

**pastoral** (L 'pertaining to shepherds') A minor but important mode which, by convention, is concerned with the lives of shepherds. It is of great antiquity and interpenetrates many works in Classical and modern European literature. It is doubtful if pastoral ever had much to do with the daily working-life of shepherds, though it is not too difficult to find shepherds in Europe (in Montenegro, Albania, Greece and Sardinia, for instance) who compose poetry, sing songs and while away the hours playing the flute. For the most part pastoral tends to be an idealization of shepherd life, and, by so being, creates an image of a peaceful and uncorrupted existence; a kind of prelapsarian world.

The origins of pastoral with many of its conventions are to be found in the works of Theocritus (c. 316–c. 260 BC), a native of Syracuse in Sicily, who wrote pastorals for the sophisticated Greeks of Alexandria. He wrote what are called *Idylls* or *Epyllia* (qq.v.), short mythological narratives, and pastoral or bucolic poems: dialogues or monologues which treated of the lives of shepherds, goatherds, neatherds, farmers and fishermen. His shepherds are involved in the contests of piping and the improvisation of songs. They also descant on the attractions of girls. An important figure in his poems was Daphnis, a shepherd who married the nymph Chloe, and was killed by Aphrodite for being so uxoriously faithful. Nature mourned the death of Daphnis, and this became the prototype of the pastoral elegy (q.v.) of which an outstanding example is Milton's *Lycidas*.

Theocritus's successors were Bion (c. 100 BC) and Moschus (c. 150 BC), whose poems were similar. Virgil (70–19 BC) modelled his *Eclogues* on Theocritus and in them evoked that 'golden age' in which innocent shepherds lived in primitive bliss.

The next work of note in the tradition is the Greek pastoral romance *Daphnis and Chloe* (3rd–5th c. AD) by Longus, the model of the romance favoured by writers in the Renaissance. Latin poets of the Middle Ages wrote eclogues but little of note survives except for a poem in dialogue form by Alcuin (735–804). This is an early instance of the medieval form of *débat* (q.v.). In the later Middle Ages we find poems of a dramatic character which are associated with Whitsuntide

and May Day games; especially a form known as the *pastourelle* (q.v.). An interesting instance of a pastoral poem in this tradition is Henryson's *Robene and Makyne* (15th c.).

One may suppose that by the late Middle Ages the pastoral imagery which was an important feature of the Christian and Hebrew teaching may well have had some influence on pastoral. After all, Christ was the shepherd and human beings were His flock. Such knowledge enhanced the conviction that the shepherd's life was a paradigm of tranquillity and harmonious love. In this connection one should note that *The Adoration of the Shepherds* was a popular medieval Mystery Play (q.v.). The veneration accorded to Virgil in the Middle Ages resulted from the famous lines in the *Fourth Eclogue*, which were interpreted as a prophecy of the advent of Christ, and which accordingly had some influence on the concept of pastoral and the pastoral life.

Petrarch and Boccaccio wrote eclogues in Latin; but more influential than these were the Latin pastorals of Mantuan (1448–1516). These had some vogue throughout Europe and were texts for schoolboys in England in the Elizabethan period. Alexander Barclay's five *Eclogues* (c. 1515–21) were also influential. Two were translations from Mantuan, and three were adaptations from the *Miseriae Curialium* (15th c.) of Aeneas Sylvius who became Pope Pius II.

By this time the pastoral 'novel' was also beginning to be established. In the 14th c. Boccaccio wrote one called *Ameto*, and in 1504 Sannazaro published *Arcadia*. It comprised twelve verse eclogues linked by prose and set a fashion which Montemayor followed with *Diana* (c. 1559), and this in its turn was a kind of model for Sidney's pastoral romance *Arcadia* (1590). Meantime, Spenser's *Shepherd's Calender* was closely modelled on the eclogues of Theocritus, Virgil and Mantuan. It consisted of twelve poems (one for each month of the year), all of which showed great metrical variety and skill. The elements of allegory (q.v.), pastoral elegy and the *débat* were apparent. In this *Calender* Spenser combined the idealized world of Classical pastoral with the everyday world of English shepherds and gave this combination a unity by projecting the inner world of his own imagination. Pastoral conventions were also noticeable in other works by Spenser, especially in *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*, in *Daphnaïda* (an elegy on the death of Sir Arthur Gorges's wife) and *Astrophil* (an elegy on the death of Sir Philip Sidney).

In the late 16th c. many other works amplified the pastoral tradition, such as Marlowe's *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*, which evoked a memorable reply from Sir Walter Raleigh. Michael Drayton

also wrote some eclogues (1593) in which he introduced an earthier and more realistic quality to pastoralism, particularly in *Daffodil*, *The Shepherd's Sirena* and *The Muses' Elysium*.

At about this time pastoral drama appeared in Italy with Tasso's *Aminta* (1581) and Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* (1585). The influence of these works is discernible in a number of Shakespeare's plays; also in Ben Jonson's unfinished play *The Sad Shepherd* (1641). This was a descendant of the Whitsuntide pastorals. James Shirley also wrote a pastoral play called *The Arcadia* (1640), which was a kind of adaptation from Sidney's work. But probably the most distinguished pastoral play in English literature was John Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1608). Masques (*q.v.*) of the period also used pastoral themes. One of the last to do so was Milton's *Comus* (1634).

Pastoral and pastoral drama also flourished in France in the latter part of the 16th c. and during the 17th. We find early traces of Italian influence in the poets of the Pléiade (*q.v.*) and Belleau wrote a *Bergerie* which used a pastoral framework for some complimentary poems. The first major works are Nicolas Filleul's *Ombres* (1566) and Belleforest's *Pastorale amoureuse* (1569). In 1585 Nicolas de Montreux started the publication of *Bergeries de Juliette*, a pastoral romance which had several sequels. He also wrote pastoral dramas, notably *Diane* (1594) and *Arimine* (1596). From then on pastoral in one form or another proliferated in France. Some of the more important works are: Montchrétien's *Bergerie* (1600); Nicolas Chrestien de Croix's *Les Amantes ou la grande pastourelle* (1613); Honoré d'Urfé's *L'Astrée* (1607-27); Racan's *Bergeries* (1625); Mairet's *Sylvie et Silvanire* (c. 1625-9); Gombauld's *Amaranthe* (1631). Hereabouts pastoral is becoming decadent, as we can see from Pichou's *Folies de Cardenio* (1629) and Mareschal's *Inconstance d'Hylas* (1630), both of which were based on *L'Astrée*. In 1627 Sorel parodied *L'Astrée* in *Le Berger extravagant*. Some time later Molière wrote some successful pastoral comedies, notably *Mélicerte* (1666) and *Les Amants magnifiques* (1670).

In England, in the 17th c., broadly speaking, the pastoral undergoes modifications in form and content. Like Raleigh, John Donne 'replied' to Marlowe with *The Bait*. In this poem Donne tilts laconically at the conventions and assumptions of pastoral.

William Browne, on the other hand, a friend of Drayton and Jonson, settled for the well-established Elizabethan tradition. For the most part his pastoralism is 'romantic' (he appealed to poets of the romantic period, *q.v.*, especially Keats), and his main works, *Britannia's Pastorals* (1613, 1616, 1852 *op. post.*) and *Shepherd's Pipe* (1614), are rather anaemic and diffuse.

Phineas Fletcher, a contemporary of Browne, also worked in the Spenserian Elizabethan tradition. His *Piscatorie Eclogs* (1633) deal with the lives of fishermen rather than shepherds. Sannazaro had already done this with his piscatory eclogues in 1526, and in 1555 the Dalmatian poet Petar Hektorović had published *Ribanje i ribarsko prigovaranje*, a realistic fishing pastoral.

Apart from these the main name in connection with the pastoral convention in the 17th c. is Milton – who was influenced by Phineas Fletcher and Spenser. Pastoral elements occur in his *Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, *L'Allegro*, *Arcades*, *Comus* and, above all, in *Lycidas* (1637). Minor works of note by contemporaries of Milton are those by Marvell, especially his *Damon the Mower*, *The Mower against Gardens*, *The Mower to the Glow-worms*, and *The Mower's Song*. Marvell's use of pastoral is highly individual.

Later in the 17th c. Sir Charles Sedley and Dryden wrote verses which sustained the pastoral convention. For instance, a slight work by Sedley called *Phyllis Knotting*, and Dryden's *The Lady's Song*. One should note also that Dryden wrote some good pastoral verse for the sub-plot of *Marriage à la Mode*. In this play Leonidas and Palmyra have been brought up as shepherds though they are of noble birth. In these verses they look back to the old days.

Fundamentally, this is what pastoral is about: it displays a nostalgia for the past, for some hypothetical state of love and peace which has somehow been lost. The dominating idea and theme of most pastoral is the search for the simple life away from the court and town, away from corruption, war, strife, the love of gain, away from 'getting and spending'. In a way it reveals a yearning for a lost innocence, for a pre-Fall paradisaical life in which man existed in harmony with nature. It is thus a form of primitivism (*q.v.*) and a potent longing for things past. Hence the myth of the golden age which, in Classical literature, is diffused in Hesiod, Virgil and Ovid. In the Middle Ages Boethius, Jean de Meung, Dante and Chaucer used it as an image or metaphor for the Garden of Eden. During the Renaissance period the expression of a longing for this Arcadian world was worked out in greater detail. But it is probably not entirely a coincidence that, as the mythopoetic attractions of pastoral happiness diminish, so utopia (*q.v.*) begins to acquire a particular interest for people.

In the 18th c. pastoral was further modified. It remained a popular mode, but too often became effete, precious, 'Dresdenesque'. In 1709 Pope published four pastoral poems in imitation of Spenser. These showed considerable elegance and technical virtuosity. In the same year Ambrose Philips also published some pastorals. Between the two poets there was some rivalry and envy over the respective merits of

their poems. John Gay took Pope's part and in *Shepherd's Week* (1714) attempted a parody of Philips's work. This misfired because Gay, in his efforts to show what rustic life was really like, produced a realistic 'home-spun' type pastoral. Gay also composed several ironical eclogues.

Apart from these, most 18th c. poems in the pastoral tradition were descriptions of particular places, and thus were topographical poetry (*q.v.*). One of the earliest examples of this kind of poem was Denham's *Cooper's Hill* (1642). Others of note were Pope's *Windsor Forest* (1713) and Dyer's *Grongar Hill* (1726). Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* belonged to this kind. Longer and more ambitious descriptive poems were James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1726-30) which derives from Virgil's *Georgics*. A century later John Clare wrote something rather similar in the form of *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1827). Other major minor works, so to speak, of the 18th c. which employ pastoral elements are: Alan Ramsay's pastoral drama *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725); William Shenstone's *A Pastoral Ballad* (1755); William Collins's *The Persian Eclogues* (1724); and Thomas Chatterton's *The African Eclogues* (c. 1777).

In his *Shepherd's Week*, John Gay had shown how it was possible to treat rural subjects in a realistic manner instead of with a stylized and rose-tinted formalism. When George Crabbe published *The Village* in 1783 he painted the cot

As Truth will paint it and as bards will not.

Most of Crabbe's verse annals were outstanding for their realistic treatment of rural scenes.

For Blake the shepherd was still a symbol of an innocent and unspoilt way of life; and for Wordsworth also the country, unblemished nature and the uncorrupted existence of countrymen, were in many ways ideal. However, Wordsworth, like Crabbe, had no liking for the formal pastoral and was realistic in his treatment of rural themes and scenes. In his topographical and narrative poems we have what amounts to a new version of pastoral even though he still stresses the simplicity and innocence of country life. This is evident in *The Pet Lamb*, *The Idle Shepherd Boys* and *Michael*. Wordsworth is fully aware of the pastoral tradition and in *Michael* (1800), which is a kind of narrative idyll, he shows the destruction of the traditional pastoral way of life. It is a mournful, almost tragic poem and is a counterpart to Goldsmith's lament in *The Deserted Village* (1770). In a remarkable passage (lines 173 ff.) in Book VIII of *The Prelude* Wordsworth evoked the whole history of pastoral, contrasting the old

idea of the shepherd's 'smooth life' with rough reality. Nevertheless, the 19th c. produced two great pastoral elegies in Shelley's *Adonais* (1821) and Matthew Arnold's *Thyrsis* (1867). Moreover Landor returned to the pastoral manner of Theocritus in his *Hellenics* (1846-7).

From about the middle of the 19th c. onwards the pastoral tradition fissiparated, and the main results, as a rule interesting experiments, display much variety. Later attempts at a kind of pastoralism were made by Tennyson in *Dora*, *The Northern Farmer* and *The Princess*; by William Barnes in his dialect *Poems of Rural Life*; by John Davidson in *The Fleet Street Eclogues*; and by Edward LeFroy in *Echoes from Theocritus*, a series of sonnets in the tradition of Theocritus's Idylls. To these we should add a number of poems by the French Parnassians, the poems in A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*, miscellaneous poems by W. B. Yeats, and Eduardo Marquina's *Eglogas*.

Other noteworthy works which, in various ways, are associated with the pastoral, the eclogue and pastoralism are: Ezra Pound's *An Idyll for Glaucus*; Roy Campbell's satirical pastiche *A Veld Eclogue: The Pioneers*, and his *Jungle Eclogue*; Auden's *The Age of Anxiety*; MacNeice's *Eclogue for Christmas*; George Barker's long narrative poem in *débat* (*q.v.*) form, *Goodman Jacksin and the Angel*; Norman Cameron's *Shepherds and Shepherdesses*; and William Bell's *Elegies*.

Though pastoral may die in one form it is likely to be reincarnated, and the traditional primitivist themes reanimated. To support this one may cite the novels of Jean Giono, and the fine lyrics of R. S. Thomas, whose austere compassionate eye has done for the Welsh rural scene what Crabbe, in a totally different way, did for his parish.