

SCHILLER'S NAIVE AND SENTIMENTAL POETRY AND THE MODERN IDEA OF PASTORAL

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Certain topics figure prominently in most scholarly and critical accounts of pastoral—nature, the Golden Age, idyllic landscape, innocence, and nostalgia. For most readers, these are simply the manifest features of pastoral. But any critical observation or interpretation involves cultural, institutional or personal commitments. The assumption that pastoral is defined by idealized nature and the features associated with it derives from a specific poetics, which so far as it concerns pastoral, has its profoundest statement in *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*. Schiller provides an anatomy of modern thinking about pastoral and enables us to see connections and implications in a way no later criticism does.

Schiller's account of pastoral is embedded in a general theory of poetry, and particularly of the nature of modern poetry. Its intellectual imperatives and cultural urgencies come from the analogy between the growth of the individual and the progress of human history. "This path taken by the modern poets," he says at one point, "is that along which man in general, the individual as well as the race, must pass."¹ Schiller represents man's original condition—in the childhood of the individual and historically in ancient Greece—as one of unity within himself and with the world around him: "Sense and reason, passive and active faculties, are not separated in their activities, still less do they stand in conflict with one another" (193). But as man develops and civilization and art lay their hands upon him, "that *sensuous* harmony in him is withdrawn, and he can now express himself only as a *moral* unity, i.e., as striving after unity. The correspondence between his feeling and thought which in his first condition *actually* took place, exists now only *ideally*" (194). Nature, which once was simply the world in which man found himself and acted, is now seen to be separate from him, and presents itself as the ideal of harmonious existence which he seeks to achieve.

To these types of man, which are also stages of development, correspond two types of poetry, the naive and the sentimental:

In the earlier state of natural simplicity [poetry] is the completest possible *imitation of actuality*—at that stage man still functions with all his powers simultaneously as a harmonious unity and hence the whole of his nature is

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expressed completely in actuality; whereas now, in the state of civilization where that harmonious cooperation of his [320]whole nature is only an idea, it is ... the *representation of the ideal* that makes for the poet. (194)

What might appear a slippage between types of poetry and types of poet conveys one of Schiller's deepest insights and contributions to theory. His attention to structures of temperament and their relation to historical and cultural situations enables him to reject traditional generic categories of poetry and instead to classify all poetry by modes of feeling or perception (*Empfindungsweise*). Naive poetry is always characterized by simplicity, whatever its subject or emotional level: "since the naive poet only follows simple nature and feeling, and limits himself solely to imitation of actuality, he can have only a single relationship to his subject" (195). From this single relationship arises our own singleness of feeling as we read Homer and other naive poets. Sentimental poetry, on the other hand, arouses complex feelings, because the sentimental poet does not realize himself in his relation to actuality:

He *reflects* upon the impression that objects make upon him, and only in that reflection is the emotion grounded which he himself experiences and which he excites in us. ... The sentimental poet is thus always involved with two conflicting representations [*Vorstellungen*] and perceptions [*Empfindungen*]*—*with actuality as a limit and with his idea as infinitude; and the mixed feelings that he excites will always testify to this dual source. (196)

From the sentimental poet's relation to the ideal on the one hand and actuality on the other, Schiller derives all modes of modern poetry:

Since in this case there is a plurality of principles it depends which of the two will *predominate* in the perception of the poet and in his representation [*Darstellung*], and hence a variation in the treatment is possible [as it is not in naive poetry]. For now the question arises whether he will tend more toward actuality or toward the ideal—whether he will realize the former as an object of antipathy or the latter as an object of sympathy. His presentation will, therefore, be either *satirical* or it will be ... *elegiac*; every sentimental poet will adhere to one of these two modes of perception. (196)

Schiller here speaks of elegiac poetry in a broad sense—as the kind of poetry in which pleasure in [*Wohlgefallen*] and representation of the ideal predominate over the sense of actuality. This broadly elegiac poetry can take one of two forms:

Either nature and the ideal are an object of sadness if the first is treated as lost and the second as unattained. Or both are an object of joy represented as actual. The first yields

the *elegy* in the narrower sense, and the second the idyll.

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On Naive and Sentimental Poetry has been said to “constitute the intellectual foundation for all modern approaches to pastoral,” on the grounds that it established modal (as opposed to traditional generic) definitions of the various kinds of poetry.² But the essay is more specifically a “mirror for [321]modern critics,” as the Elizabethans might have said, because Schiller’s categories of sentimental poetry correspond remarkably to what many critics still describe as the uses of pastoral. Like Schiller, these critics consider a longing for the ideal, prompted by a reaction against the ways of civilization, to be at the heart of (pastoral) poetry. Hence when not indulging in pure representations of the ideal (Schiller’s idyll), the pastoral sensibility will either turn to criticism of corrupt or sophisticated ways of life (Schiller’s satire) or will look back nostalgically to a simpler, vanished past (Schiller’s elegy). The satiric potentialities of pastoral are a commonplace—to the extent that in some accounts, satire is not simply an aspect or potential use of pastoral but its main motive. And the extraordinary emphasis on the Golden Age in modern accounts of pastoral—far beyond what is justified by ancient or even Renaissance writers—is due to critics’ accepting a structure of relationships which makes the elegy, in Schiller’s sense, a definitive manifestation of the impulse at the heart of this kind of poetry.

However powerful and suggestive Schiller’s theory of modern poetry, it is unlikely that we would accept the specific terms in which he frames it. But pastoral still seems to us to be defined by the problem of man’s relation to nature and the phenomena and issues which Schiller derives from it. Hence we find modern critics channeling the general issues of *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry* into the specific problematic of pastoral. Adam Parry’s well known essay, “Landscape in Greek Poetry,” develops a framework almost identical to Schiller’s:

Man in the youth of a culture possesses a kind of confidence which does not allow him to feel alien from the world about him. ... As long as man, though different from the rest of nature (using the word in a wider sense), is not of another world from it, he will not choose nature as a whole, or nature in a multiple aspect, to figure something of himself. For this would involve his conceiving nature as something *other*.³

Having outlined this version of the naive, Parry goes on to define the later stage of culture and poetry:

Interest in landscape, or nature, *for its own sake* could be best understood as applying to that literary art wherein man looks to nature for something which he has not within himself or which exists in an imperfect and adulterated manner in his daily life. ... Nature no longer tells us what we are: it tells us what we are not but yearn to be. Pastoral

poetry—and romantic poetry, where it deals with nature—
fits into this category.⁴

The main difference between this and the original scheme of “naive and sentimental poetry” is that Schiller’s model of nature is the child and its maturing, whereas Parry, like most modern critics of pastoral, makes landscape the chief representative of nature and the issues it raises. The foregrounding of landscape is evident in the title of his essay (which as much concerns the representation of heroes and metaphors drawn from nature) and in such other [322]titles as “Arcadia: The Discovery of a Spiritual Landscape,” “Vergil’s *Eclogues*: Landscapes of Experience,” “*Lycidas*: The Poet in a Landscape,” and “The Landscape of the Mind” (this last an important study of Neoplatonic pastoral which says almost nothing about landscape). The modern emphasis on landscapes and settings as the definitive conception of pastoral presumably reflects a diminished “belief” in childhood and a continuing commitment to imaginative worlds. Whatever its cause, the shift from childhood to landscape has an important theoretical and interpretive consequence. It removes time and its necessities from the model of nature and poetry, and thus conceals from us the reasons, which were clear to Schiller, why pastoral often seems jejune or callow.

The point of tracing these modern emphases back to Schiller is to show that what have seemed obvious ways of understanding pastoral carry with them a certain poetics and certain attendant emphases. It is not enough to point to the presence in pastoral of *loci amoeni* and echoing woods. They are certainly there, but they have as much to do with establishing a space for song as with man’s relation to nature. We need a stronger explanation for the fact that idyllic landscape—or its associated phenomenon, the Golden Age—is often singled out as the definitive feature of pastoral. Only in Schiller’s terms can we understand the links assumed when Parry says that pastoral appears in Plato’s *Phaedrus* “in the form of both indulgence in natural beauty and criticism of society,”⁵ or when Frank Kermode explains “the nature of pastoral poetry” by moving, in the space of two pages, from “contrasts between the natural and the cultivated” to the opposition of country and city to the Golden Age to Juvenalian satire.⁶ Again, it is not that Schiller’s poetics are espoused as such, but rather that they in effect predetermine what seem the evident features, interests, and uses of pastoral. Once you decide that innocence or the Golden Age or landscape is of the essence of pastoral, you are likely to be drawn into the field of force represented by *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*.

Of course it may be that Schiller’s poetics are appropriate to pastoral. But if this is so, we must face Schiller’s own argument that pastoral is an inherently compromised form. After developing the distinction between satire and elegy as the two main branches of sentimental poetry, he turns to the third type, the idyll, in which the real and the ideal come together:

The poetic representation of innocent and contented mankind is the universal concept of this type of poetic composition. Since this innocence and this contentedness

appear incompatible with the artificial conditions of society at large and with a certain degree of education and refinement, the poets have removed the location of idyll from the tumult of everyday life into the simple pastoral state and assigned its period before the *beginnings of civilisation* in the childlike age of man. (210)

Schiller has a strong, even a noble sense of the way idyllic poetry expresses dissatisfaction with modern society and the individual's desire for harmony within himself and with his environment. He therefore does not regard idyllic imaginings as merely reactive or wishful. In a memorable passage, he says:

[323]All peoples who possess a history have a paradise, a state of innocence, a golden age; indeed, every man has his paradise, his golden age, which he recalls, according as he has more or less of the poetic in his nature, with more or less inspiration. Experience itself therefore supplies features enough for the depiction [*Gemälde*] of which the pastoral idyll treats. For this reason it remains always a beautiful, an elevating fiction, and the poetic power in representing it [*Darstellung*] has truly worked on behalf of the ideal. (211)

But although the idyll has its source in human nature and the natural history of culture, there is a “shortcoming grounded in the essence of the pastoral idyll [*Hirtenidylle*; Schiller also uses the word *Schäferidylle*]” (211). It can be stated in more than one way, in accordance with the various dualisms which inform Schiller's thought. He states it first as a conflict between past and future. If, as he claims, the idyll is not a chimera and holds out a real human possibility, then its effect should be to make us look to the future in hope: the condition of harmony which it depicts is the one which civilization “aims at as its ultimate purpose” (210). Unfortunately, by presenting a state of innocence in the past, the idyll, precisely by affecting us, leads us backwards and “imbues us only with a sad feeling of loss” (211). The aesthetic weakness is inherent and necessary, because idyllic poems do not accept the necessities of time. “The childlike age of man,” which the idyll depicts, can no more be recovered than the actual childhood of individual men.

Schiller goes on to develop the contradictions of the modern, “sentimental” idyll—he explicitly says that he is not concerned with the “naive” idyll of the Greeks⁷—in broader historical and cultural terms:

Set *before the beginnings of civilisation*, [such poems] exclude together with its disadvantages all its advantages, and by their very nature they find themselves necessarily in conflict with it. ... Since they can only attain their purpose by the denial of all art, and only by the simplification of human nature, they possess together with the utmost value for the *heart*, all too little for the *spirit*, and their narrow range is too soon exhausted. (211)

Hence the value of these poems is at the same time their limitation: "We can love them and seek them out only when we stand in need of peace, but not when our forces are striving for motion and activity. Only for the sick in spirit can they provide *healing*, but no *nourishment* for the healthy; they cannot vivify, only assuage" (211).

Schiller's analysis has a clarity and authority unmatched by any later critic in his tradition. He gives a persuasive account of the appeal of pastoral, to which he in no way suggests he is immune, while at the same time his sense of its spiritual debility is as urgent, broadly based, and decisive as Dr. Johnson's. It is also less easily discounted than Johnson's. Schiller's argument brings out and helps us understand the fact that many modern critics of pastoral find it difficult to take their subject seriously. Bruno Snell represents Vergil's pastorals as "the discovery of a spiritual landscape," prompted by the loss of the [324]connection, which existed in the Greek city-state, between poetry and the world of experience and action. This analysis derives, whether consciously or not, from *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*. (The second half of Snell's essay is devoted to Horace, whom Schiller called "the founder of this sentimental mode of poetry" [190]). It is Schiller's critique of the idyll which explains why Snell does not treat the *Eclogues* simply as a form of modern poetry, but makes them sound peculiarly feeble and self-indulgent:

Virgil needed a new home for his herdsmen, a land far distant from the sordid realities of the present. ... He needed a far-away land overlaid with the golden haze of unreality. ... [Theocritus] still shows some interest in realistic detail. Virgil has ceased to see anything but what is important to him: tenderness and warmth and delicacy of feeling.⁸

Renato Poggioli, who expended so much wit and intelligence on analyzing the pastoral ideal, had no qualms about saying that it "shifts on the quicksands of wishful thought":

The psychological root of the pastoral is a double longing after innocence and happiness, to be recovered not through conversion or regeneration but merely through a retreatThe pastoral longing is but the wishful dream of a happiness to be gained without effort, of an erotic bliss made absolute by its own irresponsibility.⁹

Rosalie Colie praises Marvell's "Mower" poems in the same vein:

The pastoral cannot provide a satisfactory working-model for lives as men and women must live them, complicated beyond help from the pastoral paradigm. Just because the pastoral is so "useless" in interpreting human life, it is important for its recreative, dreaming beauty all the same.¹⁰

These uneasy and condescending accounts can be referred to and explained by Schiller not only because we still discern in pastoral the features of the sentimental idyll, but also because we measure them by similar criteria. We share with Schiller ideas of psychological integrity and fullness of experience

that make pastoral appear callow or self-indulgent, and we share a sense of the necessities of history that makes it appear escapist.

Modern critics are of course aware that pastoral writing is urban and sophisticated. But by accepting a Schillerian account of the essential ingenuousness and debility of “pure” pastoral, they can speak of its sophistication not as one of its properties, but only as a conflict with itself. One reason for emphasizing the satiric potentialities of pastoral is to associate it with a stronger form of poetry that is explicitly ironic and schooled by experience. But the characteristic way of making pastoral interesting is to claim that it undermines or criticizes or transcends itself. Thus Harry Berger speaks of Spenser’s *Shepherd’s Calendar* as a critique of “the paradise principle.” In terms that again remind us of Schiller, he argues that Spenser represents “the longing for paradise as the psychological basis of the pastoral retreat from life. This longing may be inflected toward wish-fulfilling fantasy or toward bitter rejection of the world that falls short of such fantasy.”¹¹ What makes *The [325] Shepherd’s Calendar* worth our attention, in Berger’s view, is that it takes as jaundiced a view of the paradise principle as we do and proves to be “an ironic portrait of the tradition it claims for itself.”¹² Irony is not the only way in which pastoral can be interpreted as something other than it seems. Allegory too has been much favored by modern critics, who often invoke the tradition that Vergil’s *Fourth Eclogue* prophesied the birth of Christ in order to justify their own abstruse or high-minded interpretations.

Such attempts to transcend the felt limitations of pastoral are once again anticipated and prospectively analyzed in *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*. The contradiction in sentimental idylls, Schiller says, is that they “implement an ideal, and yet retain the narrower indigent pastoral world” (212). In traditional pastoral, the poetic value of this world derives solely from the naive mode of representation. The writer of modern idylls therefore “should absolutely have chosen another world for the ideal” (212), which he should represent in wholly other terms:

Let him not lead us backwards into our childhood in order to secure to us with the most precious acquisitions of the understanding a peace which cannot last longer than the slumber of our spiritual faculties, but rather lead us forward into our maturity in order to permit us to perceive that higher harmony which rewards the combatant and gratifies the conqueror. Let him undertake the task of idyll so as to display that pastoral innocence even in creatures of civilisation and under all the conditions of the most active and vigorous life, of expansive thought, of the subtlest art, the highest social refinement, which, in a word, leads man who cannot now go back to Arcady forward to Elysium.

(213)

This is a call for what our leading witness of Romantic prophecy calls “strong” poetry. Schiller’s terms are less ironized and embattled than Harold Bloom’s,

but his words bring to mind such Bloomian heroes as Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley and Whitman, and he looks back to the same historical antecedent: “A loftier satisfaction is aroused by Milton’s superb representation of the first human couple and the state of innocence in paradise: the most beautiful idyll known to me of the sentimental type” (212). When modern critics of pastoral emphasize allegorical interpretation, the theme of art and nature, Edenic motifs, and the higher flights of irony and self-reflexiveness, they assume the authority of Romantic poetry in its heroic aspect and seek to make pastoral interesting to it. Not all continue the Romantic tradition as frankly and grandly as Northrop Frye, who assimilates pastoral to the mode of romance,¹³ and not all are as self-aware as Harry Berger, who explicitly seeks a “strong” version of pastoral to recuperate the “weak”;¹⁴ others, like Renato Poggioli and Frank Kermode, have their own interesting quarrels with Romanticism. But just as accepting a Schillerian account of pastoral leads to dissatisfaction with it, so embracing Schillerian solutions leads to implausible claims. If “strong” poetry is our criterion, there is no avoiding the conclusion that pastoral is “weak.”

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[326]The alternative to calling pastoral “weak” is to say, with William Empson, that “the pastoral process” consists of “putting the complex into the simple.”¹⁵ Though *Some Versions of Pastoral* is widely recognized as the profoundest treatment of the subject, its coruscating brilliance and idiosyncracies of manner have made it as difficult to use as it is easy to admire. Empson’s view of pastoral has been regarded as either unmanageably inclusive or narrowly social and political. It in fact lies between these extremes, wide-ranging indeed but consistent. Empson develops an account of the central and defining simplicity of pastoral not from the natural model of childhood and maturity, but from a basic social situation—the encounter of “high” and “low” persons, the sophisticated and socially privileged confronting (as courtiers and rustics meet in Renaissance pastorals) the socially and economically humble. Empson’s view that poetry is rhetorical and social—its permanent forces unavoidably mediated by the realities of given societies and historical moments—offers an alternative to Schiller’s view of poetry as psychological and universal.

One finds ethical, social, and rhetorical emphases in some of the most valuable interpretations of pastoral written since Empson—notably Thomas G. Rosenmeyer’s *The Green Cabinet* (1969) and Richard Cody’s *The Landscape of the Mind* (1969). (Note the concession to Schillerian poetics in these titles, both of which, as Rosenmeyer in his case frankly admits, are irrelevant to the arguments of the books.) By grounding their accounts of pastoral in intellectual history—Epicureanism, in Rosenmeyer’s case, and Renaissance Neo-Platonism, in Cody’s—both these studies imply a pre-Romantic poetics of pastoral, to which not nature but certain kinds of human beings and human experience are central. Neither of these studies considers itself “Empsonian.” But it is Empson who provides a modern poetics that explains why attending to the human figures of pastoral leads one to find its identifying features in

elements of voice, style, and representation, and why interpreters like Rosenmeyer and Cody emphasize ethical stability in one's present world, rather than a yearning for one's past.

The "versions of pastoral" Empson puts on display are everywhere determined by the ideas encoded in the phrase "putting the complex into the simple." For all the variety and unorthodoxy of his examples, he is consistently concerned with the range of suggestion and implication in apparently simple effects, whether these are due to humble characters or to certain literary devices or qualities of style, or to certain words and images (like the "green thought in a green shade" that absorbs so much of his attention in the chapter on Marvell's "The Garden"). The Elizabethan double plot counts as pastoral because it is "an easy-going device" that "has an obvious effect ... of making you feel the play deals with life as a whole" (25). The point of discussing *Paradise Lost* under the rubric of "Milton and Bentley" is to show that Milton's style prompts full feeling and reflection because of qualities of suggestiveness, even vagueness, that elude the grasp of critics who insist—like Bentley in his notorious rewriting of the poem—that poetry be accountable to the analytic intelligence alone. Remarks (quoted below) introducing "The Garden" and *The Beggar's Opera* emphasize poetic devices and effects that are both accessible and inclusive. What makes "the process of putting the complex [327] into the simple" in these works a *pastoral* process is shown by a characteristic they all share. Each contains characters or images traditionally considered "simple," sometimes straightforwardly pastoral, to whom or which Empson's analysis continually returns: the comic or "low" characters in Elizabethan plays, the "summer's flower" in Shakespeare's Sonnet 94 ("They that have power to hurt"), Marvell's "green thought in a green shade," Adam and Eve before the Fall, the thieves and Polly Peachum in *The Beggar's Opera*, and "the child as swain" in *Alice in Wonderland*. The account given of these figures is continually associated with the effect and presence of the work as a whole and with the qualities of the mind that produced and the mind that apprehends it.

The difference between these ideas and Schiller's account of the poetic mind is implicit in the remarks that begin the chapter on "They that have power to hurt":

There is no reason why the subtlety of the irony in so complex a material must be capable of being pegged out into verbal explanations. The vague and generalised language of the descriptions, which might be talking about so many sorts of people as well as feeling so many things about them, somehow makes a unity like a cross-roads, which analysis does not deal with by exploring down the roads; makes a solid flute on which you can play a multitude of tunes, whose solidity no list of all possible tunes would go far to explain. (86)

This "solidity" might at first call to mind the unity of (complex) effect that most of our critical forebears attribute to poetry. One of Empson's contemporaries at

Cambridge tells us that Coleridge's definition of the poet's activity—"the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities, of sameness with difference; of the general with the concrete, the idea with the image..., a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order"—"could have been recited by any pupil of Richards as surely as a Presbyterian could recite the Shorter Catechism."¹⁶ This view of the poet implies, for the critic, that completeness of understanding is of the essence of imaginative apprehension: the mind that grasps the literary work holds within it all that can be relevantly said about it. But though he was I. A. Richards' greatest pupil, Empson does not share this view of either poet or critic.¹⁷ The unity of a crossroads (such as it is) is a fact of social existence, with no grounding in nature or analogy to the human individual; the solid flute suggests the limits of the minds that write and interpret, for of course no tune can be played upon it.

Most of the chapters of *Some Versions of Pastoral* begin by remarking that the poetic forces in question lie beyond individual calculation or control. Of "The Garden": "The chief point of the poem is to contrast and reconcile conscious and unconscious states, intuitive and intellectual modes of apprehension; and yet that distinction is never made, perhaps could not have been made; his thought is implied by his metaphors" (113). Of *The Beggar's Opera*: "Some queer forces often at work in literature can be seen there unusually clearly; its casualness and inclusiveness allow it to collect into it things that had been floating in tradition" (185). "Double Plots" begins: "The [328]mode of action of a double plot is the sort of thing critics are liable to neglect; it does not depend on being noticed for its operation, so is neither an easy nor an obviously useful thing to notice" (25). Any individual—the writer as well as the reader—has an essentially pastoral relation to an artwork, in that he or she cannot, in the strong and literal sense, comprehend it all. The point with which Empson begins the book, and which leads him to argue that all good "proletarian" literature is "pastoral," is that "good writing is not done unless there are serious forces at work; and it is not permanent unless it works for readers with opinions different from the author's" (3). Hence "two people may get very different experiences from the same work of art without either being definitely wrong" (5). His reflections on the double plot lead him to say: "Once you break into the godlike unity of the appreciator you find a microcosm of which the theatre is the macrocosm; the mind is complex and ill-connected like an audience, and it is as surprising in the one case as the other that a sort of unity can be produced by a play" (66). Under these conditions, every figure in a work and every writer and reader is in the situation represented by literary herdsmen. The imagined unity of godlike comprehension dissolves into a social coherence of which each person is only a part. Even the Elizabethan hero, in Empson's account, has "a machinery like that of pastoral" (29). (One of the strengths of *Some Versions* is that, without saying a word about Theocritus or Vergil, it grasps the historical fact that pastoral was inscribed within and a reduction of the heroic.)

The difference between Empson and Schiller comes out most pertinently in the ways they construe simplicity and hence the idea that pastoral writing puts “the complex into the simple.” Schiller speaks of the simplicity [*Einfalt*] of naive poetry, but the element of the paradoxical or problematic in Empson’s formula—its consciousness that “in pastoral you take a limited life and pretend it is the full and normal one” (110)—does not come into play, since by definition the naive as a mode of representation is expressive of full human experience. The tension between the complex and the simple emerges when Schiller considers simplicity in real life, in a discussion of what he calls “childish” (*kindisch*) and “childlike” (*kindlich*) temperaments and behavior (182ff.). “Childish” behavior and character cannot compel our unreserved assent, he says, for they are at the expense of a mature and cultured sense of reality. Certain individuals, however, have an inner strength and innocence that enable them to transcend considerations of the world and its ways; in their presence, our “mockery of ingenuousness [*Einfältigkeit*] yields to admiration of simplicity [*Einfachheit*]” (182). In a rather tortuous discussion, Schiller tries to reserve the honorific term “naive” for those persons who are genuinely childlike, and at one point, he represents them as pastoral figures: in their ignoring of “the artificial circumstances of fashionable society,” he says, they “comport themselves even at the courts of kings with the same ingenuousness and innocence that one would find only in a pastoral society [*Schäferwelt*]” (184). But his main emphasis is on heroically naive individuals—poets, artists, even statesmen and generals; the childlike then becomes a characteristic of genius, whose expressions are “the utterances of a god in the mouth of a child” (187). This is as paradoxical as Empson’s “complex in simple,” but the terms are too [329]extreme to have the humbler pole modulate the style of life or art that expresses it. Schiller’s attitude towards human simplicity is divided exactly as is his attitude towards the literary idyll—between uneasiness at the limitations of the childish and admiration of the genuinely childlike, which proves to be heroic and godlike.

Empson’s idea of simplicity in social presence and behavior has some superficial similarities to Schiller’s. A defence of the courtly pastoralist’s pretence of humility—that “in its full form” it is not “merely snobbish”—sounds some Schillerian notes:

The simple man becomes a clumsy fool who yet has better “sense” than his betters and can say things more fundamentally true; he is “in contact with nature,” which the complex man needs to be, so that Bottom is not afraid of the fairies; he is in contact with the mysterious forces of our own nature, so that the clown has the wit of the Unconscious; he can speak the truth because he has nothing to lose. (14)

This could be squared with Schiller’s statement that “we ascribe a naive temperament to a person if he, in his judgement of things, overlooks their artificial and contrived aspects and heeds only their simple nature” (184). But

the differences of substance are revealed in the two styles—Schiller’s philosophical mode of ontological characterization and universal responses, versus Empson’s flexible play between the complex man and the simple, jumping from one to the other in the space between “clumsy fool” and “better ‘sense,’” and ending by both facing and assuming as his own the clown’s forthright speech. Not subscribing to an ideology of Nature and childhood, Empson can regard the simple person appreciatively, taking on some of his stances without expecting him to resolve the divisions and dilemmas of ordinary human experience. On the contrary, “both versions, straight and comic, are based on a double attitude of the artist to the worker, of the complex man to the simple one (‘I am in one way better, in another not so good’), and this may well recognise a permanent truth about the aesthetic situation” (15). This double attitude responds, and the aesthetic situation corresponds, to what Empson regards as permanent conditions of life in human societies. Hence, the pastoral process is not called into question by reality as we know it, nor is it to be expected to transcend or transform it. Empsonian pastoral lives in the present, because that is all it has. It can “give strength to see life clearly and so to adopt a fuller attitude to it” (19), because it includes the self-conscious and critical, as Schiller’s idyll (unlike other forms of sentimental poetry) does not.

One might argue, in the light of what has just been said, that Empson conceives the modern writer as ineluctably “sentimental,” and that he therefore offers less an alternative to Schiller than a latterday development of one aspect of the critical system and problematic that derive from him and his contemporaries. This is probably true, if one looks to Empson for theory and a general poetics as such. But insofar as what matters in literature is represented by acts of reading and practical criticism, *Some Versions of Pastoral* is a major alternative to Schiller’s account of the idyll and its disabilities. The book’s [330]strength and suggestiveness come from its accepting the imperative to take a limited life and pretend it is the full and normal one: it gives over visionary heroism and identifies writing and its human significance with a fundamentally ironized mode. It makes us think differently about pastoral, because it is a version of pastoral itself.



NOTES

1. “On Naive and Sentimental Poetry,” in H. B. Nisbet, ed., *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Winckelmann, Lessing, Hamann, Herder, Schiller, Goethe* (Cambridge 1985). Nisbet reprints in full (slightly modified) the translation by Julius A. Elias (New York 1966). Parenthetical page references in the text to “Naive and Sentimental Poetry” are to Nisbet’s volume.

2. David M. Halperin, *Before Pastoral: Theocritus and the Ancient Tradition of Bucolic Poetry* (New Haven 1983) 43.

3. Adam Parry, "Landscape in Greek Poetry," *Yale Classical Studies* 15 (1957) 4, 6.
4. Parry (supra n. 3) 7-8. Parry does not mention Schiller, but he is well aware of his debt to writers in the romantic tradition, notably Wordsworth, Hölderlin, and Ruskin.
5. Parry (supra n. 3) 16.
6. Frank Kermode, *English Pastoral Poetry: From the Beginnings to Marvell* (London 1952; repr. New York 1972) 13-15.
7. Schiller does not discuss Theocritus, but he is presumably thinking of him when, in his critique of the modern idyll (of which German poetry in the eighteenth century provided abundant examples), he says: "What I am here criticising in the bucolic idyll applies of course only to the sentimental; for the naive can never be lacking content since here it is already contained in the form itself" (211). It is to Schillerian poetics, in the main, that we owe the view of Theocritus as a realist that dominated nineteenth-century criticism.
8. Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought*, trans. T. G. Rosenmeyer (Cambridge, Mass. 1953) 282, 288.
9. Renato Poggioli, *The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal* (Cambridge, Mass. 1975) 1, 14. The phrase about the quicksands of wishful thought is on p. 2. The easy and sophisticated Poggioli sometimes sounds simply like a latter-day Fontenelle. But his involvement with Schiller's problematic (he was, after all, most importantly a critic of modern literature) is evident in his hostility to Rousseau and his championing of Goethe. Schiller (1785-1805) has a striking and brilliant expostulation with the cultured person who feels the longings Poggioli describes here.
10. Rosalie L. Colie, "My Echoing Song": *Andrew Marvell's Poetry of Criticism* (Princeton 1970) 41.
11. Harry Berger, Jr., "Orpheus, Pan, and the Poetics of Misogyny: Spenser's Critique of Pastoral Love and Art," *ELH* 50 (1983) 27. This article has been incorporated into a monograph on *The Shepherdes Calender* that forms the second part of Berger's *Revisionary Play: Studies in the Spenserian Dynamics* (Berkeley 1988). The sentences quoted above appear at the very head of this monograph (pp. 277-78).
12. "Orpheus,..." (supra n. 11) 53. Berger has to some extent modified this view (though for the purposes of this essay, its representative force still holds). In *Revisionary Play* (supra n. 11) 282 he says, "I think pastoral that criticizes itself rather than (or as well as) the great world is an enduring element of the mode." But he still [331]wants to call this *metapastoral*, so that the Schillerian "paradise principle" is still at the heart of the mode.
13. For Frye's elevation of pastoral, see *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton 1957) 141-44, 152, 296-97.
14. "Orpheus,..." (supra n. 11) 37; *Revisionary Play* (supra n. 11) 349. Berger's championing of "*strong pastoral* or *metapastoral*," as opposed to "the great quantity of pastoral that ... may be classified as *weak pastoral*" motivates his excellent essay, "The Origins of Bucolic Representation: Disenchantment and Revision in Theocritus' *Seventh Idyll*," *Classical Antiquity* 3 (1984) 1-39. The words quoted are on p. 2.
15. William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (London 1935; repr. Norfolk, Conn. 1960) 23. In the following paragraphs page references to this work are given in parentheses in the text.
16. M. C. Bradbrook, "The Ambiguity of William Empson," in Roma Gill, ed., *William Empson: The Man and His Work* (London 1974) 4.
17. For a fuller account of this aspect of Empson's thought, see Paul Alpers, "Empson on Pastoral," *New Literary History* 10 (1978-79) 101-23.