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# 76. Milton's use of pastoral as a means of institutional criticism in *Lycidas*

## Oya BAYILTMIŞ ÖĞÜTCÜ[1]

## Abstract

John Milton's *Lycidas* is a pastoral elegy written in 1637 after the death of an idealized man of religion, Edward King. Reflecting the lament of the persona for the loss of a sound man intended for the Church, *Lycidas* is rooted in the classical tradition and embodies all the qualities of the pastoral. Incorporated into the pastoral qualities of the poem is a part where St Peter gives voice to the follies of the contemporary clergy, which turns the poem into a means of criticism. The poem emphasises that while a great man of religion like Lycidas dies, the failing ones survive despite all their material interests and ignorance of society. Accordingly, the aim of this article is to analyse Milton's *Lycidas* as an example of pastoral where Milton brings together the classical tradition with institutional criticism. This article will analyse the poem in context, and reminding the ideas of Archbishop Laud, it will argue that the use of the shepherd image as a pastor-poet, as in the case of the classical pastoral tradition, provides Milton with the means to delve into the use of the image of the shepherd in the Christian imagery. This, in turn, enables him to discuss the conditions of the poet and of poetry in the seventeenth century.

**Keywords:** John Milton, *Lycidas*, pastoral, institutional criticism

## *Lycidas* şiirinde kurumsal eleştiri aracı olarak Milton'ın pastoral kullanımı

## Öz

John Milton'ın *Lycidas*'ı ideal bir din adamı olan Edward King'in ölümünden sonra 1637 yılında yazılmış pastoral bir ağıttır. Şiirdeki anlatıcının Kilise'ye hizmet etme amacını güden dört dörtlük bir adamın kaybına yaktığı ağıtı yansıtan *Lycidas*, klasik geleneğe dayanmaktadır ve pastoralin tüm özelliklerine sahiptir. Şiirin pastoral özelliklerinin arasında, şiiri bir eleştiri aracına dönüştüren, Aziz Peter'in dönemin din adamlarının kötülüklerini dillendirdiği bir kısım bulunmaktadır. Şiir Lycidas gibi müthiş bir din adamı ölürken, kötülerin maddiyatçılıklarına ve toplumu göz ardı etmelerine rağmen yaşamaya devam etmelerini vurgular. Bu bağlamda, bu makalenin amacı Milton'ın *Lycidas* şiirini, Milton'ın klasik gelenek ile kurumsal eleştiriyi bir araya getirdiği bir pastoral örneği olarak incelemektir. Makale şiiri bağlamında inceleyecek ve Başpiskopos Laud'un fikirleri hatırlatılarak, çoban imgesinin klasik gelenekte olduğu gibi papaz-şair olarak kullanımının Milton'a Hristiyan imgede olan çoban imgesini derinlemesine incelemesine de imkan verdiğini tartışılacaktır; ki bu da, Milton'ın şair ve şiirin on yedinci yüzyıldaki durumlarını da tartışabilmesini sağlamıştır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** John Milton, *Lycidas*, pastoral, kurumsal eleştiri

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**Introduction**

John Milton wrote *Lycidas* after the death of his friend Edward King who unfortunately drowned in the Irish sea at an early age. Defined by E. M. W. Tillyard as "the last and greatest English poem of Milton's youth" (1961: 59), the poem laments the death of young Lycidas before being able to serve his society. His death is a loss for society in that Lycidas was such a good man of religion that he was expected to serve well for the good of society. In other words, Lycidas had not just personal but also religious and thus social significance for the persona. The poem appeared first as a part of a two-part memorial, which includes Latin and Greek poems in the first volume and English poems in the second volume (Daiches, 1961: 102). *Lycidas* has been defined as "a pastoral elegy" written in "the pastoral tradition" (Hyman, 1972: 23), as an "agonized personal cry and a formal exercise, a search for order and a made object, an affirmation of faith in providence and an exploitation of pastoral and archetypal myth" (Bush, 1965: 62) as well as a "pastoral monody" (Revard, 2003: 246). John Savoie defines it as "one of the touchstones of English poetry, particularly of the elegy" (2019:127). In addition to being a pastoral elegy, *Lycidas* also contains some criticism of the clergy of the time. *Lycidas* was written when Archbishop Laud was arguing for religious reform in England. This means that the pastoral tradition turns out to be a means for criticising religious corruption in *Lycidas*. Hence, Milton goes in between pastoral description and satirical narration throughout the poem. The poem begins and ends with a pastoral style while transforming into a critical mode in the middle. In Milton's words, *Lycidas* "by occasion foretells the ruin of our corrupted clergy, then in their height" (122).[2] Thus, the aim of this article is to analyse Milton's use of pastoral as a means of institutional criticism in *Lycidas*.

**Pastoral Tradition and *Lycidas***

*Lycidas* is rooted in pastoral tradition in terms of style while it also reflects the religious corruption in the seventeenth century. Following the classical pastoral tradition, the poem begins with invocation to the Muses as the "sisters of sacred well" (15). Then, the poem associates the loss of Lycidas with poetry, which implies and requires a lament for poetry as well. Considering the Virgilian example set by the Roman poet Virgil's hierarchy of genres starting with pastoral, going on with georgics and the climax reached with epic, *Lycidas* can be considered to be the initial step for Milton's following the Virgilian example. Accordingly, lament for Lycidas can be related with "the very poetry of the present elegist" (Hyman, 1972: 116). Therefore, the poem can also be associated with Milton's maturation process as a poet and his self-interrogation. The lament of the persona can be observed in the line where the persona admits that he writes with "forced fingers rude" (4) as he feels compelled but is not mature enough to write. However, this does not mean that the poem is loosely written. Rather, it conforms to the pastoral tradition soundly as can be observed throughout the poem. Hence, *Lycidas* should be regarded not just as a pastoral lament for the death of a friend but also about the conditions of the poet and the poetry in the seventeenth century and the social context (Hyman, 1972: 114).

The pastoral roots of *Lycidas* are affected by Milton's own research on Italian verse. As Daiches puts forward,

> [t]he verse of *Lycidas* owes much to Milton's study of Italian poetry. While Milton does not employ the *canzone* (which consists of a complex rhymed verse-paragraph repeated in the same form several times before the concluding *commiato*, which is a shorter stanza), nevertheless his handling of the

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[2]     Throughout the article all the references to Milton's *Lycidas* will be from *The Annotated Milton: Complete English Poems* (2008). Ed. Burton Raffel. New York: Bantam Books, 122-132. All the references to the poem will be to the line numbers.

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> verse-paragraphs and of varying line-lengths clearly derives from the *canzone,* and the concluding passage of eight lines is his own adaptation of the *commiato.* (1961: 103)

Being the outcome of such a meticulous writing process, *Lycidas* traces back to the classical tradition as a pastoral. Douglas Bush argues that though rooted in the pastoral tradition, *Lycidas* surpasses "all other pastoral elegies" (1965: 63). According to Lawrence W. Hyman, this superiority of *Lycidas* is due to its "objective- 'pure'- elegiac lament" (1972: 115). Also shedding light on the conditions of the poet and hence the poetry of its time, *Lycidas* is a pastoral lament and depicts a pastoral world.

*Lycidas* begins referring to laurels (1) and myrtles (2) that are the symbols of poetry in classical tradition. Firstly, it lays bare the subject matter and indicates that Lycidas was a great man of religion and intended to serve the Church soundly. Unfortunately, he died an early death. Following the invocation to the Muses, the persona refers first to how Lycidas and the persona spent their time dealing with their flocks, how "old Damoetas loved to hear our song" (36). Then comes a grim, "heavy change" (37) in their pastoral routine with the untimely death of Lycidas. The persona depicts the death and sorrow that followed Lycidas's death as follows:

> Now thou art gone, and never must return!
>
> Thee, shepherd, thee the woods, and desert caves,
>
> With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'er-grown,
>
> And all their echoes mourn.
>
> The willows, and the hazel copses green,
>
> Shall now no more be seen
>
> Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
>
> As killing as the canker to the rose,
>
> to the weanling herds that graze,
>
> Or frost to flow'rs, that their gay wardrobe wear,
>
> When first the white thorn blows –
>
> Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear. (38-49)

The persona laments the loss of poet-shepherd Lycidas whose "soft lays" (songs or poems) will not mention the beauties of nature anymore. Everything in nature is very sorrowful for the death of Lycidas almost in a pantheistic way. In accordance with pastoral tradition, the mourning in nature reveals the impact of the death of Lycidas as a great shepherd in the macrocosm as well. As Rosemond Tuve indicates, such a mourning in the pastoral tradition brings together the human and the nonhuman for the death of the poet, that is, the good and wise shepherd, the protector of life, who is associated with the order and the peace in nature and whose loss is, hence, associated with the sterility following his death, the death of the shepherd (1962: 107). His death is followed by a symbolic death in/of nature, which shows the close connection between the shepherd and nature in pastoral tradition.

Throughout the poem, the persona is an anonymous rural poet-singer. This poet-singer expresses his sorrow from time to time in his frustration with temporal injustice and divine inequity as well as his lament for the death of his friend, who was also a poet-singer. In a dramatic mode, the persona quotes Phoebus, Camus and St Peter and talks about his changing mode. In relation to such dramatic mode, M. H. Abrams states that *Lycidas* is "clearly a dramatic lyric, with a setting, an occasion, a chief character, and several subordinate characters (who may, however, be regarded as representing the speaker's own

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thoughts, objectified for dramatic purposes as standard personae of the pastoral ritual)" (1961: 222). Such stylistic features regarding the dramatic nature of *Lycidas* helps Milton reflect the personal and private feelings of the persona following the loss of a good shepherd who intended to serve the Church.

## From Pastoral to Institutional Criticism in *Lycidas*

Although *Lycidas* presents the personal sorrow of the persona, the poem is not simply about the death of Edward King as it can also be considered at a social level. *Lycidas* is written not only to lament the death of a great man of religion, but also to honour Lycidas for his surpassing qualities unlike the follies of the clergy. *Lycidas* presents both the tragic death of Lycidas and the sorrow that follows his death and honours Lycidas as a good-mannered man of religion by the use of the shepherd image in the Christian context. There is also a kind of complaint against God in that the speaker laments the death of a good shepherd while the wicked shepherds are saved (Brooks and Hardy, 1961: 148). Society loses good shepherds but the wicked ones go on thriving and the persona cannot see the reason of such kind of an injustice. Thus, as Stella P. Revard puts it, the pastor-poet "is exorcizing his own doubts about his calling as poet-pastor as well as justifying his trust in the 'god' who struck Lycidas down in an untimely fashion and who permits unworthy pastors to serve in his place" (2003: 247). His death was a "sad occasion" (6) since "Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime" (8), before being able to serve his society. The society loses the good shepherd Lycidas while the wicked shepherds survive.

The use of the shepherd image serves to underscore the religious undertones of the poem by pointing out the shepherd both as a leader and nurturer. The image of the shepherd presents the idea that "[a] modicum of knowledge about the life of a sheep, with its needs, perils and protectors, will tell us what sort of things the bad clergy did in 1637" (Tuve, 1962: 81). Thus, historical references to the seventeenth century pave the way for institutional criticism in *Lycidas*. Furthermore, there is the combination of classical and Biblical imagery in that the shepherd is both the singer and the piper in the classical tradition while it is associated with spiritual guidance in the Christian tradition as well, which combines the image of the priest and the poet (Daiches, 1961: 114). In addition to the combination of the elements of the classical pastoral and the Christian tradition, James H. Hanford states that the shepherd is also associated with "the pastor and his flock" in that "[i]t opened the way, in the eclogue, for the treatment of matters ecclesiastical, and rendered the pastoral elegy as appropriate to the death of a member of the clergy as it was to that of a poet" (1961: 43) as in the case of ecclesiastical criticism in *Lycidas*. This can be taken as the formation of the ground to justify the reference to the contemporary times and the corruption in the clergy.

Lycidas has died early and the society is left unguided because of the corruption in the remaining men of religion. This pastor-poet image may also help the reader see the reason why Lycidas is connected to both Apollo and St Peter, because "[a]s poet Lycidas is connected to Lycian Apollo, the patron god of poets; as pastor to St Peter, the head of the Christian church, which King would have served" (Revard, 2003: 247). Thus, the connection between Lycidas, the pastor-poet, and the clergy is established and the comparison between them is justified. This is also the point where *Lycidas* intermingles the classical pastoral tradition with the Christian tradition. Accordingly, the reference to St Peter is also functional for Milton to pave the way for institutional criticism. Milton refers to the corruption in the clergy through the words of St Peter as follows:

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> How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
>
> Anow of such as for their belly's sake
>
> Creep and intrude, and climb into the fold?
>
> Of other care they little reck'ning make
>
> Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
>
> And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
>
> Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
>
> A sheep-hook, or have learned ought else the least
>
> That to the faithfull herdman's 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 Pipes of wretched straw.
>
> The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
>
> But swoll'n with wind and the rank mist they draw,
>
> Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread,
>
> Besides what the grim woolf with privy paw
>
> Daily devours apace, and nothing said!
>
> But that two-handed engine at the door,
>
> Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more. (113-31)

Milton refers to St Peter as the "[p]ilot of the Galilean Lake" (109) and Stella P. Revard explains this idea referring to the Bible arguing that in the Gospel of Matthew, Peter witnesses how Jesus walks on the water while he was on the ship on the sea of Galilee and affirms his faith in Jesus (2003: 258).[3] Envisioned as the representative voice of the Protestant Church, St Peter in *Lycidas* voices the follies of the clergy.[4] Like the early speaker, St Peter questions the early death of Lycidas (113) and praises him in opposition to the corrupted clergy. The clergy then was associated with wealth and power leading to more and more corruption. Referring to the power and the self-interest of bishops whose only concern is "their belly's sake" (114), St Peter highlights their incompetence in preaching and how they disregard the congregation. They seem to guide people with their "flashy songs" (123), which refers to the disharmony and incongruity of the situation. The bishops are only interested in material rewards. Namely, they do not act what they preach. Full of corruption and ignorance, they ignore "[t]he hungry sheep [that] look up, and are not fed" (125). Under such conditions the early death of a qualified man of religion causes much more distress, because there was nobody like Lycidas among "the great reformers of the church, and the restorers of the commonwealth" (Dorian, 1930: 206). As Milton's St Peter indicates, what the corrupted clergy thought was just their own comfort.

According to Stella P. Revard, Milton wrote the part about St Peter to criticise the corruption of the clergy in his time and the use of the pastor-poet image helps him in this respect as well because good poetry was associated with good shepherds and bad poetry was associated with bad shepherds (2003: 255). Since the clergy was corrupted and could not guide society in terms of religion, people are left "hungry" in terms of religion. Thus, the poet presents St Peter as "a spokesman for his views on bishops" and comments on "the universal issues that were facing Christians, issues that had been taken up not so

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3      Also see Kathleen M. Swaim (1983) for a discussion of St Peter as "the Pilot of the Galilean Lake", pp. 42-45.
4      It is interesting that Milton uses St Peter who, according to Roman Catholics, is venerated as the first pope.

much by church reforms as by the poets," which lays bare the reason why there is a "common ground between Milton and Dante as they use St Peter to denounce the corrupt clergy, or Milton and Mantuan, or Milton and Spenser, as they use the pastoral poem as a means to call the venial clergy to account" (Revard, 2003: 254). Thus, this part can be taken as the explicit reflection of the institutional criticism in *Lycidas* which is written in accordance with the pastoral tradition.

Milton criticizes the corrupt clergy of the time which is defined by Donald C. Dorian as "the climax of the denunciation of corruption in the clergy" (1930: 204) and by E. M. W. Tillyard "as a glorious excrescence" (1961: 61). Although some critics refer to this part as digression and argue for "the question of unity in Lycidas" (Lawry, 1965: 112), the connection between this part and the former pastoral has been established through the implication of pastor-poet imagery. Actually, the subtitle of *Lycidas*, added to the poem in 1645, "and, by occasion, foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy, then [namely 1637] in their height," can be regarded as an extension of Milton's *Of Reformation touching Church-Discipline in England: and the Causes that hitherto have hindered it*. As Robert F. Duvall explains, in this prose work, Milton refers to the corruption in the clergy and asks for reformation to the Parliament (1967: 107).

Moving from the personal to the political, Milton interconnects his frustration about the injustice of losing a friend who could have been more beneficial to society than the corrupt clergy who, for him, are accomplices of Catholic Spain and are the chief culprits of social injustice. In his "attack on the Anglican clergy" (Daiches, 1961: 113), Milton implies how the material concerns of the Church leads to failure. The corruption in the clergy was to such an extent that when there was a plague in 1637, it was believed that the plague was sent by God as a punishment for the failing clergy (Revard, 2003: 255). In Milton's words, the clergy is "[r]ot inwardly" and so "foul contagion spread" (128). The rotten clergy turns out to be source of not just spiritual but also physical illness in the society.

Moreover, extending the pastoral imagery of the leading shepherd, Milton equates the corrupt (Catholicized) clergy with the archetypal imagery of the wolf: the enemy of shepherds and sheep, and associated with evil and the devil in Christian thought. As Milton emphasises, there is "the grim wolf" (128) that "[d]aily devours apace" (129) let alone any reformers. Commenting on the questioning attitude of the speaker and referring to the inspiration of Milton, Douglas Bush argues that *Lycidas*

> [...] brings out another aspect of God's unaccountable ways: while He cuts off the life of a worthy young cleric, He allows the grossly unworthy to infest His church. Milton may have had in mind such passages from Dante (Inferno xix, Paradiso xx), Petrarch (Sonnet cviii), Spenser (May eclogue), and others as he was to quote in his first and third tracts against the bishops. In this speech he first raised his Puritan standard: his attack on the clergy may have been stimulated by the brutal and notorious punishment, in the summer of 1637, of the Puritan pamphleteers, William Prynne, Henry Burton, and John Bastwick; "the grim wolf" is presumably the Church of Rome and may refer to recent conversions, especially in the circle of Charles's French queen, Henrietta; and the last two lines; whatever the precise meaning of the much-discussed metaphor, are certainly a prophecy of God's final judgment. (1965: 64-65)

The rottenness in the clergy gives birth to "hungry sheep" (125) in society, that is, people who are hungry both spiritually, by being misled by the corrupt clergy, and materially, by being deprived of their material assets because of the greed and self-service of the clergy. The members of the clergy have "[b]lind mouths" (119), which implies the idea that they cannot lead people well and are incompetent as preachers. They just serve "for their belly's sake" (114) unlike the "young swain" Lycidas (113). The clergy is blind to the needs of people and do not feed them spiritually.

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There was, thus, a need for "the purification of the clergy" which, in Milton's idea, "was to be affected by parliament" (Dorian, 1930: 207). The reformation of the Church and clergy was necessary because of the fact that there was a Catholic threat for Protestant England. Reminding the conflict between Protestant England and Catholic Spain, which ended up with the victory of England in the Spanish Armada of 1588, David Daiches indicates that "Catholic Spain remained the enemy for the very protestant Milton" and the wolf imagery "refers to the proselytizing Roman Catholic Church" (1961: 117). Yet, not dismissing the Catholic threat outside England, it can be argued that, for Milton, the enemy is not just to be found in Catholic Europe but also inside England, as the English clergy, with their ignorance, incompetence and material interests, does more harm to its Protestant people than the Catholics abroad. This is why Milton criticizes the guardian-angel that looks not homeward (163) but towards Spain, that is towards the Catholics (162). This unfortunate situation was created due to the follies of the clergy. Hence, these lines can also be interpreted as Milton's "passionate cry for his country and for himself" (Daiches, 1961: 117) as they are under threat because of the corrupted men of religion that were supposed to be the guardian-angels of the country.

Regarding the corruption of the clergy and the angel looking not homeward, it can also be argued that Milton's chief target is the infamous Archbishop Laud who was marked for his oppressive measures against ultra-Protestant views. Rosemond Tuve argues that the church history at the time of Archbishop Laud shows how universal Milton's plea was as the accusations against the clergy were not just valid for the English clergy (1962: 83). Archbishop Laud applied tight impositions in terms of censorship in 1637. In particular, there were harsh punishments like in the exemplary case of the same year in which "shortly before Edward King's drowning the doctor John Bastwick, the clergyman Henry Burton and lawyer William Prynne, having been tried by the Star Chamber and convicted of seditious libel, were punished by branding and by having their ears cropped" (Revard, 2003: 254). Such severe punishments became the source of criticism against Archbishop Laud. In fact, even when he first became Primate in 1633, Laud argued that the followers of Puritanism were "like the clerical pedants" and that England would be soon cleared from Puritanism with the help of his "methodical application of college discipline;" so, he adopted the plan "to stop up every hole through which puritan feeling could find vent in the press, the pulpit, the influence of the clergyman, the legal services of the Church, or the illegal of the conventicles" (Trevelyan, 1966: 184). As Robert F. Duvall indicates, the things that Archbishop Laud and his followers wanted to preserve were "ritual, liturgy, symbols, and the sacraments of the Prayer Book" (1967: 109). As a result of their powerful status, bishops became the embodiments of pride within the body of the church paving the way for their failure (Duvall, 1967: 116). This leads to the fall of the watchful shepherds into "a gluttonous and selfish desire" as reflected through their blind mouths which are "balanced by 'sucking eyes'" (Brooks and Hardy, 1961: 147). At this point, turning back to the "grim wolf" imagery, Stella P. Revard questions whether this might be a reference to Archbishop Laud himself as he was letting Catholicism spread in the country (2003: 255). Thus, Milton employs the elegiac form in a very nuanced and poetic way, without sacrificing it to blunt political slogans. Milton laments and reflects his frustration for his personal loss and England's loss through the corrupt clergy in such a way that prevents the poem from becoming a time- and space-bound propaganda.

Poetic ambiguity enables Milton to express his frustration, while protecting him from being the target of his political enemies. This ambiguity, or "obscurity" (Dorian, 1930: 206), in addition to the referent of "grim wolf", can be also found in the image of the "two-handed engine at the door" that is "ready to smite" (130-31). Stella P. Revard questions

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> [w]hen Milton added the headnote in 1645 that he had 'by occasion {foretold} the ruin of our corrupted clergy then in their height', was he referring specifically to the judgement of the engine that Peter called down upon them? Some have argued that he was, and the engine should be identified, accordingly, as the axe that struck Laud or the judicial orders of Parliament that deprived the established clergy of their livings. Yet, given the apocalyptic fervour of these lines, it would be a mistake to limit them to such historical outcomes, unforeseen in 1637 even by a prophetic poet. (2003: 255-6)

There were different interpretations of this image of the "two-handed engine at the door." For instance, G. M. Harper believes that Milton refers to Catholic Spain and France and their combined power against England that would bring the end of Protestant England (qtd. in Dorian, 1930: 205). William Vaughn Moody adds much to the ambiguity in that he argues that "the two-handed engine has been interpreted (1) as the "axe that is laid unto the root of the tree," St. Matthew III. 10; (2) as the two-handed sword of Revelation I. 16; (3) as the two Houses of Parliament; (4) as the sword of St. Michael; (5) as the secular and the spiritual power" (qtd. in Dorian, 1930: 205-6).5 Furthermore, there are some that interpret the engine as the "parliament as the agency whose two hands were to wield the punitive "engine" described- each house, perhaps, imagined as furnishing one hand for the common task," which is closer to Milton's idea in that he supported the reformation undertaken by Parliament (Dorian, 1930: 206) with the hope "that parliament could, by asserting the liberty of Englishmen which it represented, accomplish the removal of the avaricious clergy from the Church" (Dorian, 1930: 213). Evidently, after criticizing the corruption in the clergy and the need in the society for religious guidance, Milton asks Parliament for reformation. This makes Milton's "role of a reformer" clear in the poem and exemplifies that "his desire to become a pamphleteer to reform society came from the stream of Puritan influence in his background" (Duvall, 1967: 107). Thus, while pessimistic throughout the poem because of the crisis he had after the traumatic loss of his friend that led him to question the whole clergy, Milton reserves his hope for social change and observance of genuine Puritan life in England.

## Conclusion

Milton concludes his elegy *Lycidas* by returning back to the pastoral narration and almost canonizing Lycidas as an exemplary figure to be observed and celebrated. He is an example of the good shepherd. Lycidas promises hope for his flock and despite his death, he is still remembered with his notable qualities as a great man of religion. The persona states that "And now the sun had stretched out all the hills, / And now was dropped into the western bay. / At last he rose and twitched his mantle blue: / Tomorrow to fresh woods, and pastures new" (190-193). Lycidas almost turns into a Christ figure and resurrection (and thus hope) is restored. Accordingly, while seemingly having lost all of his hope for the improvement of society because of the failing clergy, it can be argued that Milton seems to retain his belief that paradise will be somehow regained, a theme, which he will explore in his later poetic career in *Paradise Regained*. Therefore, although *Lycidas* is written in the traditional pastoral tradition, it is evidently also about the poet and poetry. Besides, there is a great deal of institutional criticism embedded in the poem. Milton applies the elements of the pastoral tradition for institutional criticism of the clergy in the seventeenth century, a topic which affected individual lives and society as a whole.

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5    Also see James S. Baumlin (1999) for a discussion of "two-handed engine at the door", pp. 66-71.

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