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Title: Arcadia in the Minecraft Age: Pastoral Escapism in Popular Media of the 2020s

Abstract:

Since the origins of pastoral poetry in the third century B.C.E., the idea of the pastoral has developed into a loose form characterized by romanticized images of nature, a sense of escapism, and a perceived division between the “natural world” and “civilized world”. As political, social, and environmental contexts have changed over time, the pastoral has shifted in reflection of the world around it. This paper compares four pieces of popular pastoral media from the 2020s – Taylor Swift’s folklore (2020), Chloe Zhao’s Nomadland (2020), Joe Pera’s Joe Pera Talks With You: Season 3 (2021), and Minecraft (2011) – to gain insight into contemporary pastoral narratives, and better understand popular perspectives regarding nature, civilization, escapism, and the environment.