

# Marsyas by Jose-Maria de Heredia



Apollo Flaying Marsyas by Jusepe de Ribera, 1637

translated by [Thomas Banks](#) (August 2021)

Your voice once charmed these trees whose burning wood  
Has scorched your skin and bone, and the red stain  
Of your spilled life flows slowly to the plain  
In mountain brooks dyed crimson with your blood.

Jealous Apollo full of heavenly pride

With iron rod shattered your reeds that long  
Made lions peaceful and taught birds their song:  
With Phrygia's singer Phrygian song has died.

Nothing remains of you except the dry  
Remnant of flesh Apollo in his hate  
Left on a yew-branch hanging; No pained cry  
Or tender gift of song opposed your fate.

Your flute is heard no more; hung on the trees  
Your flayed skin is the plaything of the breeze.

Marsyas

Les pins du bois natal que charmait ton haleine  
N'ont pas brûlé ta chair, ô malheureux ! Tes os  
Sont dissous, et ton sang s'écoule avec les eaux  
Que les monts de Phrygie épanchent vers la plaine.

Le jaloux Citharède, orgueil du ciel hellène,  
De son plectre de fer a brisé tes roseaux  
Qui, domptant les lions, enseignaient les oiseaux ;  
Il ne reste plus rien du chanteur de Célène.

Rien qu'un lambeau sanglant qui flotte au tronc de l'if  
Auquel on l'a lié pour l'écorcher tout vif.  
Ô Dieu cruel ! Ô cris ! Voix lamentable et tendre !

Non, vous n'entendrez plus, sous un doigt trop savant,  
La flûte soupirer aux rives du Méandre...  
Car la peau du Satyre est le jouet du vent.

[Table of Contents](#)

---

Thomas Banks has taught literature and Latin for many years in Idaho, Montana, and North Carolina, where he currently lives. Other writings of his have appeared in *First Things* and

the *St. Austin Review*.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](https://twitter.com/NERIconoclast)