B. The Dramatic Pastorale and Pastorale en Musique

INTRODUCTION

While isolated examples of pastoral plays appeared in France during the Middle Ages, native pastoral drama, like ballet de cour, had its true beginning in the latter part of the sixteenth century and reached fruition during the reign of Louis XIII. ¹ The Renaissance pastorale came to France from Italy and Spain, primarily through the French translations of Jacopo Sannazaro’s Arcadia (1505; trans. 1544), Jorge de Montemayar’s Diana (c.1560; trans. 1578), Torquato Tasso’s Aminta (1581; trans. 1584), Giambattista Guarini’s Il Pastor fido (1585; trans. 1595), and Luigi Grotto’s Il Pentimento amoroso (trans. 1590). These neoclassical pastorales were modelled in turn upon the Idylls of Theocritus, the Elogies and Georgics of Virgil, Ovid’s Metamorphoses, and Cicero’s Dream of Scipio. A product of troubled times, the Latin pastorale depicted a countryside at peace at a time when the dying Roman Republic was being torn apart by civil war. Similarly, the French pastoral was essentially aristocratic escapist literature of the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries. Set in an idealized countryside of forests, rocks, caves, springs, and temples, the French pastoral was far removed from the grim reality of rural life as it was from the intrigues and political machinations of courtly society. As Jean Rousset points out, ‘it reminds the courtiers that they are immersed in artifice and conventions; the true life is elsewhere, in Arcadia, in Sicily, in Forez, where the world is pure, the heart is laid bare, and life and love are in harmony.’ ²

Contemporary theorists viewed pastoral drama as a type of style of the comic and tragic genres, but given a rustic setting and featuring pastoral characters.³

² Rousset, La Littérature de l’Age baroque en France (Paris, 1954), 32. Forez was the idealized, bucolic setting of d’Orlé’s pastoral romance L’Astrée (1607–48).
³ Giustini explained that ‘the word pastoral can then be taken in two ways, either as an adjunct meaning pastoral quality, or as that particular substantive that today signifies action and the story of shepherds, when it stands by itself. The word pastoral applied to the Pastor fido should not be taken for a substantive signifying a tale separated from the tragicomedy, but for an adjective relating to tragicomedy, signifying that it differs from those that represent citizens by being composed of pastoral persons’. See G. Guastini, ‘Compendio della poesia tragicomica’ (1601), trans. in A. H. Gilbert, Literary Criticism: From SENECA TO DRYDEN (Detroit, 1963), 232.

François d’Aubignac, writing fifty years after the heyday of the genre, described the pastorale as ‘a dramatic poem following the rules of the others [i.e. the comic and tragic genres], composed of five acts, of several agreeable events and intrigues, but all with regard to a country life. There are only shepherds, hunters, fishermen, and similar sorts of people. Thus we have borrowed from the subject-matter of the Idylls and Elogues of the ancients, and applied to it the organizational principles of satirical tragedy.’ ⁴ Thus, as it allies itself with comedy, tragicomedy, and tragedy, the French dramatic pastorale adopts the musical conventions of that particular genre.

In general, the pastorale is set in an idyllic, harmonious world, one in which nature hangs in a delicate balance. Dramatic conflict arises when unrequited love upsets nature’s equilibrium. Typically, the love-interests of the nymphs and shepherds proceed by a unidirectional schema: A loves B, who loves C, who loves A. Such a ‘chain of lovers’ is illustrated in the argument to Christien des Croix’s Les Amantes, ou La Grande pastorale (1613):

Euryalius is in love with Floris, and is hated by her. Ariston loves Cloride, whom she disdains so as to cherish Euryalius; Elice and Filine love Defils, who scorns them because his vows are addressed to Floris, who only desires Ariston. Captain Briarée is in love with Cloride, who refuses his services. The magician Ismen is obsessed with his love for Elice, who is deaf to his avowals of passion. Briarée seeks the help of Ismen to attain his love, which he promises him on condition that he delivers Elice into his hands.

Variations on this formula include a shepherdess who reigns indifference to love (La Croix’s La Clémence (1629), Dassoucy’s Les Amours d’Apollon et de Daphné (1650)) or one who divides her affections equally among a number of lovers (Coignée of Bourron’s Iris (1620), Monléon’s Amphilute (1630)). Pastoral loci topici arising from these romantic entanglements include vows of chastity, dialogues with echoes, lamentations and plaintes, mysterious oracles, suicide attempts, sleep-scenes, singing contests, scenes of ceremonial sacrifice, or celebrations—all of which provide ample opportunities for musical elaboration.

Magicians and sorceresses were pastoral characters of wide popular appeal, for their conjurings, dreams, and hallucinations, magic phyllets that feign death, oracles and premonitions, transformations and metamorphoses called for imaginative visual and sound effects. The divinities of the forests and rivers (Satyrs, dryads, naiads, sirens) establish the pagan setting of the pastorale, while the miraculous appearance of the gods of mythology offers further occasion for scenic spectacle. In the Arcadian or naturalistic pastorale, the gods exist on a higher plane than the pastoral characters; when required to restore pastoral harmony, a god will descend from the heavens in the form of a deus ex machina.

Of a different tradition with its own theatrical conventions, the mythological or neoclassical pastorale sought to re-create the art of ancient Greece. Here, Greek gods and demigods replace the kings and nobles of classical tragedy, and the action is set in more abstract mythological or Olympian landscape. Stage designers used state-of-the-art technology to create supernatural and marvellous scenic effects, for which they enlisted the aid of music and dance. *Circé, ou le Balad comique de la Royn (1581)* foreshadowed many of the identifying features of this multigeneric machine theatre: musical praises of the monarch, scenes of Ovidian metamorphosis, singing gods and choruses of demigods, and allegorical allusions to contemporary events. By the middle of the seventeenth century a third, hybrid genre would emerge in the *pastorale-héroïque*—so called because the legendary heroes and gods of mythology (the héro) appeared in a pastoral setting, on the same level of existence as the nymphs and shepherds. The early history of the mythological pastorale and *pastorale-héroïque*, and their later development in the mythological machine play and pastoral opera, will be taken up in Chapters 12 and 13.

The evolution of the Arcadian pastorale and its musical counterpart, the *pastorale en musique*, will be examined in Chapters 9, 10, and 11. Traveling *comédie dell'arte* players first brought Italian pastoral tragicomedies to the Valois court, and the visits of Giulio Caccini and Giambattista Andreini introduced the Bourbons to the latest developments in Florentine-style opera. Meanwhile, the French pastorale of the early seventeenth century absorbed many features of contemporary *ballet de cour* (in the *chanson* and *plaine*, the *dialogue en musique*, and the pastoral chorus). D'Urfé's *L'Astrée* transformed the dramatic pastorale and brought about a refinement of the lyrical and musical element; however, during the 1630s and 1640s the genre became progressively absorbed into comedy and tragicomedy. A renewed interest in the pastorale arose with the performances of Italian operas and semi-operas given in Paris in the late 1640s and 1650s, which inspired the first experiments in the *pastorale en musique*. Several of the Molière–Lully *comédies-ballets* would feature pastoral interludes sung in whole or in part, and led to the conjunction of pastoral comedy and *comédie-ballet* in Boyer's *Listeine* (1672).

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*An excellent discussion of these two broad distinctions in the Italian Renaissance pastorale is found in A. Machin, *Music and the Life and Work of Isabella Andreini: Humanist Attitudes toward Music, Poetry, and Theater during the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries*, Ph.D. diss. (Univ. of Chicago, 1994), 10-66.

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