

1912

The English pastoral, its origin, and development

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/5192>

Downloaded from DSpace Repository, DSpace Institution's institutional repository

Approved.

E. Charlton Black.

April 25. 1912.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

THESIS

THE ENGLISH PASTORAL, ITS ORIGIN, AND DEVELOPMENT

SUBMITTED BY

SUSAN ELIZABETH HALLOWELL

(A.B., BOSTON UNIVERSITY, 1908)

In partial fulfilment of requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

1912

378.744
B0
1912, A.M.
hal

SYNOPSIS

Introduction
The Classic Pastoral
 Theocritus
 Vergil
At the Renaissance
The English Pastoral
 Spenser
 The Elizabethan Pastoral
 17th Century Pastoral
 Decline - the 18th Century
The Pastoral Elegy

In dealing with the pastoral we have to do with the literary fashion of a bygone day, a disused poetical form. We can study its classic origin, its spread in Europe at the Renaissance, its rise and great popularity in England, and finally its decline and extinction. The pastoral is no longer a living mode of poetical expression. It is a form too often unjustly ranked. In the minds of many of us the word pastoral stands for something unreal and remote from actual life, like the figures of Watteau shepherds with their lace sleeve ruffles and gaily decorated crooks. Petit Trianon, the pastoral plaything of the unfortunate Marie Antoinette, is largely responsible for this wrong conception, this belittling of a worthy type of literature. It is unfair to judge the pastoral by its decadence. The form is a conventional one, but in its best estate a wholesome and genuine love of nature breathes through the classic tradition and gives it life and beauty. With the loss of this inspiration comes the decline of the pastoral. That the pastoral early became artificial is largely due to the fact that it was so

much more easy to reproduce its outward form than to catch its inner spirit. It becomes more and more formal, and in the 18th century too often ridiculous, until the French Revolution, which shattered so many pretensions, put an end to this unreal fashion. When the return to nature came in the early 19th century the pastoral form was outworn and not to be revived.

In our consideration of the subject we must first of all have a clear idea of what the pastoral is, and equally important, of what the pastoral is not. From the derivation of the name we see that the subject matter is shepherd life. It does not deal with humble life in general, but with one particular calling, the tending of sheep, in itself a poetical occupation. The man with the hoe is not a fit subject for pastoral verse. For the pastoral is not realism. Though its founder Theocritus described faithfully shepherd life as he saw it, he did not give that minute attention to sordid detail which characterizes modern realism, but viewed it in a romantic, an idyllic aspect. We shall see more clearly the

definite scope of the subject in our study of Theocritus, who fixed the standard of pastoral poetry for all time. Let us for the present limit our definition of pastoral to that type of poetical expression of which the Idyls of Theocritus are the direct models.

The pastoral was the last form of literature perfected by the Greeks. Theocritus, born about 315 B. C. belongs to the period of Greek decadence. He was a native of Syracuse, but his later life was spent in the capital city of Alexandria. From the contrast between the luxurious city life and the blue skies and open fields of his native island the Idyls of Theocritus were born. Sicily was an ideal land of pastoral. Its green slopes and rugged cliffs, the blue Italian sky and blue waters form an idyllic background for his singing shepherds. Theocritus has been criticised for putting into the mouths of his shepherds such poetical expressions and sweet fancies, but the Sicilian peasants were quite unlike our Northern farmers, and their descendants today are a highly imaginative, poetical race whose rural songs sound strangely like the lyrical verses of the early Greek poet.

Theocritus was true to his subject; he painted for us country life as he saw it, but he viewed it in retrospect as looking back from the barbaric luxury of the Greek capital, with longing, upon the simple life of his youth. An imaginative light, a glamour is cast around the joys and sorrows of shepherd life and Sicily becomes an Arcadia to all later poets. Here we have a further addition to our conception of the pastoral: it is country life described, not by the shepherd, but from an outside viewpoint or in retrospect, and usually for the delight of a cultured audience. It is an interesting fact that the pastoral, which would seem to be a form of such simplicity and naturalness, has most often flourished in a highly intellectual and even critical age. Descriptions of country life delight those city dwellers who have lost their own simplicity, and rural life is viewed through a golden haze. This point of view furthers the tendency of the pastoral to become artificial.

There are thirty idyls usually attributed to Theocritus, though it is doubtful if all of these are genuine. In these little pictures, each of a

single scene, we have depicted various aspects of Sicilian shepherd life. The general pastoral theme is love, often unrequited or betrayed love. Theocritus has given us several distinct types of pastoral verse. First of all we have the lament for an absent or unfaithful lover. The second idyl is perhaps the best example of this, where a forsaken girl tries by magic rites to win back her lover. This is one of the best-known of the idyls and we shall find that it has been frequently imitated. Other examples are the Song of the Cyclops, pining for Galatea, and that beautiful lament of the goatherd which begins, "Courting Amaryllis with song I go." The second type of pastoral given us by Theocritus and imitated by later poets, is the contest of song between two shepherds, with a judge to decide the match and award the wager, a bowl of ivywood, a rustic pipe, a calf or a young lamb. There are many examples of this; sometimes the shepherds sing alternately short snatches each in praise of his love, sometimes the shepherd songs are really beautiful lyrics. Often in the same idyls we find examples

of the third type, which has been called the "bantering" pastoral. Frequently an idyl begins with rude banter between shepherds who close by vieing with each other in song. A fourth type, the elegy, as the form which has most affected modern literature, deserves separate treatment.

A special characteristic of Theocritus, imitated by Vergil and by later poets, is the use of the refrain, "Begin, ye Muses dear, begin the pastoral song!" In the second idyl, already referred to, where Simaetha tries to win back Delphis, the refrain is used with especial effect. "My magic wheel, draw home to me the man I love!" is changed in the last part of the idyl to "Bethink thee of my love, and whence it came, my Lady Moon!"

We cannot too strongly emphasize the fact that the Greek pastoral was real and natural. Theocritus wrote of what he saw and knew and loved, the Sicilian meadows and mountain sides, the Sicilian shepherds. The beauty and the sweetness of the idyls have made them models for later poets, many of whom, alas, have been content to copy the form alone. The Idyls of Theocritus are spontaneous;

it is when the singing shepherds of Sicily are transplanted to northern fields that the pastoral becomes artificial. Even then in the hands of the true nature lover the pastoral is a delight, but when the poet turns for his descriptions to the classics, instead of to nature, and describes Sicilian scenery instead of English hills and meadows, the true nature of the pastoral has gone. Theocritus is not the father of that so-called pastoral.

The idyls of Theocritus were in their time exceedingly popular and many imitators arose. The names of two of these have come down to us, each associated with a single poem - Bion, known by his Lament for Adonis, and Moschus, because he used the same form in a lament for Bion dead. These two poems are most important in the development of the classical elegy.

The direct influence of Theocritus upon European poetry was hardly as great as the indirect influence through Vergil's Eclogues. Vergil stereotyped the forms of Theocritus and began the tendency towards artificiality. He gave the

world faithful transcriptions of the Theocritean forms, but the sweetness and charm of the Greek master he could not reproduce. In place of these he added high polish and melodious expression which raise his bucolics from the rank of mere imitations. In Vergil we find the Idyls of Theocritus in strange dress. All the well-known types are there, with almost literal translations of many passages. The same Greek shepherds, Daphnis, Corydon, Tityrus and Thyrsis greet us, but their idyllic character is gone. Vergil introduces allegory into the pastoral and so early we begin to feel that the shepherd dress is merely a disguise. He complains against a centurion who had wronged him, he praises Augustus, he expounds moral truths, all under the pastoral figure. A few of the bucolics are original poems in pastoral form, the greater number are merely free translations of the best known of the Greek idyls, the bantering idyl, the lament for Daphnis, the charms of the betrayed girl. The scenery and atmosphere are for the most part Sicilian, it is the Sicilian muse that he invokes. One of these eclogues deserves

special attention, though it is not strictly a pastoral. It is the fourth, called the Pollio, and is famous because from this poem Vergil derived his mediaeval title of Mage. In this poem he was believed to have prophesied the birth of the Messiah. Pope has imitated the eclogue in his Messiah, the last lines of which are so well-known:

"Rise, crown'd with light, imperial Salem, rise!"
To Vergil we owe the first suggestion of Arcadia as the land of pastoral.

There are several reasons why Vergil's Eclogues should have had greater influence on later poets than their Greek originals. In the first place Latin was a much better-known language than Greek. Then too, his epic brought Vergil greater fame than Theocritus ever enjoyed and the Bucolics shared their author's prominence. Another reason for the wider influence of the Latin poems lay in the fact that they were so much more easily copied. Vergil's polished form invited imitation, the melody of Theocritus, like that of Spenser, remains inimitable.

The increased interest in classic literature

which came with the Renaissance revived the pastoral convention and introduced it into Europe. The Italian pastoral had greatest influence on English letters. We cannot do more than mention names here. Of the poets of the Italian Renaissance Petrarch and Boccaccio handed down the Vergilian tradition to our own poets. Another name, that of Sannazaro, is of especial importance in the development of the pastoral romance.

A new impulse had been given to the pastoral by Christianity. Everywhere in the Scriptures we have the shepherds: in the Old Testament, David with his songs of shepherd life; in the New Testament the figure culminates in Christ, the Good Shepherd. The old pagan pastoral was thus seen to be a fitting form for religious poetry, allegorical and didactic teaching, and unfortunately, later on for religious satire and religious dispute. From this new meaning ingrafted upon an old form come many curious medleys, as for example, that well-known passage in *Lycidas*, where Milton introduces among the muses, nymphs, and old pagan divinities, St. Peter, "The pilot of the Galilean lake."

Spenser writes in the Shepherds Calendar -

"And wanned not the great God Pan
 Upon mount Olivet,
 Feeding the blessed flocke of Dan,
 Which dyd himselfe beget?"

and it is rather curious to find the shepherds, who watched their flocks, in Crashaw's Hymn to the Nativity, bearing the classic names of Thyrsis and Tityrus.

In England there were two manifestations of the pastoral spirit. First of all there was a native tendency to pastoral, of spontaneous growth, which gives us such poems as Henryson's Robyn and Makyne, considered the first English pastoral.

"Robene sat on gud greene hill,
 Kepand a flock of se:"

This native form is seldom found uninfluenced by the past. More often it inspires the traditional pastoral, which without this natural spirit grows formal and artificial. We have seen that the strict pastoral type is not native to England - that which was true to life in Greece becomes unreal unless the poet has the genius to follow Theocritus,

not only in form, but by faithful reproduction of what he actually sees. The classic pastoral in the hands of a true English nature lover becomes a thing of beauty; without native inspiration it becomes formal and dead.

Spenser happily combined the two tendencies. In his *Shepherds Calender* he reaches the high-water mark of the English pastoral. He had a wide knowledge of previous pastoral writers - we recognize the Theocritean forms and even familiar passages - but the poems are not Greek, nor Latin, but typically English. Instead of galingale and asphodel, English "daffadillies" and hawthorne bloom, - the nightingale not the cicala sings and English shepherds feed their flocks on the hills of Kent. English names for the most part replace the classical ones, instead of Thyrsis, Tityrus and Damoetas, we have Colin Clout, Hobbinol, Cuddie, Thomalin and Willie. Spenser is by no means a mere imitator of the classics.

The *Shepherds Calender* is divided into twelve eclogues "proportionable to the twelve months," most of them appropriate to their particular seasons.

The general theme which connects these is the unrequited love of Colin Clout for Rosalind, and we have in the different divisions examples of the several pastoral forms, created by Theocritus and conventionalized by Vergil. In the August eclogue Willie and Perigot vie with each other in song, with Cuddie for judge. In November we have an elegy, a lament on the death of "Dido! the greate shephearde his daughter sheene." Colin's lament for Rosalind unkind which recurs again and again:

"I love thilke lasse, (alas! why doe I love?)
 And am forlorne, (alas! why am I lorne?)
 Shee deignes not my good will, but doth re-
 prove,
 And of my rural musicke holdeth scorne.
 Shepheards devise she hateth as the snake,
 And laughes the songs that Colin Clout doth
 make."

Spenser follows Vergil in using the pastoral form for the praise of his sovereign; in the April eclogue he praises Elisa in the extravagant terms then in fashion. It is also used to teach moral lessons and even to cloak religious disputes.

These tendencies show the weakness of the English pastoral and point to its early decline. But the Idyls of Theocritus are not more sweet than the melodious verses of Spenser, which have never been surpassed in English literature.

The Shepherds Calender appeared in 1579. Its influence on the development of the pastoral was great and immediate. Scores of imitators, most of them of mediocre ability, sprang up and pastoralism became the literary fashion of the day. During the Elizabethan age and the succeeding decades there was scarcely a branch of literature that did not feel the pastoral impulse. Sidney's Arcadia (founded upon the Arcadia of the Italian, Sannazaro) was the first of a series of pastoral romances, characteristic of this age. Greene's Menaphon and his Pandosto, and Lodge's Rosalynde are other examples which we can only mention. The drama, too, felt the same impulse. Here the Italian influence combined with the prose romance and grafted on the old English mystery plays with their rude portrayals of shepherd life, give us such plays as Fletcher's Faithful Shepherdess,

Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and the *Winter's Tale*, (directly founded on the pastoral romance) and, in another age Milton's *Comus* and *Arcades*. With these manifestations of the pastoral spirit we shall not concern ourselves.

The Elizabethan pastorals owe less to classic tradition than those of a later age. The best known are those that spring from the native impulse, though that impulse was almost never free from traditional influence. The formal classical eclogues of this period are inferior to the pastoral lyrics which are scattered through the romances and plays, and collected in old anthologies and song books. We must not suppose that these songs are about real shepherds. Nothing is farther from the truth. A native pastoral tradition had grown up side by side with the classical convention. There is no reality to the shepherd life depicted in these beautiful songs. All is idealized. The shepherd has become a fashionable convention for the lover or poet. The songs are dainty conceits, lyrically sweet but fragile and with no vital hold on life. The formal classical eclogue is not more

remote from the conditions of actual life.

Nearly all of the great Elizabethans tried their hands at this fashionable literary type, with greater or less success. Sidney, Peele, Fletcher, even Ben Jonson wrote pastoral verse. One of the most perfect songs from the prose romancer is Robert Greene's *The Shepherd's Wife's Song*.

"Ah, what is love? It is a pretty thing,

As sweet unto a shepherd as a king;

And sweeter too,

For kings have cares that wait upon a crown,

And cares can make the sweetest love to frown.

Ah then, ah then,

If country loves such sweet desires do gain,

What lady would not love a shepherd swain?"

In Lodge's *Rosalynde* we have several beautiful songs, one, *Montanus' Sonnet*, reminiscent of *Theocritus*.

"The lovesick Polypheme that could not see,

Who on the barren shore

His fortunes doth deplore,

And melteth all in moan

For Galatea gone;

And with his piteous cries,
 Afflicts both earth and skies,
 And to his woe betook,
 Doth break both pipe and hook:
 For whom complains the morn,
 For whom the sea nymphs mourn;
 Alas, his pain is naught;
 For were my woe but thought,
 Oh how would Phoebe sigh, if she did look
 on me?"

Shakespeare's lyrics are well known -

"Under the greenwood tree
 Who loves to lie with me,"

"Who is Sylvia? what is she

 That all our swains commend her?"

and the spring song from Love's Labours Lost -

"When daisies pied and violets blue
 And lady-smocks all silver-white
 And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue
 Do paint the meadows with delight,"

are most in the pastoral vein.

Besides the songs scattered through the romances and plays there are many pastoral lyrics found in anthologies and in the Elizabethan song books. The most important of the anthologies, England's Helicon was published in the year 1600. It contains some of the best representatives of the Elizabethan pastoral lyric and also serves to show the extraordinary popularity of this form. The greater number of these lyrics are of course forgotten, but several poems in the collection will never die. The best known is Marlowe's

"Come live with me, and be my love;
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dales and fields,
Woods, or steepy mountains yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals."

a poem which has been imitated again and again, but never equalled. Raleigh's reply, beginning

"If all the world and love were young,

And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
 These pretty pleasures might me move
 To live with thee and be thy love."

is also included in this collection. Here too we have reprinted Surrey's Harpalus Complaint, one of the earliest of Elizabethan pastorals.

"Phillida was a fair maid,
 And fresh as any flower:
 Whom Harpalus the herdman pray'd
 To be his paramour."

One other store house of Elizabethan pastorals has been mentioned - the song books. The name of Campion immediately suggests itself - some of the most lovely are from his pen. Here is the first stanza of his Amaryllis.

"I care not for these ladies
 That must be woo'd and pray'd,
 Give me kind Amaryllis,
 The wanton country maid:
 Nature art disdaineth
 Her beauty is her own:
 Her when we court and kiss,
 She cries, "Forsooth, let go!"

But when we come where comfort is,
 She never will say 'No'."

Many of the Elizabethan lyrics are anonymous. We must mention one of these and quote at least a few lines from *Phillida Flouts Me*, a poem which contains a hint of later society verse.

"Oh! what a plague is love,
 How shall I bear it?
 She will unconstant prove,
 I greatly fear it.
 It so torments my mind,
 That my strength faileth,
 She wavers with the wind,
 As the ship saileth.
 Please her the best you may,
 She looks another way.
 Alas and well a day!

Phillida flouts me.

To the 16th century belong dozens of other lyrics equally delightful. The names of Nicholas Breton, Thomas Decker and Thomas Heywood must at least be mentioned. To quote all the sweet songs of the Elizabethan age would be impossible.

The pastoral lyric reaches its culmination and finds its last interpreter in Robert Herrick. Herrick's verse seems almost of the Elizabethan age; he is the direct descendant of Greene and of Campion. To Phyllis is one of the famous imitations of Marlowe's *Passionate Shepherd*. Ordinary country fare will not do for this dainty shepherdess - Herrick tempts her with

"The paste of filberts for thy bread,
 With cream of cowslips buttered;
 Thy feasting tables shall be hills
 With daisies spread and daffodils,
 Where thou shalt sit, and red-breast by
 For meat shalt give thee melody."

Corinna's *Going a-Maying*, perhaps the best known of Herrick's poems, is certainly not surpassed by any earlier lyrics. The poem concludes with that thought (so characteristic of Herrick) of the swift passing of youth and joy, seldom found in the Elizabethan pastoral. With Herrick we associate Marvell, with his songs in Juliana's praise, and with these two the pastoral lyric comes to an abrupt close. For a century the highest develop-

ment of the pastoral had been along lyric lines. Now comes a return to the formal eclogue and with it the decadence of the pastoral.

Before discussing the 18th century eclogues we must consider briefly the development of the pastoral proper during these years, from Spenser to the close of the 17th century. With a single exception no great names mark its progress - in this age the glory of the pastoral is distinctly the lyric. After Spenser, imitators in plenty sprang up, who were content to follow closely the Spenserian model. Peele and Lodge both wrote eclogues, inferior in quality to their songs. Drayton's *Muses Elizium* follows the classic tradition and the name of Richard Barnfield belongs both here and among the Elizabethan song writers. More pretentious than any of these is William Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*, a pastoral epic in several books interspersed with songs.

The great pastoral writer of the 17th century was John Milton. Milton's five so-called minor poems, the work of his youth, are all in this vein.

Lycidas we reserve for later treatment. Comus belongs to the drama - it is one of the most perfect examples of that pastoral dramatic development, the masque. The fragment Arcades is of the same class. Throughout these two poems are beautiful songs and bits of rural description not to be surpassed in any age. L'Allegro and Il Penseroso are not of course strict pastorals, but in them we have charming pictures of country life.

"While the ploughman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorne in the dale."

Though intense love of the classics is Milton's prevailing characteristic, he did have a very real interest in country life which added freshness to his rural scenes. With Milton and with Herrick the development of the English pastoral along different lines really ceases. It is unfortunate that the pastoral does not end here with the great glories of lyric and formal tradition, but there is

another chapter, a chapter of decline.

The 18th century is characterized by the return to the formal eclogue and by the final extinction of the pastoral. Three names mark the course of the eclogue, Pope, Philips and Gay. Pope's four pastoral poems, named for the four seasons, are practically school boy exercises. They were written at the age of sixteen and treat in an extremely conventional manner the traditional pastoral themes, the contest in song, the despair of Alexis, the lover's lament, and lastly the dirge for the dead shepherdess, Daphne. As classical imitations showing the possibilities of the heroic couplet these poems are worthy; as delineations of shepherd life they are absurd. A quotation at random will show the stiffness and formality of the style. Here for instance are the opening lines of Spring.

"First in these fields I try the sylvan strains,
Nor blush to sport on Windsor's blissful plains:
Fair Thames, flow gently from thy sacred spring,
While on thy banks Sicilian Muses sing;
Let vernal airs through trembling osiers play,

And Albion's cliffs resound the rural lay.

So when the nightingale to rest removes,
The thrush may chant to the forsaken groves;
But charm'd to silence, listen while she sings,
And all the aerial audience clap their wings."

Vergil, not Theocritus, is Pope's model and as in Vergil high polish is the leading characteristic. In his "Discourse on Pastoral Poetry" prefixed to the poems, Pope virtually states that his method has been imitation of the classic writers rather than personal observation though he does remark that "With respect to the present age, nothing more conduces to make these compositions natural, than when some knowledge in rural affairs is discovered!" Pope greatly admired the pastorals and in regard to their merit was waged a curious literary controversy.

With the decay of creative power in any age comes usually a great deal of critical discussion. The pastoral was no exception. The periodicals of the age contain many articles on the history of the pastoral, its nature and development.

Of a series of such articles in the Guardian, the final number concludes with this sentence, "Theocritus left his dominions to Vergil; Vergil left his to his son Spenser, and Spenser was succeeded by his eldest born Philips." Now between the pastorals of Pope and those of Philips the modern reader finds little to choose. Pope was certainly the greater master of versification, but the real pastoral spirit was dead, and the question of the relative superiority of these two is not a vital one for us. Pope, of course, found just cause for anger in the expressed preference for his rival. Two things he did. He wrote to the Guardian, a paper purporting to continue the same series, in which he compares Philips and Pope, and while seeming to give superiority to his rival, he really holds him up to ridicule. At least he attempted that - the satire is not ^{at} all clear to us and the article seems scarcely convincing. The quarrel had a more important result, however. Pope induced the poet Gay to write a series of eclogues ridiculing those of Philips which he found savored too much of the country! Like so many works begun in parody

The Shepherd's Week became more than a burlesque and Gay, a true nature lover, accomplished what neither Pope nor Philips could do and brought the pastoral back to the soil. Gay's characters bear the ridiculous names of Cloddipole, Hobnelia, Buxoma and Blouzelinda and some of his versions of the classic themes of Theocritus are very amusing. Monday, or the Squabble, is the old bantering idyl in strange form and in Thursday, or the Spell, we recognize that the model is Theocritus' lament of the betrayed girl. Hobnelia's complaint begins thus

"I rue the day, a rueful day I trow,
 The woeful day, a day indeed of woe!
 When Lubberkin to town his cattle drove,
 A maiden fine bedight he happ'd to love;
 The maiden fine bedight his love retains,
 And for the village he forsakes the plains.
 Return, my Lubberkin, these ditties hear;
 Spells will I try, and spells shall ease
 my care.
 'With my sharp heel I three times mark the
 ground,

And turn me thrice around, around, around!" These pastorals clearly lack the elegance and propriety required by Pope, but Gay's shepherds, clumsy, unpoetic creatures though they are, are alive.

Here the pastoral, except in one narrowed sense, really ends. In Gay we have one of the first faint hints of the coming realism and return to nature that was to overthrow classicism and traditional authority. The pastoral was worn out. It might perhaps have served as a fitting form of expression for the new 19th century movement, had it not been so inextricably bound up with the age of formal expression. The 19th century poets looked upon the man of the fields not as a plaything or as a fantastic metaphor or symbol, but as a man belonging with themselves in common brotherhood. The old form was entirely inadequate for the new conception.

We have seen the beauties of the pastoral in its perfection. In its decline it had the merit of preserving, in critical and bookish periods, a love of country life even though that life was

conventionalized and idealized. Its faults are obvious. It was at best a highly conventional form, with the germ of its decline inherent in its own characteristics. Though it gave us some of the beautiful things in our literature, it was nevertheless an exotic, foreign to English shores and not destined to sturdy growth and development. In one form alone the pastoral lives on - the elegy.

The pastoral elegy had its origin in the celebration of the death and resurrection of Adonis. In this eastern rite, grafted upon the old Greek religion we have the decay of summer represented by the death of a beautiful youth - Linus, Adonis, Thammuz (the name has many forms). Theocritus has described the rites of the yearly festival of the Resurrection of Adonis and it was for such an occasion that Bion wrote his Lament for Adonis. Theocritus has given us at least one elegy. It is the song of Thyrsis in the first idyl and several English poems show its influence.

"Where, ah! where were ye when Daphnis was languishing; ye Nymphs, where were ye? By Peneus's beautiful dells, or by dells of Pindus? For surely

ye dwelt not by the great stream of the river Anapus, nor on the watch-tower of Etna, nor by the sacred water of Acis. ----- Ye wolves, ye jackals, and ye bears in the mountain caves, farewell! The herdsman Daphnis ye never shall see again, no more in the dells, no more in the groves, no more in the woodlands. Farewell Arethusa, ye rivers, good-night, that pour down Thymbris your beautiful waters.

Begin, ye Muses dear, begin the pastoral song!"

But it is to Bion and to Moschus that we owe the real models of the classical elegy. Bion's Lament for Adonis is well known to English readers through Mrs. Browning's translation beginning

"I mourn for Adonis - Adonis is dead

Fair Adonis is dead, and the Loves are
lamenting.

Sleep, Cypris, no more on thy purple-strewed
bed;

Arise, wretch stoled in black, beat thy
breast unrepenting,

And shriek to the worlds, 'Fair Adonis is
dead.'"

Moschus was the first to use this form for the expression of personal grief. He imitates Bion's Adonis in his lament for the dead singer. We should like to quote both poems at length, they are so filled with reminiscences of the better-known English elegies, Milton, Shelley, Arnold, all drew inspiration for form and for many exquisite verses from these two pastoral elegies.

This classic model perfected by Bion, and given personal application by Moschus became in English letters a dignified and fitting way of expressing grief for a dead friend, especially one who like Lycidas "knew himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme." In fact it is more often the poet than the man who is lamented - the grief is not so much personal anguish, as sorrow for the world's loss in the untimely death of a singer. Deep passion and despair would not use so elaborate a setting, grief from the heart demands simpler expression. Tennyson cannot think of his dear dead friend under the guise of Daphnis or Adonis. It is "my Arthur" in In Memoriam. But with the exception of In Memoriam all the greater English

elegies are pastoral in form and they are perhaps the greatest glory of the English pastoral.

Four great names mark the development of the classical elegy, Spenser, Milton, Shelley and Arnold. Spenser's best-known contribution to elegiac literature is the *Astrophel* written on the death of his friend Sidney.

"A gentle shepheard borne in Arcady,
Of gentlest race that ever shepheard bore,
About the grassie bancks of Haemony
Did keepe his sheep, his litle stock and store:
Full carefully he kept them day and night,
In fairest fields; and *Astrophel* he hight."

Astrophel shares the characteristics of the *Shepherds Calender*. It is classic in structure only, though the figure of Stella weeping over the dead body of her lover is reminiscent of the Adonis. It is not the nymphs of formal elegy but his fellow shepherds who were absent at the death of *Astrophel*.

"Ah! where were ye this while his shepheard
peares,
To whom alive was nought so deare as hee:
And ye fayre Mayds, the matches of his yeares

Which in his grace did boast you most to bee!
Ah, where were ye, when he of you had need,
To stop his wound that wondrously did bleed!"
Of the great elegies, Astrophel owes least to Greek
influence.

With Milton it is far different. Lycidas is
a strictly formal, strictly classical poem, broken
only by two passionate outbursts which reveal
Milton, the man. Its structure is based upon the
Greek elegies and the poem shows throughout close
familiarity not only with Bion and Moschus but with
Theocritus as well. Like Vergil, Milton invokes
the Sicilian muse. The catalogue of flowers that
strew the laureate hearse of the dead, occurs again
and again both in Greek and English pastoral. In
Lycidas the pastoral figure is carried through to
the end; in none of the other elegies is the
classic treatment so sustained. Here, and in all
the English elegies we find the note of hope, that
is absent in the pagan laments.

"Ah me, when the mallows wither in the
garden, and the green parsley, and the curled
tendrils of the anise, on a later day they live

again, and spring in another year; but we men, we, the great and mighty, or wise, when once we have died, in hollow earth we sleep, gone down into silence; a right long, and endless, and unawakening sleep." (The Bion of Moschus)

Asphodel was of course Sidney's own name for himself, Lycidas was a shepherd in Theocritus and again in Vergil. Adonais is without doubt Shelley's variant from the name Adonis. In his lament for Keats, Shelley draws largely from the classics, but the poem is not strictly a pastoral. There is an atmosphere of unreality: the mourners about the dead poet are not shepherds but

"Desires and Adorations,

Winged Persuasions and veiled Destinies,

Splendours and Glooms, and glimmering

Incarnations

Of hopes and fears, and twilight Fantasies;"

Shelley's Adonais is the longest of all the classical elegies. Its opening stanzas follow closely the Greek

"I weep for Adonais - he is dead!

Oh, weep for Adonais! though our tears

Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
 And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
 To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
 And teach them thine own sorrow; Say: 'With me
 Died Adonais; till the Future dares
 Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
 An echo and a light unto eternity!'

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
 When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which
 flies

In darkness? where was born Urania
 When Adonais died?"

We have already quoted the opening lines of the
 Adonis. The Lament for Bion begins

"Wail, let me hear you wail, ye woodland glades,
 and thou Dorian water; and weep ye rivers, for
 Bion, the well beloved! Now all ye green things
 mourn, and now ye groves lament him, ye flowers now
 in sad clusters breathe yourselves away. Now
 redden ye roses in your sorrow, and now wax red
 ye wind-flowers, now thou hyacinth, whisper the
 letters on thee graven, and add a deeper ai ai to

thy petals; he is dead, the beautiful singer." In these first stanzas of Adonais, the classic influence is strongest. There are but few individual passages in this poem directly referable to the Greek originals, and towards the close the pastoral figure seems almost forgotten.

Matthew Arnold brings the pastoral down to our own time. His Thyrsis is the fourth of the great English classic elegies. Arnold was a thorough Greek scholar and lover of the classics. The opening stanzas of the Scholar Gypsy breath the very spirit of Theocritus. In Thyrsis the influence of Bion and Moschus is strong. Notwithstanding this Thyrsis is a thoroughly English poem, much more so than Lycidas or the shadowy Adonais. The scene is frankly Oxford, the two Hinkseys and Cumner ground. Arnold's flowers do not come from classical literature but are blossoms that grow in every door yard

"gold-dusted snap dragon,

Sweet-William with his homely cottage-smell,

And stocks in fragrant blow;"

The influence of Bion and Moschus is not merely

structural. Arnold has even paraphrased passages from the Greek, and in his verse given them new beauty. Here are the concluding lines of the Lament for Bion.

"Nay, sing to the Maiden some strain of Sicily, sing some sweet pastoral lay. And she too is Sicilian, and on the shores of Aetna she was wont to play, and she knew the Dorian strain. Not unrewarded will the singing be; and as once to Orpheus's sweet minstrelsy she gave Eurydice to return with him, even so will she send thee too, Bion to the hills. But if I, even I, and my piping had aught availed, before Pluteus I too would have sung."

In Thyrsis we have these stanzas -

"Alack, for Corydon no rival now! -

But when Sicilian shepherds lost a mate,
 Some good survivor with his flute would go,
 Piping a ditty sad for a Bion's fate;
 And cross the unpermitted ferry's flow,
 And relax Pluto's brow,
 And make leap up with joy the beauteous head
 Of Proserpine, among whose crowned hair

Are flowers first opened on Sicilian air,
 And flute his friend, like Orpheus, from the
 dead.

O easy access to the bearer's grace
 When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine!
 For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,
 She knew the Dorian waters' gush divine,
 She knew each lily white which Enna yields,
 Each rose with blushing face;
 She loved the Dorian pipe, the Dorian strain,
 But ah, of our poor Thames she never heard!
 Her foot the Cumner cowslips never stirred.
 And we should tease her with our plaint in
 vain!"

A passage like this, lovely in itself, gains fresh beauty from a knowledge of the Greek that inspired it. There is no incongruity in Arnold's blending of the classic with the scenes of common English life.

These great masters have shown us the rare beauty of the pastoral elegy. In lesser degree other English elegies suggest Greek models but in

spite of the dignity and fitness of this form, its manifest limitations have been felt by many poets. Exquisite as it is, there is a coldness and formality about the traditional form, hard to be overcome. Partaking of the nature of the pastoral, it may share the same fate. But it seems probable that alone of the pastoral development, this form will live and grow in beauty. It waits re-inspiration at the touch of a master hand.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Theocritus, Bion and Moschus

rendered into English prose by Andrew Lang

Vergil's Eclogues

Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama. - W. W. Greg

English Pastorals - Edmund K. Chambers, editor

The Warrick Library

Lyrics from the song-books of the Elizabethan age

A. H. Bullen, editor

Seventeenth Century Lyrics - G. Saintsbury, editor

The Guardian

Complete works of Spenser, Milton, Pope, Matthew

Arnold, E. B. Browning, etc.

English Elegies - John Cann Bailey, editor

(Bodley Head anthologies)