'Most musicall, most melancholy': Avian aesthetics of lament in Greek and Roman elegy[1]

Résumé

In this paper, I explore how Greek and Roman poets alluded to the lamentatory background of elegy through the figures of the swan and the nightingale. After surveying the ancient association of elegy and lament (Section I) and the common metapoetic function of birds from Homer onwards (Section II), I analyse Hellenistic and Roman examples where the nightingale (Section III) and swan (Section IV) emerge as symbols of elegiac poetics. The legends associated with both birds rendered them natural models of lamentation. But besides this thematic association, I consider the ancient terms used to describe their song, especially its shrillness (λιγυρότης/*liquiditas*) and sweetness (γλυκύτης/*dulcedo*) (Section V). I demonstrate how these two terms connect birdsong, lament and elegiac poetry in a tightly packed nexus. These birds proved perfect emblems of elegy not only in their constant lamentation, but also in the very sound and nature of their song.

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Mots-clés: aesthetics, elegy, lament, metapoetics, nightingale, shrillness, swan, sweetness

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Texte intégral

In *Il Penseroso* ('The Reflective Man'), the English poet John Milton (1608–1674) conjures a vision of poetic melancholy and contemplation. After invoking the Goddess Melancholy and picturing her attendant train ('Peace', 'Quiet' and the like), he dwells on a night-time scene of melancholic music (vv. 55–64):

> And the mute Silence hist along,
> 'Less Philomel will deign a Song,
> In her sweetest, saddest plight,
> Smoothing the rugged brow of night,
> While Cynthia checks her Dragon yoke,
> Gently o're th' accustom'd Oke;
> Sweet Bird that shunn'st the noise of folly,
> Most musicall, most melancholy!
> Thee Chauntress oft the Woods among,
> I woo to hear thy Eeven-Song;

In Milton's thought world, reflective silence is banished by the intrusive song of the nightingale ('Philomel'), whose melody comes alive through the incessant sibilance and alliteration of these verses. The bird is a figure of song and sweetness: she is 'sweet' (61), 'most musicall' (62), and a 'chauntress' (63) in the 'sweetest' of situations (57). Yet she is also a figure of loss and lamentation, suffering her 'saddest plight' (57) and proving 'most melancholy' (62). Milton juxtaposes these two states directly in an oxymoronic combination of pleasure and anguish: she is both 'most musicall' and 'most melancholy' (62), her plight is both 'sweetest' and 'saddest' (57). Through this vivid vignette, the bird becomes an emblem of Milton's poetic melancholia: she 'shun[s] the noise of folly' (61) just as the poet began his ode by dismissing 'vain deluding joyes, | The brood of folly' (1–2). This underlying sense of opposition even extends to the relationship of *Il Pensero* with its companion piece, *L'Allegro* ('The Lively Man'), a contrasting celebration of poetic mirth.[2] Whereas that poem features a rooster crowing a 'Matin' cry (*L'Allegro* 114), the

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[2] On *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* as a poetic pair, see e.g. Lewalski (2003) 5–7; Teskey (2011) 75–88, (2015) 76–100.

nightingale here sings an 'Eeven-Song' (64). Her sweet and sombre notes mark the end of the day, a time associated with darkness, death and closure. The bird embodies the melancholic mood of Milton's ode.

I have begun with this passage because it epitomises many of the themes and associations that I wish to explore in this paper: birds as a symbol of poetry; the aesthetic qualities of their song; and the interplay of the sweet and the sombre in the generic self-consciousness of a particular genre of ancient poetry, elegy. We shall see that Milton's self-reflexive depiction of the nightingale has a considerable pre-history in the Classical world. My focus will be two birds that were particularly associated with lament and elegy in antiquity: the nightingale and the swan. I shall begin by setting the scene with important background for this study, tracing the association of elegy and lament in ancient theoretical reflections on the genre (Section I), and the well-established classical tradition of employing birds as metapoetic emblems (Section II). I shall then explore occasions in Hellenistic and Roman poetry where the nightingale (Section III) and the swan (Section IV) emerge as symbols of elegy both within and beyond the elegiac corpus. And I shall close by considering the larger significance of these metaliterary gestures for our understanding of ancient elegy (Section V). The legends associated with both birds rendered them natural models of lamentation, but beyond this thematic connection I shall argue that the very sound and nature of their song rendered them perfect emblems of the genre.

I. Elegy and Lament

When we think of elegy – and especially of Roman elegy – it is natural to think first of love and of the amatory poetry of elegists such as Propertius, Tibullus, Ovid and Sulpicia.[3] The trials and tribulations of love, however, were only ever one facet of elegy's generic disposition. In archaic and classical Greece, elegiac poetry exhibited a wide range of subject matter, concerns and interests, including the martial exhortation of Tyrtaeus, the mournful musings of Mimnermus, and

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[3] The amatory aspect of elegy is frequently foregrounded in modern 'marketing' of the genre: many Universities offer courses on 'Roman/Latin love elegy', and two recent companions focus specifically on this aspect: Gold (2012); Thorsen (2013).

Archilochus' reflections on wine, seafaring and warfare. There was little sense at the start that love would one day be the genre's overriding concern.[4]

By the time we reach Rome, however, we do find a clearer conception of the essence and origins of elegy, thanks in no small part to the literary codifications and generic classifications of Hellenistic scholars. Yet even then, the origins of the genre were located not in the realm of love, but in the sphere of lament and mourning. The very word itself, ἐλεγεία, was etymologically derived from various Greek words: the noun ἔλεος ('pity'), the expression of lament ἒ ἒ λέγειν ('to say ah ah') or the similar εὖ λέγειν ('to speak well'), reflecting a key feature of θρῆνος, the praise of the deceased.[5] Throughout their works, Roman poets and critics repeatedly allude to this generic *aetion*, associating elegy with mournful lament. In the *Ars Poetica*, Horace famously remarks that slender elegies (*exiguos elegos, Ars P*. 77) started off as the genre of *querimonia*, before being expanded to incorporate votive dedications (*Ars P*. 75–78):

> versibus impariter iunctis **querimonia** primum,
> post etiam inclusa est **voti sententia compos**;
> quis tamen **exiguos elegos** emiserit auctor,
> grammatici certant et adhuc sub iudice lis est.

> **Lament** was first framed in verses unequally joined, and afterwards so too was **the sentiment of granted prayer**. As to which author first published **slender elegies**, the critics are in dispute and the controversy still waits the determination of a judge.

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[4] On elegy's varied generic background, see Hunter (2013). This is not to deny that some Greek poets could construct their own selective elegiac literary histories: in the Hellenistic period, Hermesianax's *Leontion* transforms elegy (and many other literary genres) into a discourse centred solely on love and loss (fr. 7 Powell = fr. 3 Lightfoot): Spatafora (2004); Farrell (2012) 14–17.

[5] For catalogues of ancient attestations of these etymologies, see Kannicht (1969) II. 73; Maltby (1991) 201–2 *s.vv. elegeus, elegia, elegiacus*; O'Hara (2017) xvii, xxi–xxii nn. 3, 4. For discussion, see Harvey (1955) 170–1; Rosenmeyer (1968); West (1974) 1–21; Bowie (1986) 22–27; Hinds (1987a) 103–4; Alexiou (2002) 104–6; Bessone (2003) 215–25; Nagy (2010); O'Hara (2018); Swift (2019) 14–17.

The subject of love in the *Ars Poetica*, by contrast, is relegated to the realm of lyric ten lines later, alongside hymns, epinicia and drinking-songs (*iuvenum curas*, *AP* 85). In Horace's characterisation of elegy, love has been completely effaced by the presence of lament.[6]

Horace was not alone in this conception of the genre's origins. The very language that Roman poets use of elegy also reflects this aetiological background: the genre is repeatedly described as *flebilis*, 'tearful', and *miserabilis*, 'pitiable'.[7] The Alexandrian scholar Didymus, an older contemporary of Horace, went even further than his peers in connecting the very metrical form of elegy to these lamentatory origins. The shorter pentameter falls away, he claims, just like the fate of the dead (Didym. Περὶ ποιητῶν [p. 387 Schmidt], *apud* Orion. *gramm. etym. s.v.* ἔλεγος [p. 58 Sturz]):

> πεντάμετρον τῷ ἡρωϊκῷ συνῆπτον, οὐχ ὁμοδραμοῦντα τῇ τοῦ προτέρου δυνάμει, ἀλλ' οἷον συνεκπνέοντα καὶ συσβεννύμενον ταῖς τοῦ τελευτήσαντος τύχαις.

> They joined the pentameter to the hexameter; the former cannot keep pace with the power of the first line, but seems to expire and be extinguished together with the fortunes of the deceased.[8]

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[6] Of course, Horace is not the most disinterested critic; by claiming love for lyric, he aggrandises his own characteristic poetic form. Alternatively, some scholars interpret verse 76 as a reference to love elegy, taking the *vota* as the wishes of the lover and *voti sententia compos* as 'the expression of one's gratified wish/desire' (cf. e.g. Ov. *Ars Am*. 1.485–86): see e.g. Clark (1983), countering the criticisms of Brink (1971) 166–67. Even if this reading were right, however, love poetry still proves secondary (*post*) to the original *querimonia* (*primum*).

[7] E.g. Hor. *Carm*. 1.33.2–3 (*miserabilis … elegos*), 2.9.9 (*flebilibus modis*); Ov. *Am*. 3.9.3 (*flebilis … Elegia*; *ex vero* in v. 4 signposts the etymology: Ziogas (2013) 330 n.17), *Her*. 15.7 (*flebile carmen*), *Trist*. 5.1.5 (*flebile carmen*). Cf. too Isid. *Orig*. 1.39.14; Varro, *De Poematis* (*GRF* fr. 303): *nam et elegia extrema mortuo accinebatur sicuti nenia, ideoque ab eadem elogium videtur tractum cognominari, quod mortuis vel morituris ascribitur novissimum* ('for an elegy, like a dirge, is sung at the last to the dead; and therefore the word *elogium* ["epitaph"] seems to have been derived from the same root, because it is written at the last for the dead or those about to die', tr. Keith (1992) 142 n.16).

[8] Tr. adapted from Hunter (2006a) 121 n.8. Cf. e.g. Ov. *Am*. 1.1.17–18, 27 on the rise and fall of the elegiac couplet. For further discussion (both ancient and modern) of the relationship between the hexameter and pentameter, see Morgan (2012).

In Didymus' conception, elegy's form reflects its inherent association with the world of lament. Notably, no ancient critic appears to have used the same image for other metrical schemes, even for those which involve comparable diminuendos or adaptations of the hexameter. The Sapphic stanza (which 'falls away' with the adonius of its final line) was associated with brevity and contraction, while the Sotadean (which reorders the long and short syllables of the hexameter) was considered effeminate, as if the masculine hexameter had metamorphosed into female form.[9] But such reductions or alterations were never presented in funereal terms. Didymus' morbid description of the elegiac couplet, by contrast, draws upon and reinforces elegy's link with mourning.

In Augustan Rome, then, elegy was intimately associated with lament. Yet there is some reason to suspect that this association already existed far earlier in the Greek world. We find hints of it in Hellenistic, Classical and even Archaic texts, although never yet so explicitly theorised. Ewen Bowie has noted that the earliest attestations of ἔλεγος ('lament' – from which ἐλεγεῖον and ἐλεγεία seem to be derived) appear in a cluster of Euripidean plays in the seven or eight years after 415 BCE (e.g. Hecuba's '*elegoi* of tears', δακρύων ἐλέγους, *Tro*. 119) and has suggested that one of Euripides' contemporaries with an interest in etymology and the history of music may have invented the etymological derivation then.[10] But the lyricist Simonides' association with elegy, threnody and (funereal) epigram may suggest that the connection goes back even further.[11] Indeed, the growing prominence of elegiac couplets in sepulchral epitaphs during the sixth century would

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[9] Sapphic stanza: e.g. Dion. Hal. *Comp*. 19.131, II.85.12–18 Usener–Radermacher (μικράς … στροφάς, ὀλίγοις … κώλοις); Morgan (2010) 181–283, esp. 212–18. Sotadean: e.g. Demetr. *Eloc*. 189 (ὁποῖα γὰρ μεταμεμορφωμένῳ ἔοικεν ὁ στίχος, ὥσπερ οἱ μυθευόμενοι ἐξ ἀρρένων μεταβάλλειν εἰς θηλείας, 'for the line seems as if it has metamorphosed, like figures in myth who change from males into females'); Morgan (2010) 44–45. Cf. too Morgan (2010) 115–130 on choliambics, a deformed version of the iambic trimeter, characterised as limping and brutish (e.g. Demetr. *Eloc*. 301). I thank Llewelyn Morgan for discussion on this point.

[10] Bowie (1986) 25; note especially Andromache's elegiac lament at *Andr*. 103–16. However, Bowie may go too far in ruling out the existence of elegiac threnodies in the archaic period: Aloni (2001) 91.

[11] Simonides was celebrated for his funereal poetry (Catull. 38.8; Hor. *Carm*. 2.1.37–38; Dion. Hal. *De imit*. 2.2.6 (420), II.205.7–11 Usener–Radermacher; Quint. *Inst*. 10.1.64) and had many epitaphic epigrams ascribed to his name (Page (1981) 186–302). Most evidence for his threnodies concerns lyric metres (520–31 *PMG*), but his Plataea Elegy commemorates the war-dead (fr. 11 W²: Nobili (2011)) and fr. 22 W² may also be an elegiac threnody: Yatromanolakis (1998).

have established a natural connection between the metre and mourning.[12] And already in some of Archilochus' elegies, we find a prominent place given to the topic of lament: in fr. 13 W^2, the poet reflects on the nature and limits of grief (κήδεα … στονόεντα, ἀναστένομεν, πένθος), while in other fragments he laments the death of his brother-in-law at sea.[13] Already in the archaic age, elegy and lament were closely aligned.

Even more suggestive, however, is the subject matter of several Hellenistic elegies which treat mythical tales of grief and suffering, again implying a close connection between elegy and lament: Eratosthenes' *Erigone* concerns the suicide of the eponymous Attic girl, while Philitas' *Demeter* dwells on the grieving goddess' search for her stolen daughter. In the latter poem, our extant fragments are replete with the language of grief and sorrow. Within a handful of verses, we find no fewer than seven words associated with mourning: ἄλγεα, κήδεα, κλαυθμός, μέλεος, οἴμοι, πένθος and πῆμα (frr. 9–10, 12–13 Spanoudakis, frr. 1–4 Lightfoot). Although fragments are notoriously slippery to pin down, this lexical accumulation certainly suggests an association between elegy and lament in the Hellenistic age.[14]

In any case, given this (perceived) lamentatory background of elegy, it is easy to see how Roman love elegy slots into this generic archaeology. Love elegists tendentiously and often humorously appropriated the genre's association with mourning, translating the emotional depths of funereal grief into the temporary heartbreak of the elegiac world: in their poems, they bathetically suffer symptoms of passion akin to death, express bereavement at the loss of their beloved, and depict themselves as locked-out lovers who bewail their pitiful fate. Suffering lovers too participate in the world of lament, and it is no surprise that the noun *querela* – a synonym of Horace's

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[12] See esp. *SEG* 41.540A, a sixth-century elegiac epitaph from a polyandrion in Ambracia, concerned with mourning (ὀλοφύρομαι, v. 1) and grief (πένθος, v. 6): Bousquet (1992) 586–606; D'Alessio (1995); Estrin (2019). Prior to the sixth century, the hexameter dominated verse inscriptions.

[13] [στο]νόεσσα, 'mournful' or [ἀλγι]νόεσσα, 'grievous', fr. 9.5 W^2: Swift (2019) 220; κλαίων, 'weeping', fr. 11.1 W^2; cf. Plut. *quomodo aud. poet.* 6.23b (θρηνῶν, 'lamenting'), 12.33a–b (λυπούμενος, 'aggrieved').

[14] Cf. Hunter (2013) 29. We could also cite Antimachus' *Lyde* (c. 400 BCE), an elegiac poem apparently composed to console himself on the loss of his wife/mistress: Matthews (1996) 27.

querimonia – became a recurring buzzword of the genre.[15] We might also compare Domitius Marsus' epigram on the death of Tibullus, which neatly defines elegy as the lamenting of 'soft loves' (fr. 7 Courtney):

> te quoque Vergilio comitem non aequa, Tibulle,
>> mors iuvenem campos misit ad Elysios,
> ne foret aut **elegis molles** qui **fleret amores**
>> aut caneret forti regia bella pede.

> You too, Tibullus, unfair death sent as Virgil's comrade to the Elysian Fields while still a young man, so that nobody would live to **weep soft loves in elegiacs**, or to sing of royal wars with a strong foot.

Here too, however, we may suspect a Hellenistic background, given Hermesianax's formulation of the elegist Antimachus as a grieving lover who fills his books with tears (fr. 7.41–46 Powell = fr. 3.41–46 Lightfoot):

> Λύδης δ᾽ Ἀντίμαχος Λυδηΐδος **ἐκ** μὲν **ἔρωτος**
>> πληγεὶς Πακτωλοῦ ῥεῦμ᾽ ἐπέβη ποταμοῦ·
> †δαρδάνη δὲ θανοῦσαν ὑπὸ ξηρὴν θέτο γαῖαν
>> **κλαίων**, †αἴζαον δ᾽ ἦλθεν ἀποπρολιπὼν
> ἄκρην ἐς Κολοφῶνα· **γόων** δ᾽ ἐνεπλήσατο βίβλους
>> ἱράς, ἐκ παντὸς παυσάμενος **καμάτου**.

> And Antimachus, struck **by his love** for Lydian Lyde, trod beside the stream of the Pactolus river; … but when she died, he laid her beneath the dry earth, **weeping**; and … after

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[15] Cf. Saylor (1967); Kennedy (1993) 32 ('the verb "to bewail" (*queri*) becomes discursively constructed to signify the act of writing elegy'); James (2003) 108–28. See e.g. Tib. 1.2.9, 1.4.71, 1.8.53; Prop. 1.16.39, 1.18.29; Ov. *Am.* 2.4.27, 2.6.7–8. Cf. Hor. *Carm.* 2.9, addressed to the elegiac poet Valgius: Valgius, he claims, never ceases from pursuing his lover Mystes with tearful verses (*flebilibus modis*, 2.9.9–10) and should cease from his 'soft complaints' (*desine **mollium** | tandem **querelarum***, 2.9.17–18).

departing, he came to the citadel of Colophon and filled holy books with **tears** when he had ceased from all his **distress**.

The perceived origins of elegy in lament, then, were not incompatible with Augustan or earlier poets' focus on the woes and sufferings of love. By contrast, the confrontation of love and lament, of *amor* and *mors*, proved a fertile matrix for the production of Roman elegy: the genre constantly mediated between the erotic and the sepulchral.[16] In talking of Latin or Hellenistic 'love elegy', however, we should be careful not to forget the contours of this generic archaeology. When ancient poets thought of elegy, they thought of lament as much as love: lament was woven into the very fabric of the genre.

In this paper, I wish to consider how Greek and Roman authors both alluded to and reflected on this lamentatory background of elegy. Much scholarship in recent decades has explored elegy's elaborate self-consciousness (especially in Rome), highlighting how it plays knowingly with its metrical form, Callimachean heritage and complicated relationship to hexameter epic.[17] Building on this work, I aim to highlight a further strand of elegy's generic self-fashioning, demonstrating the extent to which elegists appropriated both the swan and the nightingale as figures for elegiac lament. Several of these metaliterary moments have been discussed before, but a fuller collection of the material and a closer focus on the aesthetics of avian lament will further enrich our understanding of ancient elegy and its generic self-positioning.

Before turning to each bird in turn, however, I shall first lay out the precedent for avian metapoetics in archaic and classical Greek poetry – an essential background against which we can best appreciate the elegists' innovative appropriation of tradition.

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[16] See e.g. Papanghelis (1987); Ramsby (2007); Keith (2011).
[17] Metrical form: Morgan (2010) 345–77, (2012); Henkel (2014). Callimachean heritage: Hunter (2006b), (2012) 162–70. Elegy and epic: Hinds (1987a). Generally, see too Kennedy (1993); Keith (1999a).

II. Birds of Song

By the Hellenistic and Roman periods, birds had long served as a symbol for poetic activity, part of a larger metapoetic bestiary which also included fish, insects and mammals. From our earliest literary texts, birds of various kinds are closely associated with both poetry and song – and none more so than the nightingale and the swan.[18] Already in Homer, Penelope is compared to the nightingale, which is explicitly described as 'singing' a lovely cry – the only explicit mention of bird *song* in the whole of Homer (*Od.* 19.518–24):[19]

> ὡς δ᾽ ὅτε Πανδαρέου κούρη, χλωρηῒς **ἀηδών**,
> **καλὸν ἀείδησιν** ἔαρος νέον ἱσταμένοιο,
> δενδρέων ἐν πετάλοισι καθεζομένη πυκινοῖσιν,
> ἥ τε θαμὰ τρωπῶσα χέει **πολυηχέα φωνήν**,
> παῖδ᾽ ὀλοφυρομένη Ἴτυλον φίλον, ὅν ποτε χαλκῷ
> κτεῖνε δι᾽ ἀφραδίας, κοῦρον Ζήθοιο ἄνακτος,
> ὣς καὶ ἐμοὶ δίχα θυμὸς ὀρώρεται ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα,

> As when the daughter of Pandareus, the **nightingale** of the greenwood, **sings her lovely song** when spring has just begun, sitting amid the thick leaves of the trees, and pours out her **many-toned voice**, often changing its notes, lamenting her dear son Itylus, the son of lord Zethus, whom she once killed mistakenly with a sword; even so my own heart is stirred to and fro in doubt.

As scholars have long noted, the close juxtaposition here of ἀηδών ('nightingale') and ἀείδησιν ('sings') already hints at an etymological connection between the nightingale and song, a

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[18] For a useful catalogue of metapoetic birds, see Nünlist (1998) 39–54. Cf. too Steiner (2007); Gurd (2016) 36–38, 42–50; Roussel (forthcoming a).

[19] The closest other reference is *Od.* 21.411, when the bowstring 'sings like a swallow in tone' (ἡ δ᾽ ὑπὸ καλὸν ἄεισε, χελιδόνι εἰκέλη αὐδήν). Otherwise, the verb is only used of the Muses and internal characters, especially bards. For the significance of this simile, see Anhalt (2001); Alden (2017) 132–37.

derivation that enjoyed a considerable afterlife in later Greek thought.[20] Gregory Nagy, meanwhile, has seen in the description of the bird's πολυηχέα ('many-toned') voice a model for Homer's own art of variation.[21] Already in the *Odyssey*, there is an implicit association between bard and bird; the nightingale's song emblematises Homer's poetic art.

This association becomes even more explicit in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, in the famous fable of the hawk and the nightingale (*Op.* 203–12):

> ὧδ᾽ ἴρηξ προσέειπεν **ἀηδόνα ποικιλόδειρον**,
> ὕψι μάλ᾽ ἐν νεφέεσσι φέρων, ὀνύχεσσι μεμαρπώς·
> ἡ δ᾽ ἐλεόν, γναμπτοῖσι πεπαρμένη ἀμφ᾽ ὀνύχεσσι,
> μύρετο· τὴν ὅ γ᾽ ἐπικρατέως πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπεν·
> "δαιμονίη, τί λέληκας; ἔχει νύ σε πολλὸν ἀρείων·
> τῇ δ᾽ εἶς ᾗ σ᾽ ἂν ἐγώ περ ἄγω **καὶ ἀοιδὸν ἐοῦσαν**·
> δεῖπνον δ᾽, αἴ κ᾽ ἐθέλω, ποιήσομαι ἠὲ μεθήσω.
> ἄφρων δ᾽, ὅς κ᾽ ἐθέλῃ πρὸς κρείσσονας ἀντιφερίζειν·
> νίκης τε στέρεται πρός τ᾽ αἴσχεσιν ἄλγεα πάσχει."
> ὣς ἔφατ᾽ ὠκυπέτης ἴρηξ, τανυσίπτερος ὄρνις.

So the hawk addressed **the dapple-necked nightingale** while he carried her very high up among the clouds, grasped in his talons. She wept pitifully, pierced by his curved talons; but he spoke forcefully to her: "Wretch, why are you screeching? You're in the grip of someone far superior to you, and you're going wherever I take you, **singer though you may be**. I'll make you my dinner if I wish, or I'll let you go. Foolish is he who wishes to contend with those who are stronger; for he is deprived of victory and suffers pains in addition to disgrace." So spoke the swift-flying hawk, the long-winged bird.

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[20] Rank (1951) 35. See *Et. Gud. s.v.* ἀηδών (I 29.19–20 De Stefani): παρὰ τὸ ἀείδω ἀηδών κατὰ διάλεκτον Αἰολέων.

[21] Nagy (1996) 59–86, who also sees this variation exemplified by a textual variant for this adjective: πολυδευκέα, glossed as τὴν ποικίλως μεμιμημένην ('variously imitative', Ael. *NA* 5.38).

It has often been remarked that this passage rewrites the hawk's usual Homeric diet of doves, jackdaws and starlings, so as to introduce the nightingale as a specifically poetic model.[22] The hawk explicitly calls the nightingale a 'singer' (ἀοιδόν, 208), again nodding to the bird's etymological association with song, while the bird's 'variegated neck' (ποικιλόδειρον, 203) also hints at the variegated strain of its song, just like Homer's πολυηχὴς φωνή.[23] It is no surprise that this bird has been read as a figure for Hesiod himself from antiquity onwards.[24]

In the late archaic *Homeric Hymn to Pan*, the nightingale also appears pouring forth a honey-voiced song as a foil for Pan's excellent piping (*h. Hom.* 19.14–18):[25]

> ποτὶ δ᾽ ἕσπερον ἔκλαγεν οἶος
> ἄγρης ἐξανιών, δονάκων ὕπο μοῦσαν ἀθύρων
> νήδυμον· οὐκ ἂν τόν γε παραδράμοι ἐν μελέεσσιν
> ὄρνις, ἥ τ᾽ ἔαρος πολυανθέος ἐν πετάλοισιν
> θρῆνον ἐπιπροχέουσα χέει **μελίγηρυν ἀοιδήν**.

Towards evening, as he returns from the hunt, he sounds his note alone, playing sweet music from his reed pipes; not even she could surpass him in melodies – that bird who in much-blossoming spring pours out **her honey-voiced song**, pouring forth her lament amid the leaves.

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[22] West (1978) 206; Steiner (2007) 179, 181; Canevaro (2015) 56.

[23] Cf. Puelma (1972) 90 n.22; Pucci (1977) 77 n.5; Steiner (2007) 180–81, comparing Ar. *Av.* 213–14, Eur. *Hel.* 1111–13 for the conjunction of the nightingale's neck and song.

[24] Schol. *Op.* 202a (p. 75 Pertusi): καλῶς οὖν ἑαυτὸν ἀηδόνι ἀπήκασε – μουσικὸν γὰρ τὸ ὄρνεον. Cf. Pucci (1977) 62; Steiner (2007) 178–88, (2012) 3–11 (detecting a poetic *agon* between the Homeric hawk and Hesiodic nightingale; cf. already Hubbard (1995)); Lye (2018) 180 (further noting the gendered power hierarchy between the masculine ἴρηξ and feminine ἀηδών).

[25] The date of this hymn is unknown, but it is generally dated between the late-sixth and mid-fifth centuries BCE: Janko (1982) 184–85; Fröhder (1994) 304–5; Thomas (2011) 169–70. Contrast Andrisano (1978–1979) (fifth to fourth centuries BCE).

The bird here is only introduced with the vague and generic ὄρνις, but identification as the nightingale is secured through an allusive echo of the *Odyssey* 19 simile,[26] as well as the presence of ἀοιδήν: the noun again hints at the etymology of ἀηδών from ἀείδω, while also figuring the bird as a quasi-poet, an exemplar of musical achievement for Pan to surpass.

Already in many of our earliest extant texts of the Greek tradition, therefore, the nightingale was a recurring figure of song. And indeed, this association continued in the later literary tradition. Bacchylides too described himself as a nightingale (Κηίας ἀηδόνος, Bacchyl. 3.98);[27] the speaker of Theogn. 939 claimed that he could not match the bird's shrill voice (οὐ δύναμαι φωνῇ λίγ᾽ ἀειδέμεν ὥσπερ ἀηδών); and the appearance of a nightingale in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* (17–18, 668–80) has even been read as a representation of Sophocles himself: not only is the bird located in Colonus, Sophocles' native deme (*OC* 670), but it is also connected with Dionysus, the patron god of the tragic theatre (*OC* 674–80).[28] More generally, the nightingale seems to have acquired a close connection with the Muses: in fragments of Euripides, we hear of an ἀηδόνων μουσεῖον ('nightingales' haunt of the Muses', fr. 88 *TrGF*), and in another Palamedes is described as the 'all-wise nightingale of the Muses', celebrating his role as a creative figure of the arts (τὰν πάνσοφον … ἀηδόνα Μουσᾶν, fr. 588 *TrGF*).[29] Through its association with both singing and the Muses, therefore, the nightingale proved a veritable 'songbird' from our earliest Greek poetry, a recurring model for poets of various genres.[30]

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[26] Note esp. ἔαρος … πετάλοισιν … ἐπιπροχέουσα χέει μελίγηρυν ἀοιδήν, *h. Hom.* 19.17–18 ~ ἔαρος … πετάλοισι … τρωπῶσα χέει πολυηχέα φωνήν, *Od.* 19.519–21. See Germany (2005) 199–202; Thomas (2011) 168–69.

[27] Cf. Maehler (2004) 100.

[28] The nightingale dwells among 'wine-faced ivy' (οἰνωπόν … κισσόν, 674–75) where 'Dionysus always treads' (ἀεὶ Διόνυσος ἐμβατεύει, 679): Suksi (2001) esp. 655–57.

[29] Cf. Scodel (1980) 51 with n.16, who notes that Palamedes is called an 'epic poet' (ἐποποιός) in the Suda (π 44). Cf. too Eur. *HF* 1021–22, where the chorus seem to mention Procne's murder of her only child (for which she would be transformed into a nightingale) as a subject of song to be sacrificed to the Muses (μονότεκνον Πρόκνης φόνον ἔχω λέξαι | θυόμενον Μούσαις): for the uncertain meaning of these verses, see Bond (1981) 327; Monella (2005) 232 n.28.

[30] For further discussion and examples, see Thompson (1936) 17–18; Monella (2005) 221–51; Mathieu-Castellani (2016) 15–86; Roussel (forthcoming b).

The same can also be said of the swan, which was closely connected with song, Apollo and the Muses from archaic poetry onwards.[31] In the 21st *Homeric Hymn* addressed to Apollo, a song of only five lines, the swan verbally and structurally parallels the bard in singing of the god:

> Φοῖβε, **σὲ μὲν καὶ κύκνος** ὑπὸ πτερύγων **λίγ᾽ ἀείδει**
> ὄχθη ἐπιθρῴσκων ποταμὸν πάρα δινήεντα
> Πηνειόν· **σὲ δ᾽ ἀοιδὸς ἔχων φόρμιγγα λίγειαν**
> **ἡδυεπὴς** πρῶτόν τε καὶ ὕστατον αἰὲν **ἀείδει.**
> καὶ σὺ μὲν οὕτω χαῖρε, ἄναξ· ἵλαμαι δέ σ᾽ **ἀοιδῇ.**

> Phoebus, **of you the swan too sings with a shrill note** from its wings, leaping onto the bank beside the eddying river Peneius; and **of you the sweet-versed bard** always **sings** first and last **with his shrill *phorminx*.** And so rejoice, lord; I propitiate you **with my song.**

There is an elaborate symmetry here between swan and singer, articulated by the balanced μέν … δέ clauses. Both the bird and the poet sing of Apollo with a shrill tone (σέ … κύκνος … λίγ᾽ ἀείδει ~ σὲ δ᾽ ἀοιδὸς ἔχων φόρμιγγα λίγειαν … ἀείδει), a parallelism which is reinforced by the presence of καί in v. 1: the swan (*as well as* the poet) sings of the god. The penultimate line also evokes another common etymological association of ἀείδω, here not connecting it with the nightingale, but rather with eternity (αἰέν). The poet emphasises the eternal celebrations of divine Apollo, shared by bard and bird.[32]

Beyond this hymn, the association of swan and song is visible in many other extant archaic and classical texts. Near the end of Alcman's first *Partheneion*, the chorus compare its own (or an individual's) singing to that of a swan at the streams of Xanthus (**[ἀείδ]ει·** | φθέγγεται δ᾽ [ἄρ᾽] ὥ[τ᾽ ἐπὶ] Ξάνθω ῥοαῖσι | **κύκνος**, fr. 1.99–101 *PMGF*), while a choral fragment of Pratinas (ascribed to a *hyporchema*) involves a similar comparison of singer and bird (708.3–5 *PMG*):

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[31] See Donohue (1993) 18–33 and Thévenaz (forthcoming) for a fuller survey.
[32] See *Et. Gud. s.v.* ἀηδών (I 29.19 De Stefani): διὰ τὸ **ἀεὶ ᾄδειν** ἐν θέρει καὶ ἐν χειμῶνι. Part of v. 1 (κύκνος ὑπὸ πτερύγων) was attributed to various other poets in antiquity, including Alcman (S2 *SLG*), Terpander (S6 *SLG*) and Ion (S316 *SLG*).

> ἐμὲ δεῖ παταγεῖν
> ἀν᾿ ὄρεα σύμενον μετὰ Ναϊάδων
> **οἷά** τε **κύκνον** ἄγοντα ποικιλόπτερον μέλος.

> I must make a din, rushing up the mountains with the Naiads, **like a swan** leading a dapple-winged song.[33]

Moreover, the chorus of Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians* pictures the melodious swan 'rendering his service to the Muses' (κύκνος μελῳδὸς Μούσας θεραπεύει, *IT* 1104–5), a chorus member from Euripides' *Heracles Furens* describes himself as a swan-like elderly singer (κύκνος ὣς γέρων ἀοιδός, *HF* 692), and in Plato's *Myth of Er* in the *Republic*, the archetypal poet Orpheus is said to choose the soul of a swan for his reincarnation (just as Thamyris, another poet, chooses that of a nightingale) (*Resp.* 10.620a–b):[34]

> ταύτην γὰρ δὴ ἔφη τὴν θέαν ἀξίαν εἶναι ἰδεῖν, ὡς ἕκασται αἱ ψυχαὶ ᾑροῦντο τοὺς βίους· **ἐλεινήν** τε γὰρ ἰδεῖν εἶναι καὶ γελοίαν καὶ θαυμασίαν. κατὰ συνήθειαν γὰρ τοῦ προτέρου βίου τὰ πολλὰ αἱρεῖσθαι. **ἰδεῖν μὲν γὰρ ψυχὴν ἔφη τήν ποτε Ὀρφέως γενομένην κύκνου βίον αἱρουμένην,** μίσει τοῦ γυναικείου γένους διὰ τὸν ὑπ᾿ ἐκείνων θάνατον οὐκ ἐθέλουσαν ἐν γυναικὶ γεννηθεῖσαν γενέσθαι· **ἰδεῖν δὲ τὴν Θαμύρου ἀηδόνος ἑλομένην· ἰδεῖν δὲ καὶ κύκνον μεταβάλλοντα εἰς ἀνθρωπίνου βίου αἵρεσιν, καὶ ἄλλα ζῷα μουσικὰ ὡσαύτως.**

> Er said that the way in which the souls chose their lives was a sight worth seeing, since it was **pitiful**, funny, and surprising to watch. For the most part, their choice depended upon the character of their former life. For example, **he said that he saw the soul that had once belonged to Orpheus choosing a swan's life**, because he hated the female sex because of his death at their hands, and so was unwilling to have a woman conceive and give birth to

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[33] Alcman: Hutchinson (2001) 100–2. Pratinas: Wright (2016) 15–16.
[34] Given both birds' association with mourning (see below), it may not be a coincidence that their metamorphoses are first described as a pitiful (ἐλεινήν) sight.

him. He saw the soul of Thamyris choosing the life of a nightingale, a swan choosing to change over to a human life, and other musical animals doing the same thing.[35]

Through all these archaic and classical examples, we see the persistent connection between swan and singer, a connection which continued to thrive into Hellenistic and Roman times (e.g. Callim. *Hymn* 4.249–54; Lucr. 4.180–82 = 909–11). Indeed, by the Augustan age, the *topos* of 'poet as swan' had become such a cliché that Horace humorously reworked it in *Ode* 2.20, literalising the motif into an actual swan-metamorphosis.[36] Just like the nightingale, the swan thus proved a recurring symbol of poetic song.

To close this section, however, it is worth noting that these associations draw on a larger aetiological tradition which derived human voice and especially poetry from bird song.[37] Alexander the Paphian records the tradition that as a baby Homer uttered the voices of nine different birds during the night (*Vita Homeri* 7, p. 253 Allen = Eust. *Od*. 1713.17–21):

Ἀλέξανδρος δὲ ὁ Πάφιος ἱστορεῖ τὸν Ὅμηρον υἱὸν Αἰγυπτίων Δμασαγόρου καὶ Αἴθρας· τροφὸν δὲ αὐτοῦ προφῆτίν τινα θυγατέρα Ὤρου ἱερέως Ἴσιδος, ἧς ἐκ τῶν μαστῶν μέλι ῥεῦσαί ποτε εἰς τὸ στόμα τοῦ παιδίου. καὶ τὸ βρέφος ἐν νυκτὶ **φωνὰς ἐννέα προέσθαι· χελιδόνος, ταῶνος, περιστερᾶς, κορώνης, πέρδικος, πορφυρίωνος, ψαρός, ἀηδόνος καὶ κοττύφου**.

Alexander the Paphian records that Homer was the son of the Egyptians Aethra and Dmasagoras and that his nurse was a prophetess, a daughter of Orus, the priest of Isis, from whose breasts honey once flowed into the little child's mouth. During the night, the baby then **uttered nine voices**: **the voice of a swallow, a peacock, a dove, a crow, a partridge, a water hen, a starling, a nightingale, and a blackbird.**

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[35] Tr. adapted from Grube and Reeve (1992) 290–91.
[36] See Schwinge (1965); Thévenaz (2002); Pianezzola (2011); Harrison (2017) 235–44.
[37] See Bettini (2008) 43–47, 118–22.

Athenaeus provides further evidence for such traditions (*Ath*. 9.389f–390a). He cites some verses of Alcman in which the poet claims to have invented his song by imitating the cry of partridges (fr. 39 *PMGF*), as well as a remark by Chamaeleon of Pontus that the ancients invented music 'from the birds which sing in lonely places' (ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐρημίαις ᾀδόντων ὀρνίθων, fr. 24 Wehrli) – a view which is echoed in Lucretius' claim that men were able 'to imitate the shrill notes of birds' (*liquidas avium voces imitarier*) long before they learnt to sing *levia carmina* (Lucr. 5.1379–81). Most relevant for our current investigation, however, is Democritus' own version of this claim, preserved by Plutarch, which specifies the swan and the nightingale as the direct source of mankind's mimetic inspiration (Democritus 68 B154 D–K = 27 D203 L–M = Plut. *De soll. an*. 20.974a):[38]

> … τὰ ζῷα …, ὧν ὁ Δημόκριτος ἀποφαίνει μαθητὰς ἐν τοῖς μεγίστοις γεγονότας ἡμᾶς· ἀράχνης <ἐν> ὑφαντικῇ καὶ ἀκεστικῇ, χελιδόνος ἐν οἰκοδομίᾳ, **καὶ τῶν λιγυρῶν, κύκνου καὶ ἀηδόνος, ἐν ᾠδῇ κατὰ μίμησιν**.

> … animals … of which Democritus affirms that we have been the pupils in the most important matters: of the spider for weaving and mending; of the swallow for house building; **of the shrill birds, the swan and the nightingale, for song, by imitation**.[39]

These examples demonstrate that there was a long and well-established tradition in antiquity of associating birds – especially the nightingale and the swan – with both poetry and song. At some point, however, these two birds also gained a particularly elegiac resonance. By the third century BCE at the latest, both came to symbolise not just song in general, but elegiac poetry in particular. Elegy never gained an exclusive hold on either bird, but – as we shall see – the pair proved particularly apt emblems of the genre and were repeatedly employed to represent it to the exclusion of other possible candidates such as the swallow, rooster or partridge. The swan and nightingale had always been prominent in the earlier tradition of 'avian poetics' (though not particularly in

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[38] Cf. too Plut. *De soll. an*. 19.973a on poets 'comparing their sweetest poems to the songs of swans and the odes of nightingales' (τὰ ἥδιστα ποιήματα μέλεσι κύκνων καὶ ἀηδόνων ᾠδαῖς ἀπεικάζοντες).

[39] Tr. adapted from Laks and Most (2016) VII 247.

elegy), but from the Hellenistic period onwards they began to dominate its elegiac strand. In the following sections, I shall trace the evidence for this development, studying each bird in turn, before moving to ask bigger questions about the broader significance of this elegiac association.

III. The Elegiac Nightingale

As the examples we have already explored demonstrate, the nightingale was associated with grief and lamentation ever since the time of Homer.[40] Already in the *Odyssey*, the bird was pictured 'lamenting for her dear son Itylus' (παῖδ' ὀλοφυρομένη Ἴτυλον φίλον, *Od.* 19.522); the Hesiodic *ainos* features the nightingale 'wailing pitiably' (ἣ δ' ἐλεόν … | μύρετο, *Op.* 205–6); and in the *Homeric Hymn to Pan* the bird pours forth a θρῆνον ('lament', *h. Hom.* 19.18).[41] All of these examples presuppose the mythical tradition of the nightingale's metamorphosis from a mother who killed her son, either by accident or by design. Most familiar to us is the myth of Procne and Philomela, as told most famously by Ovid (*Met.* 6.412–674), in which Procne actively took revenge on her Thracian husband Tereus for his horrendous rape and mutilation of her sister Philomela by murdering their son and serving Tereus his flesh.[42] Yet Homer's simile seems to evoke a different version of events, in which a certain Aedon was married to the Theban Zethus and, in jealousy at her sister-in-law Niobe's many children, plotted to kill one of her nephews but accidentally killed her own son instead.[43] These are significant mythical variants, further compounded by an alternative version of the Procne/Philomela myth in which the raped Philomela, rather than the child-murdering Procne, was transformed into the nightingale (Ovid himself acknowledges this typological confusion at the end of his narrative with the intentionally ambiguous *altera … altera*, *Met.* 6.668–69).[44] Despite these variations in the mythical record,

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[40] This section builds on the important study of Monella (2005) 221–51, adding futher examples and discussion, as well as exploring the significant Hellenistic precedent which he does not consider.

[41] For the bird's association with lament, cf. too [Mosch.] *Lament for Bion* 38, 46–49; Nicaenetus fr. 1.9–10 Powell; Parthenius fr. 33.2–3 Lightfoot with Lightfoot (1999) 188–89.

[42] For the myth and its reception, see e.g. Gildenhard and Zissos (2007).

[43] Cf. Alden (2017) 132–37.

[44] See e.g. Van Dam (1984) 355–56; Booth (1991) 125; McKeown (1998) 114–15; Woodman (2012) 143. The same ambiguity is reflected in a fragmentary hypothesis for Sophocles' *Tereus*:

however, there are key fixed elements in all versions of the myth: the mother's filicide, her ensuing grief, and the subsequent nightingale-transformation of a grieving woman (be it the mourning mother or her raped sister).

This mythical baggage rendered the nightingale a ready model for poetic lament. It is no surprise that the nightingale's song is explicitly referred to as ἔλεγοι already in Aristophanes' *Birds* (*Av.* 218), while in tragedy the bird is repeatedly associated with lamentation, especially of women who have lost a loved one – a gendered aspect to which we shall return at the end of this section.[45] By the Hellenistic period, however, this lamentatory connection appears to have gained a particularly elegiac resonance. Our clearest evidence for this association comes in three different poems, two by Callimachus and one by Posidippus.

In the first, Callimachus' famous epigram for the dead Heraclitus, the poet proudly proclaims that death will never take away his friend's 'nightingales' (*AP* 7.80 = 2 Pf. = 34 *HE* [1203–8]):

> Εἶπέ τις, Ἡράκλειτε, τεὸν μόρον, ἐς δέ με **δάκρυ**
>   ἤγαγεν· ἐμνήσθην δ' ὁσσάκις ἀμφότεροι
> ἥλιον ἐν λέσχῃ κατεδύσαμεν. ἀλλὰ σὺ μέν που,
>   ξεῖν' Ἁλικαρνησεῦ, τετράπαλαι σποδιή,
> **αἱ δὲ τεαὶ** ζώουσιν **ἀηδόνες**, ᾗσιν ὁ πάντων
>   ἁρπακτὴς Ἀίδης οὐκ ἐπὶ χεῖρα βαλεῖ.

> Someone told me, Heraclitus, of your fate and brought me to **tears**; I remembered how often the two of us had set the sun with our talking. But you, my Halicarnassian friend, are

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ἐγέ[νοντο ἡ μὲν] ἀηδὼν ἡ δὲ χε[λιδών], 'one became a nightingale, the other a swallow' (*P.Oxy.* 3013.31–32). The alternative tradition has a long afterlife: cf. Milton's 'Philomel' with which we began.

[45] Aesch. *Ag.* 1142–45 (~ Cassandra), *Suppl.* 58–76 (~ female chorus); Soph. *Aj.* 622–33 (~ Ajax's mother), *El.* 103–9, 147–49, 1075–77 (~ Electra), *Trach.* 962–63 (~ female chorus); Eur. *Hec.* 337–38 (~ Polyxena), *Hel.* 1107–16 (~ female chorus), *Phaethon* fr. 773.19–26 *TrGF*. Cf. too Sophocles' *Tereus*: Coo (2013), Finglass (2016). On the nightingale in tragedy, cf. Weiss (2017) 253–63, (2018) 144–67.

long ago ash, I suppose; **yet your nightingales still live on,** upon which Hades, the snatcher of all, will not cast his hands.

The notion of living ἀηδόνες hints at the birds' etymological connection with the adverb ἀεί, evoking the immortality of poetry in the face of death (cf n.<mark>32</mark> above). But the choice of the bird here may also have a larger significance. Not only does its lamentatory associations fit with this threnodic epigram for a lost friend in elegiac couplets, but it also evokes the nature of Heraclitus' own poetry. Diogenes Laertius, who quotes this epigram, records that Heraclitus was himself an 'elegiac poet' (ἐλεγείας ποιητής, Diog. Laert. 9.17), which has prompted some scholars to speculate that 'nightingales' may even represent an actual title of a collection by Heraclitus.[46] Whether or not this was the case, however, the designation of his elegiac output as 'nightingales' is particularly suggestive of a connection between the birds and elegy.

This connection is equally strong in Callimachus' *Bath of Pallas*, the only elegiac poem in his collection of six hymns. After Teiresias has lost his vision for unwittingly catching sight of Athena bathing naked, his grieving mother Chariclo is explicitly compared to a nightingale (*Hymn* 5.93–96):

> ἁ μὲν <ἄμ'> ἀμφοτέραισι φίλον περὶ παῖδα λαβοῖσα
>   μάτηρ μὲν **γοερᾶν οἶτον ἀηδονίδων**
> ἇγε **βαρὺ κλαίοισα**, θεὰ δ᾽ **ἐλέησεν ἑταίραν**
>   καί νιν Ἀθαναία πρὸς τόδ᾽ **ἔλεξεν ἔπος**

The mother embraced her dear son with both her arms and performed **the mournful nightingales' lament**, **wailing heavily**; the goddess **took pity on her companion** and **spoke this word** to her.

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[46] Cf. Hunter (1992a). Ἀηδόνες as titular: Williams (1991) 171. For 'nightingales' as poems, cf. Ἀλκμᾶνος ἀηδόνες (adesp. *AP* 9.184.9); Hsch. α 1498: ἀηδόνα· ᾠδήν; Callim. *Aet*. fr. 1.16 Harder (see <mark>Section V below</mark>).

These verses are loaded with the language of mourning and grief (γοερᾶν, οἶτον, βαρὺ κλαίοισα), building on Chariclo's previous words (85–92), which had already evoked the world of funeral lamentation by playing on the equivalence of the loss of sight and the loss of life.[47] This nightingale comparison is particularly suggestive of elegy, however, because of the assonant verse ends of 95–96 (ἐλέησεν ἑταίραν … ἔλεξεν ἔπος), phrasing which evokes the very sound of 'elegy' and its etymological association with ἔλεος, 'pity'.[48] Such a metapoetic interpretation is reinforced by the wider context of this episode, which takes place at Hippocrene on Mt Helicon, a loaded site of poetic initiation (*Hymn* 5.71). Scholars have previously noted how Teiresias' encounter with Athena and his attempt to drink from Hippocrene parallel both Hesiod's and Callimachus' poetic investiture at the same location (*Aet.* frr. 2–2j Harder),[49] but this poetological setting also lends further significance to Chariclo's nightingale-song: it is as if she too is initiated into the world of elegiac song by Athena. At this moment of motherly grief (akin to that of Procne), elegy, lament and the nightingale coalesce.[50]

Our final Hellenistic example comes from Posidippus' *Seal Poem* (118 A–B = *SH* 705), in which the poet sings programmatically of his old age and impending death. As a poem of at least 28 lines, it straddles the boundary between epigram and elegy, like many other sphragistic epigrams, and

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[47] Cf. Hunter (1992b) 20. For οἶτον, cf. Nicaenetus fr.1.9 Powell (ὀλολυγόνος οἶτον) and Eur. *IT* 1091 where, if the MS is to be trusted, the halcyon sings an ἔλεγον οἶτον.

[48] Cf. Hunter (1992b) 22, acknowledging debt to Charles Segal.

[49] E.g. Heath (1988) 81–84; Ambühl (2005) 366, 410–11. The nature of Callimachus' (and Hesiod's) initiation in the fragmentary *Somnium* of the *Aetia* is much debated, but on the basis of later receptions it is plausible that both were depicted as drinking the water of Hippocrene. For various viewpoints, see Crowther (1979); Knox (1985); Sens (2015) 47.

[50] Callimachus' *Aetia* may conceal a third Callimachean association of the nightingale with elegiac lament. Fr. 113 Harder = fr. 63 Massimilla appears to treat the myth of Scylla, transformed into the bird Ciris after betraying her father and country. Verse 2 may conceal a reference to the myth of Procne and Philomela (Δαυ[λιάδες], conjectured by Pfeiffer), suggesting that Callimachus may have compared Scylla's transformation with their metamorphosis into the nightingale and swallow (cf. [Virg.] *Ciris* 200 *Dauliades*, 410 *Procne*). See Massimilla (1996) 374; Harder (2012) II 872. The evidence is inconclusive, but we may speculate whether Callimachus also alluded to the lamentatory aspect of the nightingale here. Cf. Scylla's elegiac-style lament at Ov. *Met.* 8.44–80, and the elegiac aspects of the pseudo-Virgilian *Ciris*: see Kayachev (2016) 21–26 (reworking of major Catullan elegies), 114–15 (quasi-elegiac laments).

probably stood at the start or end of a collection.[51] After invoking both Apollo and the Muses, the poet twice compares himself to Archilochus, 'the Parian' (Παρίου, 118.12; Παρίηι, 118.19). First, he establishes the archaic poet as a direct model, wishing to enjoy similar posthumous honours to those which Archilochus enjoyed (118.12–16).[52] But then he distances himself from him; Posidippus wants nobody to shed a tear for himself (μηδέ τις οὖν χεύαι δάκρυον, 118.24), but instead invites his audience to lament for Archilochus, now described as a 'Parian nightingale' (118.19–21):

> ἀλλ' ἐπὶ μὲν Παρίηι δὸς **ἀηδόνι λυγρὸν** ἐφ . [
>   νῆμα κατὰ γληνέων **δάκρυα** κ ε ι ν ὰ χέω[ν
> καὶ **στενάχων**, δι' ἐμὸν δὲ φίλον στόμα [

> Grant a **mournful** thread to the Parian **nightingale** …, casting empty **tears** from your eyelids and **groaning**, but through my dear mouth …

Lloyd-Jones observed that this description taps into the common use of ἀηδών as a synonym for 'poet'.[53] But here too, the association is particularly suggestive of an elegiac poet.[54] As in Callimachus' *Hymn*, these lines are suffused with the language of lamentation (λυγρόν, δάκρυα, στενάχων), and Archilochus himself – like Callimachus' Heraclitus – was a foremost elegiac poet, considered in antiquity one of the possible founders of the genre.[55] Indeed, through the opposition he sets up, Posidippus seems to be suggesting a generic contrast between Archilochus' mournful elegies and his own epigrammatic corpus. Whereas Archilochus deserves a libation of tears,

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[51] Cf. Lloyd-Jones (1963) 96; Barigazzi (1968) 201–2; Gutzwiller (1998) 154. For its length, cf. Meleager *AP* 4.1 (58 verses), Philip *AP* 4.2 (14 verses), Callimachus *Epigr*. 1 Pf. = *AP* 7.89 (16 verses), although the unusual length of the first two may also reflect their status as lists.

[52] Cf. Lloyd-Jones (1963) 87–88. This wish taps into Archilochus' budding Hellenistic hero cult: cf. the Mnesiepes inscription from the mid-third century BCE, *SEG* 15.517 and see Clay (2004), with 30–32 on Posidippus.

[53] Lloyd-Jones (1963) 91–92.

[54] Cf. Hunter (2011) 235–36.

[55] See Didym. Περὶ ποιητῶν (p. 387 Schmidt), *apud* Orion. *gramm. etym. s.v.* ἔλεγος (p. 58 Sturz): εὑρετὴν δὲ τοῦ ἐλεγείου <φασὶν> οἱ μὲν τὸν Ἀρχίλοχον, οἱ δὲ Μίμνερμον, οἱ δὲ Καλλῖνον παλαιότερον. For the debate, cf. *Ars P*. 77–78 (==Section I above==) and the further testimonies collected by De Stefani (1909–1920) II 451–52.

Posidippus requests a different kind of tribute; Lloyd-Jones' suggestion of a wine offering is particularly attractive, since it would effectively encapsulate the sympotic nature of many Posidippan epigrams.[56] As in Callimachus' *Hymn* and *Epigram*, therefore, the nightingale here has a particularly elegiac resonance, and seems to form part of a poetic *recusatio* in which Posidippus distances himself from tearful elegy in favour of vinous epigram.

Although these poems offer no more than isolated hints, therefore, it seems that at least Callimachus and Posidippus already exploited the association between elegy and lament in the third century BCE, keyed through the figure of the nightingale. All three poems associate nightingales with mourning and elegiac song: in two cases (the epigrams), this association is specifically connected to elegiac poets (Heraclitus and Archilochus), while in the third (the elegiac hymn), the generic connection is reinforced by the wider metapoetic context of the scene and the knowing etymological allusion in ἐλέησεν. In developing this link between the nightingale and elegy, both poets may well have been responding to contemporary scholarly debate on the nature of the genre. Yet whatever the scholarly background, it is clear that – for them – the bird was an apt symbol of elegiac lamentation.

It is in Roman poetry, however, where this association of nightingale and elegy becomes particularly established and pronounced. In Catullus 65, the poet compares his mournful poetry after the death of his brother to the song of the lamenting nightingale (Catull. 65.11–16):

> at certe **semper** amabo,
>   **semper maesta tua carmina morte canam**,
> qualia sub densis ramorum **concinit** umbris
>   **Daulias, absumpti fata gemens Ityli**.—
> sed tamen in tantis **maeroribus**, Ortale, mitto
>   haec expressa tibi **carmina Battiadae**

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[56] Lloyd-Jones (1963) 91. The poet's specification of his own φίλον στόμα ('dear/kind mouth') may also implicitly contrast Archilochus' famously venomous mouth (cf. Callim. fr. 380 Pf.): Tsantsanoglou (2013) 129. Posidippus' rejection of tears also looks to the poem's closing wish for a happy afterlife through mystic initiation (108.24–28): Dickie (1998) 70–76.

But surely I will **always** love you, **always will I sing elegies made gloomy by your death**, such as **the Daulian bird sings** beneath the branches' dense shade, **lamenting the fate of slain Itylus**.—Yet amidst such great **sorrows**, O Hortalus, I send you these **verses** translated **from Battiades**.

These verses readily recall the metapoetic nightingale of the *Odyssey* who similarly lamented for her son Itylus (Ἴτυλον, *Od*. 19.522 ~ *Ityli*, 65.14) amid dense foliage (δενδρέων ἐν πετάλοισι καθεζομένη πυκινοῖσιν, *Od*. 19.520 ~ *sub densis ramorum … umbris*, 65.13).[57] As in the *Odyssey*, the language here reinforces the connection between poet and bird: both sing (*canam*, 12 ~ *concinit*, 13), while Catullus' *maesta carmina* (12) parallel the bird's lament (*gemens*, 14). The repetition of *semper* in 11–12 accentuates the incessant nature of the poet's grief, while also offering another pun on the etymological connection between ἀηδών, ἀεί and ἀείδω, wordplay that we have already seen repeatedly in our Greek examples.[58] The nightingale stands here as a figure for Catullus' elegiac poetics, the loss of his brother motivating his song, just like the nightingale's loss of her son. But the connection receives even more programmatic significance from the fact that this poem appears to have inaugurated a whole *libellus* of Catullan elegiac poetry (Catull. 65–116).[59] In that case, the nightingale stands as a model not only for this elegiac poem but also for Catullus' whole elegiac collection. Moreover, the metrically identical placement of *carmina* in verses 12 and 16 suggests an identification between Catullus' *maesta carmina* and Callimachus' elegiac 'Lock of Berenice', a translation of which follows as poem 66. It is as if Catullus appropriates his Hellenistic predecessor as a model for this poetics of nightingale elegy, perhaps

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[57] Cf. Thorsen (2014) 55, citing Syndikus (1984–1990) II 197; Quinn (1996) 353. See too Woodman (2012) 141–43 on Catullus' allusions to the alternative versions of the nightingale myth.
[58] Barchiesi (1993) 364; Bessone (2013) 45–46. This etymologising is assisted by reading *canam* in 12, but can still be felt in the combination of *semper* (12) and *concinit* (13) if one prefers to follow the other manuscript reading (*tegam*) or other conjectures (*seram*: Ellis (1904) *ad loc.*; *legam:* Santini (1994)). Verses 11–12 also emblematise two of the major strands of elegy: love and lament.
[59] The division of Catullus' corpus continues to be a matter of debate (see Skinner (2007) for an overview), but on Catull. 65–116 as a collection (framed by Callimachean references: *carmina Battiadae*, 65.16 ~ 116.2), see Wiseman (1969) 17–18, (1979) 176–79 where he accepts the thesis of Quinn (1972) 264–65; Forsyth (1977) 353; Hutchinson (2003); Skinner (2003); Hubbard (2005) 269–75. On the programmatic and transitional nature of *Carm.* 65, see Block (1984).

even nodding back to Callimachus' metaliterary exploitation of the bird in his own elegiac works.[60] After all, the bird's association elsewhere with sleeplessness (Hes. fr. 312 M–W) renders it an apt model of another prized Callimachean trait, the ἀγρυπνίη which he praises in Aratus (*AP* 9.507.4 = 27.4 Pf. = 56.4 *HE* [1300]).[61] Already in Catullus, therefore, the nightingale was a clear symbol of elegiac (and Callimachean) poetics.

Catullus was far from isolated at Rome in his use of the nightingale comparison, however. The motif was picked up and developed by later elegists, especially by Ovid. In *Amores* 2.6, the *epicedion* for Corinna's dead parrot, Ovid asks Philomela to stop lamenting her son and turn to this new cause of sorrow (2.6.7–10):

> quod scelus Ismarii **quereris**, Philomela, tyranni,
> > expleta est annis ista **querela** suis;
> alitis in rarae **miserum** devertere **funus**:
> > magna sed antiqua est **causa doloris** Itys.

> The crime of the Ismarian tyrant of which **you complain**, Philomela, that **complaint** has been exhausted by its allotted years; turn your attention to the **sad funeral** of an exquisite bird—Itys is a great, but ancient, **cause for grief**.

As in Catullus 65, these verses are suffused with the language of lament (*quereris*, 7; *querela*, 8; *miserum … funus*, 9; *causa doloris*, 10) and framed by further attestations of grief (*maestis … capillis*, 5; *dole*, 12). The nightingale (here Philomela) is picked out first among all birds (*aves*, 2; *volucres*, 3) for its doleful plaint. Ovid captures something of its repetitive cries in verses 9–10: as McKeown notes, Itys' name frames the couplet (*alITIS … ITYS*), just as the bird often repeats that name elsewhere (perhaps an allusive nod to Catullus' etymologising of ἀηδών through the

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[60] For further Callimachean echoes in this poem, see Barchiesi (1993) 363–65 and Hunter (1993); and for the Callimachean character of *Carm*. 65–116 as a whole, see King (1988).

[61] Cf. Ibyc. 303b *PMG*: ἇμος **ἄυπνος** κλυτὸς ὄρθρος ἐγείρησιν ἀηδόνας (**ἀύπνους** … ἀηδόνας, coni. Schneidewin). Sleeplessness is another apt emblem of elegy, given its original association with lovesickness: Thomas (1979) 195–205; cf. Phanocles' depiction of love-struck Orpheus' **ἄγρυπνοι** … μελεδῶναι (fr. 1.5 Powell).

repetition of *semper* at Catull. 65.11–12).[62] There is considerable – even outrageous – humour in the poet's request to the bird, aligning the grief at Tereus' crime and Itys' death with the more mundane sorrow felt at the passing of his beloved's pet. But here too, this description of the nightingale gains a particularly metapoetic resonance, in this case from the larger avian allegories at play in *Amores* 2.6. It is well known that the poem is an imitative re-run of Catullus 3 on Lesbia's dead sparrow (marked as such at the outset: the bird is an ***imitatrix** ales*, 2.6.1), and that the parrot in many ways serves as a figure for Ovid.[63] Within the context of such self-conscious reflection, Ovid's prominent description of the mourning nightingale at the outset of his poem establishes the bird as a model for his own elegiac mourning. *Amores* 2.6 looks back not only to the Catullan *passer*, but also to the elegiac nightingale of *Carmen* 65.

In Ovid's *Fasti*, meanwhile, the bird recurs at another metaliterary moment, in the context of the goddess Ceres' loss of her daughter Persephone, the same myth which Philitas had previously treated in his elegiac *Demeter* (*Fast*. 4.481–86):

> quacumque ingreditur, **miseris** loca cuncta **querellis**
> implet, **ut amissum cum gemit ales Ityn**,
> perque vices modo 'Persephone!' modo 'filia!' clamat,
> clamat et **alternis** nomen utrumque ciet.
> sed neque Persephone Cererem nec filia matrem
> audit, et **alternis** nomen utrumque perit.

> And wherever she went, she filled every place **with her sad complaints, as when the bird laments her lost Itys**. In turn she cried, now "Persephone!", now "daughter!" She cried and shouted either name **alternately**; but neither Persephone heard Ceres, nor did the daughter hear her mother; both names died away **alternately**.

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[62] McKeown (1998) 116.

[63] *imitatrix ales*: Hinds (1987b) 7, (1998) 4–5. Parrot as poet: Cahoon (1984), (1991); Boyd (1987), (1997) 170–77; Myers (1990); Thorsen (2014) 163–64; contrast Kronenberg (2016). See too Statius' own rewrite of Ovid's parrot poem, *Silv*. 2.4 (<mark>Section IV below</mark>).

The nightingale laments (*gemit*, 482), just as it did in Catullus (*gemens*, 65.14), and Ceres' sad complaints (*miseris … querellis*, 481) recall key terms of the elegiac genre. As in Callimachus' *Bath of Pallas*, this nightingale is not directly associated with the poet, but rather with one of Ovid's internal characters, but here too the passage is loaded with a strong generic self-consciousness. As Stephens Hinds has highlighted, the repetition of *alternis* (484, 486) not only nods to the alternation of Ceres' cries, one moment calling on 'Persephone', the next on her 'daughter' (*filia*), but it also acts as an 'arch programmatic hint' that this lament is 'written in the "alternating" hexameters and pentameters of the elegiac rhythm'; Ovid uses *alternus* in precisely this metrical sense on a number of other occasions.[64] Moreover, the description of Ceres filling every place with her complaints (*miseris loca cuncta querellis | implet*, 481–82) echoes Hermesianax's Antimachus, who similarly 'filled' his books with tears (γόων δ᾽ ἐνεπλήσατο βίβλους, fr. 7.45 Powell); her behaviour parallels that of other elegiac poets, reinforcing the metapoetic potential of this passage. Within the narrative context, however, this simile is extremely jarring: Procne mourning the death of her son (or Philomela mourning her own rape) is a dissonant *comparandum* for Ceres' lament for Prosperina. Might this perhaps hint that Ceres is not so much the innocent mother of a raped child but somehow complicit in her daughter's loss? If so, it is not clear precisely what we should make of this implication, but given Ceres' presentation as a kind of poetic figure, it could resonate particularly fruitfully with Ovid's tradition of his own elegiac *crimen*: Procne's 'crime' in vengefully killing her son serves as a parallel and foil for Ovid's own elegiac errors. Here too, the lamenting nightingale thus proves a particularly appropriate symbol for the strains (and sins) of elegy.

This connection between the nightingale and elegy appears to have run so deep in Ovid's corpus that it could be activated even when the bird and its myth were not directly mentioned. In the programmatic proem of Ovid's third book of *Amores*, for example, the poet wanders amid a crowd of lamenting birds (*Am*. 3.1.1–10):

    Stat **vetus** et multos **incaedua silva** per annos;

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[64] Hinds (1987a) 120, citing *Fast.* 2.121 (*… canimus sacras **alterno** carmine Nonas*); *Trist.* 3.1.11 (**alterno** *… versu*), 3.1.56 (**alternos** *… pedes*), 3.7.10 (**alternos** *… pedes*). Cf. too Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.9 (**alternum** *… pedem*).

> credibile est illi numen inesse loco.
> fons sacer in medio speluncaque pumice pendens,
> et latere ex omni **dulce queruntur aves**.
> hic ego dum spatior tectus nemoralibus umbris—
> quod mea, quaerebam, Musa moveret opus—
> venit odoratos **Elegia** nexa capillos,
> et, puto, pes illi longior alter erat.
> forma decens, vestis **tenuissima**, vultus amantis,
> et **pedibus vitium** causa decoris erat.

There stands **an ancient wood**, **uncut** for many years; you could believe that there is a divine power in that place. In the middle is a sacred spring and a cave with overhanging rock, and from every side **the birds complain sweetly**. While I was walking here, covered by the grove's shadows, wondering what work my Muse would set in motion, **Elegy** approached me, with her perfumed hair tied up and, I think, with one foot longer than the other. Her form was comely, her clothes **very thin**, her face that of a lover, and **the imperfection in her feet** was a source of grace.

This poem is deeply self-conscious, especially in its description of personified Elegy, evoking key aspects of the genre's aesthetic and metrical identity (e.g. *tenuissima*, 9; *pedibus vitium*, 10).[65] But the opening lines are also suggestive of a more general metapoetic environment: as is well known, *silva*, like the Greek ὕλη, can evoke the raw material of poetry; yet here it is both *vetus* ('old') and *incaedua* ('uncut'), suggesting a paradoxical combination of ancestral tradition and untested originality.[66] Ovid hints that he is building on the well-established elegiac tradition, but simultaneously taking it along experimental paths. Part of this originality may be his less direct evocation of the nightingale motif; the bird is not named explicitly, but still reverberates in the background. The mention of 'sweetly complaining' birds (4) is alone enough to suggest

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[65] Cf. Karakasis (2010).

[66] Cf. Hunter (2006b) 30, suggesting a connection with Callimachus' untrodden paths. For *silva* as raw poetic material, see Hinds (1998) 12–13. Cf. too the opening of Prop. 3.1 (a likely intertext for Ovid given its identical book position), which combines Greek tradition and Italian originality in a similarly programmatic manner.

nightingales; indeed, the same phrase reappears in *Heroides* 15 with a similar connotation (*dulce queruntur aves*, *Her*. 15.152, see below).[67] But more significantly, the poet himself appears to play the role of the nightingale here, lamenting in isolation and covered by the shadows of the wood (*tectus nemoralibus umbris*), just as the singing bird is repeatedly depicted elsewhere.[68] In this most programmatic of poems, featuring Ovid's encounter with the personification of Elegy herself, the poet is figured as a solitary nightingale in the woods, alongside a host of other sweetly complaining birds.

This nexus of solitude, mourning and the natural world appears to build on Propertius 1.18, an elegy which the poet closes by similarly picturing himself in the wilderness with only birds as companions (Prop. 1.18.25–30):

> omnia consuevi timidus perferre superbae
>> iussa, neque **arguto** facta **dolore queri**.
> pro quo continui montes et frigida rupes
>> et datur inculto tramite **dura** quies;
> et quodcumque meae possunt narrare **querelae**
>> cogor ad **argutas** dicere **solus aves**.

> I have grown accustomed to endure the orders of an arrogant woman timidly, and not to **complain** in **shrill grief** about her actions. In return for this, I am given endless mountains, cold rocks, and **comfortless** rest on a wild path. And all that my **complaints** can tell I am forced to utter **in solitude** to the **shrill birds**.

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[67] *queruntur aves* is a recurring leitmotif of Ovidian elegy: cf. too *Her*. 10.8, *Fast*. 4.166.

[68] Thus Hunter (2006b) 30. See esp. Cat. 65.13 (*sub densis ramorum … umbris*) and Virg. *Georg*. 4.511 (*populea … sub umbra* – below). Cf. too *Od*. 19.520 (δενδρέων ἐν πετάλοισι … πυκινοῖσιν); *h. Hom*. 19.17 (ἐν πετάλοισι); Soph. *OC* 673 (χλωραῖς ὑπὸ βάσσαις); Eur. *Phaethon* fr. 773.23 *TrGF* (ἐν δένδρεσι); Theoc. *Id*. 7.140 (ἐν πυκιναῖσι βάτων … ἀκάνθαις [if ὀλολυγών refers to a nightingale and not a frog: Hunter (1999) 194]); Parthenius fr. 33.2 Lightfoot (ἐνὶ βήσσῃς); [Mosch.] *Lament for Bion* 9 (πυκινοῖσιν … ποτὶ φύλλοις).

Here too, just as in *Amores* 3.1, the poet wanders alone in a scene with loaded elegiac terminology. Having avoided complaining to Cynthia's face, he now utters his elegiac *querelae* (29) alone to shrill birds (*argutas … aves*, 30). As in *Am*. 3.1, these birds are not identified any more specifically, but the parallel contexts of isolation (*solus*, 30), lamentation (*queri*, 26; *querelae*, 29) and the natural landscape (27–28) suggest that here too they represent nightingales, the very bird whose behaviour the poet mimics. The repetition of *argutus* to describe both the poet's grief (26) and the birds' cries (30) certainly encourages an association of the two.[69] Ovid's programmatic poem may thus have already found precedent in Propertius' lonely, nightingale-like wanderings in the *Monobiblos*.

The connection between elegy and nightingale is felt most strongly, however, in the fifteenth epistle of Ovid's *Heroides*, a poem of contested authorship which features Sappho lamenting for the love of Phaon.[70] The elegiac tenor of the poem is established explicitly at its opening, when Sappho claims that 'I must weep for my love; elegy is the song of tears' (**flendus** *amor meus est; elegiae* **flebile** *carmen, Her*. 15.7), but it is near the end of the epistle that this amatory grief is explicitly paralleled with that of the nightingale (*Her*. 15.151–56):

> quin etiam rami positis lugere videntur
>   frondibus, et nullae dulce **queruntur** aves;
> **sola** virum non ulta pie **maestissima mater**
>   **concinit Ismarium Daulias ales Ityn**.
> ales Ityn, Sappho **desertos cantat amores** —
>   hactenus; ut media cetera nocte silent.

> Why, even the branches seem to mourn, casting their leaves aside, and no birds sweetly **complain**; **only** the **most sorrowful mother**, the **Daulian bird** who took unholy vengeance on her husband, **sings of Ismarian Itys**. The bird **sings** of Itys, Sappho **of abandoned loves** – that is all; the rest is as silent as midnight.

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[69] Cf. Monella (2005) 243.
[70] On the debated authorship of *Heroides* 15, see Thorsen (2014) 96–122.

Regardless of the actual authorship of this elegiac epistle, it too clearly evokes the association of nightingale and lament and echoes many of the passages that we have explored above. We have already noted the half-line repetition of *dulce queruntur aves*, also found at *Amores* 3.1.4, but the poem contains many further allusive connections. As in Catullus 65, the nightingale sings (*concinit,* 154 ~ *concinit,* Catull. 65.13) and is identified as Daulian (*Daulias,* 154 ~ *Daulias,* Catull. 65.14), a rare adjective which appears elsewhere only in other later imitations of Catullus.[71] But she has now become *maestissima mater* (153), the superlative adjective agonistically outdoing Catullus' own *maesta carmina* (65.12). In addition, the rare adjective *Ismarium* (154) recalls for us Ovid's *epicedion* for Corinna's parrot (*Ismarii*, *Am.* 2.6.7), where it was used to describe not Itys, but his father Tereus; the genealogical relationship may figure the intertextual connection between the two poems,[72] but it also highlights the resemblance of the two characters, a key part of the myth: it is precisely Itys' similarity to his father that prompts Procne to kill him (*Met.* 6.619–23).[73] Immediately after this passage, meanwhile, 'Sappho' describes a sacred spring (15.157–60) in language which recalls the opening of *Amores* 3.1 (esp. *fons sacer*, *numen*), reinforcing the connection with that programmatic depiction of the nightingale-poet.[74] Within a handful of verses, the epistle draws on many parts of the tradition that we have explored above.

As in those other passages, the connection between bird and poet is active here, rendered explicit by the parallelism of verse 155: Sappho, a ready model for poetic activity, sings of her lost love, just as the bird does her lost son. In this case, the connection also seems to draw on Sappho's particularly strong associations with the nightingale: she was compared with the bird by a number

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[71] Cf. Rosati (1996) 214–15 n.36; Hallett (2005) para. 21–28.

[72] For genealogical relationships as a marker of allusion, see e.g. Sommerstein (1987) 215 and Wright (2016) 99–100 on Ar. *Av.* 281–83 (~ Sophocles' *Tereus*); Hunter (2014) 138–39 on Thgn. 1135–50 (~ *Op.* 200); and the further examples amassed at Currie (2016) 27 n.169. I make this point here without committing to the directionality of this allusion: the move from Tereus in *Am.* 2.6 to Itys in *Her.* 15 could suggest that the epistle is the later poem, but Ovid is perfectly capable of inverting the usual genealogical flow, starting with son (*Her.* 15) and moving back to father (*Am.* 2.6).

[73] Thorsen (2014) 166–67. The adjective appears only once more in Ovid's corpus, at *Am.* 3.9.21–22 (the *epicedion* for Tibullus): see Thorsen (2014) 166–70 for the intertextual network.

[74] Thorsen (2014) 165–66, who further notes (pp. 52–56) the echoes of *Am.* 3.12.32 (*concinit Odrysium Cecropis ales Ityn*) and of Homer's Penelopean nightingale, which creates a neat ring composition across the single *Heroides*, from Penelope (*Her.* 1) to Sappho (*Her.* 15), both associated with the bird.

of ancient writers, mentioned it in her poetry (fr. 136 Voigt), and is the likely source for the rare epithet *Daulias*.[75] Ovid, however, transforms this Sapphic background into a particularly elegiac form by having the poetess sing of *amores* – the only plural use of this noun in the whole poem. At this moment when Sappho seems most like a nightingale, she also seems most like Ovid himself, the author of the elegiac *Amores*.[76] This passage thus epitomises the trend that we have been tracing through Hellenistic and Roman poetry: the nightingale is associated with specifically mournful and elegiac composition. By the time of this poem, the association of elegy and nightingale appears to have become an extremely well-established trope, centred on song, mourning and bereavement.

In fact, this association ran so deep in the literary mentality of Rome that it could also be evoked in other genres besides elegy, part of the larger generic 'mixing' of this period.[77] At the end of Virgil's *Georgics*, Orpheus is compared to the nightingale after he has lost his wife Eurydice for a second time. And here too, despite the poem's didactic hexameters, the comparison gains a particularly elegiac resonance (*Georg*. 4.507–20):

> septem illum totos perhibent ex ordine mensis
> rupe sub aëria deserti ad Strymonis undam
> **flesse sibi**, et gelidis haec evolvisse sub antris
> mulcentem tigris et agentem carmine quercus:
> qualis populea **maerens philomela** sub umbra
> amissos **queritur** fetus, quos **durus arator**
> observans nido implumis detraxit; at illa

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[75] Sappho as/like nightingale: e.g. Hermesianax fr. 7.50 Powell; schol. Luc. *Imag*. 18 (p. 186 Rabe). *Daulias*: Rosati (1996) 215 n.39; Woodman (2012) 142. Thucydides (2.29.3) mentions poets calling nightingales 'Daulian', but no surviving Greek text preserves this name (unless we accept Pfeiffer's Callimachean conjecture Δαυλιάδες: see n.50 above); given that Sappho is both the imagined author of *Heroides* 15 and a major source for Catullus, she is a likely candidate to be Thucydides' referent.

[76] Thorsen (2014) 165, further noting that Sappho uniquely describes herself in the third person here, 'breaking down the epistolary fiction and thus rendering the figure of Sappho more distant, at the same time as Ovid's presence as the poem's extratextual author becomes all the more imposing'.

[77] Cf. Harrison (2007); for Virgil and elegy, see esp. 59–74 (*Ecl*. 10) and 210–14 (*Aen*. 4).

> **flet** noctem, ramoque sedens **miserabile carmen**
> integrat, et **maestis late loca questibus implet**.
> nulla Venus, non ulli animum flexere hymenaei:
> **solus** Hyperboreas glacies Tanaimque nivalem
> arvaque Riphaeis numquam viduata pruinis
> lustrabat, raptam Eurydicen atque inrita Ditis
> dona **querens**.

> They say that **he wept** to himself for seven whole months, one after the other, beneath a lofty crag beside the stream of the lonely Strymon, and unfolded this whole tale beneath ice-cold caves, charming tigers and leading forth oaks with his song: just as the **nightingale, mourning** beneath a poplar's shade, **laments** her lost offspring, which a **heartless ploughman** has observed and snatched unfledged from the nest; she **weeps** throughout the night, perched on a branch, and repeats her **pitiable song**, **filling all around with her mournful complaints.** No thought of love or wedding song could divert his soul. **Alone** he would roam the ice of the Hyperborean north, the snowy Tanais and the fields that were never free from Riphaean hoar-frost, **lamenting** his lost Eurydice and the useless gift of Dis.

In this simile, the myth of the nightingale has been translated into georgic 'reality', as the bird loses her chicks to a heartless farmer, rather than her own hand.[78] But here too, the bird carries a strong metapoetic and elegiac resonance. A series of verbal echoes establish a parallel between the nightingale and Orpheus, another archetypal poet-figure: both weep (*flesse*, 509 ~ *flet,* 514) and both mournfully lament their lost loved ones (*querens*, 520 ~ *maerens ... queritur*, 511–12; *maestis ... questibus,* 515).[79] Alone, these words are enough to conjure up the world of elegiac lament, especially in their echoes of the language of Catullus 65 (particularly his *maesta carmina*, 65.12). But there are other features of this passage which together reinforce the configuration of Orpheus as a specifically elegiac poet: the nightingale to which he is compared sings a *miserabile carmen*

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[78] The Procne myth still resonates obliquely through the comparison with Orpheus: both Procne and Orpheus lose the object of their song (and of their love) through their own conduct (filicide/looking back on Eurydice).

[79] Monella (2005) 244. Cf. *quereris*, *Am.* 2.6.7.

(514), just like Horace's description of *miserabilis* elegy (*Carm.* 1.33.2–3); and it even fills the whole place with lament, just like Demeter in Ovid's *Fasti* (*maestis late **loca** questibus **implet***, 515 ~ *miseris **loca** cuncta querellis | **implet***, *Fast.* 4.481–82).[80] The language of the scene paints Orpheus in distinctively elegiac terms.

Moreover, this elegiac framework even extends beyond the figures of the poet and bird to incorporate the destructive farmer who snatches away the nightingale's young. Richard Thomas has noted the intratextual connection with Virgil's earlier description of the angry farmer (*iratus ... arator*) in *Georgics* 2, who uproots and destroys birds' homes in converting woods to ploughlands (*Georg.* 2.207–11). But this georgic scene now receives an elegiac re-branding, as the *arator* becomes no longer *iratus*, but rather *durus,* just like the hard and stern mistresses of elegiac poetry.[81] The mournful tones of the elegiac nightingale are thus set against the heartlessness of the farmer, mirroring the elegiac relationship of suffering poet and stern *puella*. Combined with the scene's emphasis on sorrow and lament, Virgil thus seals Orpheus' depiction as a specifically elegiac poet. Notably, Virgil likely had Hellenistic precedent for this elegiac rendering of Orpheus: the elegist Phanocles similarly presented Orpheus in an elegiac vein in his Ἔρωτες ἢ Καλοί ('Loves or Beautiful Youths'), recounting his death in Thrace and burial on Lesbos (fr. 1 Powell: an episode notably concerned with 'dire grief', δεινόν … ἄχος, fr. 1.24 Powell). Following

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[80] This association of Orpheus and the nightingale may also reflect a pre-existing tradition: according to a detail preserved in Myrsilus of Methymna (*FGrH* 477 F2) and Pausanias (9.30.6), nightingales were said to sing most sweetly around Orpheus' tomb.

[81] On *duritia* as anathema to the elegiac universe and the inversion of *mollitia*, see Cairns (1979) 102; Hinds (1987a) 21–22, 141 n.58; Kennedy (1993) 31–34; Fabre-Serris (2013); Klein (2013). For elegiac terminology more generally, see Keith (1999a). The *durus arator* may also also fit a larger tradition of uncouth rustics threatening helpless birds: Mesomedes' lyric εἰς κύκνον features a 'Museless rustic goatherd' (ἄμουσος … αἰπόλος ἀγρότας, fr. 10.4–5 Heitsch) who almost captures a swan which is stuck on a frozen river but escapes at the last minute. Mesomedes was a Hadrianic poet, but West (1974) 162 suspects that this story lies behind Theogn. 1097–1100, in which case the episode could have already been known to Virgil and evoked here, especially given the icy conditions of Orpheus' wandering. Allusion to the swan, as another elegiac bird (see Section IV), would be particularly apt; cf. too Pl. *Resp.* 10.620a (Section II above) for Orpheus' association with the swan elsewhere.

Phanocles' example, Virgil crafts Orpheus through a particularly elegiac lens, reinforced above all by the nightingale simile.[82]

In Hellenistic and Roman poetry, therefore, the nightingale became a recurring figure of elegy, repeatedly symbolising the lamentatory background of its poetics both within and outside the genre. The bird was associated not only with mourning mothers (Chariclo, Ceres), whose suffering mirrors that of Procne, but also with a wide range of poets – and especially male poets (Heraclitus, Archilochus, Catullus, Ovid and Orpheus). The nightingale comparison thus no doubt contributed to a familiar strategy of Roman love elegy, the poet's self-feminisation: in aligning themselves and other male poets with a grieving mother, Roman poets once more blurred traditional social divisions of gender and power. But here too we can detect Hellenistic precedent for this trend: Posidippus' fashioning of Archilochus as an elegiac nightingale may hint at the feminine quality of the archaic poet's lamentations, especially given Archilochus' own characterisation of mourning as 'womanly' (γυναικεῖον πένθος, fr. 13.10 W^2). In addition to this gendered aspect, however, this recurring use of the nightingale also adds to the Roman love elegists' playful re-reading of elegy's lamentatory origins: it is one thing to adopt Procne's maternal grief as an analogue for other grievances or bereavements (e.g. Catullus' loss of his brother), but quite another to redeploy this specific example of extreme lamentation as a paradigm for the more trivial matters of elegiac love. In adopting the bird as an emblem of the genre, Roman elegists played self-consciously with the distance between Procne's mythical misery and their own humbler sorrows.

Besides these thematic considerations, however, the recurring choice of the nightingale as an elegiac emblem also has a larger aesthetic significance. We shall explore this in Section V below, but let us first turn to the second major bird of elegiac song: the swan.

IV. The Elegiac Swan

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[82] For Virgil's awareness of the bird's elegiac resonance, cf. too *Eclogue* 6, where the mention of Gallus (64–73) is closely followed by the story of Philomela (78–81), only interrupted by the myth of Scylla (74–77), a story of female lamentation which also has elegiac overtones: cf. n.50 above.

Like the nightingale, the swan had a tradition attached to it that rendered it a particularly suitable model of lamentation. The legend ran that swans on the point of death would break out into beautiful song, proleptically lamenting their demise, a legend that is mentioned by many ancient authors, with varying degrees of credulity. Pliny denies it on the basis of sinister personal 'experiments' (*HN* 10.32), but there in fact seems to be scientific grounding to the myth, as Geoffrey Arnott has shown, highlighting that doubts in antiquity seem to be due to the confusion of two different species, the mute swan and the whooper swan.[83] In any case, the tradition was already well established by the fifth century. The legend is presupposed by several Aesopic fables (233, 399 Perry), as well as Clytemnestra's comparison of Cassandra to the swan in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*: 'like a swan', she has 'sung her final dirge of death' (ἣ δέ τοι **κύκνου** δίκην | τὸν **ὕστατον** μέλψασα **θανάσιμον γόον**, *Ag.* 1444–45).[84] Its popularity is also suggested by the Platonic Socrates' attempt to re-explain the phenomenon in the *Phaedo*. According to him, swans sing beautifully before their death not in lamentation, but rather in joy that they are soon to meet their master, Apollo (*Phd.* 84e–85b):

> καί, ὡς ἔοικε, **τῶν κύκνων** δοκῶ φαυλότερος ὑμῖν εἶναι τὴν μαντικήν, οἳ ἐπειδὰν αἴσθωνται ὅτι δεῖ αὐτοὺς ἀποθανεῖν, ᾄδοντες καὶ ἐν τῷ πρόσθεν χρόνῳ, **τότε δὴ πλεῖστα καὶ κάλλιστα ᾄδουσι, γεγηθότες ὅτι μέλλουσι παρὰ τὸν θεὸν ἀπιέναι οὗπέρ εἰσι θεράποντες**. οἱ δ' ἄνθρωποι διὰ τὸ αὐτῶν δέος τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τῶν κύκνων καταψεύδονται, καί **φασιν αὐτοὺς θρηνοῦντας τὸν θάνατον ὑπὸ λύπης ἐξᾴδειν**, καὶ οὐ λογίζονται ὅτι οὐδὲν ὄρνεον ᾄδει ὅταν πεινῇ ἢ ῥιγῷ ἤ τινα ἄλλην λύπην λυπῆται, **οὐδὲ αὐτὴ ἥ τε ἀηδὼν καὶ χελιδὼν καὶ ὁ ἔποψ, ἃ δή φασι διὰ λύπην θρηνοῦντα ᾄδειν**. ἀλλ' οὔτε ταῦτά μοι φαίνεται λυπούμενα ᾄδειν οὔτε οἱ κύκνοι, ἀλλ' ἅτε οἶμαι τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος ὄντες, μαντικοί τέ εἰσι καὶ προειδότες τὰ ἐν Ἅιδου ἀγαθὰ ᾄδουσι καὶ τέρπονται ἐκείνην τὴν ἡμέραν διαφερόντως ἢ ἐν τῷ ἔμπροσθεν χρόνῳ.

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[83] Arnott (1977), (2007) 123. For ancient testimony, see esp. Aristot. *HA*. 615b2–5; Cic. *Tusc.* 1.73; and the further references gathered by Thompson (1936) 181–82; Arnott (2007) 123. Like Pliny, Alexander of Myndus was sceptical (Ath. 9.393d).

[84] On Aeschylus' engagement with the Aesopic fables here, see Harris (2012).

Moreover it seems you think I'm inferior in my prophesying to **the swans** who, when they perceive that they must die, although they could sing before, **they now sing at their loudest and most beautiful, rejoicing in the fact that they're about to go to the god whose servants they are**. But human beings, because of their own fear of dying, interpret the swans wrongly and **say they're lamenting death and singing out through grief**, and they don't take into account that no bird sings when it's hungry or cold, or suffering any other kind of distress, **not even the nightingale or the swallow or the hoopoe, who they say are lamenting and singing through grief**. But it doesn't seem to me they're grieving, nor are the swans, but rather, I believe, in as much as they belong to Apollo, they have both prophetic power, and are singing with foreknowledge of good things in Hades and are taking delight on that day more than ever before.[85]

As often elsewhere, Plato here goes against the current of mainstream thought, challenging not only the legend of the prophetic swan, but also the mythical aetiology of Procne, Tereus and Philomela. In spite of his efforts, however, the traditional association of swans and lamentation continued throughout antiquity and still resonates today in modern English idiom, where a 'swan song' is a sort of 'last hurrah'. Given that swans were also closely connected with Venus, the goddess of love, it is thus no surprise that this bird too was appropriated by Roman elegy as another apt image of its own poetics.[86] In comparison to the nightingale analogy, we can find less Hellenistic precedent here (restricted to Callimachus' *Aetia* prologue, discussed in Section V), but elegy's association with the swan was enthusiastically developed at Rome, especially by Ovid.

In the proem of the fifth book of Ovid's *Tristia*, the exiled poet programmatically asserts that *flebile carmen* is the only match for his current *flebilis* situation (*Trist*. 5.1.5–6), before going on to compare his lot to that of the prescient swan (*Trist*. 5.1.9–14):

ut cecidi, subiti perago praeconia **casus**,

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[85] Tr. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy (2017) 400–3.

[86] The swan is frequently pictured as the steed of Venus (e.g. Hor. *Carm*. 3. 28. 13–15, 4. 1. 10; Ov. *Ars am*. 3. 809–10, *Met*. 10.708; Sil. *Pun*. 7.441–42). See Prop. 3.3.39–40 for an explicit contrast between the elegiac poet's 'snow-white swans' (*niueis … cycnis*) and the 'sound of a strong horse' (*fortis equi … sonus*) which leads to *arma*, i.e. epic; see Nelson (forthcoming) §2b.

>   sumque **argumenti** conditor ipse mei.
> utque iacens ripa **deflere Caystrius ales**
>   dicitur ore **suam** deficiente **necem**,
> sic ego, Sarmaticas longe proiectus in oras,
>   efficio tacitum ne mihi **funus** eat.

> Since I have fallen, I act as herald of my sudden **fall**, and I myself am the author of my own **theme**. Just as **the bird of the Cayster** is said to lie on the bank and **bewail its own death** from its failing voice, so I, cast far away upon the Sarmatian shores, ensure that **my funeral rites** do not pass in silence.

Instead of the Daulian bird of the Sapphic epistle, here we have that of the Cayster, a river which was particularly known in antiquity for its swans.[87] But this avian parallel reflects the weeping strain of elegy equally well (cf. *deflere*, 11). The very word which Ovid uses of his theme, *argumentum* (10), may sonically recall the adjective <u>*argutus*</u> which Propertius used in 1.18 of both his shrill *dolor* and the shrill birds: here too, Ovid's topic involves a pointedly lamentatory strain. But in particular, the swan's association with impending death alongside mourning makes it a particularly apt image for the funereal life of Ovid's exile, assimilating it to a figurative demise.[88] Elsewhere in the *Tristia*, too, Ovid compares himself to a swan in a similar manner, as in 4.8, where the bird's plumage parallels his own aging and whitening hair (*iam me* **cycneas** *imitantur tempora* **plumas**, 'Already my temples resemble **a swan's plumage**', 4.8.1).[89] The bird thus seems to have been a particularly apt symbol for the internalized elegiac grief of Ovid's exile.

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[87] E.g. *Il.* 2.459–63; *Anacreontea* 60.8 West; Ov. *Met.* 5.386–87; Sil. *Pun.* 14.189–90; Philostr. *Imag.* 1.11.3; Himer. *Or.* 40.1, 47.4, 48.7.

[88] Cf. e.g. Nagle (1980) 22–23, noting too *Trist.* 5.1.48 (*tibia funeribus convenit ista meis*), where *tibia* refers simultaneously 'to the flute-playing customary at funerals, the mournful mood of the exilic elegies, and the flute of elegy.'

[89] Ovid draws on a pre-existing tradition of comparing white hair with swan's plumage: cf. Ar. *Vesp.* 1064–65; Eur. *HF* 691–94; Hor. *Carm.* 2.20.9–12 (with Nisbet and Hubbard (1978) 341–42). Ovid's physical deterioration in *Trist.* 4.8 also echoes the opening of his collection, *Tristia* 1.1, which is concerned with the shabby state of his own book in exile.

Yet the bird was not solely the preserve of Ovid's exilic oeuvre. In another of Ovid's *Heroides*, Dido opens her address to Aeneas by comparing herself to the swan (*Her.* 7.1–2):

> sic ubi fata vocant, udis abiectus in herbis
> > ad vada Maeandri **concinit albus olor**

> Thus **the white swan sings** when summoned by fate, cast down among the wet grass by the shallows of the Maeander river.

The spectre of death still hangs in the background of this opening, given Dido's impending suicide on Aeneas' departure, all too well known from Virgil's treatment of the episode in *Aeneid* 4. But in the context of the sufferings of love, the simile highlights the death-like pains of the unrequited lover. At the very start of this poem, the swan stands as a manifesto of Dido's mournful, elegiac poetics.

Even more explicitly elegiac, however, is the depiction of the poet Arion in Ovid's *Fasti*, who – after he has been captured by pirates – sings his own 'swan song' before escaping (*Fast.* 2.91–92, 105–10):

> Cynthia saepe tuis fertur, **vocalis Arion**,
> > tamquam fraternis obstipuisse modis.
> (…)
> > > > capit ille coronam,
> > quae possit crines, Phoebe, decere tuos;
> induerat Tyrio bis tinctam murice pallam:
> > reddidit icta suos pollice chorda sonos,
> **flebilibus numeris** veluti canentia dura
> > traiectus penna tempora **cantat olor**.

> Cynthia, they say, has often been stunned by your notes, **tuneful Arion**, just like her brother's. (…) He took the crown which would suit your locks, Phoebus; he put on his

robe, which had been dipped twice in Tyrian purple: the string, when struck, responded with its own music in a **mournful rhythm**, just as **a swan sings** when its snowy temples have been pierced by a hard arrow.

Arion is another archetypal poet figure: a bard of great skill, whose song possesses a power over nature akin to that of Orpheus (*Fast.* 2.83–90, cf. *Met.* 11.1–2).[90] He is also equated here with Apollo, the god of poetry: the goddess Cynthia is said to have often been amazed at his song, so like her brother's (2.91–92), while he also adorns himself like Apollo before performing to the pirates, wearing a garland that would suit Phoebus' locks (2.106) and wearing a purple robe just like that which Apollo wears in his song contest with Pan in the *Metamorphoses* (*Tyrio bis tinctam murice pallam*, 2.107 ~ *Tyrio saturata murice palla*, *Met.* 11.166).[91] Even in this opening description, however, there is a specifically elegiac aspect to his poetological representation: he is called *vocalis Arion* (*Fast.* 2.91), a phrase attested elsewhere only in Propertius when used of Adrastus' talking horse of the same name (Prop. 2.34.37) – in a poem notably concerned with the move from epic to elegy.[92] Flagged by this verbal parallel, we can also read more into the mention of *Cynthia* in the same line (2.91): at first sight, this noun refers to the goddess Diana, Apollo's brother, but it also evokes the mistress of Propertius' elegiac oeuvre, especially given the further Propertian echoes in these lines. Scholars have previously noted how Propertius aims to stun Cynthia with his verses, just as Arion does with his (_nostro_ **stupefiat Cynthia** _versu_, Prop. 2.13.7 ~ **Cynthia** *saepe* _tuis_ *fertur* … **obstipuisse** _modis_, *Fast.* 2.91–92);[93] but we can also add the pointed echo of the *incipit* of Propertius' *Monobiblos* (*Cynthia prima suis*, Prop. 1.1.1 ~ *Cynthia saepe*

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[90] Newlands (1995) 180–81; Robinson (2011) 118. Arion was already paired with Orpheus by Virgil (*Ecl.* 8.55–56); the connection is reinforced here by the echo of Horace's *vocalem …
Orphea* (*Carm.* 1.12.7–8) in *vocalis Arion* (*Fast.* 2.91).

[91] Newlands (1995) 181–82, further noting the parallel 'downward order' which Ovid employs to describe Arion's and Apollo's accoutrements, moving from head, to cloak, to hands and instrument; cf. Robinson (2011) 127–28.

[92] Newlands (1995) 182–83; Robinson (2011) 121–22. On Prop. 2.34, see Stahl (1985) 172–88; O'Rourke (2011).

[93] Newlands (1995) 182–83; Robinson (2011) 121–22, who further notes (with thanks to Heyworth: 121 n.8) that 'Cynthia was … rescued by Arion's dolphin in Propertius' nightmare at 2.26': Ovid's association of Arion and Cynthia thus provides a further link back to Propertius' oeuvre.

tuis, Fast. 2.91), signposted by the footnoting *fertur*.[94] From the very beginning, Ovid's Arion seems to have been cast in a particularly elegiac light.

This elegiac connection is reinforced further, however, in the following description of the poet's 'swan song' (109–10). The phrase *flebilibus numeris* (109) bears a clear elegiac resonance (cf. n.7 above). But in addition, the swan explicitly sings (*cantat*), here with a pun on *canentia* in the previous line, linking the white temples of the swan with its singing – recalling the common association of poets' white hair with the plumage of swans (cf. *Trist*. 4.8.1 above).[95] This elegiac flavour is strengthened further by the presence of the *dura penna*, 'the hard arrow' which pierces the swan's temples – just like the *durus arator* of the *Georgics*, an intrusion of peculiarly elegiac violence into this scene.[96] But in addition to all this, the hinted subject of Arion's song is also particularly apt for the elegiac *Fasti* itself: if we isolate the second half of the pentameter in verse 110 (*tempora cantat olor*), it is as if the swan sings of *tempora* ('times/seasons'), the very subject matter of the *Fasti* itself: *tempora* is, after all, the very opening word of the poem.[97] Arion's song thus becomes an archetype not only of elegiac lament, but also of the elegiac *Fasti*, figured through the mournful death cries of the swan.[98] Just like the nightingale, this bird proved a fruitful image for elegists to reflect on the nature of their own genre.

Yet as with the nightingale, this metaliterary association of the swan with elegiac lament is not restricted to elegy alone; it is also evoked in other genres, especially epic. In book 10 of the *Aeneid*,

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[94] For such *incipit*-allusions, cf. esp. Horace, e.g. *Carm*. 1.9 ~ Alc. fr. 338 Voigt; *Carm*. 1.12 ~ Pind. *Ol*. 2; Richmond (1970); Cavarzere (1996). Propertius himself recalls the *incipit* of Prop. 1.1 near the end of his three-book collection: 3.10.15, 3.21.9–10, 3.21.29, 3.24.2.

[95] Newlands (1995) 185–86; Robinson (2011) 133–34; cf. n.89 above.

[96] Cf. Newlands (1995) 186–87, further noting the sailor's *arma* (2.102), a word loaded with epic associations which Ovid programmatically rejects (in favour of *aras*) at the start of the *Fasti* (*Fast*. 1.13). Robinson (2011) 131–33 suggests that the unusual *penna* evokes the eagle's traditional complaint that it was slain by its own plumage, i.e. to have brought disaster on itself (e.g. Aesch. fr. 139 *TrGF*; Ar. *Av*. 807–8), a motif that resonates suggestively against Ovid's exile.

[97] Newlands (1995) 184–85, citing Ahl (1985) 291 for Ovid's comparable play with the metrically identical *tempora* ('temples') and *tempora* ('times') at *Met*. 1.4.

[98] Later authors also link Arion's singing with consolation (cf. Gell. *NA*. 16.19: *canere carmen casus illius sui consolabile*), lament (cf. Hyg. *Astr*. 2.17.3: *quoniam nemo esset alius qui ut ipse suum questu prosequeretur eventum … suam coepit deflere mortem*), and the dying swan (Favorinus [Dio Chrys.] *Or*. 37. 2; Plut. *Sept. Sap*. 161c4–8); cf. Robinson (2011) 128–29.

for example, the appropriately named Cycnus is transformed into a swan in grief at the death of his lover Phaethon (*Aen*. 10.185–93):[99]

Non ego te, Ligurum ductor fortissime bello,

transierim, **Cinyre**,[100] et paucis comitate **Cupavo**,

cuius olorinae surgunt de vertice pennae

(crimen, **Amor**, vestrum) **formae**que insigne paternae.

namque ferunt **luctu** Cycnum Phaethontis **amati**,

populeas inter frondes umbramque sororum

dum **canit** et **maestum** Musa solatur **amorem**,

canentem molli pluma duxisse senectam

linquentem terras et sidera voce sequentem.

I would not pass you by, **Cinyrus**, bravest leader of the Ligurians in war, nor you, **Cupavo**, although your retinue is small; swan plumes rise from your crest, a token of your father's **form** – and a reproach, **Love**, to you. For they say that Cycnus, **grieving for his beloved** Phaethon, while **singing** and comforting his **sad love** with music amid the shade of his sisters' poplar leaves, took on **white** old age with a **soft plumage**, leaving behind earth and chasing the stars with his cry.

This myth of Cycnus and Phaethon had an elegiac provenance: it was apparently treated by Phanocles in his Ἔρωτες ἢ Καλοί (fr. 6 Powell), a poem to which Virgil gestures through the combination of *Amor* and *formae* in 188, as well as the footnoting *ferunt* in 189.[101] Yet regardless of this literary heritage, Virgil emphasises the elegiac tenor of the episode, especially in the combination of lament and bereaved love: Virgil's Cycnus feels grief for his beloved Phaethon

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[99] For the elegiac aspects of this scene, see too McCallum (2012); and for Virgil's broader reflections on swans and poetics in the *Aeneid*, see Malamud (1998) esp. 108–11 on Cycnus.

[100] For the textual *crux* here and printing of *Cinyre*, see McCallum (2012) 210–11 n.4, (2015) 694–95 n.6.

[101] *Amor/formae*: McCallum (2012) 221–22, McCallum (2015) 699 n.35. Footnoting *ferunt*: Horsfall (2016) 114–15. The connection with Phanocles is reinforced by the apparent verbal echo in 190–91 of another part of his poem, treating the death of Orpheus (fr. 1.3–4 Powell: πολλάκι δὲ σκιεροῖσιν ἐν ἄλεσιν ἔζετ' ἀείδων | ὃν πόθον): Harrison (1991) 120–21.

(*luctu ... Phaethontis amati*, 189) and comforts his woeful passion with song (*maestum ... amorem*, 191).[102] This elegiac combination of love and grief is reinforced, moreover, by the very names of Cycnus' son Cupavo and his fellow commander Cinyrus. The former (Cupavo) etymologically puns on the verb *cupio* and its cognates such as *Cupido*, while its second half also suggests *avis*, hinting at his father's avian transformation; the latter (Cinyrus), if the correct reading in the text, evokes the Greek adjective κινυρός (wailing/plaintive), which Apollonius himself had used in the *Argonautica* of the Heliades lamenting at Phaethon's death (κινυρόν … γόον, *Argon.* 4.605).[103] In addition, the elegiac flavour of the scene is further strengthened not only by the parenthetical address to Love in 188 (*crimen, Amor, vestrum*), evoking the harsh and reproachable god of elegy,[104] but also by the description of the swan's plumage as 'soft' (*molli*, 192), evoking yet another key term of elegiac poetry.[105] Even before Ovid's series of self-reflexive elegiac swans, therefore, Virgil had already fashioned the bird as an emblem of elegy in the *Aeneid*.[106]

Yet it is Ovid again who returns to this myth after Virgil and builds on its elegiac potential at the end of the Phaethon episode in the second book of the *Metamorphoses* (2.367–80):

> Adfuit huic monstro proles Stheneleia Cycnus,
> qui tibi materno quamvis a sanguine iunctus,
> mente tamen, Phaethon, propior fuit. ille relicto
> (nam Ligurum populos et magnas rexerat urbes)
> imperio ripas virides amnemque **querellis**

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[102] Cf. Keith (1992) 144.

[103] Paschalis (1997) 350–51; Malamud (1998) 110; McCallum (2012) 209–17, (2015) 694–97. On Cupavo, cf. Barchiesi (2005) 267. On Cinyrus, cf. Ahl (1985) 33 n.11, noting that κινυρός is a Homeric *hapax legomenon* (*Il.* 17.5). We might also suspect a nod to the Cypriot poet Cinyras, who was also associated with mourning: Franklin (2015) esp. 187–89.

[104] Keith (1992) 144–45, citing Prop. 1.1.4, 17, 34 and 1.7.25–26; Ov. *Am.*1.1.3–4 and 1.2.8. On *Amor* as a symbol of elegiac poetry, cf. Harrison (2007) 33, 65.

[105] On elegiac *mollitia*, see n.81 above. Note too the contrametrical pun on the verbal connection between *cano*, 'I sing', and *caneo*, 'I become white', as we have already seen in Ovid's *Fasti*: *cănit*, 191; *cānentem*, 192.

[106] Although Virgil does not specify the swan's association with prophecy here, his mention of Cycnus fits with his broader emphasis on local traditions of Etruscan prophecy (cf. e.g. the immediately following description of Ocnus, the son of 'prophetic Manto', *fatidicae Mantus*, *Aen.* 10.198–99).

Eridanum **implerat silvam**que sororibus auctam,
cum vox est **tenuata** viro canaeque capillos
dissimulant plumae collumque a pectore longe
porrigitur digitosque ligat iunctura rubentis,
penna latus velat, tenet os sine acumine rostrum.
fit nova Cycnus avis nec se caeloque Iovique
credit, ut iniuste missi memor ignis ab illo;
stagna petit patulosque lacus ignemque perosus
quae colat **elegit** contraria flumina flammis.

Cycnus, the son of Sthenelus, witnessed this miracle. Although he was related to you, Phaethon, by his mother's blood, he was closer to you in affection. He abandoned his kingdom – for he had ruled over the peoples and great cities of Liguria – and **filled with his weeping** the Eridanus river and its green banks, as well as the **wood** to which his sisters had been added. And then the man's voice **grew thin**, white feathers hid his hair, his neck was stretched out far from his breast, his reddening fingers were joined together by a webbed membrane, wings covered his sides, and a blunt beak replaced his mouth. So Cycnus became a strange new bird, but he did not entrust himself to the sky or to Jove, because he remembered the fiery bolt which the god had unjustly hurled; instead, he sought stagnant pools and spreading lakes and in his hatred of fire **he chose** to inhabit rivers, the opposite of flames.

Here, too, Ovid develops the elegiac tenor of the scene, alluding to the amatory relationship of Cycnus and Phaethon (368–69) and presenting Cycnus' grief in elegiac terms: he wanders through the natural world uttering an archetypally elegiac lament (*querellis,* 371), with which he fills the whole landscape (*querellis | … implerat*, 371–72), just like the Virgilian nightingale (*questibus implet*, *Georg.* 4.515) and the Ovidian Demeter (*querellis | implet, Fast.* 4.481–82). The following mention of *silva* (372) might also bear a metapoetic resonance, as in *Amores* 3.1: the very raw materials of the poet's work are suffused with elegiac mourning (*querellis | … implerat silvam*, 371–72). In addition to all this, however, Alison Keith has noted two further features that reinforce Cycnus' association with elegy: first, the hero's thinning and attenuated voice (*tenuata,* 373),

which evokes the adjective *tenuis*, a key trope of not only Callimachean *leptotes,* but also refined elegy (cf. e.g. Elegy's *vestis tenuissima, Am*. 3.1.9);[107] and second, the final verb *elēgit* (*Met*. 2.380) which also, in a further contrametrical pun, evokes the swan's power of specifically elegiac composition. As in Virgil, so too in Ovid, Cycnus' transformation into a swan is framed in specifically elegiac terms.[108]

This elegiac association of the swan returns later in the *Metamorphoses* when another character is compared with a swan: in this case, Canens, an apparently Ovidian invention whose very name evokes poetry and song. Ovid makes this etymology explicit when she is first introduced (*Met*. 14.337–42):

> rara quidem facie, sed rarior **arte canendi**,
>
> unde Canens dicta est: silvas et saxa movere
>
> et mulcere feras et flumina longa morari
>
> ore suo volucresque vagas retinere solebat.
>
> quae dum feminea **modulatur** carmina voce,
>
> exierat tecto Laurentes Picus in agros …

> Rare was her beauty, but rarer still **her skill in singing**, and hence she was called Canens. With her own voice she used to move woods and rocks, tame wild beasts, slow the course

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[107] Keith (1992) 140–41. Cf. e.g. Hor. *Epist*. 2.1.224–25 (*cum **lamentamur** non apparere labores | nostros et **tenui** deducta poemata filo*).

[108] Cf. the other two swan transformations in the *Metamorphoses*: (1) *Met*. 7.371–81, a tale of spurned love (*spreto … amore*, 375) in which a different Cycnus jumps off a cliff and transforms into a swan; his mother Hyrie melts away through weeping (*flendo*, 380) and becomes a pool. (2) *Met*. 12.64–145, where an invulnerable Cycnus, Neptune's son, fights Achilles, but transforms into a swan after being trapped and strangled. The first clearly evokes an elegiac world of unhappy love and lamentation; the second is less obviously elegiac, but may still evoke the genre in its undermining of masculine epic heroism (Cycnus' armour is merely ornamentation, *decor*, 90; Achilles' hand is weak, *debilis*, 106; Cycnus dies by strangulation, 'a typically feminine and shameful mode of death': Keith (1999b) 232; cf. Fear (2005) on masculine liminality in elegy. For Callimachean/unHomeric readings of this episode, see Möller (2003); Papaioannou (2007) 50–86. See too Heslin (2016) for Ovid's undermining of Homeric trustworthiness.

of long rivers and detain wandering birds. Once, while **she was modulating** her songs with her womanly voice, Picus had come out from his home into the Laurentine fields …

Just like Arion in *Fasti* 2, Canens' song possesses a power akin to that of Orpheus (*Met*. 11.1–2; *Fast*. 2.84–90), and later in the episode, she too is compared to a swan on the point of death (*Met*. 14.428–34):

> illic cum **lacrimis** ipso **modulata dolore**
> verba sono **tenui maerens** fundebat, ut olim
> **carmina** iam **moriens canit exequialia cycnus**;
> **luctibus** extremum **tenues** liquefacta medullas
> tabuit inque leves paulatim evanuit auras,
> fama tamen signata loco est, quem rite Canentem
> nomine de nymphae veteres dixere Camenae.

> There, **in tears**, she **mournfully** poured forth her words **attuned to grief** in **a thin** voice, just as **a swan** sometimes **sings his funeral songs on the very point of death**. Finally, as her **delicate** marrow dissolved **in grief**, she wasted away and gradually vanished into thin air. Yet her story is still imprinted on that place, which the ancient Camenae rightly called Canens after the nymph's name.

Sara Myers has highlighted Canens' close association with the ancient Latin Muses (*veteres Camenae*, 434) in this passage, reinforcing her role as a figure of song: the name of the Camenae, after all, was also etymologically connected with singing.[109] And as Canens dies, she is presented as singing just as she did in life: her *verba* are *modulata* (428), just as she earlier *modulatur* (341). But despite noting the poetological associations here, Myers did not go on to consider the explicitly elegiac tones of this swan simile: once more, we find the same combination of tears and grief that we have repeatedly seen (*lacrimes, dolore, maerens, luctibus*), and in the use of *dolor* we may

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[109] Myers (1994) 108–11. For the etymological association of the *Camenae*, see e.g. Varro, *Ling*. 6.75 and 7.27, with de Melo (2019) II 875, 930–32; Serv. ad *Ecl*. 3.59 (*Camenae musae, quibus a cantu nomen est inditum*).

even detect some wordplay with *olor*, the original Latin word for swan. Just as with the Ovidian Cycnus, moreover, so too here Canens' liquefaction becomes a model of elegiac *tenuitas*: not only does she lament with a thin sound (*sono tenui*, 429), but she is also transformed into soft marrow, *tenues ... medullas* (431). Indeed, as Alex Hardie notes, the nymph's elegiac potential is also hinted at earlier in the episode, when she is pictured wandering mad through Latian lands (*Latios errat vesana per agros*, 422),[110] just like the maddened wandering of lovestruck elegists, such as Gallus in Virgil's sixth *Eclogue* (*tum canit, errantem Permessi ad flumina Gallum, Ecl*. 6.64).[111] Here too, therefore, the swan simile fashions Canens as a representative of elegiac poetry, a figure of mournful lamentation.[112]

As a final example of the elegiac potential of the swan in Roman poetry, however, let us turn to Statius' *Silvae* 2.4, an *epicedion* for his friend Melior's pet parrot which allusively reworks Ovid's *Amores* 2.6.[113] Unlike Ovid's poem, Statius' is in hexameters, but it still has a strong metapoetic flavour and flirts with the elegiac sphere of its intertextual model. Like Corinna's parrot, Melior's is figured in poetic terms: it is a tuneful creature (*canorus*, 2.4.9), with carefully practised words (*meditataque verba*, 2.4.7). And it is set within a scene suffused with the language of elegy: while alive, the bird wandered between couches like a roving elegist (*errantemque toris,* 2.4.6) and filled the house with shrill sounds (*argutum … stridentia limina*, 2.4.13), a lamenting strain which the doors now produce themselves in its absence (*querelae*, 2.4.14). The poet invites a whole

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[110] Hardie (2010) 45, cf. 44–47 more generally on 'Elegiac Canens'.

[111] On elegiac *error* and its possibly Gallan/Parthenian associations, see Ross (1975) 62–64; Cairns (2006) 227–28. Cf. too *Ecl*. 10.55 (*lustrabo*); Prop. 1.1.11 (*errabat*); Virg. *Georg*. 4.519 (*lustrabat*); Parth. *Amat. narr*. 36.5 (ἀλωμένη). Earlier intriguing precedent is offered by the pastoral poetess Eriphanis, mentioned by Clearchus, whose lovestruck wanderings (πλανωμένη) prompted both people and wild beasts to weep (συνδακρῦσαι, Clearchus fr. 32 Wehrli = Ath. 14.619c–d).

[112] From this perspective, we might be able to reinterpret the voice of Silius Italicus' Teuthras whose voice 'could surpass dying swans' (*linguam*, | *uincere linquentes uitam quae possit olores*, *Pun*. 11.437–38). Casali (2006) 580 suggests that this declaration 'is an implicit claim on Silius's part of the superiority of his own "banqueting poet" over the banqueting bards of the earlier epic tradition.' But given the generic association of the dying swan, we could perhaps see Silius asserting the authority of his epic over the elegiac tradition (just as Teuthras' Virgilian model, Iopas, marks Virgil's rejection of another genre, cosmological poetry: White (2006)).

[113] See Herrlinger (1930) 87–90; Van Dam (1984) 336–67, esp. 338–40; Dietrich (2002); Newlands (2005). Statius, like Ovid, signposts his allusive imitation: ***imitator*** (*Silv*. 2.4.2), cf. <mark>n.63 above</mark>.

menagerie of mourning birds to come and lament the parrot's death (2.4.16–23, esp. **gemitus**, 2.4.22; **miserandum** … *carmen*, 2.4.23), a list which notably concludes with the nightingale, the 'bereft sister who **moans** in her Bistonian bedchamber' (*quae Bistonio* **queritur** *soror orba cubili*, 2.4.21). The elegiac bird which had opened Ovid's *epicedion* (*Am*. 2.6.7–10: Section III) here closes Statius' catalogue, reinforcing the poem's elegiac underpinning. It is the swan, however, which Statius first picks out as a model and parallel for the parrot's fate: he dismisses the 'common tale of Phaethon' (*cedat Phaethontia vulgi | fabula*, 2.4.9–10) and claims that 'swans are not the only ones to celebrate their death' (*non soli celebrant sua funera cycni*, 2.4.10). In this poem of mourning, the poet establishes the swan as a programmatic paradigm for his elegiac-inflected parrot. Here too, the swan – alongside the nightingale – is conceived as a particularly elegiac and lamentatory bird.

As with the nightingale, therefore, the swan proved an apt and recurring emblem of elegy. Whether introduced through a simile or through a character's metamorphosis, the swan's mournful and proleptic cries aptly symbolised the genre's lamentatory aspect. It is striking, however, how much Ovid has dominated the foregoing discussion: besides the cases of Virgilian and Statian reception, every example has come from Ovid's oeuvre. Of course, the bird briefly appears as the steed of elegy in Propertius' programmatic 3.3 (in comparison to the war-horse of epic: 3.3.39–40, cf. n.86 above), but otherwise it does not feature in the work of other elegists, and even in this sole Propertian case we find no explicit mention of its prophetic lament. It would seem that the association of the swan's song with impending death appealed particularly to Ovid, a poet who became so aware of his own quasi-death in exile. In addition, however, it is notable that Ovid appears to have treated the bird's song in a grander manner than the nightingale's, even in the genre of small-scale and personal elegy. This may again be the result of the swan's broader associations with death, Apollo and prophecy – topics which made it appeal also to grander genres such as lyric and the paean.[114] But we might also identify a further gendered dimension: in comparison to the feminine nightingale (ἀηδών, *Procne, Philomela*), the swan was conceived as a masculine bird (κύκνος, *olor*); its use as a poetic emblem did not carry the same emasculating

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[114] Lyric: e.g. Hor. *Carm*. 2.20, 4.2.25. Paean: Castrucci (2013). Cf. too Papaioannou (2004) on the swan in Ovidian epic and Thévenaz (2004) on the bird as emblem of rhetoricians.

undertones. Both birds thus symbolised the elegiac genre, but with some significant distinctions between them.

V. The Aesthetics of Lament

In the previous sections, we have seen both the swan and the nightingale figured as tropes of elegiac lamentation, repeatedly appearing as models for the elegiac genre. As we have noted, this association must be indebted to the legends attached to both birds, which rendered them ready symbols of lament and mourning. The nightingale's grief for her dead son and the swan's for its own impending death map readily onto the *flebilis* and *miserabilis* nature of Elegy. I would like to conclude, however, by asking whether there is anything more in the nature and aesthetic of these birds' laments, as represented in ancient literature and thought, that made them particularly appropriate as a symbol of elegy.

Ovid's description of the swan's thinned voice certainly points in this direction, connecting the bird with elegiac *tenuitas*. The bird was associated with a thin, small sound elsewhere: Lucretius twice talks of the swan's ***parvus** canor* ('**small** song', 4.181 = 910), apparently in imitation of Antipater of Sidon's description of Erinna as possessing the '**small** sound of the swan' (κύκνου **μικρὸς** θρόος, *AP* 7.713.7 = *HE* 58.7 [566]). By tapping into this tradition, Ovid makes the bird's song an apt figure for the small and thin style of his elegy (cf. *exiguos elegos*, *Ars P*. 77; *tenuissima, Am*. 3.1.9).[115]

In more general terms, however, the nature of both birds' song also seems to be particularly well-matched for the sonic aspect of elegy and lament. Their singing is often associated in Greek with the adjectives λίγυς and λιγυρός, evoking a shrill and clear quality. We noted above Democritus' specification of the swan and nightingale as the λιγυροί in imitation of whom mankind learnt to

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[115] Cf. *vox … tenuata* (Ov. *Met*. 2.373); *sono tenui* (*Met*. 14.429); *ore … deficiente* (*Trist*. 5.1.12). Cf. Hardie (2010) 45 n.94. This emphasis on the swan's dying and dwindling voice contrasts with Horace's focus on the bird's lofty lyric grandeur (***nec tenui** ferar | penna*, Hor. *Carm*. 2.20.1–2; *multa ... levat aura … | … in altos | nubium tractus*, 4.2.25–27).

sing (Section II above), and both birds are repeatedly qualified with this adjective elsewhere: in Aristophanes' *Birds*, Cinesias asks to become a λιγύφθογγος ἀηδών ('shrill-voiced nightingale', Ar. *Av*.1380); in tragedy, the nightingale is λίγεια ('shrill', Aesch. *Ag*. 1146; Soph. *OC* 671); and in the 21st *Homeric Hymn*, the swan sings λίγα ('shrilly', *h. Hom*. 21.1). Even the name of Cycnus' native people, the Ligurians, seems to hint at the connection etymologically (*Ligurum*, *Aen*. 10.185; *Met*. 2.370).[116]

It is significant, then, that these same words are also often associated with grief and mourning. According to the LSJ, λίγυς after Hesiod is used 'mostly of sad sounds.' We could cite, for example, the Linus mourning song (of uncertain date) which employs shrill voices (φωναῖς λιγυραῖς, 880 *PMG*), and was said to be sung in an attenuated voice (μετ' ἰσχνοφωνίας), like an Ovidian swan (b *schol*. *Il*. 18.570):[117]

> φασὶ δὲ αὐτὸν (sc. τὸν Λίνον) ἐν Θήβαις ταφῆναι καὶ τιμηθῆναι **θρηνώδεσιν** ᾠδαῖς ἃς λινῳδίας ἐκάλεσαν. ἔστι δὲ **μέλος θρηνητικὸν** ὁ λίνος **μετ' ἰσχνοφωνίας ᾀδόμενος**. ἆρα οὖν ὁ νεανίας διὰ τῆς μιμήσεως ταύτης τὰ κατὰ τὸν Λίνον ᾖδεν; **ἐθρηνεῖτο** γὰρ οὗτος παρὰ τῶν Μουσῶν οὕτως·
>
>> †ὦ Λίνε θεοῖσι τετιμημένε, σοὶ γὰρ πρώτῳ μέλος ἔδωκαν ἀθάνατοι ἀνθρώποισι **φωναῖς λιγυραῖς** ἀεῖσαι· Φοῖβος δέ σε κότῳ ἀναιρεῖ, Μοῦσαι δέ σε **θρηνέουσιν**.†

> They say that he (sc. Linus) was buried in Thebes and honoured in **mourning songs** which they called Linus-songs. The Linus is a **mourning song** which is **sung in a thin voice.** Was the youth in this representation singing the song about Linus? **He was mourned** by the Muses as follows:
>
>> Oh Linus, honoured by the gods – for the immortals first gave you a song for men to sing **with a shrill voice**; Phoebus killed you in anger, but the Muses **mourn** for you.

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[116] Cf. Ahl (1982) 389. Cf. too *Id*. 12.6–7: the 'most tuneful' nightingale is 'shrill-voiced' (ἀηδών | συμπάντων **λιγύφωνος** ἀοιδοτάτη πετεηνῶν).

[117] Cf. West (1992) 45; Hardie (2010) 42.

The adverb λίγεως is also often used of lament, as of the Heliades in the *Argonautica* (again in the context of Phaethon's death: **γόον ὀξὺν ὀδυρομένων** ἐσάκουον, | Ἡλιάδων **λιγέως**· τὰ δὲ **δάκρυα μυρομένῃσιν**, *Argon.* 4.624–25) and of lynxes mourning for their lost young in the pseudo-Oppianic *Cynegetica* (**μύρονται λίγεως** ἀδινὸν **γόον** ἐκ δ᾽ ἄρα τηλοῦ | **κωκυτὸν** προΐᾶσι **πολύστονον**, *Cyn.* 3.103–4). Moreover, as Frederick Ahl has noted, already in Homer the adverb is frequently used in contexts of lamentation.[118] A λίγυς voice, therefore, often reflects the sounds of mourning. The repeated use of this language for the nightingale and swan implies that their cries are particularly appropriate for lament. And we could also compare the adjectives *liquidus* and *argutus* in Latin, which are similarly used of both bird song and lamentation.[119] In both Greek and Latin, therefore, the very sound of the nightingale's and swan's singing aligned them closely with the world of grief and mourning.

Even more intriguingly, however, this same sonic quality was also associated with elegy. A λιγυρῶς manner is precisely what the Hellenistic grammarian Dionysius Thrax prescribes for the reading of elegy itself (Dion. Thrax *Ars*, *GG* I.1, p. 6.8–11):

ἵνα τὴν μὲν τραγῳδίαν ἡρωϊκῶς ἀναγνώμεν, τὴν δὲ κωμῳδίαν βιωτικῶς, **τὰ δὲ ἐλεγεῖα λιγυρῶς**, τὸ δὲ ἔπος εὐτόνως, τὴν δὲ λυρικὴν ποίησιν ἐμμελῶς, τοὺς δὲ οἴκτους ὑφειμένως καὶ γοερῶς.

So that we read tragedy heroically, comedy in a lifelike manner, **elegy shrilly**, epic vigorously, lyric poetry harmoniously, and lament in a subdued and plaintive tone.

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[118] Ahl (1982) 389 n.52: *Il.* 19.5 (κλαίοντα **λιγέως**: Achilles mourning for Patroclus); *Od.* 10.201 (κλαῖον δὲ **λιγέως**: Odysseus' men grieving over past suffering); *Od.* 11.391 (κλαῖε δ᾽ ὅ γε **λιγέως**: Agamemnon's lamenting shade); *Od.* 16.216 (κλαῖον δὲ **λιγέως**: Odysseus' and Telemachus' mournful cries of reunion); *Od.* 21.56 (κλαῖε μάλα **λιγέως**: Penelope weeping over Odysseus' bow).

[119] *Liquidus*: cf. Hardie (2010) 42. Swan song: Lucr. 4.547–48 (*et convallibu' **cycni** intortis ex Heliconis | cum **liquidam** tollunt **lugubri voce querellam***, 'and when from the winding valleys of Helicon **the swans** raise up a **shrill lament** with a **mournful voice**'; the text of v. 547 is corrupt; I follow the suggestion of Smith at Rouse and Smith (1992) 318–19). Cf. Ov. *Am.* 1.13.8 (*et **liquidum tenui** gutture cantat avis*, 'and a bird sings **shrilly** from its **slender** throat'). Lament: e.g. Hor. *Carm.* 1.24.2–4 (*praecipe **lugubris** | **cantus**, Melpomene, cui **liquidam** pater | **vocem** cum cithara dedit*). *Argutus*: cf. Prop. 1.18.25–30, Stat. *Silv.* 2.4.13 above.

Dionysius distinguishes 'elegy' and 'lament' here, indicating that the two were never seen as identical. Yet his choice of the adverb λιγυρῶς for elegiac performance is still revealing. In fact, the scholia's gloss on this detail highlights the continuing association of the genre (and its sound) with grief and sorrow (*Scholia Vaticana, GG* I.3, p. 173.15–17):

«**Λιγυρῶς**» δέ, οἷον **ὀξέως** ἀναγινώσκειν ἡμᾶς δεῖ τὰ ἐλεγεῖα, ὡς ἂν συμπεπνιγμένους καὶ ἐκπεπληγμένους **τῷ πλήθει τῶν κακῶν**.

'**shrilly**', because we must read elegy **sharply**, as though choked and beaten down **by the multitude of evils**.[120]

For this second century Hellenistic critic, a shrill quality was particularly appropriate for the mournful strains of elegy, a sentiment which seems to reflect broader Hellenistic thought: Phanocles hints at the same association through his repeated use of the adjectives λίγυς/λιγυρός in treating the death of Orpheus in his Ἔρωτες ἢ Καλοί (fr. 1 Powell).[121] And it is likely that this association dates back even further than the Hellenistic age. In Theognis' famous premonition of his addressee Cyrnus' enduring fame, the poet pictures the boy as the subject of specifically 'shrill' music (Thgn. 239–43):

θοίνῃς δὲ καὶ εἰλαπίνῃσι παρέσσῃ
ἐν πάσαις, πολλῶν κείμενος ἐν στόμασιν,
καί σε σὺν αὐλίσκοισι **λιγυφθόγγοις** νέοι ἄνδρες
εὐκόσμως ἐρατοὶ καλά τε καὶ **λιγέα**
ᾄσονται.

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[120] For ὀξέως, cf. too *Commentarius Melampodis, GG* I.3, p. 21.3–5: ἡ γὰρ **λύπη τῇ παρατροπῇ τῆς φωνῆς ἐκ τοῦ κλαυθμοῦ ὀξύτερά** τινα παρεισάγει ('For **as a result of a change in the voice from weeping**, **grief** introduces a rather **sharper note**').
[121] See ἠχή … **λιγυρῆς** … λύρης (fr. 1.16 Powell), **λίγειαν** … Ὀρφείην … κεφαλήν (fr. 1.17–18), χέλυν … **λιγυρήν** (fr. 1.19).

> You will be present at every dinner and feast, lying on the lips of many, and lovely youths accompanied by **shrill-sounding** pipes will sing of you in orderly, beautiful and **shrill** voices.

Theognis imagines the reception of his elegiac poetry within a sympotic setting, sung in a shrill style (**λιγέα**, 42) to the accompaniment of 'shrill-sounding' pipes (σὺν αὐλίσκοισι **λιγυφθόγγοις**, 41). The *aulos*, the instrument to which elegy was often performed, is explicitly figured as λίγυς.[122] Like Dionysius Thrax, Theognis thus already associates elegy and its sounds with this aesthetic mode. And it is notable that here too we are close to the world of lament: in the following lines, Theognis pictures Cyrnus' future departure to 'Hades' house **of much wailing**, beneath the depths of the dark earth' (δνοφερῆς ὑπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης | βῆς **πολυκωκύτους** εἰς Ἀΐδαο δόμους, Thgn. 243–44) in language that recalls the Iliadic lament of Andromache upon Hector's death (νῦν δὲ σὺ μὲν Ἀΐδαο δόμους ὑπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης | ἔρχεαι, *Il*. 22.482–83).[123] Already in the sixth century, we thus find λιγυρότης encoded into elegy's own self-identity.

The connection is also suggested by Solon's alias for his fellow elegiac poet Mimnermus (Λιγυαστάδης, Solon fr. 20 W²). As critics in antiquity recognised, this name (like Cycnus' 'Ligurians') evokes the adjective λίγυς; indeed, the Suda claims that the name derives precisely from the 'melodious' and 'shrill' aspect of Mimnermus' poetry (ἐκαλεῖτο δὲ καὶ Λιγυαστάδης διὰ τὸ ἐμμελὲς καὶ **λιγύ**, Suda s.v. Μίμνερμος, μ 1077).[124] If such an etymology underlies Solon's naming of Mimnermus in the sixth century BCE, the connotations of the word must have had a long history. A λίγυς aesthetic, therefore, is the appropriate mode of not only lament, but also elegy. The shrill song of the swan and nightingale was perfectly attuned to both spheres.

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[122] Ancient evidence suggests that the *aulos* was used in at least some elegiac performances, although scholars debate how central it was to the genre: for differing views, see e.g. Faraone (2008); Budelmann and Power (2013); Sbardella (2018), all with further bibliography. Notably, the *aulos* was also closely connected with the song of the nightingale: cf. Aristophanes' *Birds*, where the nightingale appears to have been played by the *aulos*-player: Barker (2004); Weiss (2017) 260–63.

[123] I thank Lawrence Kowerski for drawing my attention to this intertext. The phrase recurs at *Od*. 24.204, concluding the Underworld conversation of Amphimedon and Agamemnon, in which both bemoan their own fates.

[124] Cf. e.g. Klooster (2011) 189. On critical debate surrounding this apparent patronymic and the name of Mimnermus' father, see Kazanskaya (2018).

Besides this shrill lamentatory quality, however, both birds' cries were also regularly associated with sweetness, another quality that resonates strongly with the elegiac aesthetic.[125] According to Isidorus, the swan pours forth a sweet song (Isid. *Orig.* 12.7.18):

olor avis est quem Graeci κύκνον appellant … cycnus autem **a canendo** est appellatus, eo quod **carminis dulcedinem modulatis vocibus** fundit. ideo autem **suaviter** eum canere, quia collum longum et inflexum habet, et necesse est eluctantem vocem per longum et flexuosum iter varias reddere **modulationes**.

The swan is a bird which the Greeks call κύκνος … Moreover, the swan is named **from its singing**, because it pours **out sweet song with modulated sounds**. It is said to sing so **sweetly** because it has a long and curved neck, and the voice, forcing its way through the long and winding route, necessarily utters varied **modulations**.

The phrase *modulatis vocibus* may recall for us the Ovidian language of Canens in *Met.* 14, who similarly *modulatur* with *modulata verba*, but what we should stress here is the emphasis on the *dulcis* nature of the bird's song, an emphasis we also find elsewhere. Lucretius introduces the short song of the swan as a parallel for his own few but sweet-voiced verses,[126] while we have already encountered birds that complain 'sweetly' in Ovid's *Amores* 3.1 and *Heroides* 15 (***dulce*** *queruntur aves*). The association is even already found in Attic drama: in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Cassandra envies the 'sweet life' that the nightingale has received from the gods, in comparison to her own lot (**γλυκύν** τ᾽αἰῶνα, *Ag.* 1148), while in Aristophanes' *Birds*, the nightingale sings sweetly in symphony with the Muses (τὴν δ᾽ **ἡδυμελῆ** ξύμφωνον ἀηδόνα Μούσαις, *Av.* 659). Both birds were thus well known for their sweet and pleasant sounds.

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[125] On elegiac sweetness, see Hunter (2006a). The *Scholia Vaticana* to Dionysius Thrax closely identify elegiac sweetness and shrillness (*GG* I.3, p. 173.17–18): «λιγυρῶς» ἤγουν γλυκερῶς, λιγὺς γὰρ ὁ γλυκύς.

[126] Lucr. 4.180–82 = 909–11: ***suavidicis*** *potius quam multis versibus edam; | parvus ut est cycni melior canor, ille gruum quam | clamor in aetheriis dispersus nubibus austri*: Donohue (1993) 29–31.

As with their shrill song, this recurring emphasis on the birds' sweetness also resonates with key elegiac programmatics: *dulcis* is a familiar programmatic word in Roman elegy, and Callimachus famously describes Mimnermus as 'sweet' in his *Aetia* prologue (**γλυκύς**, fr. 1.11 Harder). But we could also cite Hermesianax's earlier description of Mimnermus in the *Leontion* (fr. 7.35–37 Powell = fr. 3.35–37 Lightfoot):

Μίμνερμος δὲ, τὸν **ἡδὺν** ὃς εὕρετο πολλὸν ἀνατλὰς
    ἦχον καὶ **μαλακοῦ** πνεῦμ᾽ ἀπὸ πενταμέτρου,
καίετο μὲν Ναννοῦς·

Long-suffering Mimnermus, who discovered **sweet** song and the **soft** pentamenter's breath, burned for Nanno.

Hermesianax conceives of Mimnermus as the πρῶτος εὑρετής of the elegiac genre (εὕρετο, 35), taking a clear stance in the ancient debate on this question.[127] What is most significant for us here, however, is the emphasis on Mimnermus' sweet song (**ἡδύν** … ἦχον) and the softness of the pentameter (**μαλακοῦ** … πενταμέτρου), foreshadowing not only Callimachus' praise, but also the Roman conception of *mollitia*. Elegy is a programmatically sweet and soft genre, and in this regard the swan and the nightingale are again ideal models for its acoustics. Of course, sweetness is a rather impressionistic term, and in antiquity it could be applied to a whole range of poets, not only Lucretius but even Homer, the archetypal epic poet.[128] Yet since sweetness was a key concept with which elegiac poets themselves played, the overlap of birdsong and elegiac aesthetic is certainly suggestive.[129]

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[127] Cf. *Ars P*. 77–78 (Section I); Didym. Περὶ ποιητῶν (n.55 above).

[128] Hunter (2006a) 122 with n.12, citing Meliadò (2003) 16 n.46 [*non vidi*]: Eustathius praises Homer for being ὀλιγόστιχος and γλυκύς (*Il*. 369.43 = I 583.21 van der Valk); cf. Dio Chrys. 53.6 (ἡδεῖαν).

[129] This sweetness may also be connected with the *aulos*, an instrument to which elegy was often performed (cf. n.122 above), and which was often associated with sweetness itself (e.g. Pind. *Ol*. 10.93–94: **ἀδυεπής** τε λύρα | **γλυκύς** τ᾽ αὐλός; Bacchyl. 2.12: **γλυκεῖαν** αὐλῶν καναχάν, 'sweet clang of flutes').

Indeed, in this regard, we should close by recalling the mention of 'sweeter nightingales' in the famous *Aetia* prologue of Callimachus (ἀη[δονίδες] δ' ὧδε μελιχρ[ό]τεραι, *Aet*. fr. 1.16 Harder), a phrase which certainly seems to gain added significance from the foregoing discussion. There may be something more specifically elegiac about this combination of nightingales and sweetness than is often thought. Moreover, the later praise of the cicada's λιγὺς ἦχος (fr. 1.29 Harder), the apparent mention of a dying swan in the fragmentary close of the prologue (fr. 1.39–40 Harder), and the possible mention of a λίγεια Μοῦσα (fr. 2a.2 Harder) in the transition to the *Somnium* all combine to suggest that the opening of Callimachus' poem offers the ideal embodiment of the various tropes that we have been exploring above.[130] In this key work of elegiac poetry (cf. ἐλέγοισι, *Aet*. fr. 7.13 Harder), so influential for later Roman poets, we already find the nightingale and swan associated with a sweet and shrill poetics, foreshadowing later Roman elegists' treatment of these birds.

VI. Epilogue

In their sweetness, shrillness and lamentation, therefore, the swan and the nightingale proved ideal figures for the elegiac poet and his sweet yet sombre aesthetic. As we have seen, Hellenistic and Roman poets repeatedly returned to both birds as emblems for elegiac poetry, not just because of their mournful myths, but also because of the very nature of their song, which was both shrill and sweet – just like elegy. Of course, neither bird ever became an exclusively elegiac emblem, and both continued to be employed as 'songbirds' more generally. But the elegiac affinity of the birds' myths and song ensured that they both became a recurring and dominant emblem of the genre.

To close, I would like to suggest one direction in which this research could be expanded, by exploring further aspects of antiquity's generic bestiary. The swan and the nightingale were just one part of a broader tradition of employing animals as emblems for different genres. Besides the swan and the nightingale, we could identify other animals which more occasionally evoke the elegiac genre, such as the Callimachean cicada (see above on *Aet*. fr. 1.29 Harder) or the halcyon,

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[130] See Sberna (2015) on the prologue's swan and its association with a λιγύς aesthetic.

a figure with a similarly mournful myth who appears alongside Procne in Propertius' poem on Cynthia's birthday (3.10.9–10) and the programmatic *Tristia* 5.1 (*hoc* **querulam** *Procnen Halcyonenque facit*, *Trist.* 5.1.60). But we could also examine the symbolic animals of other genres. The horse was strongly associated with epic, for example, while iambos featured a wide cast of programmatically bristly critters: as Mario Telò has recently demonstrated, the donkey (Archil. fr. 21 W^2), fox (Archil. fr. 185–87 W^2) and hedgehog (Archil. fr. 201 W^2) aptly convey the aesthetic *horror* of iambos and its association with shaggy roughness (τραχύτης, δασύτης).[131] In these other cases, however, the sound of these beasts is less prominent: the horse's epic associations reside primarily in its familiar role on the battlefield, while the creatures of iambos signify through their bristling physicality. The swan and nightingale, by contrast, symbolise elegy as much through the aesthetics of their song, as through their thematic or corporeal associations. They encapsulate the sound, as much as the feel, of the genre.

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[131] Telò (2019). The iambic associations of the donkey may add a further layer to Callimachus' dismissal of the beast's dissonant din in the *Aetia* prologue (fr. 1.29–32 Harder); he distances himself from iambic roughness in favour of elegiac refinement.

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