

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott  
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel  
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup  
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt  
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier  
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder  
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George  
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust  
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot  
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy  
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius  
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates  
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Raabe Gibbon Tschchow  
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius  
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke  
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil  
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus  
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus Moltke  
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo  
Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht  
Nietzsche Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz  
von Ossietzky Marx vom Stein Lawrence Irving  
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# **A Full Enquiry into the Nature of the Pastoral (1717)**

Thomas Purney

## Imprint

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## INTRODUCTION

In the preface to each of his volumes of pastorals (*Pastorals. After the simple Manner of Theocritus, 1717; Pastorals. viz. The Bashful Swain: and Beauty and Simplicity, 1717*) Thomas Purney rushed into critical discussions with the breathlessness of one impatient to reveal his opinions, and, after touching on a variety of significant topics, cut himself short with the promise of a future extensive treatise on pastoral poetry. In 1933 Mr. H.O. White, unable to discover the treatise, was forced to conclude that it probably had never appeared (*The Works of Thomas Purney*, ed. H.O. White, Oxford, 1933, p. 111), although it had been advertised at the conclusion of Purney's second volume of poetry as shortly to be printed. A copy, probably unique, of *A Full Enquiry into the True Nature of Pastoral* (1717) was, however, recently purchased by the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library of the University of California, and is here reproduced. Despite the obvious failure of the essay to influence critical theory, it justifies attention because it is the most thorough and specific of the remarkably few studies of the pastoral in an age when many thought it necessary to imitate Virgil's poetic career, and because it is, in many respects, a contribution to the more liberal tendencies within neoclassic criticism. Essentially, the *Full Enquiry* is a coherent expansion of the random comments collected in the poet's earlier prefaces.

Purney belongs to the small group of early eighteenth-century critics who tended to reject the aesthetics based upon authority and pre-established definitions of the *genres*, and to evolve one logically from the nature of the human mind and the sources of its enjoyment; in other words, who turned attention from the objective work of art to the subjective response. These men, such as Dennis and Addison, were not searching for an aesthetics of safety, one that would produce unimpeachable correctness; Purney frequently underscored his preference for a faulty and irregular work that is alive to a meticulous but dull one. This is not to be understood as praise

of the irregular: the rules of poetry must be established, but they must be founded rationally on the ends of poetry, pleasure and profit, and the psychological process by which they are received, and not solely on the practices and doctrines of the ancients. Taking his cue from the Hobbesian and Lockian methodology of Addison's papers of the pleasures of the imagination without delving into Addison's sensational philosophy, Purney outlined an extensive critical project to investigate (1) "the Nature and Constitution of the human Mind, and what Pleasures it is capable of receiving from Poetry"; (2) the best methods of exciting those pleasures; (3) the rules whereby these methods may be incorporated into literary form (*Works*, ed. White, p. 48). It is this pattern of thought that regulates the *Full Enquiry*. Perhaps more than any other poetic type, the pastoral of the Restoration and the early eighteenth century was dominated by classical tradition; the verse composed was largely imitative of the eclogues of Theocritus and Virgil, especially the latter, and criticism of the form was deduced from their practices or from an assumption that the true pastoral of antiquity was the product of the Golden Age. Of this mode of criticism Rapin and Pope were the leading exemplars. In opposition, Fontenelle, Tickell (if he was the author of the *Guardian* essays on the pastoral), and Purney developed their theories empirically and hence directed the pastoral away from the classical tradition. (On these two schools see J.E. Congleton, "Theories of Pastoral Poetry in England, 1684-1717," *SP*, XLI, 1944, pp. 544-575.) Although Purney adopted a modification of Aristotle's critical divisions into Fable, Character, Sentiment, and Diction, and took for granted the doctrine of the distinction of *genres*, he otherwise rejected traditional formulae and critical tenets, and began with the premise that man is most delighted by the imaginative perception of the states of life for which he would willingly exchange his own. These are "the busy, great, or pompous" (depicted in tragedy and the epic) and "the retir'd, soft, or easy" (depicted in the pastoral). From this analysis of "the Nature of the Human Mind," the characteristics of the true pastoral, such as the avoidance of the hardships and vulgarities of rural life, follow logically. Similarly, since a minutely drawn description deprives the reader's fancy of its naturally pleasurable exercise, pastoral descriptions should only set "the Image in the finest Light." Rapin, on the other hand, had determined the proper length of descriptions by examining

Virgil and Theocritus. For the association of the pleasure afforded by the pastoral with the natural human delight in ease, Purney was indebted to the essays on the pastoral in *The Guardian* (see no. 22), from which he borrowed extensively for many of his principles, and to Fontenelle, who constructed his theory of the pastoral upon the premise that all men are dominated "par une certaine paresse." By contrast, although Pope adopted Fontenelle's premise, he tested its validity by relating it to the accepted definition of the *genre*.

One of Purney's major purposes in the essay was to dignify the pastoral by demonstrating that it admits all the components generally reserved for tragedy and the epic. Most critics had considered the pastoral a minor form and consequently had narrowed their attention to a few frequently debated questions, mainly the state of rural life to be depicted and the level of the style to be adopted. All agreed that the poem should be brief and simple in its fable, characters, and style. But it was therefore a poetic exercise, no more significant, Purney complained, than a madrigal. He was intent upon investing the pastoral with all the major poetic elements—extended, worthy fable; moral; fully-drawn characters; and appropriate expression. For in his mind the poem best incorporates one of the only two true styles, the tender, and therefore warrants a literary status beneath only tragedy and the epic.

Like his critical method, Purney's decision that the pastoral should depict contemporary rural life divested of what is vulgar and painful in it, rather than either the life of the Golden Age or true rustic existence places him on the side of Addison, Tickell, Ambrose Philips, and Fontenelle (indeed, his statement is a paraphrase of Fontenelle's), and in opposition to the school of Rapin, Pope, and Gay, who argued for a portrait of the Golden Age. Both schools campaigned for a simplicity removed from realistic rusticity (which they detected in Spenser and Theocritus) and refinement (as in Virgil's eclogues); but to one group the term meant the innocence of those remote from academic learning and social sophistication, and to the other the refined simplicity of an age when all men—including kings and philosophers—were shepherds. With reservations, the first group tended to prefer Theocritus and Spenser; and the second, Virgil. Hence, too, the first group approved of Philips' efforts to create a fresh and simple pastoral manner. As a poet, Pur-

ney moved sharply away from the classical pastoral by curiously blending an entirely original subject matter with a sentimentalized realism and a naive, diffuse expression; and as a critic he pointed in the direction of Shenstone and Allan Ramsay by emphasizing the tender, admitting the use of earthy realism in the manner of Gay, and recommending for pastoral such "inimitably pretty and delightful" tales as *The Two Children in the Wood*. Had his contemporaries read the treatise, how they would have been amused to contemplate the serious literary treatment of chapbook narratives, despite Addison's praise of this ballad.

In his usual nervous manner, the critic did not confine himself to his topic, but touched on a number of significant peripheral subjects. He showed the virtue of concrete and specific imagery at a time when most poets sought the sanctuary of abstractions and universals; commented cogently on the styles of Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare; anticipated the later doctrine of the power of the incomplete and the obscure to suggest and therefore to compel the imagination to create; adopted and expanded Addison's distinction between the sublime and the beautiful; and, borrowing a suggestion that he probably found in Dennis (*Critical Works*, ed. Edward N. Hooker, Baltimore, 1919, I, 47), developed a profitable distinction between the sublime image and the sublime thought by examining their different psychological effects.

But, because they run counter to the accepted opinions of his age, it is Purney's comments on matters of style that are especially striking, although it must be remembered that most of them have to do with the pastoral alone and do not constitute a general theory of poetics. Perhaps his most original contribution is his attack upon the cautious contemporary styles of poetry: "strong lines," a term that originally defined the style of the metaphysical poets, but that now described the compact and pregnant manner of Dryden's satires, for example, and the "fine and agreeable," exemplified, let us say, by Pope's *Pastorals* or Prior's *vers de société*. To these Purney preferred the bolder though less popular styles, the sublime and the tender, corresponding to the two pure artistic manners that Addison had distinguished. How widely Purney intended to diverge from current poetry can be judged by his definition of the sublime image as one that puts the mind "upon the Stretch" as in Lady Mac-

beth's apostrophe to night; and by his praise of the simplicity of Desdemona's "Mine eyes do itch." Both passages were usually ridiculed by Purney's contemporaries as indecorous.

Equally original is Purney's concept of simplicity, which he insisted should appear in the style and the nature of the characters, not in denuding the fable and in divesting the poem of the ornaments of poetry, as Pope had argued in the preface of his *Pastorals*. It was this concept that also led Purney to his unusual theory of enervated diction. How unusual it was can be judged by comparing with the then-current practices and theories of poetic diction his recommendation of monosyllables, expletives, the archaic language of Chaucer and Spenser, and current provincialisms—devices that Gay had used for burlesque—as means of producing the soft and the tender.

But it is hardly true that Purney's "true kinship is with the romantics," as Mr. White claims, for there is a wide chasm between a romantic and a daring and extravagant neoclassicist. Rather, Purney's search for a subjective psychological basis for criticism is one of the elements out of which the romantic aesthetics was eventually evolved, and it frequently led him to conclusions that reappear later in the eighteenth century.

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In addition to editing Purney's pastorals, Mr. H.O. White has published an exhaustive study of "Thomas Purney, a Forgotten Poet and Critic of the Eighteenth Century" in *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, XV (1929), 67-97. University of Illinois.

Earl. R. Wasserman

# A FULL ENQUIRY INTO THE TRUE NATURE OF PASTORAL.

The PROEME or first Chapter of which contains a SUMMARY of all that the CRITICKS, ancient or modern, have hitherto deliver'd on that SUBJECT.

After which follows what the Author has farther to advance, in order to carry the POEM on to its utmost Perfection.

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Written by Mr. *PURNEY*.

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[Illustration]

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**LONDON**

Printed by *H.P.* for JONAS BROWN, at the *Black Swan* without Temple-Bar. 1717.

## PROEME.

*Cubbin* (ye know the Kentish Swain) was basking in the Sun one Summer-Morn: His Limbs were stretch'd all soft upon the Sands, and his Eye on the Lasses feeding in the Shade. The gentle Paplet peep'd at Colly thro' a Hedge, and this he try'd to put in Rhime, when he saw a Person of unusual Air come tow'rd him. Yet neither the Novelty of his Dress, nor the fairness of his Mien could win the Mind of the Swain from his rural Amusement, till he accosted the thoughtful Shepherd thus.

If you are the *Cubbin*, said he, I enquire for, as by the Peculiarity of your Countenance, and the Firmness of your Look, you seem, young Boy, to be; I would hold some Discourse with you. The Pastorals of your Performance I have seen; and tho' I will not call 'em Perfect, I think they show a Genius not wholly to be overlookt. My Name, continued he, is Sophy, nor is it unknown in the World. In this Book (and here he pluckt it out of his Pocket) I have pen'd some Rules for your future Guidance.

*Cubbin* was strangely taken with the mild Address and Sweetness of Sophy. A thousand times he thanked him, as often smil'd upon him, and spread his Coat for him to set more soft upon the Sands.

Sophy was a true-born *Britton*, and admir'd a forward *Spirit*. The *French* he little loved; Their Poets dare not (said he) think without the Ancients, and their Criticks make use of their Eyes instead of their Understandings. 'Twas his way to pardon, nay admire a Critick, who for every fifty Errors would give him but one Remark of Use, or good Discovery. But always read one Sheet, then burnt those dull insipid Rogues, who thought that to write a good was to write a faultless Piece. By which means their whole Work becomes one general Fault.

This Censure, I fear, would fall pretty heavy on the [A]*Criticks* of *France*; if this were a proper Place to persue the Argument in. But Sophy thus resum'd his Talk.

[Footnote A: *In the Preface to the Second Part of our Pastorals, viz. THE BASHFUL-SWAIN, and BEAUTY AND SIMPLICITY, we have shown to what Perfection the whole Science of CRITICISM was brought by the Ancients, then what Progress the French Criticks have further made, and also what remains as yet untouch'd, and uncompleat.*]

In this, said he, I like your Temper, Cubbin. By those few Pieces we have seen of your's, and those I hear you have in Manuscript, you seem determin'd to engage in those Kinds of Poetry and those Subjects in Criticism, which the Ancients have left us most imperfect. Here, if you fail, you may be still some help to him who shall Attempt it next; and if all decline it, apprehensive of no fair success, how should it ever attain Perfection.

Then Cubbin told the *Critick*, that the reason of his entering upon Pastoral, where the Labour was excessive and the Honour gain'd minute, was this; He had unhappily reflected on that thing, we call a Name, so thoroughly, and weigh'd so closely what like Happiness it would afford, that he could now receive no pleasure from the Thoughts of growing famous; nor would write one Hour in any little kind of Poetry, which was not able to take up and possess his Mind with Pleasure, tho' it would procure him the most glaring Character in Christendom. This Temper was especially conspicuous while he tarried at the Fountain where he imbibed the little Knowledge he possesses. He seem'd as out of humour with Applause, and dafted aside the Wreath if ever any seem'd dispos'd to offer it.

I' faith, said *Cubbin*, I am nothing careful whether any Pastorals be cry'd up or not. Were I dispos'd to write for a Name, no whit would I engage in either the Sublime or Soft in Writing: For as the middle Way, made up of both, is vastly easiest to attain; so is it pleasant to the most Imaginations, and acquires the widest Character.

There are originally, answer'd *Sophy*, no perfect and real Kinds of Writing but them two. As for the Strong Lines, 'tis supplying the want of the Sublime with the Courtly and Florid Stile; as what we usually call the Fine and Agreeable is but bastard and degenerate from the truly Tender. But yet it must be added that this suits the Populace the best.

Here Cubbin answer'd Sophy, that these were pretty ways of making Verses, but his mind was of such a peculiar Turn, that it requir'd some greater Design, and more laborious to occupy it, or else it would not be sufficiently engag'd to be delighted. Twould not be taken off from reflecting on what a stupid Dream is Life; and what trifling and impertinent Creatures all Mankind. Unless, said He, I'm busy'd, and in a hurry, I can't impose upon my self the Thought that I am a Being of some little significance in the Creation; I can't help looking forward and discovering how little better I shall be if I write well, or ill, or not at all. I would fain perswade my self, continued he, that a *Shakespear* and a *Milton* see us now take their Works in hand with Pleasure and read with Applause.

Tis certain, answer'd Sophy, that the less we know of Nature and our Selves, the more is Life delightful. If we take all things as we see 'em, Life is a good simple kind of Dream enough, but if we awaken out of the dull Lethargy, we are so unhappy as to discover, that tis all and every thing Folly, and Nonsense and Stupidity.—But we walk in a vain Shadow and disquiet our selves in vain.

Here Cubbin fell with his Face to the Ground, and said, I prethee now no more of this; your Book you open'd but forgot to give me the Contents.

Sophy recollected him; and told the Swain, That Book contain'd some Rules for his Direction. But as I have not patience, added he, to make a Treatise of some hundred Pages, which consists of other Persons Hints, but flourish'd and dilated on; or the Rules and Observations of the Ancients set in a different Light; I shall first sum up the whole Discoverys the *French* or any other Criticks yet have made in Pastoral; and where they have left it I shall take the Subject, and try how far beyond I am able to carry it. For after that, every single Thought will be the free Sentiment of my own Mind. And I desire all to judge as freely as I write; and (if, after a strict Examination of the Rules, they see any Reason) to condemn as peremptorily; for we cannot get out of an Error too soon.

*RUAÆUS* say's, The Pastoral Sentiments must have a Connection Plain and Easy. Affirming that tho' Incoherence, may add a negligence and simple looseness to Pastoral, yet 'tis not such a Negligence or Simplicity as Pastoral delight's in.

*DRYDEN* observe's, that the Dialect proper for Pastoral, must have a Relish of the Fascion of speaking in the Country.

*FONTENELL* that most excellent *Frenchman* takes Notice, that no Passion is so proper for Pastoral as that of Love. He mean's as to what we are to describe in our Swains; not mentioning those Passions that Poem is to raise in the Reader.

*RAPIN* observe's, The Fable should be One. The Swains not abusive, or full of Raillery. The Sence should not be extended or long. This Author has other Observations new, but you may guess of what a Nature, when he confesses He walk'd but as *Theocritus* and *Virgil* lead him. Therefore he cannot have carried the Poem to any Perfection beyond the Condition they left it in; and so much any Reader may see from the Authors themselves, without reading a large Volume to find it out.

Mr. *DRYDEN*, in another place, has an Observation which carry's the Knowledge of Pastoral still farther. Pastorals, says he, must contain an agreeable Variety after the manner of a Landscape.

But in the *GUARDIANS*, Vol. I. The Reader may see the Nature of Pastoral more explain'd and enter'd into, in a few Dissertations, than by all these Authors have deliver'd on the Subject. As these are Books in every Bodies Hands, I shall not trouble my self to extract the Summary of 'em. But he will find the Criticism on *Phillips* and the other Observations are extreamly Ingenious.

## CHAP. I

*Of the Parts of Pastoral; and of the several Sorts of that Poem.*

PASTORAL, in it's Imitation of the Lives of Shepherds, makes use of FABLE, CHARACTERS, SENTIMENTS and LANGUAGE; and by these four Parts conjoyn'tly obtain's it's End; that is, excites our Pity, or our Joy, or both. For in FABLE I include the MORAL; in SENTIMENTS both IMAGE and THOUGHT; and in LANGUAGE I comprehend the HARMONY.

These four Parts of PASTORAL would lead us into an easy and natural enumeration of the several Kinds or Sorts of that Poem: According as they have more or fewer of those Parts; and as they do or do not excite the Pastoral passions. Not that all those Kinds are perfect Pastorals, or even Poems, but only such as Authors have given us Examples of, from *THEOCRITUS* and *VIRGIL*.

But I omit this Division for another more material. A Difference more fundamental, arises in the PASTORALS written by different AUTHORS, according to the Age which the Poet chuses to describe, or the different Descriptions which he gives us of the COUNTRY. For he may draw it as 'tis suppos'd to have been in the Golden Age; or he may describe his own COUNTRY, but touching only what is agreeable in it; or lastly, may depaint the Life of Swains exactly as it is, their Fatigues and Pleasures being equally blended together. And this, last Kind most Writers have given into; for *Theocritus's* rude unmanner'd Muse (as many Criticks have stiled it, not much amiss) naturally led him into this Method; and then, 'tis easy to conceive why the latter Pastoral-Writers chose the same.

But as the second Method is plainly more delightful than the last, as it collect's the most beautiful Images and sweetest Thoughts the Country afford's; so I shall show that 'tis preferable on many other Accounts; and even finer for Pastoral than the Golden Age. But this when I speak of the Characters.

I would only settle now in short the most compleat Kind of Pastoral; And such, I think, is that which most beautifully draw's the present Life of Shepherds, and raises Pity or Joy, by the four Parts of Pastoral, Fable, Characters, Sentiments, and Language. And since 'tis these which constitute a perfect Pastoral, I shall crave leave to speak separately of 'em all. And first of the Fable.

## CHAP. II.

*Of the Fable; and the means of making a perfect One.*

A Fable proper for Pastoral, and best adapted to delight, must have these following Qualities to render It compleat.

*First*, It must be one entire *Action*, having a Beginning, a Middle, and an End.

*Secondly*, A perfect *Fable* must have a due *Length*. And not consist of only a mournful Speech which a Shepherd find's occasion to make; or the like.

*Thirdly*, And since all Poetry is an Imitation of the most Considerable, or the most Delightful Actions in the Person's Life we undertake; not any trifling Action can be sufficient to constitute the *Fable*.

*Fourthly*, Another Quality which a Pastoral Fable should have to be the most compleat is a *Moral Result*.

I shall speak to all these Heads, except the first, concerning the *Unity*; for without that Quality, it's self-evident that 'tis no Fable. By *Unity* I mean the same with Aristotle.[A]

[Footnote A: *See his 6th Chapter.*]

### SECT. 1.

*What Length a perfect Pastoral should have.*

All *Pastoral-Writers* have used the same *Length* which *Theocritus* at first happen'd into. I shall be therefore obliged, I doubt, to dwell longer, on this Head, than the Importance of it may seem to require; and must premise, that tho' a *Fable* would need, finely carry'd on, to be three or four Hundred Lines, yet let no Writer be under any Concern about this: If a *Fable* have *Unity*, shews a delightful story, paints proper Characters, and contains a *Moral*, I shall not doubt to

call the Poem a perfect and compleat *Pastoral*, tho' the Length exceeds not fifty Lines. But my Reasons for extending it are these:

Some Author I have seen, ingeniously observes, that even in telling common Stories, 'twere best to give some short Account of the Persons first, to be heard with Delight and Attention; For, says he, 'tis not so much this being said, but its being said on such a particular Occasion, or by such a particular Person. As this is true in a common Story, so 'tis more so in a Poem. The strongest Pleasure that the Mind receives from Poetry, flows from its being engaged and concerned in the Progress and Event of the Story. We naturally side in Parties, and interest our selves in their Affairs of one side or the other. Then 'tis, our Care pursues our Favourite Character, where're he goes. We anticipate all his Successes, and make his Misfortunes our own. Were the Catastrophe in a Tragedy to appear in the first Act, but little should we be moved by it, not having as yet imbibed a favourable Opinion of the Hero, nor learn'd to be in Pain as often as he is in Danger.

Now, we may read, I fear, some Number of the *Pastorals* of the ordinary Length, before we shall meet with this Pleasure. The Truth is, we are commonly past a hundred Lines, the length of these Pieces, before the Mind and Attention is entirely fix'd, and has lost all its former and external Thoughts. All the Pleasure therefore which proceeds from the Story is lost in these short Pieces.

'Tis true Indeed, I think it possible for a Novel, or perhaps a Poem, to contain a Story in a hundred Lines which shall be able to engage the Mind so as to delight it from the *fable* it self, stript of all its Ornaments. But how few in a hundred Ages have had Genius's capable of this. And if 'tis difficult in a Novel or Poem, which may couch the Circumstances close together, how much more Difficult must it be in *Pastoral*. In the former Pieces nothing is to be observed but the Story itself, in the latter a thousand Beauties are to be adjoy'n'd and as many Rules observ'd.

## SECT 2.

*The proper Length of Pastoral further collected from the Consideration of the Characters.*

Another Pleasure which the brevity of these Pieces robs us of, is this. The Characters cannot finely and distinctly be depainted in so short a Compass. And 'tis observable, we are concern'd for the Personages in no Poetry so much as those of Pastoral. Simplicity and Innocence have Charms for every Mind, and we pity most, where most our Pity's wanted.

So that the two noblest Beauties, and which constitute the main Difference between Poetry and Versification, between a perfect Poem and a Madrigal, Epigram or Elegy, are entirely lost in those Pieces, and the only Pleasure they can raise, must proceed alone from Sentiment and Diction.

### SECT 3.

*The Length of Pastoral, yet further shown from the Passions it raises.*

In every rational and consistent Piece, the Writer has some Aim in View; as, to work every thing up to one End and a Moral Result; or to excite some Passion, or the like. Otherwise it is but an Assay of Wit, a Flirt of the Imagination, and no more. Too trifling to detain the rational Mind. Now, that these short Pieces are not capable of having a Moral, or raising any Passion, I need trouble my self for no other Proof than there never having been such one produced.

But give me leave to instance in the usual Method of forming a Pastoral. One Shepherd meets another; tells him some body is dead; upon which, they begin the mournful Dialogue, or Elegy. But in such an Elegy, there is but one thing can raise a fine Pleasure; which can be the only solid Reason for the Writers performing such a Work; and that is the raising Pity, without which no End is obtain'd by such a Dialogue. And 'tis only a School-Boy tryal of Wit; like a single Description. Unless the Poet think's it enough that the Scene is laid in the Country, and the very Talk of Shepherds is enough to support a Piece. And the truth is, of a Nature so exceeding pleasant

is Pastoral, that a Piece which has but Fields and Hedges repeated pretty often in it, is at least tolerable; whereas in any other Poetry, we see every day far better Poems cast out of the World as soon as they enter into it. But another reason of their Success proceeds from the little Knowledge most People have of Pastoral; all Poets having gone in exactly the same Track, without one endeavouring to raise the Poem to any greater Perfection than they found it in; whereas Epick Poetry, Tragedy, and Comedy, arriv'd by slow degrees to the Perfection they now bear; and this Writer still went beyond the last of an equal Genius.

But I was going to give an Instance how incapable these Pieces are of raising the Passions. A mournful Dialogue, or Elegy is formed upon the Death of some Person. But if this Elegy raises not our Pity, 'tis a Trifle, and only a childish Copy of Verses. But in order to raise that most delightful Passion, should not the Reader be first prepossess'd in favour of the Party dead? Can I pity a Person because deceas'd, without knowing any thing of his while alive?

'Tis the same in that other well-known way of drawing up a Pastoral. I mean, where two Shepherds sing alternately. *Theocritus* happily light upon this, and every Pastoral Writer since his time, (that I have seen) has been so unfortunate as to happen exactly upon the same. And I believe it has as often been indifferent to the Readers which of the Shepherds overcame. Our Joy in this Case is equal to our Grief in the other.

#### SECT. 4.

*From the length by Nature prescribed to all Pieces, Epick, Tragick, &c. is shown, That Pastoral will, at least, admit of the Length of three or four hundred Lines.*

Thus far of the Necessity of extending a Pastoral to the Length of three or four hundred Lines, if we would not deprive our selves of the Opportunities of being as delightful as Poetry will permit. But if any Commentator, who think's himself oblig'd to defend *Theocritus* and *Virgil* in every particular, should not only not allow this Length to be preferable, but even condemn it as faulty, it would oblige us to come more close to the Point, and to take the Question from the