1965). Also, Fredson Bowers, *Principles of Bibliographical Description* (1949); Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (1972); G. Thomas Tanselle, *The History of Books as a Field of Study* (1981).

Elegy.   In Greek and Roman literature, "elegy" denoted any poem written in **elegiac meter** (alternating *hexameter* and *pentameter* lines). The term was also used, however, to refer to the subject matter of change and loss frequently expressed in the elegiac verse form, especially in complaints about love. In accordance with this latter usage, "The Wanderer," "The Seafarer," and other poems in Old English on the transience of all worldly things are even now called elegies. In Europe and England the word continued to have a variable application through the Renaissance. John Donne's elegies, written in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, are love poems, although they relate to the sense of elegy as lament, in that many of them emphasize mutability and loss. In the seventeenth century the term **elegy** began to be limited to its most common present usage: a formal and sustained lament in verse for the death of a particular person, usually ending in a consolation. Examples are the medieval poem *The Pearl* and Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* (elegies in the mode of *dream allegory*); Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850), on the death of Arthur Hallam; and W. H. Auden's "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" (1940). Occasionally the term is used in its older and broader sense, for somber meditations on mortality such as Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1757), and the *Duino Elegies* (1912–22) of the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke on the transience both of poets and of the earthly objects they write poems about.

The **dirge** is also a versified expression of grief on the occasion of a particular person's death, but differs from the elegy in that it is short, is less formal, and is usually represented as a text to be sung; examples are Shakespeare's "Full Fathom Five Thy Father Lies" and William Collins' "A Song from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*" (1749). **Threnody** is now used mainly as an equivalent for "dirge," and **monody** for an elegy or dirge which is presented as the utterance of a single person. John Milton describes his "Lycidas" (1638) in the subtitle as a "monody" in which "the Author bewails a learned Friend," and Matthew Arnold called his elegy on A. H. Clough "Thyrsis: A Monody" (1866).

An important subtype of the elegy is the **pastoral elegy,** which represents both the poet and the one he mourns—who is usually also a poet—as shepherds (the Latin word for shepherd is "pastor"). This poetic form was originated by the Sicilian Greek poet Theocritus, was continued by the Roman Virgil, was developed in various European countries during the Renaissance, and remained current in English poetry throughout the nineteenth century. Notable English pastoral elegies are Spenser's "Astrophel," on the death of Sir Philip Sidney, (1595), Milton's "Lycidas" (1638), Shelley's "Adonais" (1821), and in the Victorian age, Arnold's "Thyrsis." The pastoral elegists, from the Greeks through the Renaissance, developed a set of elaborate *conventions,* which are illustrated here by reference to "Lycidas." In addition to the

fictional representation of both mourner and subject as shepherds tending their flocks (lines 23–36 and elsewhere), we often find the following conventional features:

(1) The lyric speaker begins by invoking the muses, and goes on to make frequent reference to other figures from classical mythology (lines 15–22, and later).

(2) All nature joins in mourning the shepherd's death (lines 37–49). (Recent critics who stress the mythic and ritual origins of poetic genres claim that this feature is a survival from primitive laments for the death of Thammuz, Adonis, or other vegetational deities who died in the autumn to be reborn in the spring. See *myth critics*.)

(3) The mourner charges with negligence the nymphs or other guardians of the dead shepherd (lines 50–63).

(4) There is a procession of appropriate mourners (lines 88–111).

(5) The poet raises questions about the justice of fate, or else of Providence, and adverts to the corrupt conditions of his own times (lines 64–84, 113–31). Such passages, though sometimes called "digressions," are integral to the evolution of the mourner's thought in "Lycidas."

(6) Post-Renaissance elegies often include an elaborate passage in which appropriate flowers are brought to deck the hearse (lines 133–51).

(7) There is a closing consolation. In Christian elegies, the lyric reversal from grief and despair to joy and assurance typically occurs when the elegist suddenly realizes that death in this world is the entry to a higher life (lines 165–85).

In his *Life of Milton* (1779) Samuel Johnson, who disapproved both of pastoralism and mythology in modern poetry, decried "Lycidas" for "its inherent improbability," but in the elegies by Milton and other major poets the ancient rituals provide a structural frame on which they play variations with originality and power. Some of the pastoral conventions, although adapted to an industrial age and a non-Christian worldview, survive still in Walt Whitman's elegy on Lincoln, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" (1866).

In the last two decades of the twentieth century there has been a strong revival of the elegy, especially in America, to mourn the devastation and death wrought by AIDS among talented young intellectuals, poets, and artists; see Michael Klein, ed., *Poets for Life: Seventy-six Poets Respond to AIDS* (1989).

See *conventions* and *pastoral*. On the elegy, refer to: Mary Lloyd, *Elegies, Ancient and Modern* (1903); T. P. Harrison, Jr., and H. J. Leon, eds., *The Pastoral Elegy: An Anthology* (1939); Peter Sacks, *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (1985). On "Lycidas": C. A. Patrides, ed., *Milton's "Lycidas": The Tradition and the Poem* (rev., 1983), which includes a number of recent critical essays; and Scott Elledge, ed., *Milton's "Lycidas"* (1966), which reprints classical and Renaissance pastoral elegies and other texts as background to Milton's poem.