(1907); K. Strecker, "Leoninische Hexameter und Pentameter in 9. Jahrhundert," *Neues Archiv für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 44 (1922); C. M. Bowra, *Early Greek Elegists,* 2d ed. (1938); P. Friedländer, *Epigrammata: Greek Inscriptions in Verse from the Beginnings to the Persian Wars* (1948); M. Platnauer, *Latin Elegiac Verse* (1951); L. P. Wilkinson, *Golden Latin Artistry* (1963); T. G. Rosenmeyer, "Elegiac and Elegos," *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 1 (1968); D. Ross, *Style and Tradition in Catullus* (1969); M. L. West, *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus* (1974); A.W.H. Adkins, *Poetic Craft in the Early Greek Elegists* (1984); R. M. Marina Sáez, *La métrica de los epigramas de Marcial* (1998).

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ELEGIAC STANZA, elegiac quatrain, heroic quatrain. In Eng., the iambic pentameter quatrain rhymed *abab*. While it had been frequently employed without elegiac feeling or intention by other poets, e.g., Shakespeare in his sonnets and John Dryden in his *Annus Mirabilis,* the term *elegiac stanza* was apparently made popular by its use in Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1750), though, in fact, the association of the *quatrain with *elegy in Eng. appears at least as early as James Hammond's *Love Elegies* (1743) and was employed "almost invariably" for elegiac verse for about a century thereafter (Bate)—cf. William Wordsworth's "Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by Peele Castle."

■ W. J. Bate, *The Stylistic Development of Keats* (1945).

T.V.F. Brogan; S. F. Fogle

ELEGY

I. History
II. Criticism

I. History. In mod. usage, an *elegy* is a poem of loss or mourning. The term is Gr., its initial significance metrical: *elegeia* designates a poem in elegiac *couplets. In antiquity, the meter is used for a range of subjects and styles, incl. the kind of combative, promiscuous love presented in the poetry of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid. The popularity and prestige of what is still called Roman love elegy make *elegy* a loose synonym for "love poem" in early mod. usage, though the cl. exemplars are not generally "elegiac" in what becomes the dominant sense of the term. The meter, however, was also popular for *epitaphs, both literal and literary; all the Roman elegists also wrote elegies in the mod. sense, and in antiquity, the metrical term also becomes a synonym for *"lament." Neo-Lat. poets from the 15th-c. on compose new works in elegiac couplets, and attempts are made to transfer the meter to the vernaculars. Among the most successful is J. W. Goethe's, incl. a collection of *Römische Elegien* (1795), scandalously sensual love poems, defiantly unmournful. Some critics (such as J. C. Scaliger in the 16th c.) try to theorize a common ground between Roman love elegy and lament for the dead (both involve *complaints); the popularity of *Petrarchism in the Ren. strengthens a feeling that absence and frustration are central themes in *love poetry; and along these lines, "dire-lamenting elegies" (Shakespeare, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*) can be recommended to a would-be seducer. This composite understanding of the genre, however, is never fully worked out and gradually fades.

The most important cl. models for the later devel. of elegy are *pastoral: the lament for Daphnis (who died of love) by Theocritus, the elegy for Adonis attributed to Bion, the elegy on Bion attributed to Moschus, and another lament for Daphnis in the fifth *eclogue of Virgil. All are stylized and mythic, with hints of ritual; the first three are punctuated by incantatory *refrains. The elegies on Daphnis are staged performances within an otherwise casual setting. Nonhuman elements of the pastoral world are enlisted in the mourning: nymphs, satyrs, the landscape itself. In Virgil, the song of grief is paired with one celebrating the dead man's apotheosis; the poem is usually read as an *allegory on the death and deification of Julius Caesar. Virgil's poem becomes particularly influential and adaptable. In the 9th c., Paschasius Radbertus composes an imitation in which the nuns Galathea and Phyllis sing of a deceased shepherd monk as a figure for Christ. At the prompting of humanism, Ren. poets experiment with the pastoral elegy and use it for a range of personal, political, and symbolic reference. Few collections of pastorals in the Ren. are without at least one elegy, and there are important stand-alone examples, such as Clément Marot's "Eglogue" on the death of Louise of Savoy (1531). John Milton composes two full-fledged pastoral elegies: *Epitaphium Damonis* in Lat., on a close friend (1639), and "Lycidas" in Eng., on a schoolmate (1637). The latter is widely regarded as Milton's first major poetic achievement and the most successful vernacular instance of the genre. It was, nevertheless, sharply criticized in the next century by Samuel Johnson for its artificiality; he speaks for a growing disenchantment with the genre. Major poets, however, can return to it in full dress: P. B. Shelley in "Adonais" (1821) on the shockingly early death of John Keats, W. B. Yeats in "Shepherd and Goatherd" (1918) on an unnamed shepherd who "died in the great war beyond the sea." The presence of the genre can also be felt in less-adorned poems, in the general sense that the countryside is the right place for elegiac feeling (Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," 1750) or in the arch affirmation of natural sympathy with which W. H. Auden opens his elegy on Yeats (1939).

Pastoral, however, is only a specialized trad. within the wider field of poetic treatments of death and loss. Such poems (which may or may not call themselves elegies) show an immense diversity, within which filiations can be complex. Some important examples are really *sui generis*; among the few unforgettable Eng. poems of the first decade of the 16th c. is John Skelton's *Philip Sparrow,* 1,400 unpredictable lines on the death of a young girl's pet bird. The object in question is usually another person, often specifically identified: an important public figure or someone with a close personal connection to the poet, such as a spouse, lover, parent, child, or friend. Elegies on other poets are particularly common; elegies for oneself are at least as old as Ovid's exile poems. Elegies for groups or classes of people (esp.

those killed in war) date back to the Greeks but become a particular feature of the 20th c. (such as Anna Akhmatova's *Requiem* (1935, pub. 1963) on the "nameless friends" lost in the Stalinist terror of 1935–40). Poems can present themselves as epitaphs or as containing epitaphs, sometimes addressing a visitor to the cemetery (*siste viator*). Even in times that value poetic artifice at its most elaborate, poems of personal grief—such as Henry King's "Exequy" on the dead wife he calls "his matchless never to be forgotten friend" (1634)—can be strikingly direct in their effect. In 20th-c. writing, the appetite for directness becomes conspicuous, at times brutal ("he's dead / the old bastard"; W. C. Williams, "Death" [1930]). It is, however, an equally famous resource of elegies to proceed by complicated indirection. In Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess* (ca. 1368), occasioned by the death of his patron's wife, the dreaming narrator cannot acknowledge that occasion until the last of the poem's 1,300 lines, long after the reader has divined it. The mourning in Keats's ode "To Autumn" (1819) is almost entirely subliminal and inexplicit, but strong enough to make three stanzas of seasonal description one of the touchstone lyrics in the lang.

Some important elegies are expansive in their reach. In Walt Whitman's "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" (1860), a child (as in *Philip Sparrow* reacting to the death of a bird) hears from the sea a message of "Death, death, death, death, death" that is also the start of a visionary poetic calling. Paul Valéry's "Le Cimitière marin" (1922) sets an individual attempt at spiritual and intellectual transcendence amid the felt presence of the dead in a seaside graveyard at noon (its text is appropriated by Krzysztof Penderecki for "Dies irae" [1967], an oratorio on Auschwitz). Perhaps the most distinguished 20th-c. poems to call themselves elegies are R. M. Rilke's *Duineser Elegien* (written 1912–22), which move between a sense of insufficiency and loss basic to human consciousness—"And so we live, and are always taking leave"—and a higher order of awareness among beings whom the poet calls "Angels."

II. Criticism. Critical thought about elegy has been an attempt to come to grips with this diversity, sometimes inadvertently amplifying it. Despite, e.g., current acknowledgment that they have little claim to the term, a number of poignant OE poems have for 200 years been called *elegies* in a move so closely associated with a sense of their value that the designation is unlikely to change. The prestige and longevity of the genre have increased its variety, and it has often splintered and become unrecognizable to itself; an important "school of elegy," for instance, in early 19th-c. Rus. poetry produced poems that share emotional intimacy and style but little topical focus. A mountain setting is required by the trad. of cl. Ger. elegy identified in Ziolkowski's study of Friedrich Schiller's originary "Der Spaziergang" (1795). Yet wherever we draw the boundaries of kind, some version of elegy is pervasively written about in every lang.

Critics writing in Eng. seem to agree that the topics of loss and death and the speech act of lament char-

acterize the genre; that its mode is primarily *lyric, with certain characteristic generic markers (*apostrophe, exclamation, *pathetic fallacy, epideixis, pastoral topoi, *allusion, *epitaph); and that its indigenous moods are sorrow, shock, rage, longing, melancholy, and resolution—often in quick succession. Most literary historians have understood elegy as closely linked to the hist., theory, and decorum of cultural practices of mourning. Pigman's *Grief and Renaissance Elegy* and Sacks's *The English Elegy* are two particularly influential studies, both pub. in 1985, that continue to set questions and topics for later scholars. While studies vary in the extent of their embrace of psychoanalysis or cultural hist., they concur in describing the elegy as, in Pigman's phrase, "a process of mourning." Pigman identifies a shift in Reformation views and practices of mourning with consequences for elegy; Sacks sees the conventions of the genre from Edmund Spenser to Yeats as answerable to psychological needs. Later critics weigh in with some mix of social hist., psychology, and aesthetic analysis. Ramazani registers a protest by mod. elegy against normative cultural models of mourning; Zeiger, Kennedy, and others explore the importance of elegy as a resource for traumatic collective grief over breast cancer, AIDS, and the events of September 11, 2001; Spargo explores the psychological dimension of the form with philosophical attention.

Other puzzles invite attention. Why, if elegy is "a process of mourning," are so many elegies lyrics with little narrative or processional content? Standard definitions of *elegy* can strain against the temporality of lyric. Elegy's recourse to emotion seems incompletely explained by psychological or social models of grief or even by a notion of the poem as expressive. The emotions represented by the poem and the emotional experience that the poem offers to the reader are distinct; their trajectories need not coincide. They can, of course—as when, in a practice shared by other contemp. readers, Queen Victoria and George Eliot annotated the text of Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850) so that it referred to their own lost loves. Such evidence suggests that elegy is a kind of manual or liturgy for personal use; this function of the genre encouraged criteria such as *sincerity or Johnson's "passion" to dominate critical evaluation of it. Yet such criteria seem ill suited to the power of poems such as "Lycidas," Spenser's "Daphnaida," Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," and Auden's "In Memory of Sigmund Freud," which lament the deaths of persons who were not, in the standard sense of the term, "mourned" by the authors. Neither do current theories about the genre's purposes, collective or private, account for the numerous elegies of animals, objects, and so forth or for the peculiar ludic uses of the form by poets like Skelton, Emily Dickinson, Robert Burns, and the anonymous author of "Groanes from Newgate, or, An elegy upon Edvvard Dun, Esq. the cities common hangman, who dyed naturally in his bed the 11th of September, 1663."

The publication of elegy awaits further study. Chau-

cer's ms. *Book of the Duchess* is thought to have been produced for and performed at anniversary memorial events continuing long after the death of the duchess. With the advent of print, volumes of elegy were collected and printed to honor particular deaths (such as the famous volumes for Philip Sidney and the one containing "Lycidas"). Print also facilitated the voluminous appearance of elegy in broadside, and in the 17th c., the form developed what now seems like an incongruous affinity for *acrostics and *anagrams. Cavitch (2002) describes the publication of elegy in early New England with a traveler's report that there was not "one Country House in fifty which has not its Walls garnished with half a Score of these Sort of Poems." The changing forms of publication suggest a different hist. of elegy from what crit. might lead us to expect and also disabuse us of the sense that that hist. has reached any kind of conclusion.

See BLUES, CORONACH, DIRGE, ELEGIAC DISTICH, ELEGIAC STANZA, ENDECHA, EPICEDIUM, GRAVEYARD POETRY, MONODY.

■ E. Z. Lambert, *Placing Sorrow: A Study of the Pastoral Elegy Convention from Theocritus to Milton* (1976); T. Ziolkowski, *The Classical German Elegy 1795–1950* (1980); G. W. Pigman III, *Grief and English Renaissance Elegy* (1985); P. Sacks, *The English Elegy* (1985); C. M. Schenck, *Mourning and Panegyric* (1988); D. Kay, *Melodious Tears: The English Funeral Elegy from Spenser to Milton* (1990); J. Ramazani, *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (1994); E. Schor, *Bearing the Dead: The British Culture of Mourning from the Enlightenment to Victoria* (1994); W. D. Shaw, *Elegy and Paradox* (1994); M. F. Zeiger, *Beyond Consolation: Death, Sexuality, and the Changing Shapes of Elegy* (1997); M. Homans, *Royal Representations: Queen Victoria and British Culture 1837–1876* (1998); J. Hammond, *The American Puritan Elegy* (2000); M. Cavitch, "Interiority and Artifact: Death and Self-Inscription in Thomas Smith's *Self-Portrait*," *Early American Literature* 37 (2002); R. C. Spargo, *The Ethics of Mourning* (2004); M. Cavitch, *American Elegy* (2007); D. Kennedy, *Elegy* (2007); *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy*, ed. K. A. Weisman (2010).

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ELISION (Lat., "striking out"; Gr., *synaloepha*). In *prosody, the general term for several devices of contraction whereby two syllables are reduced to one. The Gr. term *synaloepha* nowadays tends to be restricted to only one form; other terms formerly used for elision in cl. prosody include *crasis* and *synizesis*. The forms of elision are: (1) *aphaeresis: dropping of a word-initial syllable (vowel); (2) *syncope: dropping of a word-internal syllable; (3) *apocope: dropping of a word-final syllable (vowel); (4) *synaeresis: coalescing of two vowels within a word; and (5) *synaloepha*: coalescing of two vowels across a word boundary, i.e., ending one word and beginning the next. (The corresponding terms for addition of a syllable to the beginning, middle, or end of a word are *prosthesis*, *epenthesis*, and *proparalepsis*, respectively.)

Collectively, these are sometimes called, on the analogy of rhet., the "metric figures" (Elwert); Johann Susenbrotus, e.g., gives a taxonomy, calling the types of elision *metaplasms*, i.e., the class of figures for adding or subtracting a letter or syllable. Elision of whole words or phrases is *ellipsis*. Probably at least some of the older terminology is confused, and certainly many prosodists over the centuries have failed to grasp that the reductive processes at work here are normal linguistic ones, not "poetical" devices peculiar to metrical verse. The shortening of words and smoothing out of the alternation of vowels and consonants are both common processes in speech. The opposite of elision is *hiatus.

In Gr., elision, variable in prose but more regular in poetry, is indicated by an apostrophe (') to mark the disappearance of the elided vowel (generally short *alpha*, *epsilon*, and *omikron* as well as the diphthong *ai* occasionally in Homer and in comedy); but when elision occurs in Gr. compound words, the apostrophe is not used. In Lat., a final vowel or a vowel followed by final *m* was not omitted from the written lang.; but as a rule, it was ignored metrically when the next word in the same measure began with a vowel, diphthong, or the aspirate *h*. In the mod. vernaculars, the apostrophe was retained to indicate graphically certain types of elision, but outside these, there is a larger case of words that have syllabically alternate forms in ordinary speech, e.g., *heaven*, which some speakers pronounce as a disyllable, some as a monosyllable. This syllabic variance is, of course, useful to poets who write in syllable-counting meters; thus, Sipe shows that in the overwhelming number of cases, Shakespeare chooses the one or other form of such words, which she terms "doublets," so as to conform to the meter.

There is some presumption that the number of syllables in the word that fits the *scansion of the line will be the number uttered in *performance (reading aloud) of the line. Robert Bridges, however, who has one of the seminal mod. discussions, uses the term *elision* in a special sense, to denote syllables that should be elided for purposes of scansion but not in pronunciation, a theory that divides scansion from performance. Ramsey has termed this "semi-elision," in his crit. of Bridges's position. The problem of poets' alteration of the syllabic structure of their lang. for metrical purposes is far more complex than is usually assumed; indeed, the very problem of determining what was ordinary speech practice at various times in the past itself is very difficult. Most of the hist. of Eng. metrical theory from ca. 1650 to 1925 could be framed in terms of dispute about elision, i.e., syllabic regularity.

■ T. S. Omond and W. Thomas, "Milton and Syllabism," *MLR* 4–5 (1909–10); Bridges; Omond; W. J. Bate, *The Stylistic Development of Keats* (1945); P. Fussell Jr., "The Theory of Poetic Contractions," *Theory of Prosody in 18th-Century England* (1954); A. C. Partridge, *Orthography in Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama* (1964); Chatman; R. O. Evans, *Milton's Elisions* (1966); J. Soubiran, *L'elision dans la poésie latine* (1966); D. L. Sipe, *Shakespeare's Metrics* (1968); Allen;