Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus

THEOCRITUS

IDYL I

The shepherd Thyrsis meets a goatherd, in a shady place beside a

spring, and at his invitation sings the Song of Daphnis. This ideal

hero of Greek pastoral song had won for his bride the fairest of the

Nymphs. Confident in the strength of his passion, he boasted that

Love could never subdue him to a new question. Love avenged himself by

making Daphnis desire a strange maiden, but to this temptation he never

yielded, and so died a constant lover. The song tells how the cattle

and the wild things of the wood bewailed him, how Hermes and Priapus

gave him counsel in vain, and how with his last breath he retorted the

taunts of the implacable Aphrodite.

The scene is in Sicily.

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Thyrsis. Sweet, meseems, is the whispering sound of yonder pine tree,

goatherd, that murmureth by the wells of water; and sweet are thy

pipings. After Pan the second prize shalt thou bear away, and if he take

the horned goat, the she-goat shalt thou win; but if he choose the

she-goat for his meed, the kid falls to thee, and dainty is the flesh of

kids e’er the age when thou milkest them.

The Goatherd. Sweeter, O shepherd, is thy song than the music of

yonder water that is poured from the high face of the rock! Yea, if the

Muses take the young ewe for their gift, a stall-fed lamb shalt thou

receive for thy meed; but if it please them to take the lamb, thou shalt

lead away the ewe for the second prize.

Thyrsis. Wilt thou, goatherd, in the nymphs’ name, wilt thou sit thee

down here, among the tamarisks, on this sloping knoll, and pipe while in

this place I watch thy flocks?

Goatherd. Nay, shepherd, it may not be; we may not pipe in the

noontide. ’Tis Pan we dread, who truly at this hour rests weary from the

chase; and bitter of mood is he, the keen wrath sitting ever at his

nostrils. But, Thyrsis, for that thou surely wert wont to sing The

Affliction of Daphnis, and hast most deeply meditated the pastoral muse,

come hither, and beneath yonder elm let us sit down, in face of Priapus

and the fountain fairies, where is that resting-place of the shepherds,

and where the oak trees are. Ah! if thou wilt but sing as on that day

thou sangest in thy match with Chromis out of Libya, I will let thee

milk, ay, three times, a goat that is the mother of twins, and even when

she has suckled her kids her milk doth fill two pails. A deep bowl of

ivy-wood, too, I will give thee, rubbed with sweet bees’-wax, a twy-eared

bowl newly wrought, smacking still of the knife of the graver. Round its

upper edges goes the ivy winding, ivy besprent with golden flowers; and

about it is a tendril twisted that joys in its saffron fruit. Within is

designed a maiden, as fair a thing as the gods could fashion, arrayed in

a sweeping robe, and a snood on her head. Beside her two youths with

fair love-locks are contending from either side, with alternate speech,

but her heart thereby is all untouched. And now on one she glances,

smiling, and anon she lightly flings the other a thought, while by reason

of the long vigils of love their eyes are heavy, but their labour is all

in vain.

Beyond these an ancient fisherman and a rock are fashioned, a rugged

rock, whereon with might and main the old man drags a great net for his

cast, as one that labours stoutly. Thou wouldst say that he is fishing

with all the might of his limbs, so big the sinews swell all about his

neck, grey-haired though he be, but his strength is as the strength of

youth. Now divided but a little space from the sea-worn old man is a

vineyard laden well with fire-red clusters, and on the rough wall a

little lad watches the vineyard, sitting there. Round him two she-foxes

are skulking, and one goes along the vine-rows to devour the ripe grapes,

and the other brings all her cunning to bear against the scrip, and vows

she will never leave the lad, till she strand him bare and breakfastless.

But the boy is plaiting a pretty locust-cage with stalks of asphodel, and

fitting it with reeds, and less care of his scrip has he, and of the

vines, than delight in his plaiting.

All about the cup is spread the soft acanthus, a miracle of varied work,

{6} a thing for thee to marvel on. For this bowl I paid to a Calydonian

ferryman a goat and a great white cream cheese. Never has its lip

touched mine, but it still lies maiden for me. Gladly with this cup

would I gain thee to my desire, if thou, my friend, wilt sing me that

delightful song. Nay, I grudge it thee not at all. Begin, my friend,

for be sure thou canst in no wise carry thy song with thee to Hades, that

puts all things out of mind!

 The Song of Thyrsis.

Begin, ye Muses dear, begin the pastoral song! Thyrsis of Etna am

I, and this is the voice of Thyrsis. 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.

Begin, ye Muses dear, begin the pastoral song!

For him the jackals, for him the wolves did cry; for him did even the

lion out of the forest lament. Kine and bulls by his feet right many,

and heifers plenty, with the young calves bewailed him.

Begin, ye Muses dear, begin the pastoral song!

Came Hermes first from the hill, and said, ‘Daphnis, who is it that

torments thee; child, whom dost thou love with so great desire?’ The

neatherds came, and the shepherds; the goatherds came: all they asked

what ailed him. Came also Priapus,

Begin, ye Muses dear, begin the pastoral song!

And said: ‘Unhappy Daphnis, wherefore dost thou languish, while for thee

the maiden by all the fountains, through all the glades is fleeting, in

search of thee? Ah! thou art too laggard a lover, and thou nothing

availest! A neatherd wert thou named, and now thou art like the

goatherd:

Begin, ye Muses dear, begin the pastoral song!

‘For the goatherd, when he marks the young goats at their pastime, looks

on with yearning eyes, and fain would be even as they; and thou, when

thou beholdest the laughter of maidens, dost gaze with yearning eyes, for

that thou dost not join their dances.’

Begin, ye Muses dear, begin the pastoral song!

Yet these the herdsman answered not again, but he bare his bitter love to

the end, yea, to the fated end he bare it.

Begin, ye Muses dear, begin the pastoral song!

Ay, but she too came, the sweetly smiling Cypris, craftily smiling she

came, yet keeping her heavy anger; and she spake, saying: ‘Daphnis,

methinks thou didst boast that thou wouldst throw Love a fall, nay, is it

not thyself that hast been thrown by grievous Love?’

Begin ye Muses dear, begin the pastoral song!

But to her Daphnis answered again: ‘Implacable Cypris, Cypris terrible,

Cypris of mortals detested, already dost thou deem that my latest sun has

set; nay, Daphnis even in Hades shall prove great sorrow to Love.

Begin, ye Muses dear, begin the pastoral song!

‘Where it is told how the herdsman with Cypris—Get thee to Ida, get thee

to Anchises! There are oak trees—here only galingale blows, here sweetly

hum the bees about the hives!

Begin, ye Muses dear, begin the pastoral song!

‘Thine Adonis, too, is in his bloom, for he herds the sheep and slays the

hares, and he chases all the wild beasts. Nay, go and confront Diomedes

again, and say, “The herdsman Daphnis I conquered, do thou join battle

with me.”

Begin, ye Muses dear, begin the pastoral song!

‘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!

‘That Daphnis am I who here do herd the kine, Daphnis who water here the

bulls and calves.

‘O Pan, Pan! whether thou art on the high hills of Lycaeus, or rangest

mighty Maenalus, haste hither to the Sicilian isle! Leave the tomb of

Helice, leave that high cairn of the son of Lycaon, which seems wondrous

fair, even in the eyes of the blessed. {9}

Give o’er, ye Muses, come, give o’er the pastoral song!

‘Come hither, my prince, and take this fair pipe, honey-breathed with

wax-stopped joints; and well it fits thy lip: for verily I, even I, by

Love am now haled to Hades.

Give o’er, ye Muses, come, give o’er the pastoral song!

‘Now violets bear, ye brambles, ye thorns bear violets; and let fair

narcissus bloom on the boughs of juniper! Let all things with all be

confounded,—from pines let men gather pears, for Daphnis is dying! Let

the stag drag down the hounds, let owls from the hills contend in song

with the nightingales.’

Give o’er, ye Muses, come, give o’er the pastoral song!

So Daphnis spake, and ended; but fain would Aphrodite have given him back

to life. Nay, spun was all the thread that the Fates assigned, and

Daphnis went down the stream. The whirling wave closed over the man the

Muses loved, the man not hated of the nymphs.

Give o’er, ye Muses, come, give o’er the pastoral song!

And thou, give me the bowl, and the she-goat, that I may milk her and

poor forth a libation to the Muses. Farewell, oh, farewells manifold, ye

Muses, and I, some future day, will sing you yet a sweeter song.

The Goatherd. Filled may thy fair mouth be with honey, Thyrsis, and

filled with the honeycomb; and the sweet dried fig mayst thou eat of

Aegilus, for thou vanquishest the cicada in song! Lo here is thy cup,

see, my friend, of how pleasant a savour! Thou wilt think it has been

dipped in the well-spring of the Hours. Hither, hither, Cissaetha: do

thou milk her, Thyrsis. And you young she-goats, wanton not so wildly

lest you bring up the he-goat against you.

Lament for Adonis by Bion

I weep for Adonaïs--he is dead!

 Dead Adonaïs lies, and mourning all,

 The Loves wail round his fair, low-lying head.

 O Cypris, sleep no more! Let from thee fall

 Thy purple vestments--hear'st thou not the call?

 Let fall thy purple vestments! Lay them by!

 Ah, smite thy bosom, and in sable pall

 Send shivering through the air thy bitter cry

 For Adonaïs dead, while all the Loves reply.

 I weep for Adonaïs--weep the Loves.

 Low on the mountains beauteous lies he there,

 And languid through his lips the faint breath moves,

 And black the blood creeps o'er his smooth thigh, where

 The boar's white tooth the whiter flesh must tear.

 Glazed grow his eyes beneath the eyelids wide;

 Fades from his lips the rose, and dies--Despair!

 The clinging kiss of Cypris at his side--

 Alas, he knew not that she kissed him as he died!

 I wail--responsive wail the Loves with me.

 Ah, cruel, cruel is that wound of thine,

 But Cypris' heart-wound aches more bitterly.

 The Oreads weep; thy faithful hounds low whine;

 But Cytherea's unbound tresses fine

 Float on the wind; where thorns her white feet wound,

 Along the oaken glades drops blood divine.

 She calls her lover; he, all crimsoned round

 His fair white breast with blood, hears not the piteous sound.

 Alas! for Cytherea wail the Loves,

 With the beloved dies her beauty too.

 O fair was she, the goddess borne of doves,

 While Adonaïs lived; but now, so true

 Her love, no time her beauty can renew.

 Deep-voiced the mountains mourn; the oaks reply;

 And springs and rivers murmur sorrow through

 The passes where she goes, the cities high;

 And blossoms flush with grief as she goes desolate by.

 Alas for Cytherea! he hath died--

 The beauteous Adonaïs, he is dead!

 And Echo sadly back "\_is dead\_" replied.

 Alas for Cypris! Stooping low her head,

 And opening wide her arms, she piteous said,

 "O stay a little, Adonaïs mine!

 Of all the kisses ours since we were wed,

 But one last kiss, oh, give me now, and twine

 Thine arms close, till I drink the latest breath of thine!

 "So will I keep the kiss thou givest me

 E'en as it were thyself, thou only best!

 Since thou, O Adonaïs, far dost flee--

 Oh, stay a little--leave a little rest!--

 And thou wilt leave me, and wilt be the guest

 Of proud Persephone, more strong than I?

 All beautiful obeys her dread behest--

 And I a goddess am, and \_cannot\_ die!

 O thrice-beloved, listen!--mak'st thou no reply?

 "Then dies to idle air my longing wild,

 As dies a dream along the paths of night;

 And Cytherea widowed is, exiled

 From love itself; and now--an idle sight--

 The Loves sit in my halls, and all delight

 My charmèd girdle moves, is all undone!

 Why wouldst thou, rash one, seek the maddening fight?

 Why, beauteous, wouldst thou not the combat shun?"--

 Thus Cytherea--and the Loves weep, all as one.

 Alas for Cytherea!--he is dead.

 Her hopeless sorrow breaks in tears, that rain

 Down over all the fair, beloved head,--

 Like summer showers, o'er wind-down-beaten grain;

 They flow as fast as flows the crimson stain

 From out the wound, deep in the stiffening thigh;

 And lo! in roses red the blood blooms fair,

 And where the tears divine have fallen close by,

 Spring up anemones, and stir all tremblingly.

 I weep for Adonaïs--he is dead!

 No more, O Cypris, weep thy wooer here!

 Behold a bed of leaves! Lay down his head

 As if he slept--as still, as fair, as dear,--

 In softest garments let his limbs appear,

 As when on golden couch his sweetest sleep

 He slept the livelong night, thy heart anear;

 Oh, beautiful in death though sad he keep,

 No more to wake when Morning o'er the hills doth creep.

 And over him the freshest flowers fling--

 Ah me! all flowers are withered quite away

 And drop their petals wan! yet, perfumes bring

 And sprinkle round, and sweetest balsams lay;--

 Nay, perish perfumes since thine shall not stay!

 In purple mantle lies he, and around,

 The weeping Loves his weapons disarray,

 His sandals loose, with water bathe his wound,

 And fan him with soft wings that move without a sound.

 The Loves for Cytherea raise the wail.

 Hymen from quenched torch no light can shake.

 His shredded wreath lies withered all and pale;

 His joyous song, alas, harsh discords break!

 And saddest wail of all, the Graces wake;

 "The beauteous Adonaïs! He is dead!"

 And sigh the Muses, "Stay but for our sake!"

 Yet would he come, Persephone is dead;--

 Cease, Cypris! Sad the days repeat their faithful tread!

IDYL III: THE LAMENT FOR BION by Moschus

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.

Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Ye nightingales that lament among the thick leaves of the trees, tell ye

to the Sicilian waters of Arethusa the tidings that Bion the herdsman is

dead, and that with Bion song too has died, and perished hath the Dorian

minstrelsy.

Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Ye Strymonian swans, sadly wail ye by the waters, and chant with

melancholy notes the dolorous song, even such a song as in his time with

voice like yours he was wont to sing. And tell again to the Œagrian

maidens, tell to all the Nymphs Bistonian, how that he hath perished, the

Dorian Orpheus.

Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

No more to his herds he sings, that beloved herdsman, no more ’neath the

lonely oaks he sits and sings, nay, but by Pluteus’s side he chants a

refrain of oblivion. The mountains too are voiceless: and the heifers

that wander by the bulls lament and refuse their pasture.

Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Thy sudden doom, O Bion, Apollo himself lamented, and the Satyrs mourned

thee, and the Priapi in sable raiment, and the Panes sorrow for thy song,

and the fountain fairies in the wood made moan, and their tears turned to

rivers of waters. And Echo in the rocks laments that thou art silent,

and no more she mimics thy voice. And in sorrow for thy fall the trees

cast down their fruit, and all the flowers have faded. From the ewes

hath flowed no fair milk, nor honey from the hives, nay, it hath perished

for mere sorrow in the wax, for now hath thy honey perished, and no more

it behoves men to gather the honey of the bees.

Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Not so much did the dolphin mourn beside the sea-banks, nor ever sang so

sweet the nightingale on the cliffs, nor so much lamented the swallow on

the long ranges of the hills, nor shrilled so loud the halcyon o’er his

sorrows;

Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Nor so much, by the grey sea-waves, did ever the sea-bird sing, nor so

much in the dells of dawn did the bird of Memnon bewail the son of the

Morning, fluttering around his tomb, as they lamented for Bion dead.

Nightingales, and all the swallows that once he was wont to delight, that

he would teach to speak, they sat over against each other on the boughs

and kept moaning, and the birds sang in answer, ‘Wail, ye wretched ones,

even ye!’

Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Who, ah who will ever make music on thy pipe, O thrice desired Bion, and

who will put his mouth to the reeds of thine instrument? who is so bold?

For still thy lips and still thy breath survive, and Echo, among the

reeds, doth still feed upon thy songs. To Pan shall I bear the pipe?

Nay, perchance even he would fear to set his mouth to it, lest, after

thee, he should win but the second prize.

Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Yea, and Galatea laments thy song, she whom once thou wouldst delight, as

with thee she sat by the sea-banks. For not like the Cyclops didst thou

sing—him fair Galatea ever fled, but on thee she still looked more kindly

than on the salt water. And now hath she forgotten the wave, and sits on

the lonely sands, but still she keeps thy kine.

Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

All the gifts of the Muses, herdsman, have died with thee, the delightful

kisses of maidens, the lips of boys; and woful round thy tomb the loves

are weeping. But Cypris loves thee far more than the kiss wherewith she

kissed the dying Adonis.

Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

This, O most musical of rivers, is thy second sorrow, this, Meles, thy

new woe. Of old didst thou lose Homer, that sweet mouth of Calliope, and

men say thou didst bewail thy goodly son with streams of many tears, and

didst fill all the salt sea with the voice of thy lamentation—now again

another son thou weepest, and in a new sorrow art thou wasting away.

Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Both were beloved of the fountains, and one ever drank of the Pegasean

fount, but the other would drain a draught of Arethusa. And the one sang

the fair daughter of Tyndarus, and the mighty son of Thetis, and Menelaus

Atreus’s son, but that other,—not of wars, not of tears, but of Pan,

would he sing, and of herdsmen would he chant, and so singing, he tended

the herds. And pipes he would fashion, and would milk the sweet heifer,

and taught lads how to kiss, and Love he cherished in his bosom and woke

the passion of Aphrodite.

Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Every famous city laments thee, Bion, and all the towns. Ascra laments

thee far more than her Hesiod, and Pindar is less regretted by the

forests of Boeotia. Nor so much did pleasant Lesbos mourn for Alcaeus,

nor did the Teian town so greatly bewail her poet, while for thee more

than for Archilochus doth Paros yearn, and not for Sappho, but still for

thee doth Mytilene wail her musical lament;

 [\_Here seven verses are lost\_.]

And in Syracuse Theocritus; but I sing thee the dirge of an Ausonian

sorrow, I that am no stranger to the pastoral song, but heir of the Doric

Muse which thou didst teach thy pupils. This was thy gift to me; to

others didst thou leave thy wealth, to me thy minstrelsy.

Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

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. And thou too, in the

earth wilt be lapped in silence, but the nymphs have thought good that

the frog should eternally sing. Nay, him I would not envy, for ’tis no

sweet song he singeth.

Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Poison came, Bion, to thy mouth, thou didst know poison. To such lips as

thine did it come, and was not sweetened? What mortal was so cruel that

could mix poison for thee, or who could give thee the venom that heard

thy voice? surely he had no music in his soul.

Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

But justice hath overtaken them all. Still for this sorrow I weep, and

bewail thy ruin. But ah, if I might have gone down like Orpheus to

Tartarus, or as once Odysseus, or Alcides of yore, I too would speedily

have come to the house of Pluteus, that thee perchance I might behold,

and if thou singest to Pluteus, that I might hear what is thy song. Nay,

sing to the Maiden some strain of Sicily, sing some sweet pastoral lay.

And she too is Sicilian, and on the shores by 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.

**Lycidas**

*In this* [*Monody*](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) *the Author bewails a
learned* [*Friend*](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml)*, unfortunatly drown'd in his Passage
from Chester on the Irish Seas, 1637. And by
occasion fortels the ruine of our corrupted
Clergy then in their* [*height*](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml)*.*

Yet once more, O ye Laurels, and once more
Ye Myrtles brown, with Ivy [never-sear](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml),
I com to pluck your Berries harsh and crude,
And with forc'd fingers rude,
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year. [ 5 ]
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,
Compels me to disturb your season due:
For [Lycidas](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer:
Who would not sing for [Lycidas](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml)? he knew [ 10 ]
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
He must not flote upon his watry [bear](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml)
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of som melodious tear.

[Begin then, Sisters](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) of the sacred well, [ 15 ]
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring,
Begin, and somwhat loudly sweep the string.
Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse,
So may som gentle Muse
With [lucky](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) words favour my destin'd Urn, [ 20 ]
And as he passes turn,
And bid fair peace be to my sable shrowd.
For we were nurst upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill.

Together both, ere the high Lawns appear'd [ 25 ]
Under the [opening](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) eye-lids of the morn,
We drove a field, and both together heard
What time the Gray-fly winds her sultry horn,
[Batt'ning](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the [Star](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) that rose, at Ev'ning, bright [ 30 ]
Toward Heav'ns descent had slop'd his [westering](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) wheel.
Mean while the Rural ditties were not mute,
Temper'd to [th' Oaten Flute](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml),
Rough [Satyrs](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) danc'd, and Fauns with clov'n heel,
From the glad sound would not be absent long, [ 35 ]
And old [Damœtas](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) lov'd [to hear our song.](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml)

But O the heavy change, now thou art gon,
Now thou art gon, and never must return!
Thee Shepherd, thee the Woods, and desert Caves,
With wilde Thyme and the [gadding](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) Vine o'regrown, [ 40 ]
And all their echoes mourn.
The Willows, and the Hazle Copses green,
Shall now no more be seen,
Fanning their joyous Leaves to thy soft layes.
As killing as the [Canker](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) to the Rose, [ 45 ]
Or [Taint-worm](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) to the [weanling](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) Herds that graze,
Or Frost to Flowers, that their gay [wardrop](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) wear,
When first the White thorn [blows](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml);
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to Shepherds ear.

[Where were ye Nymphs](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) when the remorseless deep [ 50 ]
Clos'd o're the head of your lov'd Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep,
Where your old [Bards](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml), the famous Druids ly,
Nor on the shaggy top of [Mona](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) high,
Nor yet where [Deva](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) spreads her wisard stream: [ 55 ]
Ay me, I [fondly](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) dream!
Had ye bin there — for what could that have don?
What could the Muse her self that Orpheus bore,
The Muse her self, for her inchanting son
Whom Universal nature did lament, [ 60 ]
When by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His goary visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the [Lesbian shore](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml).

Alas! What boots it with uncessant care
To tend the homely slighted Shepherds trade, [ 65 ]
And [strictly](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) meditate the thankles Muse,
Were it not better don as others use,
To sport with [Amaryllis](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) in the shade,
[Or with](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) the tangles of Neæra's hair?
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise [ 70 ]
(That last infirmity of Noble mind)
To scorn delights, and live laborious dayes;
But the fair [Guerdon](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind [Fury](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) with th' abhorred shears, [ 75 ]
And slits the thin spun life. But not the praise,
[Phœbus](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) repli'd, and touch'd my trembling ears;
Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering [foil](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml)
Set off to th' world, nor in broad rumour lies, [ 80 ]
But lives and spreds aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfet witnes of all judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in Heav'n expect thy meed.

O Fountain [Arethuse](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml), and thou honour'd flood, [ 85 ]
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crown'd with vocall reeds,
That strain I heard was of a [higher mood](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml):
But now my Oate proceeds,
And listens to the [Herald](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) of the Sea
That came in Neptune's [plea](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml), [ 90 ]
He ask'd the Waves, and ask'd the Fellon winds,
What hard mishap hath doom'd this gentle [swain](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml)?
And question'd every gust of rugged wings
That blows from off each beaked Promontory,
They knew not of his story, [ 95 ]
And sage [Hippotades](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon stray'd,
The Ayr was calm, and on the level brine,
Sleek [Panope](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) with all her sisters play'd.
It was that fatall and perfidious [Bark](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) [ 100 ]
Built in [th' eclipse](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml), and rigg'd with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Next [Camus](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml), reverend Sire, went footing slow,
His Mantle hairy, and his Bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge [ 105 ]
Like to that [sanguine flower](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) inscrib'd with woe.
Ah! Who hath reft (quoth he) my dearest pledge?
Last came, and last did go,
[The Pilot](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) of the Galilean lake,
Two massy Keyes he bore of metals twain, [ 110 ]
(The Golden opes, the Iron shuts amain)
He shook his [Miter'd](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) locks, and stern bespake,
How well could I have spar'd for thee young swain,
[Anow](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) of such as for their bellies sake,
Creep and intrude, and climb [into the fold](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml)? [ 115 ]
Of other care they little reck'ning make,
Then how to scramble at the shearers feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
Blind mouthes! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A Sheep-hook, or have learn'd ought els the least [ 120 ]
That to the faithfull Herdmans art belongs!
What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;
And when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their [scrannel](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) Pipes of wretched straw,
[The hungry Sheep look up](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml), and are not fed, [ 125 ]
But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread:
Besides what the grim [Woolf](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) with [privy](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) paw
Daily devours apace, and [nothing](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) [sed](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml),
But that [two-handed engine](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) at the door, [ 130 ]
Stands ready to [smite](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) once, and smite no more.

Return [Alpheus](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml), the dread voice is past,
That shrunk thy streams; Return Sicilian Muse,
And call the Vales, and bid them hither cast
Their Bels, and Flourets of a thousand hues. [ 135 ]
Ye valleys low where the milde whispers use,
Of shades and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the [swart Star](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) sparely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enameld eyes,
That on the green terf suck the honied showres, [ 140 ]
And purple all the ground with vernal flowres.
Bring the [rathe](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) Primrose that forsaken dies.
The tufted [Crow-toe](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml), and pale [Jasmine](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml),
The white Pink, and the Pansie [freakt](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) with jeat,
The glowing Violet. [ 145 ]
The Musk-rose, and the well attir'd Woodbine,
With Cowslips [wan](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) that hang the pensive hed,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears:
Bid [Amaranthus](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) all his beauty shed,
And [Daffadillies](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) fill their cups with tears, [ 150 ]
To strew the Laureat Herse where Lycid lies.
For so to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.
Ay me! Whilst thee the shores and sounding Seas
Wash far away, where ere thy bones are hurld, [ 155 ]
Whether beyond the stormy [Hebrides](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml),
Where thou perhaps under the [whelming](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) tide
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world;
Or whether thou to our [moist](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) vows deny'd,
Sleep'st by the fable of [Bellerus](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) old, [ 160 ]
Where the great vision of the [guarded Mount](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml)
Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold;
[Look homeward](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) Angel now, and melt with ruth.
And, O ye [Dolphins](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml), waft the haples youth.

Weep no more, woful Shepherds [weep no more](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml), [ 165 ]
For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watry floar,
So sinks the day-star in the Ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled Ore, [ 170 ]
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of [him](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) that walk'd the waves;
Where other groves, and other streams along,
With Nectar pure his oozy Lock's he laves, [ 175 ]
And hears the [unexpressive nuptiall Song](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml),
[In the blest Kingdoms meek of joy and love.](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml)
There entertain him all the Saints above,
In solemn troops, and sweet Societies
That sing, and singing in their glory move, [ 180 ]
And [wipe the tears](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) for ever from his eyes.
Now Lycidas the Shepherds weep no more;
Hence forth thou art the [Genius](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) of the shore,
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood. [ 185 ]

Thus sang the uncouth Swain to th' Okes and rills,
While the still morn went out with Sandals gray,
He touch'd the tender stops of various [Quills](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml),
With eager thought warbling his [Dorick](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml) lay:
And now the Sun had stretch'd out all the hills, [ 190 ]
And now was dropt into the Western bay;
At last he rose, and twitch'd his Mantle blew:
To morrow to fresh Woods, and [Pastures new.](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml)