

THE PASTORAL ELEGY

AN ANTHOLOGY

705
400-3

Edited with Introduction, Commentary, and Notes

BY

THOMAS PERRIN HARRISON, Jr.
Professor of English
The University of Texas

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

BY

HARRY JOSHUA LEON
Associate Professor of Classical Languages
The University of Texas

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
AUSTIN

1939

WHARTON REPROGRAPHICS

2

BION

LAMENT FOR ADONIS

I weep for Adonis; lovely Adonis is dead. Dead is lovely Adonis; the Loves join in weeping. Sleep no more, Cypris, amid crimson raiment. Awake, wretched goddess, and in sable robe smite thy bosom and say to all, "Lovely Adonis is dead."

I weep for Adonis; the Loves join in weeping.

10
Lovely Adonis lies in the mountains, his thigh wounded with the tusk, his white thigh with the white tusk, and brings anguish to Cypris, as he feebly breathes forth his life and his dark blood drips down over his snow-white flesh and his eyes are dimmed beneath his brows and the rose flees from his lip, on which dies also the kiss which Cypris shall never more carry away. Cypris delights in his kiss though he lives no more; but Adonis knows not that she kissed him as he died.

I weep for Adonis; the Loves join in weeping.

20
Cruel, cruel the wound which Adonis has in his thigh, but more grievous the wound which Cytherea bears in her heart. Around this lad the faithful dogs howled, and the Nymphs of the mountains weep, and Aphrodite, her tresses flying loose, wanders amid the woods, sorrowing, with hair unbraided, with feet unsandaled, and the thornbushes wound her as she goes and they draw her divine blood. With shrill cries she rushes through the far glens, wailing for her Assyrian lord and calling upon the lad. But around his navel the dark blood was spouting and his chest was made red with the blood from his thighs and crimson now was Adonis' breast that before was white as snow.

"Alas for Cytherea," the Loves join in weeping.

30
She has lost the lovely man and with him she has lost her divine beauty. Lovely was the form of Cypris while Adonis lived, but her beauty died with Adonis. "Alas for Cypris," all the mountains say, and the oak trees say, "Alas for Adonis"; and the rivers wail for the sorrows of Aphrodite, and the springs in the mountains weep for Adonis. The flowers are red with pain, and Cythera through all its mountain sides, through every glen sings the piteous strain, "Alas for Cytherea; lovely Adonis is dead."

40
And Echo returned the cry, "Lovely Adonis is dead." For the sorrowful love of Cypris who would not have wailed "Alas"? As she saw, as she beheld the unchecked wound of Adonis, as she saw the crimson blood about his drooping thigh, stretching forth her arms, she moaned, "O stay, Adonis, ill-fated Adonis, stay, that I may possess thee for the very last time, that I may embrace thee and mingle lips with lips. Awake but a little, Adonis, and give me this last kiss; kiss me as long as a kiss may live, until from thy soul into my mouth, even into my very heart, thy breath may flow, and I may drain thy sweet love charm and drink up all thy love and treasure this kiss as I will Adonis himself, since thou, ill-starred lad, art fleeing from me. Thou art fleeing afar, Adonis, and art going into Acheron and to that hateful and savage king; yet must I live on wretchedly, for I am a goddess and cannot follow thee. Persephone, take my lord, for thou art much stronger than I and every lovely thing must descend to thee. But I am utterly forlorn and I bear unceasing anguish and I weep for my Adonis, who is dead, and I am in fear of thee. Thou art dying, my thrice-beloved, and my love has fled from me like a dream. Cytherea is widowed and desolate are the Loves in her halls. My charmed girdle has perished with thee. O why, reckless lad, didst thou go hunting? Why, being so lovely, wast thou so mad as to fight with a wild beast?" Thus wailed Cypris; the Loves join the lament: "Alas for Cytherea; lovely Adonis is dead." So many tears does the Paphian shed as Adonis sheds drops of blood; and they all turn into flowers on the ground. The blood brings forth the rose and the tears the windflower.

I weep for Adonis; lovely Adonis is dead.

70
Weep for thy lover no more in the woods, Cypris. No good couch for Adonis is the lonely bed of leaves. Let the dead Adonis now have thy couch, Cytherea. Though in death, he is lovely; so lovely in death, like one that sleeps. Lay him down in the soft raiment in which once he slept, in which through the night he shared sacred sleep with thee, on a bed all of gold. The bed yearns for Adonis, dismal though his fate. Cast on him wreaths and flowers. With him all things have died, even as he, and the flowers are all withered. Sprinkle him with Syrian unguents,

80 sprinkle him with perfumes. Let all perfumes perish; Adonis, who was thy own perfume, is dead. Dainty Adonis is laid in crimson robes and around him the Loves weep and lament, cutting their long hair for Adonis. One has thrown over him his arrows, one his bow, one his wing, one his quiver; and one has loosed the sandal of Adonis, and others bear water in a golden basin, and one washes his thighs, and one fans Adonis from behind with his wings.

"Alas for Cytherea," the Loves join in weeping.

90 Hymenaeus quenched every torch at the doorposts and he scattered the nuptial wreath and no more did he sing, "Hymen, Hymen," no more his own song, but "Alas for Adonis," he chants, even more than the bridal song. The Graces weep for the son of Cinyras: "Lovely Adonis is dead," they say to one another. "Alas," they shriek far more than they cry the paeon. And the Fates weep aloud for Adonis in Hades, and they sing of him, but he heeds them not. 'Tis not that he does not desire it, but the Maiden does not release him.

Cease thy lamentations this day, Cytherea; refrain from beating thy breast. Thou must weep for him again; thou must bewail him again in another year.

MOSCHUS

LAMENT FOR BION

Sound me a mournful dirge, you glens and Dorian stream, and weep, you rivers, for charming Bion. Grieve now, you plants, and make lamentation now, you groves, and now, you flowers, breathe away your fragrance with sorrowing clusters. Now turn crimson with grief, you roses and you windflowers; now, hyacinth, utter the sound of your letters and show a deeper "AI, AI" on your petals. The beautiful singer is dead.

Begin, Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

You nightingales that lament amid the thick leaves, announce to the Sicilian streams of Arethusa that Bion the cowherd is dead, that with him music also has died and Dorian song has perished.

10

Begin, Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Wail mournfully, Strymonian swans, by the waters, and with notes of lamentation chant a plaintive lay, even such as old age sings on your lips, and say to the Oeagrian maidens, say to all the Bistonian nymphs, "The Dorian Orpheus is dead."

Begin, Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

He, the well-beloved of the herds, sings no more, and no more does he sing sitting beneath the desolate oaks, but by Pluteus' side he sings a chant of Lethe. The mountains are mute and the cows that wander by the bulls are weeping and will not pasture.

20

Begin, Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

For thy swift doom, Bion, Apollo himself lamented and the Satyrs sorrowed and the black-robed Priapi. The Pans sigh for thy song, and the fountain nymphs sobbed in the woodland and their waters turned to tears. Echo sobs among the rocks because she is silent and can no more mimic thy lips. At thy dying the trees dropped their fruit, the flowers all withered. The lovely milk did not flow from the sheep, nor the honey from the hives, but it perished sorrowing in the wax; for no more must the honey be gathered, now that thy honey has perished.

30

Begin, Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Not so did the Siren grieve by the shores of the sea, nor so did the Nightingale once sing among the cliffs, nor so did the Swallow lament in the far mountains, nor so did Ceyx cry out for the pain of Alcyon, nor so did the Cerylus sing in the green waves, nor so in the eastern glens did Memnon's bird lament for the son of Eos while flying around his grave, as they all did sorrow for dead Bion.

Begin, Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

The nightingales and all the swallows which once he made glad, which he taught to speak, sat by the tree trunks and wailed before one another, and the others gave answer, "You birds of sorrow, do you also mourn."

Begin, Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Who will ever play on thy flute, my thrice-beloved? Who will place his mouth on thy reeds, who would be so bold? For thy lips and thy spirit still breathe therein and the echo of thy song is still kept alive in those tubes. Shall I bear the pipe to Pan? Perchance even he would fear to press his mouth thereto, lest he come but second after thee.

Begin, Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Galatea also weeps for thy song, she whom once thou didst delight when she sat with thee by the shore of the sea; for thou didst not sing like the Cyclops. From him lovely Galatea fled, but thee she beheld more gladly than the sea spray. And now, forgetful of the wave, she sits on the desolate sands, but still she tends thy cows.

Begin, Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Together with thee, cowherd, have perished all the gifts of the Muses, the charming kisses of maidens, the lips of boys, and around thy body the gloomy Loves are weeping, and Cypris yearns for thee far more than for that kiss with which lately she kissed the dying Adonis. This, most tuneful of rivers, is thy second sorrow; this, Meles, thy new sorrow. Of old, Homer died, that sweet mouth of Calliope, and it is said that thou didst grieve for thy lovely son with tear-filled streams, and thou didst fill all the

sea with thy voice. Now thou dost weep again for another son and thou art pining away with a fresh grief. They were both beloved of fountains: the one drank of the spring of Pegasus, the other quaffed the waters of Arethusa. The one sang of the lovely daughter of Tyndareus and the mighty son of Thetis and of Menelaus, son of Atreus; but this poet's song was not of wars, not of tears, but of Pan, and he, a cowherd, had a clear voice and sang as he tended his herds, and he fashioned pipes and milked the sweet heifer and taught of the kisses of boys and nurtured Love in his bosom and stirred the passion of Aphrodite.

Begin, Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Every famous city, Bion, mourns thee, every town. Ascra sorrows for thee far more than for Hesiod. The Boeotian woodlands do not yearn so for Pindar. Not for Alcaeus did charming Lesbos grieve so, nor did the Teian city lament so much for her bard. Paros yearns for thee more than for Archilochus. Rather than for Sappho Mitylene still sighs for thy music. Thou art Theocritus to the Syracusans. But I sing a strain of Ausonian sorrow, I no stranger to the pastoral song, but I am heir to that Dorian Muse which thou didst once teach to thy pupils and with which thou didst endow me, leaving thy wealth to others, but to me the heritage of song.

Begin, Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Alas, when the mallows perish in the garden, and the green celery, and the luxuriant, curling dill, they later come to life again and grow in another year; but we, the great, the mighty, the wise men, when once we die, unhearing we sleep in the hollow earth, a right long sleep without end or awaking. Even so shalt thou be in the ground, wrapped in silence; but the Nymphs have willed that the frog should ever keep up his song; but I would not begrudge the Nymphs, for the song he sings is not beautiful.

Begin, Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Poison came, Bion, to thy mouth; it was poison thou didst eat. Could it have come to such lips and not have turned to sweetness? What mortal was so brutal as to mix poison for thee or to give it to thee at thy call? He had fled far from song.

Begin, Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

120 But Justice overtakes all men. In this my sorrow I shed tears
lamenting thy fate. Were I but able, even as Orpheus descended
to Tartarus, as once did Odysseus, as Alcides of old, I too should
quickly have gone to the abode of Pluteus, that I might see thee,
and, if thou singest to Pluteus, that I might hear what thou singest.
Ah, come! Sing out to the Maiden a Sicilian strain and a sweet
pastoral song. She too is a Sicilian and once she sported on
Aetna's shores. She knows the Dorian song. Not unrewarded will
be thy lay; and as once when Orpheus played sweetly on the
lyre, she granted him Eurydice's return, so will she send thee
also, Bion, to the mountains. But if I too had such power with
the pipe, I should myself sing before Pluteus.