Introduction

Pastoral is one of the few literary modes whose genesis can be clearly traced. While poems reworking pristine rustic experience might have existed earlier, the pastoral mode as now recognized originated with the Greek poet Theocritus in the third century BCE. More correctly put, Theocritus provided a model that others followed to create the mode.

There were few 'others' in Hellenistic Greece. A handful of poems, only one or two authentically pastoral, have been ascribed (often doubtfully) to two poets, Bion and Moschus. Of Theocritus' own thirty idylls ('little pictures' or 'sketches', often of doubtful authorship), only twelve are pastoral. What set the seal on the mode was its adoption by Virgil in the first century BCE, in ten poems sometimes closely imitating Theocritus. These selections (*eclogae*) from his early work have lent the name 'eclogue' to the typical pastoral poem of moderate length and varied subject-matter, often incorporating an inset song or song-contest.

Virgil too had few followers in classical times – only two minor poets, Calpurnius and Nemesianus. But his immense stature as the pre-eminent Latin poet, continuing through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, set before every aspiring poet the career-pattern of the 'Virgilian cycle', moving from pastoral to didactic poems on farming (the Georgics) and finally to martial and courtly epic in the *Aeneid*. This was also held to reflect the course of human civilization. From the late Middle Ages, the Virgilian eclogue became a dominant poetic genre.

There was another reason for this. Theocritus' idylls had presented, if in somewhat idealized and sometimes mythicized form, the life of actual shepherds in Cos and Sicily. Only once, in Idyll 7, is there any suggestion that the shepherds may stand for people from another world, maybe the poet's own. Virgil, however, seems to have introduced a measure of allusion in his Eclogues, beginning with the first, where the shepherd Tityrus, secure while his fellows are dislodged from the land, is held to represent Virgil himself, thanking the Emperor Augustus for his patronage.

The extent and nature of the allusion is often uncertain; but scholiasts have confirmed what any reader might suspect, that it is there. When Virgilian pastoral was revived in the late Middle Ages by Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio (chiefly the latter two), they insisted that allusion was intrinsic to pastoral. Through the ensuing Renaissance and beyond, 'pretty tales of wolves and sheep' (in Sidney's phrase)[1] were conventionally held to conceal deep hidden meanings – biographical, political, didactic,

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1 Philip Sidney, *A Defence of Poetry (The Apologie for Poetrie)*, in *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan van Dorsten, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973, 95.3–4.

religious. Most critical theory of the pastoral in that age (or indeed later) has stressed this allegorical function.

But the Middle Ages also opened fresh springs of rustic poetry, harking back to folk tradition and restoring the setting of actual rural and shepherd life. Embodied in new lines of lyric and song, such poetry became increasingly sophisticated, often through classical elements drawn not only from Virgil but from the nature-settings of Horace's *Odes* and the mythic world of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Various lines of poetry began to develop, addressing the pastoral concerns of nature and myth but striking out in other directions as well. It seems pointless to quibble about how much of this is strictly pastoral: it is all part of a wider pastoral universe, whose provinces merge and shift.

Formal pastoral acquires new life in the Renaissance by drawing on a great range of themes and settings. The translations in this book reflect much of that range, besides the seminal classical models, Virgil above all. But interestingly, some crucial medieval and Renaissance voices are absent – Petrarch's Latin eclogues (*Bucolicum Carmen*) and Sannazaro's Italian romance *Arcadia* above all. They were not translated into English until the twentieth century: their influence in Renaissance England derived from the original texts or, in Sannazaro's case, French or Spanish translations.

To map the extent and variety of Renaissance pastoral, we might use a term now out of fashion, 'art-pastoral', with its obverse, allusive pastoral. Pure art-pastoral – presenting imaginary shepherds in a fictive pastoral setting, removed from real-life concerns and untouched by allusion – is relatively rare and often rather thin. It is hard to analyse, and often not worth analysing. Scholars from classical scholiasts to modern academics have engaged much more with allusive pastoral, often theorizing the latter to define the rationale of the mode.

It is worth stressing that, whatever its later transformations, pastoral began as the poetry of a distinct aesthetic universe, implicitly set against the more complex life of court or city to which its exponents belong. This world of the imagination throws contrasting light on the poet's own world. The otherness of pastoral is the starting premise of the mode. Its allusive accommodation of the real world always redefines the latter's terms: if it does not, the exercise is pointless.

Yet what justifies the exercise is the metaphoric infusion of imaginary pastoral life with the concerns and activities of real and more complex communities. The shepherd rules over his sheep like a king, and cares for them like a priest. He is versed in nature lore, a 'wise shepherd' comparable to academic scholars. In pastoral convention, he spends much of his time in poetry and song, just like the poet writing about him; and offers love to shepherdesses in terms assimilable to the Petrarchan convention, where such poets often found their theme.

These metaphoric latencies make the pastoral of allusion something more than a set of coded references. Casting other and more complex matters in pastoral form is to place them within an implicit frame of comment. The pastoral of the European Renaissance exploited this potential unevenly, but at its best in subtle and innovative ways. Allusive content might also enter the wider body of rural and nature-poetry noted above. Conversely, the allusive eclogue might take in the simple celebration of nature and rural life, in realistic or idealized vein.

This collection comprises Early Modern British pastoral poetry, including translations. The earliest piece in the book is 'Robene and Makyne' by the Scottish poet Robert Henryson, who flourished in the late fifteenth century. This striking poem is

not backed up by any general pastoralism in the Scottish poetry of that age. The varied and notable pastoral productions of William Drummond in the seventeenth century draw on new resources of classical and continental poetry. In England, the pastoral output of the early Tudor period is limited. Besides a general body of 'plowman litera-ture' (exemplified in *Of Gentylnes* and *Nobilitye*), the only notable instances are the eclogues of Alexander Barclay, which blend some direct allusion with a great deal of moralizing, social satire and rustic realism. There is also the singular 'Harpelus' Complaint' in Tottel's Miscellany (*Songs and Sonnets*) of 1557, strikingly anticipating the lyric fictions of later Elizabethan art-pastoral. Ignoring the indifferent eclogues of Barnabe Googe and the sporadic rural poetry of Churchyard or Turberville, English pastoral comes into its own with Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender*, published anon-ymously in 1579.

   The *Calender* has its due share of allusion and moralizing in many veins. It is possible to write a consistent commentary on the twelve eclogues ('proportionable to the twelue monethes') in these terms. But what is exceptional is the quantum of non-allusive material, the creation of an entire shepherd community that, while it might reflect Spenser's circle and his times, acquires the status of an autonomous fiction. The *Calender* presents a world radically distinct from the real and contem-porary, even while notably overlapping with it. Just so, later, would the land of Faerie in Spenser's *magnum opus* absorb the reality of Elizabethan times within a notably different chivalric and supernatural universe.

   It is also a pastoral universe. T*he Faerie Queene* has two cantos of open pastoralism in Book VI; but the whole work is suffused with the mythicized nature-settings, and alternative social orders and value-systems located there, that characterize pastoralism in the widest sense. This pervasive pastoralism also marks the Spenserian poets of the early seventeenth century, most notably their doyen Michael Drayton. Even more clearly than in Spenser himself, pastoral is one of the major modes addressed by Drayton through his life, from the very Spenserian beginnings in *Idea The Shepheards Garland* to the transmogrified pastoral of *The Muses Elizium*, a fragile mythicized setting conveying a marked political message. The same compound appears more openly in Drayton's younger followers: their early flagship volume *The Shepheards Pipe* leads on to the sustained pastoralism of William Browne's overtly Spenserian *Britannia's Pastorals*, no less than to the varied social and moral critique of the prolific George Wither.

   Needless to say, Spenser's influence is not confined to the Spenserians. We need to retrace our steps to the late sixteenth century, starting with the other major influence on English Renaissance pastoral: the work of Sir Philip Sidney. The undoubted 'Sidney cult' (however we assess it) during his brief life acquired new and greater force when his works began to be posthumously published in the 1590s through the efforts of his sister Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, and his associate Fulke Greville. Chief among these works were the old and new (and soon amalgamated) versions of Sidney's chivalric-pastoral romance, *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia*. This contained four substantial groups of 'eclogues' – of much more varied nature than the term usually covers – as well as a great deal of other verse embedded in the narrative. Taken in its entirety, Sidney's *Arcadia* offered a rich store of pastoral poetry, comprising most major themes and conventions of European Renaissance pastoral. And while a great deal of personal and political allegory has been extracted from the *Arcadia*, its fictional setting means that most individual poems are autonomous aesthetic entities.

Sidney's romance led the field in England but not in Europe. Its title reflects the Italian Jacopo Sannazaro's *Arcadia* (published 1504, written much earlier), a set of eclogues linked by incremental prose narrative. The *Arcadia* established a model of pastoral romance virtually for the first time in Europe, barring the single though notable instance of Longus' Greek romance *Daphnis and Chloe* (2nd century CE). Next to Sannazaro's own, the most influential romance was Jorge de Montemayor's Spanish *Diana* (1559), with sequels by Alonso Perez and Gaspar Gil Polo. This work was translated into English by Bartholomew Yong. Other than Sidney's *magnum opus*, the earlier English examples are slight in comparison but add up to a sizeable corpus: Greene and Lodge's romances in the forefront, supplemented by more loosely structured works like John Dickenson's *The Shepheardes Complaint*. These in turn shade off into collections of disjunct pieces with a common background narrative, like Richard Barnfield's *The Affectionate Shepherd*, Nicholas Breton's *The Passionate Shepherd* and Barnabe Barnes's *Parthenophil* and *Parthenophe*. The seventeenth century adds to all these categories, most substantially in major romances like *The Countesse of Montgomeries Urania* by Sidney's niece, Lady Mary Wroth.

Sixteenth-century Europe saw a parallel development in pastoral drama, from brief opera-like entertainments to full-fledged plays. There is a substantial Italian line of the latter from the mid-sixteenth century, taking in Tasso's *Aminta* (1573) and Giovanni Battista Guarini's *Il pastor fido* (*The Faithful Shepherd*, 1590). Again, the influence spread to other languages. If Shakespeare's *As You Like It* is the most celebrated instance in English, and *The Winter's Tale* provides the best-known pastoral interlude, a line of plays typified by John Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess* (and continuing into Charles I's reign) are closer to the Italian model.

Pastoral romance and drama typically present a circular plot in which courtly characters leave their accustomed haunts, spend time in the country so as to effect a change in their state, and finally return to a revitalized court. The chief characters are usually royal or noble, and the plot-structure reflects the actual hegemony of court and city controlling the pastoral imagination. But paradoxically, the clear separation of the court can allow the country to be more clearly and distinctly defined within its structurally limited sphere: the shepherds can be shepherds because they no longer have to double as courtiers or city-dwellers. Though the shepherdess heroine often proves a royal foundling, her companions assert their own identity and ethos to the end.

This is the design that Spenser takes to singular philosophic heights in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*: there is little or nothing to match it anywhere in European pastoral. But more generally, pastoral romance and drama (especially the former), though derived from courtly genres of wider scope, offer a range of pastoral structures of unprecedented depth and detail. The eclogue was simply not capacious enough for the purpose: moreover, it had to condense the multiple, often contrary metaphoric content of the pastoral trope within a single narrow fiction. More simply and directly, pastoral romance and drama provided a storehouse of songs and lyrics, and the romance some formal eclogues as well, embedded in the narrative. This collection includes many such pieces, though it eschews dramatic scenes and extracts. In a few cases, a modicum of dramatic dialogue has been retained to make sense of a song embedded in it. There are also some extracts from verse romances, verse chronicles, and short epics or epyllia, sometimes telling a complete story, sometimes enshrining a single narrative moment.

Poems extracted from romance and drama are matched by a wide range of

independently composed lyrics, matching the body of formal eclogues. In fact, barring Thomas Watson's Latin *Amyntas* (translated into English by Abraham Fraunce) and Drayton's *Idea The Shepheardes Garland*, there are relatively few formal eclogues of note in the sixteenth century, always excepting Spenser and Sidney's work. (The seventeenth adds substantially to the tally.) Song-exchanges and debates in the romances shade off into briefer, more purely song-like interjections. Like similar stand-alone items in miscellanies and single-author volumes, these poems blend the indigenous pastoral lyric drawn from medieval tradition with the more finished products of Italianate Renaissance song-lyric. Often individually slight, even inconsequential, all this adds up to a formidable corpus, strongly and innovatively contributing to the total pastoral presence in English Renaissance poetry. They can also constitute a substantial individual output, as strikingly seen in the work of Nicholas Breton. Continental models may also be found for pastoral redactions of popular forms like the sonnet. The art-pastoral basic to this entire body of poems makes for an unusual orientation of the mode in imaginative and ideological terms.

Though song-like in effect, these poems were usually not set to music in the first instance. But there is an assumed musical element in their structure that might be brought out and defined by a later composer. Such poems shade off into pieces composed formally as songs, akin in material to Italian or other continental songbooks and often modelled on them. But all in all, the volume of non-musical pastoral lyric appears to be notably greater in English than in other European languages. The seal was set on this very distinct development by the remarkable anthology *England's Helicon* (1600). Its editorship has been variously attributed to John Bodenham, Nicholas Ling, one 'A.B.' and the publisher John Flasket.

Helicon taps every conceivable source of material: volumes of verse, romances, dramas, entertainments. Some pieces appear there for the first time, which may also be the last. Only a fraction of the contents are formal eclogues. Every now and then the editor tweaks the language of a non-pastoral piece to make it fit the bill; but this testifies to an accepted notion of the mode, even to specific models of form and diction. *Helicon* may be the product of one man's focused fancy: barring *The Phoenix Nest* reflecting the Sidney cult, there is no other printed miscellany of the period devoted to a single theme, genre or mode. But equally, *Helicon* testifies to a marked pastoral presence in the literary sensibility of the age, almost amounting to a pastoral culture.

Most strikingly even at a brief glance, *Helicon* illustrates the variety of Elizabethan pastoral – to be extended still further in the next century. Between the late sixteenth and the mid-seventeenth century, there is a greatly diverse body of pastoral across a field loosely demarcated by the eclogue, the ode, the country poem and the private poetic address, though these genres lose their identity in the traffic of themes and forms. We find courtly and personal compliment, political and philosophical allegory, intricate though often obscure personal allusion, and simpler private exchanges between friends or lovers. These blend into independent pastoral fictions – sometimes grafted on the more extended fiction of a romance or play – buttressing the status of pastoral as an organic vein of the Renaissance English imagination. The pastoral idiom can be the chosen vehicle of major lines of social and intellectual practice. Readers can choose examples of any vein they please from the wide selection gathered in this book.

A pastoral culture is crystallized in court compliment and entertainment, even in the serious business of politics. The cult of Queen Elizabeth had a famously pastoral

aspect, shading into the mythic. It was exploited for courtly entertainment, especially (and appropriately) on the Queen's progresses through the countryside, lodging at the country seats of favoured courtiers. In James I's day, and Charles I's even more, an elaborate and removed pastoral artifice became a staple vein of entertainment at the royal court itself, in masques and the exclusive world of private theatres. On a very different plane, pastoral had always been an option for devisers of city pageants and public entertainments. All in all, pastoral made its way into performative fictions through all kinds of channels for all kinds of purposes, with a corresponding range of formal guises.

But even as the Jacobean court was practising one vein of pastoral, others gained strength in opposition to court culture, or at least to the royal image and policies. The deceptively remote pastoral of the late Drayton, and its more robust foil in the younger Spenserians, marks one line of growth. Another was the nuanced progression of an intrinsically conservative genre, the country-house poem. While necessarily celebrating a quasi-feudal order, it could play off the rural version of that ethos, enshrined in a nobleman's country seat, against its court-centred avatar. Pastoral provides a means for this establishmentarian genre to deconstruct itself while stopping well short of true subversion.

But there is also a more demotic line of pastoral, challenging the political and economic order in more fundamental ways. Here the shepherd stands for the common man, even the dispossessed. Such pastoral rarely approaches the raw realism and protest voiced by Barclay a century earlier: everything else apart, the diction of pastoral (as of virtually all poetry) has grown more refined in the interim. More often now, the common shepherd-spokesman may be allied to the Puritan middle class; but even when the voice belongs to the relatively privileged (or greatly so, as with Margaret Cavendish), the ideological fracture at the heart of pastoral can be used to good purpose.

Cavendish belongs to an eminent line of Royalists. With the Puritan–Royalist divide, as with so many others, opposite sides employ the same pastoral tropes and metaphoric strategies to their contrary ends. This is most piquantly shown in the persistent use of the pastoral to mourn the death of Charles I. One such instance masquerades in ballad form as 'Jack the Plough-lad's Lamentation'. Another is composed long after the Restoration by Anthony Spinedge, born three years after Charles's execution. Earlier, Royalist pastoral had been largely confined to a species of privileged artifice, even where it carried direct political allusion. Clearly, the Royalist camp is now better apprised of the varied uses of the mode. But it is the Puritan Milton, perhaps not yet fully set in the doctrinal mould, who provides in 'Lycidas' the most elaborate and striking elegiac construct of the age, mourning the death of a less prominent figure.

'Jack the Plough-lad' illustrates the focused political use of a line of popular pastoral, as developed in the broadside ballad. The broadside incorporates a surprising amount of pastoral. Its commonest purpose is to present shepherds to political advantage, alongside other rustics and subalterns. But it also runs to simple love-poetry crossing Petrarchan convention with the more naive indigenous love-lyric. Yet other ballads are directly allusive, presenting contemporary events in pastoral garb. All in all, the broadside illustrates an unexplored encounter of the genuinely popular with the mock-popular of the standard pastoral mode.

In another, overtly non-political line of development, the pastoral generates a landscape-poetry that can point in the direction of either nature or art. Topographical

poetry achieves a heroic scale in Drayton's *Poly-olbion*, always within touching distance of the pastoral and sometimes homing in directly upon it. Another branch explores the new visual aesthetics of the 'landskip', as in Strode or (more strikingly) Eldred Revett. At much the same time, Margaret Cavendish opens up speculative angles on the encounter of 'real' nature and the pastoral. And a pan-European line, strikingly instanced in the French Antoine Saint-Amant's 'The Solitude', infuses the landscape with a dramatic, almost Gothic vein of sentimental melancholy.

The ultimate encounter of opposite planes might be said to occur in some instances of religious pastoral. The Bible yields its own pastoral material, most famously in Psalm 23 but with more metaphoric potential in the allied but distinct topos of Christ the Good Shepherd. This topos enters into piquant interaction with the trope of 'pastoral care' in the clergy, and its extension in ecclesiastical allegory. The shepherds of the Nativity are simpler in metaphoric function. There are also innovations like the pastoral setting for gospel narrative in Giles Fletcher (matching his brother Phineas' secular exercise in *The Purple Island*), and the idiosyncratic allegorical fancy of Thomas Benlowes. A more sustained vein, seen in many languages across Europe, is the age's new spiritual interest in the 'book of nature': in its central line of practice, Christianizing the structure of Horace's Second Epode in a model made popular by the Polish neo-Latin poet and cleric Casimir Sarbiewski.

This account may explain why I have referred to pastoral all through not as a genre or convention but as a mode. It operates in the Renaissance as an infinitely versatile trope, a frame of reference in which to cast any sector of human experience so as to throw new light upon it, as one might hold up an object to the light at a particular angle. It is a way of thought – at times, by only a moderate hyperbole, a way of life.

Paradoxically, pastoral's vast reach and popularity might also explain why there are so few masterpieces in the mode. It was practised by countless people of varying ability for a range of themes and purposes. In deference to the Virgilian model, poetasters began writing pastorals but went no further. Other, more skilled and persistent practitioners turned to the mode in the intervals of weightier exercises higher up in the scale of genres. (Pastoral, like satire, was conventionally placed at the bottom of a hierarchy whose top rungs were occupied by epic and tragedy.)

Renaissance pastoral is best considered as a total phenomenon, in which individual works blend organically to acquire a greater significance than they might command as stand-alone items. This also produces fascinating patterns of dissemination and circulation, both of individual texts and, more significantly, of specific tropes and conventions. The detailed introduction in the *Companion* will discuss these features of the mode. Meanwhile, here is the poetry.

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(arranged by date of publication)

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