

THEOCRITUS (*fl.* EARLY 3<sup>RD</sup> C. BCE), GREEK POET. A Syracusan with some connections to the courts of Cos and Alexandria, Theocritus' life is largely a mystery. He is most famous for his *Idylls*, featuring dialogues or poetic contests between herdsmen, and depicting rural life in a stylized way. He had a profound effect on Virgil's pastoral eclogues and on poets from Petrarch to Milton. The manuscripts of Theocritus on which early modern translations relied are particularly varied, and the numbering below does not reflect that of the twentieth-century standard editions of this ancient poet's works. Below, 'Idyll 12' retains its number in modern editions, but 'Idyll 23' is not now usually considered to be Theocritus' work; it appears numbered 'Idyll 23' in J.M. Edmonds' Loeb edition, in *Greek Bucolic Poets* (Cambridge, 1912), but is missing from A. Verity's 2002 Oxford edition.

CHARLES GOODALL (1671-1689), POET. For his biography and other selections from his works, see the print anthology, pp. 384-99.

POETICAL RECREATIONS (1688)<sup>1</sup>

A PARAPHRASE ON THE 23<sup>RD</sup> IDYLL OF THEOCRITUS<sup>2</sup>

## I.

An amorous little swain  
Was set to keep  
His father's goodly flock of sheep,  
(Fed in a common that belonged to Pan,<sup>3</sup>  
About the middle of th' Arcadian plain).  
By chance a noble youth came by,  
Whom when his sparkling eyes did spy,<sup>4</sup>  
His watchful eyes<sup>5</sup>  
That there stood sentinel,  
And did perform their office well,  
Stoutly prepared for every quick surprise.  
Marking the beauty of his angel's face,

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<sup>1</sup> Multi-authored volume: part 1 is by Jane Barker (see print anthology, pp. 522-8); part 2, by various university gentlemen.

<sup>2</sup> 'Idyll 23' is now no longer believed to be Theocritus' work. Cf. the heterosexualized version from *Poems and Translations* [PT] (1689), below. Dryden also transforms Theocritus' scornful boy into a haughty girl. See his version in *Sylvae*, 1692, pp. 107-113.

<sup>3</sup> common pasture.

<sup>4</sup> Whom ... *his* i.e., when the amorous swain saw the noble youth's sparkling eyes.

<sup>5</sup> *his* i.e., the amorous swain's.

Mixed with sweet carriage and a heavenly grace,  
 Well satisfied, they let him pass;<sup>6</sup>  
 Who having got admittance did impart  
 The fatal secret to his wounded heart.  
 Charmed with the youth he was that Fate had thither brought,  
 Whose beauty did surpass desire or thought;  
     In making whom,  
     Nature for once did thus presume,  
     To go beyond her last, to place<sup>7</sup>  
 On a man's shoulders a fair woman's face,  
     Or rather to adorn,  
 With more than heav'nly beauty a terrestrial form.

## II.

But ah! His mind  
 Not like his angel face, proud, scornful, and unkind,  
     Despising those whom passion,  
     Whom unresisted passion moved  
     To highest admiration;  
 Those who disdained him most, he greatly loved.  
     He knew not, nor did he desire to know  
     What Cupid meant, his arrows, or his bow,  
     How oft, how usually he throws  
     A golden dart  
     To wound the heart  
     Of those  
     Who most unconquerable seem,  
 Jeer at his godship, and his power contemn.<sup>8</sup>  
     Cruel in deed and word,  
 Who never the least comfort would discover,  
     Or one cool drop of ease afford  
 To a despairing, burning, dying lover.  
     Choler and anger in his entrails boils,<sup>9</sup>  
     No pleasant smiles,  
 No rosy lips, nor blushing cheeks,  
     Nor languished eyes that might betray  
     An inward fondness, and might seem to say,

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<sup>6</sup> *they* i.e., the amorous swain's eyes. *him* i.e., the beautiful noble youth.

<sup>7</sup> *to go beyond her last* to exceed the traditional limits of her knowledge, skill, and/or capacity.

<sup>8</sup> *contemn* despise.

<sup>9</sup> *choler* a synonym for 'anger' (wrath).

'I will thy mutual love repay.'  
 No comfortable words he speaks,  
 Nor suffers me to ravish one kind kiss,  
 That entrance to a future and more perfect bliss,  
 But as a chaséd boar  
 With vengeance looks upon his hunter's spear,  
 Sets up his bristles on his back,  
 And roaring makes  
 The forest all around and every creature quake:  
 So he beholds the swain  
 With desp'rate fury and disdain,  
 Adding more fuel to his never-dying flame.

### III.

Disdain did make his countenance turn pale,<sup>10</sup>  
 And all his other charms begin to fail;  
 Anger did banish every grace  
 From the dominions of his lovely face,  
 Whilst cruel eyes and harder heart took place.  
 Yet still the shepherd finds no arms  
 Fit to resist these languishing, these fainting charms;  
 His angel sweetness he must still adore,  
 Troubled that he could manifest his love no more.  
 Alas! how vain and useless all things prove,  
 When entered in damned Cupid's school,  
 We learn his precepts, and his rules,  
 When shackled in the chains of love,  
 Turn fashionable fools;  
 We scarce can call ourselves our own,  
 And our affections pay obeisance to another's crown.

### IV.

No longer able to contain,  
 Though all was needless, all in vain,  
 Tears, like a mighty flood,  
 Did over-flow their banks, and drowned  
 Th' adjacent barren, fruitless, famished ground.  
 Trembling with fear,

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<sup>10</sup> *his* i.e., the noble youth's.

At last he ventured to draw near,  
 Where all in glory stood,  
 The object of his love, the cause of his despair.  
 First he presumes to kiss  
 The sacred ground whereon he trod,  
 In hopes of future happiness,  
 But all would do no good.  
 Then strove to speak,  
 But ah! disdain and fear his forwardness did check,  
 And made his half-out lispings words draw back.  
 Forcing himself at last, stutters out such words as these:

## V.

“O cruel, inexorable, stony saint!  
 Blind to my tears and dead to my complaint!  
 Sure of some lioness or tiger born,  
 Unworthy of my love, as I unworthy of your scorn!  
 A grateful gift to you I bring,  
 The welcomest, the only thing  
 That now at present does remain  
 To ease me of my pain;  
 To ease me of my love, and you of your disdain.  
 And lo,  
 How willingly I go;  
 How willingly I go, where you  
 By your unkindness destine me unto;  
 I go where every love-sick mind  
 Is used an universal remedy to find;<sup>11</sup>  
 The place is called Oblivion’s Land,  
 A lake called Lethe in th’ midst does stand:<sup>12</sup>  
 Which were it possible that I could dry,<sup>13</sup>  
 In flames unquenchable I still should fry;  
 Nor could I yet forget thy name,  
 So oft have I repeated o’er the same,  
 But find, alas! no liquor that can quench my flame.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *used* accustomed.

<sup>12</sup> *Oblivion’s Land* and *Lethe’s lake* both are located in the classical Underworld, the land of the dead; drinking from the river of Lethe, the newly dead would forget all about their previous lives.

<sup>13</sup> *dry* drink dry.

<sup>14</sup> *liquor* liquid. Paul Hammond points out the pun on ‘liquor’ as ‘semen.’ See his discussion in *Figuring Sex between Men from Shakespeare to Rochester*, Oxford, 2002, pp. 52-54.

## VI.

“Adieu, loved youth, eternally adieu!  
 But, scornful fair, first know what doom,  
 Undoubtedly shall on your beauty come,  
 And from my dying mouth believe it true.  
 The pleasant day, alas, is quickly gone,  
 Flowers in th’ morning fresh cut down by noon,  
 The blushing rose does fade, and wither soon,  
 White snow does melt before the scorching sun:  
 So youthful beauty’s full of charms, but all are quickly gone.  
 The time will come when you yourself will prove<sup>15</sup>  
 How great a deity is Love.  
 Charmed by some beauteous she,  
 You’ll offer up your sacrifice of tears,  
 And weary her with your continual prayers;  
 By night you’ll sigh and pine, by day you’ll woo.  
 But all’s in vain that you can do.  
 No greater pity will you find than I from you.  
 Then will your conscience bring me into mind,  
 Not to delight, but serve you in your kind;  
 My restless ghost shall come,  
 Not to cry ‘Ah!’ but ‘Io!’ at your doom.<sup>16</sup>

## VII.

“However, grant me this, ev’n this at least;  
 I’ll ask no more, but grant me this request:  
 That when thou passest by,  
 Thou would’st not let me unregarded lie,  
 Seeing the fatal dagger in my breast.<sup>17</sup>  
 But come, and grieve, and weep a while;  
 I ask not (what I once so much desired) one smile,  
 But pull the dagger from the wound,  
 And close and close embrace me round;  
 Thy mantle o’er my lifeless body spread,

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<sup>15</sup> *prove* experience.

<sup>16</sup> *Io* ‘Io Paeon’ = Greek ritual cry of celebration and acclamation.

<sup>17</sup> *fatal dagger in my breast* In the Latin original and in Creech (below), the lovesick shepherd hangs himself from the noble youth’s doorpost.

Give me one kiss, one kiss, when I am dead.  
 I ask no more, Oh, grant me this:  
     That thou may'st join  
     Thy lips to mine,  
 And seal them with a meeting, parting kiss.  
 When forced by thy unkindness I am fled,  
 Thou need'st not fear that I can then revive,  
 Though such a kiss could almost raise to life.  
     Hew me a stately tomb to be my bed,  
     Where love and I may lay our head.  
 Then leave me, after thou hast three times said,  
     'My friend, my dearest friend on earth, is dead;  
     O cruel death, that canst us two divide;  
 My friend, my friend, would God that I not thee had died.'  
 Write this inscription (since they are in fashion)  
 To show how base your scorn, how excellent my passion:  
     *Here lies a lover killed by deep despair;*  
         *Stay, reader, stay,*  
         *And only be so kind to say,*  
     *'Alas, he loved; alas, he loved a cruel fair.'"*

#### POEMS AND TRANSLATIONS (1689)

#### A PARAPHRASE ON THE TWENTY-THIRD IDYLL OF THEOCRITUS

To Idera.<sup>18</sup>

##### I.

An amorous little swain  
     Was set to keep  
 His father's goodly flock of sheep,  
     In the Arcadian plain.  
 By chance a beauteous she came by,  
 Whom when his watchful eyes did spy,  
     His guardian eyes  
 That there stood sentinel, with wonder and surprise,  
 Marking the beauty of her angel's face,

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<sup>18</sup> There are a number of poems addressed to this poetic mistress in *PT*, such as 'To Idera in Mourning' and 'To Idera Wearing a Mask. A Song to M— R—'

Set off with a sweet carriage, and a heavenly grace,  
 Blest with a pleasant mien, and sprightly air,<sup>19</sup>  
 And all the dear enchantments of the fair;  
     Well satisfied, they let her pass:  
 Who thus admitted, did impart  
 The secret to his wounded heart.  
 Charmed with the lovely maid, that Fate had thither brought,  
 Whose beauty did surpass desire or thought;  
     In making whom,  
 Nature for once did thus presume  
 To go beyond her rule, and place  
 On a sweet virgin's body, a cherub's face;<sup>20</sup>  
     Or rather to adorn  
 With more than heavenly beauty, a terrestrial form.

## II.

But ah! her mind  
 Not like to her seraphic face, proud, scornful, and unkind;  
     Despising those whom passion,  
     Whom resistless passion moved,  
     To humble adoration,  
 Those who disdained her most, she above all things loved.  
     She knew not, nor desired to know  
     The fatal power of Cupid's bow,<sup>21</sup>  
 How oft, and how infallibly he throws  
     An amorous golden dart,  
     To pierce the refractory heart  
 That dare his injured deity expose;<sup>22</sup>  
     Cruel in deed and word,  
 Ne'er the least hopes of comfort would discover,  
 To a despairing, burning, dying lover.  
 But in her veins, fury for passion boils,  
 No rosy lips, no pleasant smiles,  
 No blushing cheeks, no languishing eyes,  
     That might seem to sympathize,

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<sup>19</sup> *mien* face, expression.

<sup>20</sup> *cherub* youngest and loveliest of the orders of angels.

<sup>21</sup> *Cupid's bow* the traditional image of Cupid, god of love, shooting the unsuspecting with arrows of love and desire.

<sup>22</sup> *That ... expose* i.e., that dare to belittle or ridicule his power. Cupid was often said to inflict those who held his power in contempt with unrequited love.

But as a chased boar that fills  
 With roaring all the neighbouring hills,  
 With vengeance casts his eyes around,  
 And foaming, tears the groaning ground,  
 Till distant vales the echo trembling take,  
 The forest all and every creature shake:  
     So she glances her eyes upon the swain,  
     With desperate disdain,  
 Adding more fuel to his never-dying pain.

### III.

With scorn her countenance turned pale,  
 And all her other charms began to fail;  
     Disdain had banished every grace,  
     Those blazing comets of her face,<sup>23</sup>  
     Pride and contempt took place.  
         Yet the shepherd finds no arms  
         For these fainting, sickly charms.  
 Her divine sweetness he must still admire,  
     Struck blind from Heaven with Cupid's fire,  
     The flashes of an impotent desire.  
 Alas! how vain does speechless reason prove!  
     When entered in that tyrant's schools,<sup>24</sup>  
     We learn his epidemic rules,<sup>25</sup>  
 And fettered in the chains of love,  
     Turn fashionable fools.  
 We cannot call ourselves our own,  
 But our affections pay obeisance to another's crown.

### IV.

    No longer able to contain,  
     Though all in vain,  
 Though all his words were offerings to the wind,

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<sup>23</sup> *comets* While the Petrarchan mistress' eyes are often compared to the sun (which can, for example, both illuminate and burn), Idera's eyes are comets, almost always considered an ill-omen (for example, as a harbinger of divine wrath).

<sup>24</sup> *that tyrant's* i.e., Cupid's (Love's).

<sup>25</sup> *epidemic* wide-spread, universal (in the manner of a spreading and irresistible disease).

Deaf as she was unkind!  
 Tears like the torrent of a swelling flood,  
 Tears from the heart exhaled, and drops of blood,  
     Their sinking banks did overflow,  
 And drown the famished vales below.  
     Trembling with dread and awful fear,  
 At last he ventured to draw near  
 The object of his love, the cause of his despair.  
     First he presumes to kiss  
 The sacred ground whereon he with devotion trod,  
 As in the presence of an angry god,  
     And then he strove to speak;  
 But conscious jealousy oft gave a check,  
     And made his half-out-lisping words draw back.  
 Stamm'ring at last he forced out such a speech as this:

## V.

“Inexorable, cruel, stony saint!  
 Blind to my tears, and deaf to my complaint!  
 Sure of some lioness or tiger born,  
 Unworthy of my love, as I unworthy of your scorn!  
     A grateful present to your shrine I bring,  
 The welcome, and the only welcome thing  
     That to my comfort must remain,  
     To ease me of my pain,  
 To ease me of my love, and you of your disdain;  
     And lo! proud haughty nymph, and lo!  
     How willingly I go,  
 How willingly I go, and take delight  
 In your commands, though banished from your sight.  
     I go where every lovesick mind  
     An universal remedy may find;  
     The place is called Oblivion's Land,  
 And Lethe's lazy lake i' th' midst does stand;<sup>26</sup>  
     Which were it possible that I could dry,  
 In flames unquenchable I still should fry;  
     Nor could I yet forget thy name,  
     So oft have I repeated o'er the same,  
 But find alas! no water that can quench my flame.

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<sup>26</sup> *Oblivion's Land* and *Lethe's lake* See n12.

## VI.

“Adieu, fair virgin! and eternally adieu!  
 Yet thou proud Anaxarete! learn what doom<sup>27</sup>  
 Undoubtedly shall on thy beauty come,  
     And from my dying mouth believe it true.  
     The pleasant day is quickly done,  
 Flowers in the morning fresh, cut down by noon;  
 The blushing roses fade, and wither soon;  
 White snow that melts before the scorching sun:  
 So youthful beauty’s full of charms, all in a moment gone.  
 The time will come, when you yourself will prove  
     How great a deity is Love,  
 Beauty, or wit, will e’en that scornful soul alarm,  
 A wanton Ovid, or a fair Adonis charm;<sup>28</sup>  
     You’ll offer hecatombs of prayers,<sup>29</sup>  
     Bedew your sacrifice with floods of tears,  
 Day and night sigh would, but you dare not woo,  
     For all’s in vain that you can do,  
 No greater pity will you find than I from you.  
 Then will your tortured conscience bring me into mind,  
 Not to encourage you, but serve you in your kind;  
     My restless ghost shall come,  
 Not with soft sighs, but *Ios* loud at your deserved doom.<sup>30</sup>

## VII.

“And yet grant me but this, e’en this at least,  
 I’ll ask no more, but grant me this request,  
     Pull out the fatal dagger from my breast,  
     And come and sigh and mourn a while;  
 I ask not (what I longed for once) a smile:  
     But pull the dagger from the wound,  
     And close and close embrace me round;

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<sup>27</sup> *Anaxarete* perhaps, a follower of the ancient Greek philosopher Anaxagoras; he taught that physical matter was comprised of eternal, unchanging, primary elements.

<sup>28</sup> *A wanton ... charm* i.e., the scornful mistress (identified as ‘Daphne’, below, verse VII) will herself fall prey to either a man of great seductive capacity (as the historical Ovid, author of the *Art of Love*, was popularly believed to have been) or a man of extraordinary beauty (as was the mythic Adonis, beloved of Venus, goddess of love).

<sup>29</sup> *hecatombs* spectacularly large numbers.

<sup>30</sup> *Ios* See n16.

Thy veil over my lifeless body spread,  
 Give me one kiss, one kiss when I am dead.  
 I ask no more, coy Daphne! grant but this,<sup>31</sup>  
     A meeting, parting kiss,  
     Seal my cold lips with thine,  
 When thou hast sucked up all my dying breath,  
 And mournful cypress round my temples twine,  
 When to th' Elysian mansions I am fled.  
     Nor need'st thou fear, thus summoned after death,  
 My ravished soul should come again;  
     No, all thy courtship is in vain,  
 All cannot draw me from the joys of the Elysian plain.

## VIII.

“Then build me up a stately tomb,  
 For a close retiring room;  
     In it place a downy bed,  
 Where love may lay his sworn confederate's head;  
     And leave me, after thou hast three times said,  
 ‘My Duserastes, He! Soul of my Soul, is dead.  
 Ah, cruel Death! that couldst us two divide,  
 Had Jove but pleased that I for thee had died!’  
 Write this upon my monument, to prove  
 Your own unworthy scorn, my constant love:  
     *Here lies a lover, killed by deep despair;*  
     *Stay, reader, stay,*  
     *And only be so kind to say,*  
     *‘Alas! he loved, alas! he loved a cruel fair.’”*

THOMAS CREECH (1659-1700), TRANSLATOR AND CLASSICAL SCHOLAR. Educated at Wadham College, Oxford (BA, MA, BD), holder of a fellowship at All Souls, Creech is still most famous as the translator of Lucretius' *De natura rerum* (1682; rept. 11 times by 1722). However, he also translated a number of other classical texts: Theocritus's idylls; Horace's odes, epistles, and satires; selections from Virgil and Ovid; selections from Plutarch's *Lives* [1683-85]) and the *Moralia*; Juvenal's satires; and Manilius' *Astronomica*. Plagued by depression, Creech

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<sup>31</sup> *Daphne* the name reminds the reader of the nymph Daphne; fleeing from the pursuit of the enamoured god of the sun, Apollo, Daphne prayed for rescue; the gods transformed her into the laurel tree, which became sacred to Apollo, and out of which were subsequently fashioned the crowns given to triumphant warriors and poets.

committed suicide. Rumours swirled: he had killed himself in emulation of his hero, Lucretius, also said to have died by his own hand; out of despair over the spectacular failure of his translation of Horace; or on account of unrequited love. His ‘Lucretius,’ however, was highly-lauded at the time of its publication, and long remained the standard translation of this difficult work.

THE IDYLLIUMS OF THEOCRITUS (1684)<sup>32</sup>

IDYLL 12: *A Welcome to a Friend*.<sup>33</sup>

TO MR. EDWARD EATON.<sup>34</sup>

You come, dear youth, now three long days are gone,  
 You come; but lovers do grow old in one;  
 As much as spring excels the frost and snow,  
 As much as plums are sweeter than a sloe,<sup>35</sup>  
 As much as ewes are thicker fleec’t than lambs,  
 As much as maids excel thrice married dames,  
 As much as colts are nimbler than a steer,  
 As much as thrushes please the list’ning ear  
 More than the meaner songsters of the air:  
 So much thy presence cheers; behold, I run,  
 As travellers to the shade at burning noon!  
 Oh, may an equal flame our hearts engage,  
 And let us live in songs through future age!  
 Two youths were once with mutual bands confined,<sup>36</sup>  
 The one was generous, and the other kind.  
 Their love was equal; those were golden men,  
 When he that was beloved did love again.  
 Grant, ye Immortal Powers, grant, mighty Jove,

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<sup>32</sup> Of the 30 idylls in Creech’s translation of Theocritus, three are undedicated, but the other 27 are dedicated to men: sixteen are identified as fellow Wadham College attendees; two are associated with the Inns of Court; the other seven are named but their link with Creech is unspecified. Two of the Wadham College dedicatees are called “chums,” and two others “friends.” Two non-Wadham attendees are also “friends.”

<sup>33</sup> Compare below the *Sylvae*’s version of this poem: “ΑΙΗΣ. Or, the Twelfth Idyllium of Theocritus.”

<sup>34</sup> *Edward Eaton* Not listed in the Wadham College Register, but an Edward Eaton does appear in the Oxford matriculation lists for the period.

<sup>35</sup> *sloe* fruit of the blackthorn; it has a sour, sharp taste.

<sup>36</sup> *bands* bonds, commitment.

Grant this once more, increase these bands of Love;  
 When future ages shall in order flow  
 Let some descend, and tell my shade below,  
 'Thy love, thy lover's kindness, faith and truth,  
 Are praised by all, but chiefly by the youth.'  
 But this I leave to Heaven's indulgent care,  
 For Heaven can grant, or can reject my prayer.  
 Yet thee I'll sing, thee sweet, nor midst my song  
 Shall tell-tale blisters rise, and gall my tongue.  
 The little pains you raised were kindly meant,  
 Your healing love did all the smart prevent;  
 And I departed fraught with good content.  
 Brave Megarensians, famed for nimble oars,<sup>37</sup>  
 May peace flow in, and plenty crown your shores;  
 The honours you bestow on Diocles,<sup>38</sup>  
 That constant friend and lover, claim no less;  
 At his famed tomb each year the boys contend  
 Which kisses softest, which best loves his friend,  
 And he that kisses sweetest wins the praise,  
 And runs to his glad mother crowned with bays:<sup>39</sup>  
 Happy the man that must bestow the prize!  
 Thrice happy he that judges of the kiss!  
 Fair Ganymede—that makes the Thunderer bow,<sup>40</sup>  
 Whose smiles can calm, and smooth his angry brow,  
 Allay his fury and his rage command  
 And stop his lightning in his lifted hand—  
 Had such a lip (or Fame hath often lied,  
 And Fame errs seldom on the better side)  
 That like a touchstone tried the proffer'd joy,<sup>41</sup>  
 And could discern true gold from base alloy.

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<sup>37</sup> *Brave ... oars* The Megarensians were the inhabitants of Megara, a city near Corinth.

<sup>38</sup> *Diocles* There was an annual festival held in Megara called the Diocleia, after the Athenian warrior Diocles; his death in battle came about directly as a result of his attempt to protect his male lover (L. Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization* [Cambridge, MA, 2003], p. 12).

<sup>39</sup> *bays* a wreath of laurel or bay branches, the emblem traditionally bestowed on victorious poets, generals, and athletes in the ancient world.

<sup>40</sup> *Fair Ganymede ... the Thunderer bow* For 'Jove (the *Thunderer*) and Ganymede,' see Glossary (print anthology).

<sup>41</sup> *touchstone* a substance that can test the genuineness of another substance.

IDYLL 22 (23): *A Scorned Shepherd Hangs Himself; the Cruel Fair is Killed by the Statue of Cupid*<sup>42</sup>

TO MR. RILEY, PAINTER TO HIS MAJESTY.<sup>43</sup>

An amorous shepherd loved a charming boy,  
 As fair [as] thought could frame, or wish enjoy,  
 Unlike his soul, ill-natured and unkind,  
 An angel's body with a fury's mind.  
 How great a god Love was, he scorned to know,  
 How sharp his arrows, and how strong his bow,  
 What raging wounds he scatters here below.  
 In his address and talk fierce, rude, untame,  
 He gave no comfort to the shepherd's flame.  
 No cherry lips, no rose his cheeks did dye,  
 No pleasing fire did sparkle in his eye,  
 Where eager thoughts with fainting virtue strove,  
 No soft discourse, nor kiss to ease his love,  
 But as a lion on the Libyan Plain  
 Looks on his hunters, he beheld the swain;  
 His lips still pouting, and his eyes unkind,  
 His forehead too was rough as was his mind;  
 His colour gone, and every pleasing grace  
 Beset by fury had forsook his face,  
 Yet midst his passion, midst his frowns he moved,  
 As these were charms he was the more beloved;  
 But when o'ercome he could endure no more,  
 He came and wept before the hated door.  
 He wept and pined, he hung his sickly head,  
 The threshold kissed, and thus at last he said:  
 "Ah cruel fair, and of a tigress born!  
 Ah stony boy, composed of frowns and scorn,  
 Unworthy of love, this rope receive,  
 The last, and welcom'st present I can give.  
 I'll never vex thee more, I'll cease to woe<sup>44</sup>  
 And whither you condemnéd freely go,  
 Where certain cures for love, as stories tell,  
 Where dismal shades, and dark oblivion dwell;

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<sup>42</sup> Compare Goodall's version, above, numbered 23.

<sup>43</sup> *To ... Majesty* John Riley (1646-1691), portrait painter. He became the official 'painter and picture drawer in ordinary' to Charles II in 1681.

<sup>44</sup> *woe* mourn or grieve; complain.

Yet did I drink the whole forgetful stream,<sup>45</sup>  
 It would not drown my love, nor quench my flame.  
 Thy cruel doors I bid my last adieu.  
 Know what will come, and you shall find it true:  
 The day is fair, but quickly yields to shades,  
 The lily white, but when 'tis pluck[ed] it fades;  
 The violet lovely, but it withers soon,  
 Youth's beauty charming, but 'tis quickly gone.  
 The time shall come when you, proud boy, shall prove<sup>46</sup>  
 The heat of passion, and the rage of love.  
 Then shall thy soul melt through thy weeping eye,  
 Whilst all shall smile, and you unpitied die.  
 Yet grant one kindness, and I ask no more:  
 When you shall see me hanging at the door  
 Do not go proudly by, forbear to smile,  
 But stay, sweet boy, and gaze, and weep a while;  
 Then take me down, and whilst some tears are shed,  
 Thy own soft garment o'er my body spread,  
 And grant one kiss, one kiss when I am dead.  
 Ne'er fear, for you may safely grant me this,  
 I shan't revive, though you could love and kiss.  
 Then dig a grave, there let my love be laid,  
 And when you part, say thrice, 'My friend is dead,'  
 Or else go farther on to please my ghost,  
 And cry, 'My best, my dearest friend is lost,'  
 And on my monument inscribe this rhyme,  
 The witness of my love and of thy crime:  
*This shepherd died for love, stay stranger here,  
 And weep, and cry, 'He loved a cruel fair.'"*  
 This said, he rolled a stone, a mighty stone—  
 Fate lent a hand behind, and pushed it on—  
 High by the wall, on this he panting rose,  
 And tied and fitted well the fatal noose.  
 Then from the place on which before he stood  
 He slipped, and hung the door's unhappy load.  
 The boy came forth, and with a scornful mien<sup>47</sup>  
 And smiling look beheld the tragic scene;  
 "Hang there," said he, "but oh how I despise  
 So base, so mean a trophy of my eyes!  
 The proudest kings should fall by my disdain,

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<sup>45</sup> *forgetful stream* Lethe (see n12).

<sup>46</sup> *prove* experience.

<sup>47</sup> *mien* See n19.

Too noble to be lost upon a swain!”  
 This said, he turned, and as he turned his head  
 His garments were polluted by the dead,  
 Thence to the plays and to the baths did move.  
 The bath was sacred to the god of Love,  
 For there he stood in comely majesty<sup>48</sup>  
 Smiles on his cheeks, and softness in his eye.  
 That part of th’ marble wrought into his breast  
 By power divine was softer than the rest,  
 To show how pity did exactly suit  
 With love, and was his darling attribute.  
 The god leapt forth, and dashed the boy, the wound  
 Let out his soul, and as it fled he groaned:  
 “Hail, lovers, hail! See here the scornful dies,  
 A just and acceptable sacrifice!  
 Be kind, and love for mutual love return,  
 For see the god takes vengeance on my scorn.”

IDYLL 26: *An Advice to a Friend to be Constant in His Love*<sup>49</sup>

TO CHARLES VINER OF WADHAM COLLEGE, ESQUIRE.<sup>50</sup>

‘Wine, friend, and truth,’ the proverb says, ‘agree,’<sup>51</sup>  
 And now I’m heated take this truth from me;<sup>52</sup>  
 The secrets that lay deep and hid before  
 Now raised by wine swim up, and bubble o’er;  
 Then take this rising truth I can’t control:  
 Thou dost not love me, youth, with all thy soul;  
 I know it, for this half of life I boast  
 I have from you, the other half is lost.  
 Whene’er you smile I rival gods above,  
 Grown perfect and exalted by thy love;  
 But when you frown, and when dislike you show,

<sup>48</sup> *he stood* i.e., the marble statue of Cupid, god of love.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. ‘Idyll 29’ (*Idylls*, trans. A. Verity, Oxford, 81-2).

<sup>50</sup> *Charles Viner (Vyner)*, son of Robert Vyner of London, matriculated 1683. Robert Vyner died ‘sine prole’ [‘without children’] in 1688, so Charles probably died between 1684/5 (the date of the poem) and 1688.

<sup>51</sup> Latin proverb, ‘In vino veritas’ (‘In wine is truth’).

<sup>52</sup> *heated* inflamed (by wine).

I sink to hell, more cursed than all below.  
 Yet how can this with common sense agree—  
 To torture one that loves and dies for thee?  
 But, youth, could my advice thy thoughts engage,  
 Mine who have learned experience by my age,  
 The counsel's good, and when a numerous store  
 Of blessings crown thee, thou wilt praise me more.  
 On one tree build one nest, and build it strong,  
 Where no fierce snake can creep, and seize thy young.  
 Now here you stand, and suddenly are gone,  
 You leap from bough to bough, and fix on none.  
 If any views thy beauty, and commends,  
 You straight enrol him midst your ancient friends,  
 Whilst all your old acquaintance laid aside;  
 Dear youth, this smells of vanity and pride.  
 Love one, your equal, love whilst life remains;  
 This pleases all, and commendation gains.  
 By this your passion will but light appear  
 Which conquers all, and all are forced to bear.  
 Love seizes all, and doth all minds control;  
 It melts the stubborn temper of my soul.  
 But Oh, I must embrace, dear, grant one kiss,  
 And thus reward and practise my advice.

SYLVAE, OR THE SECOND PART OF POETICAL MISCELLANIES<sup>53</sup> (1685)

ΑΙΗΣ. OR, THE TWELFTH IDYLL OF THEOCRITUS.

Scarce three whole days, my lovely youth, had past,  
 Since thou and I met here, and parted last,  
 And yet so sluggishly the minutes flew,  
 I thought it ages 'till we met anew.  
 Gay youth and vigour were already fled,  
 Already envious time began to shed  
 A snowy white around my drooping head.  
 As to spring's brav'ry rugged winter yields;<sup>54</sup>  
 The hoary mountains to the smiling fields;

<sup>53</sup> Dryden produced most of *Sylvae*'s translations from Theocritus and Horace, including one of Idyll 23. Idylls 1, 12 and 19 are unattributed, although Idyll 12 follows another by a William Bowles.

<sup>54</sup> *brav'ry* splendour.

As by the faithful shepherd new-yeaned lambs<sup>55</sup>  
 Are much less valued than their fleecy dams;  
 As to wild plums the damson is preferred;<sup>56</sup>  
 As nimble does out-strip the duller herd;<sup>57</sup>  
 As maids seem fairer in their blooming pride,  
 Than those who Hymen's joys have often tried;<sup>58</sup>  
 As Philomel, when warbling forth her love,<sup>59</sup>  
 Excels the feathered choir of ev'ry tuneful grove:  
 So much dost thou all other youths excel.  
 They speak not, look not, love not half so well!  
 Sweeter thy face! more ravishing thy charms!  
 No guest so welcome to my longing arms!  
 When first I viewed those much-loved eyes of thine  
 At distance, and from far encount'ring mine,  
 I ran, I flew, to meet th' expected boy,  
 With all the transports of unruly joy.  
 Not with such eager haste, such fond desires,  
 The traveler, when scorched by Syrian fires,  
 To some well-spreading beech's shade retires.  
 Oh! that some god would equal flames impart,  
 And spread a mutual warmth though either heart,  
 Till men should quote our names for loving well,  
 And age to age the pleasing story tell!  
 'Two men there were,' cries some well-meaning tongue,  
 'Whose friendship equal on love's balance hung:  
 Espnilus one, Aites t'other name,<sup>60</sup>  
 Both surely fixed in the records of fame,  
 Of honest ancient make and heav'nly mould,  
 Such as in good king Saturn's days of old<sup>61</sup>  
 Flourish'd, and stamped the age's name with gold.'  
 Grant, mighty Jove, that after many a day,  
 While we amidst th' Elysian valleys stray,  
 Some welcome ghost may this glad message say:  
 'Your loves, the copious theme of ev'ry tongue,  
 Ev'n now with lasting praise are daily sung;  
 Admir'd by all, but chiefly by the young.'

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<sup>55</sup> *new-yeaned* new-born.

<sup>56</sup> *damson* cultivated variety of plum.

<sup>57</sup> *does* female deer.

<sup>58</sup> *Hymen's joys* marriage; sexual intercourse.

<sup>59</sup> *Philomel* nightingale (Glossary, print anthology).

<sup>60</sup> *Espnilus* and *Aites* probably ancient terms for the male lover (*erastes*) and his male beloved (*eromenos*).

<sup>61</sup> *good king Saturn* In one tradition, before humanity fell into vice and corruption, the Golden Age of social and natural perfection was governed by Saturn, father of Jupiter (Zeus/Jove).

But pray'rs are vain! the ruling pow'rs on high,  
 Whate'er I ask, can grant, or can deny.  
 In the mean time thee my due songs shall praise,  
 Thee, the glad matter of my tuneful lays,  
 Nor shall the well-meant verse a tell-tale blister raise.  
 Nay, should you chide, I'll catch the pleasing sound,  
 Since the same mouth that made, can heal the wound.  
 Ye Megarensians, who from Nisa's shore  
 Plough up the sea with many a well-tim'd oar,<sup>62</sup>  
 May all your labours glad success attend,  
 You, who to Diocles, that generous friend,<sup>63</sup>  
 Due honours and becoming reverence pay.  
 When rolling years bring on the happy day,<sup>64</sup>  
 Then round his tomb the crowded youth resort,  
 With lips well-fitted for the wanton sport,  
 And he whose pointed kiss is sweetest found<sup>65</sup>  
 Returns with laurels, and fresh garlands crowned.<sup>66</sup>  
 Happy the boy that bears the prize away!  
 Happy, I grant, but (oh) far happier they,  
 Who from the seats of their much-envied bliss  
 Received the tribute of each wanton kiss!  
 Surely to Ganymede their pray'rs are made,  
 That, while the am'rous strife is warmly played,  
 He would their lips with equal virtues guide  
 To those which in the faithful stone reside:<sup>67</sup>  
 Whose touch applied, the artist can explore  
 The baser metal from the shining ore.

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<sup>62</sup> *Megarensians* See n37. *Nisa's shore* Megara's port, Nisaea, on the Saronic gulf.

<sup>63</sup> *Diocles* See n38.

<sup>64</sup> *happy day* i.e., Diocles' feast day.

<sup>65</sup> *pointed* probably, 'appointed' (*ref.* to the contest conditions under which the kiss is given); just possibly meaning 'piercing,' although the *adj.* 'sweet' makes it unlikely.

<sup>66</sup> *laurels* also, bays (see n39).

<sup>67</sup> *those* i.e., those virtues of qualities.