemporary literary and cultural debates (Recycle). Sustainable pastoral criticism also has the function of discussing how from being conceived of as an element determining the critical dismissal of a text (e.g., the accusation of prolonging traditionalism and conservativism), the pastoral can be reassessed as the very baseline from which one can produce a critical reevaluation of these texts (Rot). Therefore, I discuss how scholars should also be dedicated to fixing the negative reputations of certain pastoral poems based on the awareness that these critiques may be due to the application of a specific, limited critical scope (Repair).

The considerations that emerged within my discussion on sustainable pastoral criticism found support in the third section of my dissertation: ‘reevaluating’ pastoral poetry. Specifically, I demonstrated how a postdualistic and postanthropocentric lens is beneficial for retracing pastoral narratives in the five volumes comprising Georgian Poetry, highlighting the sense of human-nonhuman connectedness and resonating with – and somehow anticipating – current ecocritical and posthuman epistemologies. Edward Marsh’s anthology represents a literary case in the context of early twentieth-century British poetry, both considering its success at the time of its publication (at least, the critical and commercial impact of the first two issues) and the extended critical debate that it enacted – both in positive and negative terms. Yet this literary work has been widely disregarded by scholars after receiving major negative assessments. Considering many reviews published in the 1910s and 1920s and the current evaluations of this work, the pastoral in Georgian Poetry often appears as an element allegedly testifying to the conservative and traditionalist character of the anthology. However, my rereading of a pastoral trajectory in Georgian Poetry provided a different perspective, thus determining the pastoral as an aspect with literary value in the anthology. I have accomplished this a) by providing a critical introduction of the collection, which offered a more attentive contextualization of Marsh’s work in the cultural and discursive context of its time, with particular stress on its capacity to engage with the (proto-)environmental discourse of early twentieth-century Britain; b) by disclosing ecocritical and posthuman narratives from selected pastoral poems, which testified both to the original character of the pastoral
in the context of 1910s and 1920s British poetry, and its tendency to resonate with current ethical discussions in current scholarship connected to the Anthropocene.

Furthermore, through my critical introduction, it has become evident how the still-surviving, dismissive tone that characterizes the literary reputation of Marsh’s anthology primarily relies on critical narratives grounded in 1910s and 1920s literary reviews. As my observation of these reviews demonstrated, the general negative assessment characterizing the Georgians derived from few, albeit highly influential early-Modernist critics, including T.S. Eliot, J. Middleton Murry, and Edith, Osbert, and Sacheverell Sitwell. Especially in the periods during and after World War I, these authors introduced primarily formal-oriented observations that assessed the Georgians as traditionalists, considering their lack of manifest stylistic innovations – especially in the context of the early twentieth-century literary experimentation in Britain – based on their reliance on old-fashioned imagery. These aspects were allegedly not adequate to express the sense of novelty brought by the cultural, social, and aesthetical transformation of the 1910s and 1920s. References to the pastoral are manifold in these reviews, in which it often functions as an element inspiring contestation, irony, and attack. In these regards, I assessed the pastoral as a stigma compromising the appreciation of the Georgians. My discussion on challenging binary thinking highlighted that the general dismissive commentary on the anthology developed at the time of its publication primarily relied on a dualistic principle (Ferrando 2019, 60-61) summarized by the dichotomy Modernist/Georgian, which attributes to the latter a position of (qualitative) inferiority compared to the aesthetics of early-Modernism.

Observing the Georgians from this standpoint fostered my initial idea of adopting a postdualistic and postanthropocentric analytical lens for negotiating dualistic critical evaluations leading to dismissing the ecological implications of the pastoral in Georgian poetry. Also, drawing from the recent, burgeoning ecocritical scholarship on British Modernism, which demonstrates the assessment of similar implications in many Modernist works, I therefore retraced the (eco)critical value of some green trajectories running through Georgian Poetry along two main operations. On the one hand, I observed how the late-Romantic traits prevailing in many pastoral poems – assessed in many 1910s and 1920s reviews – could be rediscussed as representing the ecocritical potentials of the collection when regarded through Jonathan Bate’s studies on Romantic ecocriticism. On
the other hand, I delineated a possible point of contact between Modernists and Georgians by discussing that the environmental imagination of the latter anticipated the environmental maturity (Buell 1995) emerging in the following decades. In addition, my overview of the cultural milieu in which Georgian Poetry was published highlighted how the cultural context of early twentieth-century Britain was permeated by several proto-environmental discourses including, for instance, the legacy of Darwin’s theories and echoes of Spinoza’s philosophies in literature. Reinscribing Georgian Poetry in the context of this proto-ecological sensibility, acknowledged it as a representative cross-section of the 1910s to early-1920s British cultural environment, thus demonstrating the topicality of Marsh’s anthology at the time of its publication.

This hypothesis characterized the second section of my elaboration on the meta-concept ‘reevaluating’, in which I performed a textual analysis of selected pastoral poems from the five volumes of the anthology. The analysis demonstrated that several pastoral poems testify to Georgian Poetry’s literary value – in the sense of expressing its originality, modernity, and topicality in the cultural context of the time – as well as to their own capacity to exhibit a link between Marsh’s anthology and contemporary scholarly discussions on the Anthropocene. Specifically, this consideration came to the fore after approaching the pastoral in the selected pastoral poems beyond the apparently traditional domains that they displayed, while interrogating them with attentiveness to issues of human-nonhuman relationality and connectedness. Based on these interrogations, which also relied on my idea of sustainable criticism already discussed, I revealed how the selected poems express a sense of ontological continuity between human beings and their surroundings (vegetal and animal entities, organic and inorganic world), ethical models of relationship with it, and a mature evaluation of the environment (Buell 1995). This effect occurred both through the displays of poetic images and of linguistic and rhetorical devices.

On an imaginative level – that is: connected to the images presented or evoked by the poems – the pastoral texts examined offered a number of pluralistic descriptions of the environment by, for instance, illustrating how certain natural contexts comprise many and diverse nonhuman entities while insisting on the relational dynamics existing between them, as a pluralistic ensemble (e.g., in the case of images such as colonies of birds in a forest, boys playing on a beach, or the idea that that the force of gravity acts
indiscriminately on humans and nonhumans). Moreover, the selected poems presented images depicting the liminality between concepts traditionally set on dualistic figurations of the environment. These images included, for instance, the borders of a forest; the surfaces of water; exchanges between human beings, vegetal, and animal entities; and the burial of a (human) body in the soil.

Even traditional pastoral tropes such as the *locus amoenus*, bird singing, and grazing animals favored being rediscussed within the dynamics of the ‘the pastoral as ecosystem’, considering the way they appeared in Georgian poems. These tropes demonstrate the poems’ attentiveness to the wider net of relationships among different entities inhabiting the same pastoral locus. This was shown, for instance, through the reiterated lyrical I’s questioning of what is it like to be a nonhuman entity, as a way for attempting to explore the sphere of experientiality of animals or plants and negotiating the sense of human exceptionalism and anthropocentrism. I also showed how, in the selected pastoral poems, narrative strategies often relied on a multi-scale observation of the environment through: a) zoom-in effects underlying the peculiarities of several nonhuman entities (e.g., in the case of a poem focusing on an ecosystem constituted among the crannies of some rocks); b) zoom-out effects which favor an all-encompassing observation of extended ecosystems, assessing them as a pluralistic *unicum* (e.g., discussions on planet Earth in the perspective of an alien eye from space).

Finally, images in the selected pastoral poems possessing postdualistic and postanthropocentric implications regarded the affective entanglement bonding humans and nonhumans on an intimate, emotional level. This effect occurred, for instance, in the sensitive response of a community to the death of a tree, or in the possibility of sensing a lost friend or lover within plants or animals. All these narratives resonate with present-day scholarship in ecocriticism and affect (Weik von Mossner 2017; Bladow and Ladino 2018), a parallel that further enhances the possibility of retracing in *Georgian Poetry* connections with scholarly achievements in the field of the Environmental Humanities.

On linguistic and rhetorical levels, the pastoral poems under examination presented several devices fostering the same sense of ontological connectedness between humans and nonhumans through symbolic and metaphoric interpretations. My analysis demonstrated that many of the selected poems extended a vocabulary usually limited to human beings for describing nonhuman entities, and vice versa. This linguistic
enmeshment, therefore, became a metaphoric device recalling the sense of intertwining between the two realms – human and nonhuman – on a more conceptual level, as already illustrated. Furthermore, while, traditionally, these apparent misattributions of human capacities to nonhumans are discussed within the anthropocentric and dualistic frame of ‘pathetic fallacy’, through the theoretical and operative scope offered by my thesis and ecocritical scholarship on this topic (Rozzoni 2021b), these linguistic effects assumed different implications. These human-nonhuman linguistic enmeshments, in fact, become tools for assessing a sense of connectedness among these realms on an ontological level.

A similar effect emerged in my observation of the mixing of different registers, functioning as symbolic hybridization between the human and nonhuman worlds and of related experientiality. It is the case, for instance, of the combination of traditional solemn religious lexicons with expressions pertaining to the semantic field of the marine world, that allowed a re-narration of Christian rites and beliefs from the (postanthropocentric) perspective of a fish. Other linguistic effects asserting the ecocritical and posthuman potentials of the discussed poems regarded blatant references to the vocabulary pertaining to contemporary epistemologies: references to the notion of ‘entanglement’, or direct criticism towards the aggressive and violent behavior towards nonhumans caused by one’s (anthropocentric) education is evidence of the value of considering Georgian Poetry as a site for disclosing reflections in the context of the Environmental Humanities.

A special, final mention that underlines the contribution of the pastoral when assessing the literary value of Georgian Poetry regards references to World War I, both through imagery-related and linguistic effects. In fact, following the abovementioned pastoral trajectory in Marsh’s anthology there emerges the possibility of confirming the engagement of the Georgians in the cultural context of the 1910s and 1920s, contrary to what critics have long discussed as a further way for stressing the alleged conservative character of these poets. Moreover, the echoes of World War I in pastoral Georgian poems span from references to war imagery (e.g., the image of a shepherd killed in an air bombing) to the experience of soldiers at the front when describing the idylls. In this way, the pastoral in Georgian Poetry appeared to possess a degree of complexity. Its function is not limited to prolonging idealized descriptions of the countryside or discussions of the contrast between the rural and the urban, but it is capable of simultaneously intercepting several discourses occurring at the time of the poems’ composition. This analysis,
therefore, establishes pastoral poems in Marsh’s anthology as representative works for investigating the cultural context of 1910s and early-1920s Britain, and for exploring neglected narratives of this collection.

Based on the results of my sustainable textual analysis, it became evident how the pastoral represents much more than a conventional dualistic trope in Georgian Poetry since it allows for disclosing reflections concerning human-nonhuman intertwining and mature figurations of the environment. This awareness has determined two main results in reference to my aim to reevaluate Marsh’s collection. First, it confirmed the rootedness of the anthology in the cultural context of 1910s and early 1920s Britain, thus reassessing it as a beneficial case study for exploring the complexity of this literary and cultural period. Second, it testified to this anthology’s functionality in being (re)read through the lens developed by scholarship in the Environmental Humanities, for both disclosing references to the proto-environmental spirit of the Georgians and ethical reflections on issues of human-nonhuman relationality. In light of current challenges posed by the Anthropocene, these reflections appear particularly valuable for their eco-poietic functions (Bate 2000), that is, for enacting forms of ethical relationality and sustainable perspectives in the real, material world. In fact, dualistic and anthropocentric mindsets significantly affect attitudes and behaviors about the ways in which one understands and acts upon nonhuman others. Re-envisioning these rooted domains by reconceptualizing the pastoral, reframing pastoral criticism, and reevaluating pastoral poetry, therefore, becomes an opportunity for enhancing the ongoing paradigm shift – illustrated by ecocriticism and posthumanism – towards a more pluralistic, sustainable future.

In more systematic ways, here are the contributions and intakes offered by my tripartite discussion on the pastoral:

1) Assessing the pastoral as an ecosystem allowed for negotiating rooted critical approaches to this literary and cultural phenomenon, defying their shared dualistic scheme, which assumes an a priori divisive, vertical, and hierarchical sense of separateness between humans and nonhumans. Challenging and twisting (Sorgner 2014) conventional pastoral binaries serves for determining the pastoral in present and past manifestations as a site for exploring issues of relationality and connectedness between humans and nonhumans in a pluralistic, ethical, and inclusive way.
2) Addressing the extended tradition of pastoral theory through a postdualistic and postanthropocentric lens made evident the necessity to develop a different methodology for rediscovering the ecocritical and posthuman latent potentials from disregarded or overlooked pastoral poems. In this sense, literary criticism becomes visible as a fundamental tool for enacting a posthumanist paradigm shift on the basis of the contributions that literary texts offer in allowing one to mature new perspectives on the world. Literary criticism, therefore, becomes a privileged form of knowledge production, which inspires current readers to realize sustainable practices in the Anthropocene.

3) Reading *Georgian Poetry* in these ways determined it as a valuable literary work to be read in the present-day world – and perhaps to be included in syllabi and recirculated in libraries – since it provides useful narratives that resonate with discussion on ecological urgencies in today’s world.

These considerations represent the points of arrival of my study on the pastoral in the context of the Environmental Humanities, through a lens inspired by the combination of ecocriticism and posthumanism. However, these observations also represent valuable points of departure for further inquiries on the topic.

A first point of departure that my study offers regards the opportunity to shed further light on the ecocritical and posthuman implications of *Georgian Poetry* beyond the domains of the pastoral. As I have discussed elsewhere (Rozzoni 2021c), the volumes of Marsh’s anthology present different pieces of evidence of issues of human and nonhuman relationality, which indicates potential, valuable case studies on environmental narratives in early twentieth-century British poetry. While my study dwelled on the latent contributions of one among the several literary stigmas of *Georgian Poetry* – the pastoral – in the eye of the early-Modernist critical reception of the anthology, there remain other study paths to be investigated through the scope of the burgeoning and variegated field of the Environmental Humanities (e.g., animal studies, Object-Oriented Ontology, new materialisms).

Among these promising paths is also the possibility to conduct a deeper and more extended discussion of the references to World War I in the poems comprising the anthology, thus assessing the reception of the conflict by an array of authors, who experienced it in different ways, and re-explored it through diversified stylistic scopes.
Or one can continue the lines of research initiated in this work by exploring how the collection developed the aesthetics of realism in early twentieth-century British literature, to which some of the Georgians were also often accustomed (Ross 1965, 52). In this way, the anthology becomes a source of interrogating different layers of the complex literary milieu spanning the decade after the beginning of the 1910s, a moment at which, as Virginia Woolf famously stated, “human nature changed” (1924, 4).

A second respect in which my thesis may favor new studies regards the possibility of systematizing an ecocritical investigation of early twentieth-century British literature. As observed, the years between 1910 and 1922 represent overlooked periods by ecocritics and interpose widely discussed eras in literary studies, the Victorian period and the Modernist period – the latter of which has been receiving increasing attention in the past few years. Despite the predominance of other cultural discourses in this period – starting from World War I and the rise of the Modernist aesthetics – the 1910s and early 1920s offer an array of other topics that deserve to be explored more attentively by ecocritics. Hence, I suggest regarding the Georgian period as a way for assessing the character of the environmental discourses in British culture and literature, and as a way of seeing it as a ‘missing link’ in ecocritical scholarship comprising different periods in English studies.

Finally, and connected to this line of thought, a third point of departure for further studies relates to the idea of adopting the operative model proposed in this study in order to discuss other pastoral poems, (far) beyond the Georgian period. Considering the extent of the archive of Western pastoral literature, it is evident how there exist many works that would benefit from being re-read through the scope of postdualism and postanthropocentrism. Also considering the broad scope of my research question, my perspective resonated well with the idea of taking into account different types of past pastoral poems, which, at a first glance, prolong the conventional features of the pastoral but which, under a different lens, may disclose different narratives. The same consideration is valid when bearing in mind that traces of (proto-)environmental discourses and attentiveness towards issues of human-nonhuman relationality can be detected in virtually any epoch – as the extensive scope of ecocriticism also reveals. In this sense, intercepting these traces in past pastoral poems from different periods allows one to enact a sustainable pastoral criticism on a wider scale. And while my discussion has mainly regarded past poems, this possible study path also involves contemporary
pastoral works and narratives that have appeared to prolong traditional stylistic features of classic pastoral.

To conclude, this study has aimed to show how the establishment of hermeneutical praxis on the pastoral aligned with both the urges of our time and the related, growing epistemologies in the context of the Environmental Humanities offers a valuable scholarly contribution. It allows to provides contemporary readership with ethical reflections on issues of human-nonhuman relationality from past disregarded, dismissed, and apparently solely dualistic pastoral works. Along the paradigm shift claimed by posthumanists and ecocritics – aiming to endorse a pluralistic, horizontal sense of connectedness among human and nonhuman entities dwelling on planet Earth – these pastoral narratives become an influencing re-source for developing new ethics between human beings and the environment to be enacted in the real, material world.

While the pastoral has accompanied Western culture for over two millennia through thousands of artistic manifestations (Buell 1995, 32) – primarily by protracting dualistic and anthropocentric figurations of the natural world – this phenomenon has not stopped being influential yet. By re-imagining the pastoral, pastoral criticism, and pastoral poetry through a postdualistic and postanthropocentric sense, the pastoral archives of Western literature become an inexhaustible source for addressing the environmental challenges of current and future times, by responding to the challenges of the Anthropocene in an affirmative, ethical, and pluralistic way.
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The definitions of the following terms:

and; death; ecology; ecosystem; education; expiate; genre; green; idealize; intertextuality; landscape; literature; mode; nature; pettiness; quietness; re-; recycle; reduce; repair; reuse; romantic; romanticize; rot; speciesism; sustainability; sustainable; through; tune; Weltanschauung;
I hereby declare that I completed the submitted doctoral thesis independently and with only the help referred to in the thesis. All texts that have been quoted verbatim or by analogy from published and non-published writings and all details based on verbal information have been identified as such.