

THE MOODS OF THE ELEGY
IN GREEK LATIN AND ENGLISH POETRY

by

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THE MOODS OF THE ELEGY

In Greek, Latin and English Poetry

INTRODUCTION

If elegy be defined as a song of mourning, an attempt to trace its history would be a difficult task and perhaps an utterly impossible one; for the first stammering speech of man must have voiced sorrow for the dead. In fact, there is no ancient literature free from some form of the dirge and the lament. The subject of this study, however, is not the sorrow-songs of all mankind, but the elegy, named and developed by the Greeks, given its own vehicle--the elegiac distich, broadened to cover many moods, taken over for the sensuous love-plaints of Rome, made teacher and preacher by the scholars of the Middle Ages, and reincarnate in modern English poetry; reincarnate, one may say, since the old distich has not found favor there, although the old name, elegy, with the old connotation, a song of mourning, has a definite place in our great literature.

This study is particularly concerned with determining the original mood of the elegy among the Greeks, which naturally involves the question of its earliest home and earliest use, and is also concerned with the characteristic moods of

the elegy, expanded, developed, handed down to Rome and thence to England and America. The moods that held sway at the time of the appearance of the elegy in England, and the gradual limitation of these moods to one or two is also matter relevant to our subject.

In addition, that interesting reflex of mood on meter and meter on mood, the elegy and the distich, will surely demand some consideration of the distich per se. For though it is difficult to estimate the effect of verse-form on the content, and unsafe to assert positively that any kind of content can not be fitted to any verse mechanism by the power of genius, nevertheless, in all poetry there is surely some inter-reaction, the rules of which the real poets of all ages have understood and applied. So in a study of the moods of the elegy the pentameter should be studied, as to its fitness for the thoughts that have been entrusted to it, its peculiarities under different hands, its variations, and its limitations.

The history of elegy may be called a palimpsest written and overwritten, where it behooves us to show the original writing, clear and bright, underlying all that the centuries have put upon it.

CHAPTER I

DEFINITION AND ORIGINAL MOOD

The definitions of elegy in the various dictionaries and in the works of various writers must necessarily offer suggestions as to office and mood. Liddell and Scott in their Greek-English Lexicon define ἔλεγος as a "song of mourning; a lament, at first without reference to metrical form, so that ἔλεγος were ascribed to the nightingale and Halcyon. Originally accompanied by the flute, whence Euripides speaks of ἄλυρος ἔλεγος, unaccompanied by the lyre." Later the term ἔλεγος became both broadened and restricted in use -- broadened to apply to the expression of other emotions than sorrow, restricted in verse-form to the elegiac distich.

Edmund Gosse in the Encyclopedia Britannica characterizes elegy as "A short poem of lamentation or regret called forth by the death of a beloved or revered person or by a general sense of the pathos of mortality." Here the mood is distinctly narrowed to that of mourning -- the elegy of English literature.

The Nouveau Larousse Illustré has this definition:
"Nom que les anciens donnaient a des pièces de vers sur un sujet quelconque formées d'hexamètres et de pentamètres alternés. Petit poème sur un sujet, le plus souvent tendre et triste Dans les temps modernes l'élégie n'est

plus caractérisée par sa forme extérieure mais par son sujet. Elle chante d'ordinaire des amours contrariées ou interrompue par l'infidélité ou la mort." By this definition the French elegy proves itself the heir of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid in giving the pangs of love an equal place with sorrow for the dead.

Coleridge treats the matter more intensively, thus: "Elegy is the form of poetry natural to the reflective mind. It may treat of any subject, but it must treat of no subject for itself, but always and exclusively with reference to the poet himself. As he will feel regret for the past or desire for the future, so sorrow and love become the principal themes of the elegy. Elegy presents everything as lost and gone, or absent and future. The elegy is the exact opposite of the Homeric epic, in which all is purely external and objective and the poet is a mere voice."¹

In the above definitions all the moods of elegy are mentioned or suggested: the patriotic, or hortatory, mourning over the dead in war and crying for vengeance; the erotic, uttering love-plaints and love raptures; the threnodic, wailing impassioned grief for personal loss; the gnomic, breathing plaintive reflection on the transitory nature of life and youth and giving sage advice as to conduct during the few

1. Coleridge, Table Talk, Oct. 23, 1833

fleeting years that are ours. These moods characterize old Greek elegy and modern elegy also, in French, German and English literature. Since all these moods are found in the oldest elegy remaining to us, and all these themes employ the elegiac distich, it is particularly difficult to determine the original province of this distich, its real ancestry, so to speak, and its relation to the hexameter of epic. For we do not find the distich first in crude unfinished form, undergoing a process of evolution; but from the pen of Callinus, of Ephesus, it comes as polished and perfect as from the pen of Philetas, the Alexandrian.

The whole question of origins is so tantalizingly mysterious that there are a number of theories to which critics have pinned their faith and since all are somewhat concerned with the original mood of elegy they demand examination here.

First, that elegy has an orgiastic origin and is closely connected with ancient orgiastic cults of Greece or of Asia Minor--such as the Demeter and Cybele cults.

Second, allied to this, that elegy does indeed originate in orgiastic practice, though a practice perfectly natural to a primitive people and not necessarily closely connected with the rites of any particular cult, that is, the practice of mourning for the dead with formal dirges and special mourners in the wild fashion that soon runs into

ecstasy. Mourning of this sort is still to be seen and heard among the Syrians, Armenians and kindred folk no less than among savage tribes. In this interpretation, elegy may be derived from the Homeric dirge or the so-called Lydian dirge so intimately associated with the music of the flute.

A third theory of origin is that literary elegy was a conscious invention for the entertainment of guests in the symposium. A conscious fitting of verse-form, the distich, to a context more personal than the hexameter of epic would admit.

A fourth, the folk-lore theory, is interesting and credible. It is supported by the same sort of reasoning that supports folk-lore as the basis of Homer's epics and of other great national epics. The remnants of several folk-laments, such as the Linus and Adonis songs, supply definite foundation for this theory.

A fifth theory somewhat resembles the third. Elegy is said to be the invention of Callinus, the most ancient literary elegist (690 B. C.) However, the elegy of Callinus was not intended to entertain and amuse, but to arouse patriotic fervor for heroic deeds. Those who support this theory reason that the creation of elegy was not a difficult performance for a clever Greek, since all he had to do for his distich was slightly to modify the second of two hexameters, and, for his music, to pick up the flute instead of the lyre.

The matter of original mood in all these theories is a comparatively simple alternative: gnomic or erotic, in the sympotic theory; threnodic or hortatory, in the others.

The origin of the word, elegy, and the critical data about it furnish an interesting and enlightening introduction to a detailed consideration of theories. Jevons tells us that the word elegos is of Phrygian origin. He supports his statement by the evidence of tradition, that curiously tenacious witness, which always connects this form of composition with the music of the flute, a Phrygian invention. He mentions two Armenian words, elegu, flute, and ielarakan, mournful, which may either or both have been turned into elegos by the Greeks, since the earliest Greek elegy was spoken of by old writers as a funeral song with flute accompaniment.²

R. C. Jebb also ascribes elegos to Armenia, and says that in Greece the word meant first, a misfortune, sad event, and then a kind of dirge played on the flute for the dead. He, too, speaks of Phrygia as the original home of the flute, the music of which the musical reformer Olympus developed in the eighth century B.C. From Phrygia to the Ionian Greeks was a slight and natural migration.³

Mehaffy agrees with the others as to the origin of elegos, saying that the word was originally applied to plaintive melodies on the Phrygian flute and that it is uncertain

2. Jevons, Hist. Grk. Lit. p.111.

3. Jebb, Clas. Grk. Poetry p. 95.

whether these were with or without words. He cites occasions where the aulos, a flute of reeds, is mentioned in the Iliad and the Homeric Hymns.⁴

Crusius, in Pauly-Wissowa's Real-Encyclopädie, goes into the matter of legendary associations in some detail, arguing from the well-attested fact that a name often personifies a series of events general in character. Two legendary women, Elegie, and Elegeis, have suggestive names and stories. The former, daughter of Procte, is connected with the cult of Dionysus. The latter is the daughter of Neleus who led an Ionian colony to Caria. Elegeis has affiliation with the Demeter cult and its incitement to patriotic ecstasy.⁵ Here is the old circle, here are names like touchstones-- Ionia, Caria and the Carian dirges, patriotic ecstasy and Callinus of Ephesus.

There is a Theocles of Naxos or Eretria, who, tradition says, founded on Naxos an altar to Apollo and in a state of Apollonian ecstasy shouted the first elegiac distichs. A word elegaemen, to be mad, is said to give name to his composition.⁵

Besides these meaningful names, the generally accepted etymology for the word elegy, though it may be all wrong, certainly deserves mention. In Liddell and Scott this word is spoken of as a probable combination of two words--ἔειλέγειν

4. Mehaffy, A Hist. of Clas. Grk. Lit. p. 175. v.I

5. Crusius, in Pauly-Wissowa's Real-Encycl. p. 2260 ff.

"to say woe."

Crusius is perhaps the most important advocate of the orgiastic theory in this article just cited in the Real-Encyclopedie. He rejects Immisch's suggestion that the parent cult is the Cypris Adonis cult, voicing sorrow and excess, and says the Demeter cult, in its patriotic ecstasy, has a nearer claim. The wild plaintive strains of the flute are known to have been favored by all these orgiastic cults. Furthermore all these cults seem to look back to a home in Asia Minor where the flute also had its home, and where Callinus of Ephesus wrote the first literary elegy.

Kirby Flower Smith follows Crusius and asserts that the traditional association of the elegy with the flute naturally points to an origin in the sphere of those orgiastic cults with which the flute itself was identified. Then he goes on to shift the weight of his argument to the second theory stated above, when he says that the real significance of his statement becomes evident as soon as we realize that in a primitive condition of society the expression of emotion soon becomes ecstatic or orgiastic, and that from that point whether the original motive was sorrow, patriotic fervor, religious excitement, or love, the symptoms are very much the same. 6

Truly, the chief objection to the theory that elegy originated in some definite orgiastic cult, such as the Deme-
6. Intr. to Tibullus, the Elegies, pp. 13 and 14.

ter cult, seems to be that there is no argument for this theory that does not apply with even greater force to the second theory. It is obvious that elegy may have been produced by the same type of mind that produced and developed the Demeter cult, the Cybele cult, and others; but there is no indication that elegy was ever dedicated to any particular god or that it was preeminently religious in character. The myths mentioned by Crusius are too indistinct and various and might easily have been fabricated for purposes of explanation.

The theory that elegy did indeed originate in a primitive society whose emotions soon became orgiastic but that it was not the child of any orgiastic religious cult must next be considered. With the starting-point clearly before us--that the first literary elegy was a call to arms, that it speaks of heroism and death in battle, and rings with patriotic fervor--and with this further fact in mind, that almost contemporary with Callinus were other elegists whose theme was personal grief and the sorrows of death and unrequited love, let us go back of the elegy for a moment and consult with Homer at Phrygian Troy.

When old Priam had redeemed from Achilles the body of brave Hector, and the bearers had come with the sorrowful burden within the walls of Troy: "when they had brought him to the famous house, [they] laid him on a fretted bed, and set

beside him minstrels, leaders of the dirge, who wailed a mournful lay, while the women made moan with them. And among the women white-armed Andromache led the lamentation while in her hands she held the head of Hector, slayer of men: 'Husband thou art gone young from life, and leavest me a widow in thy halls. And the child is yet but a little one, child of ill-fated parents, thee and me; nor methinks shall he grow up to manhood, for ere then shall this city be utterly destroyed. For thou art verily perished who didst watch over it, who guardedst it and keptest safe its noble wives and infant little ones. These soon shall be voyaging in the hollow ships, yea and I too with them, and thou, my child, shalt either go with me unto a place where thou shalt toil at unseemly tasks, labouring before the face of some harsh lord, or else some Achaian will take thee by the arm and hurl thee from the battlement, a grievous death, for that he is wroth because Hector slew his brother or father or son, since full many of the Achaians at Hector's hands have bitten the firm earth. For no light hand had thy father in the grievous fray. Therefore the folk lament him throughout the city, and woe unspeakable and mourning hast thou left to thy parents, Hector, but with me chiefliest shall grievous pain abide. For neither didst thou stretch thy hands to me from a bed in thy death, neither didst speak to me some memorable word that I might have thought on ever-

more as my tears fall night and day."⁷

Following come Hecuba's lament and Helen's, who stirred "unending moan."

Let us note several points: (1) this dirge was led by 'minstrel leaders,' indicating a minstrel guild; (2) Homer, so faithful to tradition, ascribed the dirge to Trojans in Troy, the main city of Phrygia, home of the flute; (3) the moods of this dirge are practically the moods of the first literary elegy--grief for the heroic dead, patriotic fervor, personal agony for love and joy departed, bereavement.

Laments of this sort, the Lydian dirge, for example, accompanied by the keen shrill of the Phrygian flute, might easily have been taken over by the Ionian Greeks, made Greek in spirit, translated into hexameters and broken hexameters, so-called pentameters, that convey so fittingly grief and discontent.

We know that early elegy is Ionian in dialect, and we know that among ancient writers it wears a tradition of woe, wrapped always about it like a mourning veil, and that this is true even when the elegy seems happiest. Why should Euripides in his Attic drama, *Andromache*, put a lament into elegiac distichs and the Ionian dialect,⁸ if he were not thereby implying a lament convention? For the Greek

7. *Iliad*, xxiv, 720 ff, Lang Leaf & Myers Trans. p 500-501

8. Eur. *Andr.* 103-116

dramatists made a conscious effort to have varying meters express varying shades of thought; and so Euripides' use of the elegiac meter may surely be deemed significant.

The third theory of origins--that the symposium created the elegy--seems too far drawn to be really important, though K. O. Müller makes out a plausible case for this theory by saying that the purpose of the literary elegy was to entertain at symposia, no matter what tradition might imply as to preliterate elegy and its panoply of grief. He asserts that the word elegeion like the word epos refers not to the subject of a poem but to its form, and thus means simply a combination of hexameter and pentameter to make a distich, while a poem of such distichs makes an elegeia. He cites many instances where the early elegists mention feasts or wine as a matter of course, as Theognis in his poems to Cyrnus. Even when the composition expresses sorrow for the dead he feels that it was supposed to be sung at the funeral feast, and that the excess of feeling often voiced in elegy may be partially due to excess of wine. According to Müller there is no mood really characteristic of elegy. It is a form of verse adapted to express personal emotions--a thing tradition forbade the epic--and thus it received the first lyric impulses of a splendidly lyric race. After stating and explaining his symptotic theory, however, Müller traces elegos back to Phrygia or Lydia, saying that the word

can hardly be Greek in origin. He sees a clear connection between the laments prevalent in Lydia, Phrygia, and Armenia and the elegos developed among the Ionians, and insists that being so close they could hardly fail to borrow the lament with the flute, and we know they did borrow the flute.⁹

His contention in regard to the use of elegy at symposia seems not at all unreasonable and would explain the variety of moods found in the verse of Callinus, Mimnermus, and Archilochus; but when he argues for a sympotic origin, and then goes far back of the symposium to the ultimate ancestry of elegy among the dirges of Asia Minor, his beautifully worked-out theory of origins strikes us as not a theory of origins at all, but a theory of the Greek adoption of something already well developed.

The fourth theory of origin, that folk-lore was the basis of the elegy, can be well defended because of the very ancient folk-songs of the lament type cited quite frequently in early writers.

These lament songs generally were sung at the rustic festivals, and all sorrowfully bewail the death of some beautiful boy. The Linus story was popular even in the time of Homer, for in the description of Achilles' shield we have these lines: "And he set therein a vineyard teeming plent-

9. Müller, Hist. Lit. Anc. Gr. Vol. I, p.142-4

eously with clusters, wrought fair in gold; black were the grapes but the vines hung throughout on silver poles..... And maidens and striplings in childish glee bare the sweet fruit in plaited baskets. And in the midst of them a boy made pleasant music on a clear-toned viol, and sang thereto a sweet Linus-song with delicate voice; while the rest with feet falling together kept time with the music and the song.¹⁰

This Linus song was wide-spread, seemingly a vintage-song, current in several localities of Greece proper, also in Cyprus, thence it points further back even to Phoenicia and Bithynia. It has been interpreted to symbolize the death of summer in the death of the beautiful Linus.

The chorus of this song, "Ai Linon!" Jevons tells us, suggests the Semitic words "ai le nu!" woe is us.¹¹

There is also the Adonis song, current in the southern part of Asia Minor and in many Greek settlements. Jevons finds a parallel for this name also in the Semitic Adonai, lord. This song has the same general content as the Linus-song.

Others of a similar nature are: Lityerses, sung in Phrygia at the cutting of the corn; Bormus, with flute accompaniment, current among the Mariandygnians on the shores of the Black sea; the Hylas story, from Bithynia, the Olen hymn from Delos, in which Olen is said to have been a Lycian.

10. Hom. Il. XVIII p. 561 ff, Transl. L.L. & M.

11. Jevons, Hist. Grk. Lit. p. 111

This song is traceable to Phoenicia, and must have belonged to the Phoenician worship that existed in Delos before the introduction of the worship of Apollo.

The Asiatic origin of these folk-songs, and the fact that the flute was used with most of them, with the further fact that these laments were known in Greece at a very early time, and that the elegy was used with no instrument but the flute, furnish almost certain evidence of some connection between elegy and the folk-laments we have been considering.

The fifth theory of origins, that the literary elegy and the distich were the invention of Callinus, may be true, but seems to be so much a pure guess that we can hardly give it more than passing mention. The modifying of a hexameter into the so-called pentameter would be no marvellous task, not so difficult as the work of Archilochus in inventing the iambic. Singing his heart out to arouse his countrymen to brave deeds is not unthinkable on the part of the poet of Ephesus; but that vague ancient rumor that he did invent the elegy, and the surmise that he could have done it are not particularly convincing as arguments.

From the above study of words and theories, several conclusions may perhaps be drawn. First, the literary elegy among the Ionian Greeks has a background, too definite to be disregarded, in the mournful songs of Asia Minor, with their flute accompaniment; all the theories point in that direction,

the etymology of the words, the associations of place. Furthermore it is evident that the Ionic dialect used in almost all old Greek elegy shows that the Greeks themselves recognized it as a heritage from Asia Minor, noted in the case of Euripides and his Andromache.

Finally, then, we must conclude: that early elegy was a song of mourning probably at first of a military type, modeled after the Lydian Dirge, because the untimely death of a soldier in battle would naturally arouse strong emotion; and that this song of mourning was accompanied by the piercing wail of the Phrygian flute; that the first mood of the elegy when put into distich form was threnodic and then hortatory; that the personal character of the elegy merely serves to emphasize the fact that even when given freedom to express their thoughts as they would in the distich, the early Greeks seemed to express by it sombre reflections on death, decay, losses, abuses and love's despairs.

CHAPTER II

THE DISTICH

The elegiac distich is made up of a hexameter and a so-called pentameter verse. This pentameter, the characteristic part of the distich, is really a hexameter with the third and sixth foot catalectic, leaving thus one long syllable in the middle of the verse and another at the end, which, counted together as one foot, give the pentameter its name. There is a certain rigidity about the pentameter that the typical hexameter lacks, however, since the pentameter admits no substitution in the dactyls of the second dipody; the verse must run — — — — — in that half of the pentameter.

This distich appears first in literature in the verse of Callinus of Ephesus and shows all the characteristics mentioned above. Hence it is supposed to have been an invention of the Greeks and to have grown out of the heroic hexameter as a variation more suited to express the personal emotions surging through the hearts of the lyricists.

Several facts and tendencies may be noted about the mechanics of the distich. First, its peculiar metrical effect. After the grand sweep of the hexameter the broken melody of the pentameter seems to lend the whole a character of division, of futility, like a fountain that rises clear and strong only to fall back in baffled spray into its own basin.

Second, The fitness of the distich to express epigrammatic utterances. The pentameter so divides continuous verse that it lends to it an appearance of stanzaic form-- short stanzas that seem to stop of themselves the flow of thought. Hence the short concise epigram finds the distich suitable and convenient. The very early epigram, however, was written to be carved on a tomb; so it may have chosen this meter because of the tradition of mourning that hung about the elegy and the distich; and the later epigrammatists may have simply used the meter of the ancients. At all events, we may be sure they would have discarded a meter that was difficult or inconvenient.

Third, growing from the above, the tendency among later Greek elegists and Roman elegists to let each distich be a thought unit. This tendency, as in the case of the English heroic couplet, causes the distich to be used for sentences, short maxims, quotable wisdom that may lend pith to an oration or point the moral in a sermon. But, however useful this may be, it tends to cheapen the distich, to make it ridiculous and commonplace, and to discourage its use in expressing the exalted emotion of true poetry.

Fourth, the rhythmic balance in the pentameter lends itself easily to rhyme; so rhyme does appear--too frequently among some elegists to be wholly accidental.

The first point--the peculiar metrical effect of the

distich has seemed to some almost its *raison d'être*, under the assumption that the emotion of grief created a meter, broken, plaintive, hopeless. That broken plaintive music was called elegos, we know from the halcyon's lament in Euripides,¹ and the invocation of the nightingale in Aristophanes.² At all events, this much is true: the mood of care free merriment always seems to wear the distich most ungracefully. A nursery rhyme in hexameters would give somewhat the same effect as the lightness of Catullus³ or Ovid⁴ gives in some of their elegy. On the other hand Ovid's mastery of the distich-mechanism makes a plaintive theme highly effective under his hand:

Cum subit illius tristissima noctis imago,
 qua mihi supremum tempus in urbe fuit,
 Cum repeto noctem, cum tot mihi cara reliqui,
 labitur ex oculis nunc quoque gutta meis.⁵

These verses have simplicity and dignity and seem to be especially suited to the meter. Catullus' laments for his brother give us an even greater sense of appropriateness--perhaps it is their sincerity that burns across the centuries.

The use of the distich for the epigram concerns us on-

1. I.T. 109 ff
2. Av. 218
3. Cat. 102, 108
4. Amor. I, 15
5. Trist. 1, 3. vs 1-4

ly when we consider the epigram as allied to elegy and can treat it in its relations to elegy proper; for there are places where boundary lines are lost and we cannot tell elegy from epigram. This is particularly noticeable in the case of the older sepulchral epigrams. The moods of elegy are distinct in many of these, not excepting the erotic mood; and when the poems consist of from three to five distichs it is difficult to say whether they are long epigrams or short elegies. At any rate, there is a great mass of these epigrams, that sum up in a few clear-cut words the salient beauty or defect in a life or the grief of a broken heart. Many of them show great similarity to the lament-songs of the Linus and Hyacinth type, in deploring the untimely death of some lovely youth or maiden. The almost invariable use of the distich in epigram must surely be considered significant.

Our third point--the tendency of the distich to become a thought unit--is particularly interesting because it seems to mark the decline of this verse form as a carrier of elevated poetry.

With Callinus, Mimnermus, Theognis, and Solon, the thought played in and about the single distich but was not bound by it in any apparent way. Several distichs or a part of a distich might convey a complete thought. For example, the longest fragment of Mimnermus, in eight distichs,

has a first sentence of two and a fraction distichs. In Mimnermus 11, consisting of seven verses, there is only one sentence. In Theognis an examination of five hundred verses shows only about ten per cent of the distichs to be end-stopped. Among the Romans, however, the opposite tendency is noticeable, and culminates in the work of Ovid. One of his Amores of seventeen distichs, has fourteen that make complete sentences. An examination of eighty-three continuous distichs from the Heroides shows about two thirds of these to be end-stopped.

The tendency toward making each distich a neat little package of thought thus becomes a habit in Ovid. He has completely divorced the tradition of sorrow also from his elegy, and uses the distich to express anything and everything-- uses it much too glibly; with the result that in the hands of his imitators, it is cheapened and defiled and never again regains its old place of high honor.

The fourth point of interest in the study of the distich, the use of rhyme, is probably due to a sense of rhythmic balance which the equal divisions of the pentameter give. The Greek elegists used rhyme sparingly; so sparingly, in fact, that one is tempted to consider the rhyme accidental in many cases. Thus the rhymes that appear in Callinus' pentameters are too few to demand consideration. On the other hand, when Theognis uses rhymes in five successive pentame-

ters, we are forced to believe he rather liked the pleasing sound.

καὶ γήρως ποιοῦ, Κύρνε, καὶ ἠπιάλου
 ῥιπτεῖν καὶ πετρέων, Κύρνε, κατ' ἠλιβατων
 οὐθ' ἔρξαι δύναται, γλώσσα δὲ οἱ δέδετα
 δίξασθαι χαλεπῆς, Κύρνε, λύσιν πενίης
 ἢ ζῶειν χαλεπῇ τειρόμενον πενίῃ

Mimnarmus has four rhymed pentameters out of forty-two. His first elegy, moreover, has a delightful rhyme in the first pentameter.

τεθναίην ὅτι μοι μηκέτι ταῦτα μέλοι

Solon, Callinus, and Tyrtaeus use very few rhymes. The $\omega\nu$ sound is popular with the two last named, perhaps because of the rolling sonorous sound of the syllable, appropriate for a call to arms. As stated above, however, where rhyme is used so sparingly we cannot be at all sure that it is used with purpose.

The Romans used rhyme much more freely than did the Greeks--end-rhyme, medial-rhyme, rhyme even at the caesural division of the hexameter. Catullus' verse has ten per cent rhymed hexameters, twenty-two per cent rhymed pentameters, and seventeen per cent similar endings. The percentage of rhymes in Ovid and Tibullus is very nearly the same as in Catullus. In Propertius the climax is reached. In fact, he seems to use rhyme wherever he can fit it in. In the sixth elegy of his first book, ten out of eighteen pentameters

have medial rhymes and two others have consonance that give the effect of rhyme; while six of the hexameters have either consonance or rhyme. Propertius is fond, too, of rhyming quatrains and odd interweavings of medial and terminal rhyme until he gives a distinct individuality to his use of the elegiac meter by such practises.

For example:

Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis
 contactum nullis ante cupidinibus
 tum mihi constantis dejecit lumina fastus
 et caput impositis pressit Amor pedibus,
 donec me docuit castas odisse puellas
 improbus et nullo vivere consilio
 et mihi iam toto furor hic non deficit anno,
 cum tamen adversos cogor habere deos.
 Milanion nullos fugiendo, Tulle, labores
 saevitiam durae contudit Iasidae.⁷

In these verses the first and second pentameters have an odd arrangement of similar endings and medial rhymes. We note also the repetition of the o sound in vss. 6 and 7, and the odd effect of adversos, nullos, and deos in vss. 8 and 9.

The following seem to disprove the possible argument that these rhymes were used by Propertius not at all for the

7. Prop. I, 1, 1-10

sake of the similar sound but merely in order that words that agree might occupy similar positions in the distich and so lend balance to the verses:

Et merito quoniam potui fugisse puellam!
 Quin etiam absenti prosunt tibi, Cynthia, venti
 necdum tu possis, spiritus iste levis
 illic quidquid ero, semper tua dicar imago
 cogor et ipse meis auribus esse gravis
 tu quoque si quando venies ad fata, memento,
 me licet unda ferat, te modo terra tegat
 deinde inter matrem deus ipse interque sororem⁸

The balance of modifier and noun, mentioned above, is seen, however, in most of the rhymed verses of Propertius; though considering the fact that he is dealing with the highly-inflected Latin language, and with a very definite meter, this balance should not astonish us. What does seem rather astonishing is the great number of rhymes he manages to use in this way.

The following fairly jingles with rhyme:

Coeum et Phlegraeis Oromedonta iugis,
 celsaque Romanis decerpta Palatia tauris
 ordiar et caeso moenia firma Remo,
 eductosque pares silvestri ex ubere reges,
 crescet et ingenium sub tua iussa meum,⁹

8. Prop. I, 17, 1 and 5: 9, 32: 19, 11: 12, 14.
 II, 13, 39: 26, 44: 31, 15

9. Prop. III, 9, 48-52

And this group of four different rhymes in four consecutive verses certainly proves definite intention on the part of the poet:

Quid mirare, meam si versat femina vitam
 et trahit addictum sub sua iura virum,
 criminaque ignavi capitis mihi turpia fingis,
 quod nequeam fracto rumpere vincla iugo?¹⁰

The following is an odd alternation of rhyme and similar ending:

Falsa est ista tuae, mulier, fiducia formae,
 olim oculis nimium facta superba meis.
 noster amor tales tribuit tibi, Cynthia, laudes;
 versibus insignem te pudet esse meis.¹¹

The o sound in these three verses becomes somewhat monotonous:

cum tremeret patrio pendula turba sacro,
 annuaque accenso celebrare Parilia faeno,
 qualia nunc curto lustra noventur equo.¹²

An examination of the forty-nine distichs of Hermesianax preserved by Athenaeus,¹³ reveals the source and model of Propertius' peculiarities of versification, noted above. In this long fragment Hermesianax effects a decided balance

10. II, 1-4

11. II, 24, 1-4.

12. IV, 1, 18-20.

13. Athen. XIII 597-599

between the two halves of twenty-eight of his pentameters by placing at the end of the divisions of each of these, words that agree with each other. Nineteen out of the twenty-eight instances make excellent rhyme. In four pentameters, moreover, there is a sort of similarity of sound, not real rhyme but approaching it, that might indicate Hermesianax' rhyming intention--for we know near-rhyme is found frequently in English verse, the rhyme-intention of which no one can question. In fact, only sixteen of these pentameters show neither agreement nor endings that might have been intended to give an effect of rhyme. From the longer fragments of Callimachus and other Alexandrians, we judge this practice to have been common in the Alexandrian school, a characteristic, in fact, of their elegy; but our evidence is not sufficient to prove conclusively whether they used this balance because they liked the rhyme it generally produced, or used the balance for the sake of the balance only, with rhyme as an unintentional by-product.

Propertius carried this practice of his models so much further--even into the parts of the hexameter separated by the caesural pause--that we must conclude that he at least did like the pleasing concord of sound and that his interweavings of rhymes were decidedly intentional.

The distich of the first Christian centuries and of the middle ages is used for every sort of triviality as

well as for long didactic dissertations. Orientius gives us a didactic treatment of the theme of immortality; Emmodius writes a begging letter and a long descriptive poem in distichs; Sedulius, in the first half of the fifth century of our era, writes a strange elegy in praise of Christ, where the hexameter states the Old Testament prophecy and the pentameter the New Testament fulfilment. The distich was used also for catalogues of events and things, until it is no wonder the new English elegy spurned it and chose rather the ode form for its poems of sorrow.

In English literature, indeed, very little use of the elegiac distich for any subject matter can be found; though the following stanza from William Dean Howell's poem, Earliest Spring shows that this verse form can be quite effective in English:

Tossing his mane of snows in wildest eddies and tangles

Lion-like March cometh in, hoarse with tempestuous
breath,

Through all the moaning chimneys, and 'thwart all the
hollows and angles

Round the shuddering house, threatening of winter and
death.¹⁴

14. Ox. Bk. of Eng. Verse. 312

CHAPTER III

CLASSICAL GREEK ELEGY

Greek elegy has been divided into three periods: the old (700-500 B.C.), the middle (500-300 B.C.), and the new (300-100 B.C.). For the study of mood, however, a division into two periods would seem more to the purpose; namely: the classical Greek elegy, and the Alexandrian elegy. Such a division seems justified by a survey of the widely different social and political conditions that produced these two distinct types of elegiac literature.

The so-called old elegy was altogether a voice of change, social, political, individual; and it was a voice crying--for reform, for justice, for personal joys and physical comfort--a voice of reproach and of instruction; but it made no attempt to be learned nor was it diffuse. It expressed its emotions and was dumb. We include the elegy of the middle period with this earlier group because apart from epigram, what little of it remains to us is of the same general character as the old elegy.

On the other hand, the Alexandrian elegy is distinct and *sui generis*. Society was brilliant, luxurious, effete, but not protesting. Political power was in the hands of the few, and no one cared to contest their mastery. The learned became poets, and poets became first of all scholars, overflowing with mythological lore. The elegy they produced

was, naturally, learned, diffuse, artificial, highly erotic in an age when love was a cult rather than an emotion or a passion. Hence for the study of moods our classical period will include all the elegy written up to the Alexandrian Age.

The epic age of expansion and of racial glorification had passed. Men were beginning to be intensely individual and to guard jealously this individuality from encroachment. So, tyrants came to be, and social unrest, and civil wars, and oppression and protest. In the stress of such conditions the elegists began to sing and to teach and to preach. The old elegy is intensely personal, intensely vigorous. When Callinus calls to arms, and Theognis curses the black-hearted rabble, and Solon pleads for reform, we feel the throb of passionate sincerity. These men meant what they said and meant it with every atom of their being.

In our study of the moods of their elegy, therefore, we have to deal with moods that were dominant and real, somewhat primitive, perhaps, but by no means critical, analytical, or subtle.

The first of the old elegists, as stated in the preceding chapter, was Callinus of Ephesus. So fragmentary are his literary remains, so vague and far his imprint upon history, our account of him must necessarily be brief.

Callinus flourished about 690 B.C., at the time when

his native city and, in fact, all Ionia were suffering much from successive invasions by the Cimmerians, a savage tribe of northern Europe. The elegy of Callinus is a call to arms. He urges the luxury-loving youth of his city to rise from their sloth and to drive out the invader. There is a very passion of protest in these lines:

"How long will ye lie idle, when will ye assume a doughty spirit, young men? Ye have no regard for your neighbors, remiss as ye are, and ye think to abide in peace when war covers all the land.* 1

And in these a sincere tribute to those who die in defense of their country:

"Let someone hurl the last spear and die, for it is an honor and a glory for a man to fight the foe in defense of his land and his children and his wedded wife. Death will come at the time for which the fates have spun the thread, but let one go straightway with spear uplifted and covering a valiant heart behind his shield when first the conflict is joined. For in no wise is it fated for a man to escape from death, not even if he be of the lineage of immortal ancestors; and oftimes, escaping from the fray and the hurtling of spears, he locks his doors and the fate of death finds him in his own home For sorrow comes to the whole people for a man of great soul when he dies,

1. Frag. 1 B.

for worthy is he of the race of the demigods. Thus do they before their eyes behold in him a tower, for he alone does deeds worth much."²

The mood here is distinctly hortatory; but certainly the thought of death runs thru and about Callinus' meagre fragments, as distinct to the sense as a thread of scarlet in white wool.

Tyrtaeus' elegy is much like that of Callinus in tone and character. He lived about 685 B.C., at the time when Sparta was engaged in the Second Messenian War. Sparta was in the throes of social disorder. Spartans whose property had been damaged by the war wanted a redistribution of land, and men were forgetting patriotism in a selfish scramble for possession. Tyrtaeus wrote stirring elegies in the Ionian dialect urging respect for the laws and patriotic vigor in dealing with the Messenians. The Spartans grew to think so highly of his songs that they would sing them at table, in camp, and before battle.

There are several traditions about Tyrtaeus' origin. One has it that he was a lame Athenian schoolmaster whom Athens had sent in derision to show Sparta how to fight. It is hardly credible, however, that Sparta would ask or accept such aid from her rival. Another tradition makes him an emigrant from Asia Minor and names Miletus as his native city.

2. Frag. 1 B.

A third tradition makes him come from Aphidnae, an Athenian town which legends of the Dioscuri connect with Laconia from a very early time. At any rate, Tyrtaeus used the Ionian dialect to express sentiments of Spartan vigor and simplicity, and wherever lay the land that gave him birth, Sparta was undoubtedly the native country of his soul.

Tyrtaeus' most famous elegy is called Eunomia, Good Laws; in this he draws a picture of the good government Sparta has and tries to bring calm out of stress. It's mood is gnomic or didactic. The other elegies are hortatory in mood. He sings the shame of cowardice, the glory of courage, the inevitability of death. Symonds quotes Campbell's translation:

"How glorious fall the valiant sword in hand
 In front of battle for their native land,
 But Oh, what ills await the wretch that yields,
 A recreant outcast from his country's fields.
 The mother whom he loves shall quit her home
 An aged father at his side shall roam,
 His little ones shall weeping with him go
 And a young wife participate his woe,
 While scorned and scoffed upon by every face
 They pine for food and beg from place to place."³

3. Symonds, J.A. The Grk. Poets, Vol. I p. 242.

The glorious death of the valiant might be said to be the theme of all this patriotic elegy. For example:

"Let us fight courageously in this land and let us die for our children, no longer sparing our lives."

"But, young men, stand by one another and fight and begin not shameful flight or coward fear, but make the heart in your breasts great and valiant and be not lovers of your lives when ye fight men."⁴

"For it is a cause of shame that an older man should fall amidst the foremost fighters and lie dead before the young; and that he who has silver hair and a grey beard should breathe out a valiant soul in the dust --- a shame and a reproach were it to behold that with one's eyes but for the young all things are meet as long as one has the flower of lovely youth; admirable for men to look upon, lovely in the sight of women while he lives and glorious when he falls among the front rank of warriors."⁵

Fragment 12 is interesting because of Tyrtaeus' unaccustomed use of mythological references and because of the picture he draws of his ideal of manliness. He says:

" I would not recall or make mention of a man nor of his prowess in running or wrestling not even if he had the bigness and might of the Cyclopes and outstripped the Thracian Boreas in the race, nor if he were handsomer than

4. Frag. 10 B.

5. Frag. 10 B.

Tithonus and richer than Midas and Cinyras, nor if he were more kingly than Pelops, son of Tantalus, and had the tongue of Adrastus with its honeyed speech, nor if he had all kinds of glory for impetuous courage; for he is not a man good in war unless he has the heart to look upon the bloody slaughter and standing near has dealt blows upon the foe. That is courage, and that is the best and most glorious prize in the world for a young man to win. A common glory is it for the city and all the people whatsoever man striding through the foremost fighters abides immovably and utterly forgets disgraceful flight, setting at naught his life and valiant soul, as he stands by his neighbor and encourages him with words.But whose falls among the foremost and loses his dear life while he brings glory to his town and to his people and to his fathers, smitten through his bossy shield and through his breastplate and through his breast, his young and old lament and all his city is filled with sorrow and mourning, and his tomb and his children and his children's children and generations yet unborn have glory.But if he escape the fate of death that lays men low and victoriously wins great renown for his spear, all men honor him, young and old alike and after a happy life he passes down to Hades; growing old he is conspicuous among his townsmen and no one is minded to deprive him of respect or right but all rise up from their places, both young and old, and give

him a seat. And now let everyone try with all his heart to reach the crown of such excellence and not be remiss in war."⁶

The above seems to contain all Tyrtaeus has for us of beauty and wisdom.

Mimnermus of Smyrna flourished about 620 B.C. He voices the hopeless discontent of a people given over to unhappy social conditions--remembering better days yet acquiescent. His elegy is elegy in the modern sense, for it reflects sadly on the passing of beauty and youth and love, and its keynote is the gloomy imminence of age and death.

Mimnermus' poems are said to have been written to a lovely flute-player, Nanno, with whom he was seriously in love, and on this account he has been called the founder of the erotic elegy. From the fragments we have of him no such conclusions can be drawn, for he does not mention the lady's name, speaks longingly of love in only one fragment and makes the theme of that fragment as well as of the others rather the passing of youth into doleful age; and furthermore expands this theme almost ad nauseam and most impersonally. Thus his elegy as we see it does not reveal him as a passionate lover interested in one woman, but as a philosopher reflecting on love's changes and life's disappointments. His work is supposed to have restored to elegy its original flavor of gentle mourning.

6. Frag. 12, B.

An examination of political conditions throws some light on Mimnermus' mood. Smyrna, after beating back Gyges, had fallen later into the oppressive hands of his successor. Political subjection then had much to do with giving that melancholy touch to Mimnermus' poetry. There is beauty, however, and real inspiration in most of his fragments. His far-famed erotic elegy follows:

"What is life and what joy is there without golden Aphrodite! May I die when I am no longer interested in such things--secret love and sweet gifts and the couch. The flowers of youth alone for men and women are worth the getting. For when painful old age comes, making even the handsome man ugly, carking care gnaws at the soul and one has no joy in looking upon the rays of the sun but is hateful to boys and finds no honor with women--so hard has God made old age."⁷

Again: "We are like leaves that grow in the flowery season of spring, when they quickly spring up beneath the rays of the sun. Like unto them we enjoy for a brief span the flowers of youth, knowing at the hands of the gods neither evil nor good. But the black fates stand beside us, one with the goal of burdensome old age, the other with that of death. Short-lived is the fruit of youth while the sun scatters its light upon the earth, but when we pass this period of time, to die forthwith is better than life, for many woes come to the soul. In one case the house is wasted, and the woeful

circumstances of poverty assail. Another wants for children and yearning most for them he passes down beneath the earth to Hades, and another has a soul consumed with sickness; and there is not one of them to whom Zeus does not give many ills."⁸

In accordance with such sentiments he prays: "May the fate of death without sickness and without grievous care find me at the age of sixty."⁹

In the above fragments is the despair, the ennui, of one who has given up. The following strikes a more manly note:

"Having left the lofty Meleian town of Pylos, we came with our ships to the charming land of Asia and to lovely Colophon, and with overnight of arms we took our stand-- leaders of relentless insolence; and thence starting out from the banks of the river, by the will of the gods, we took Aeolian Smyrna."¹⁰

It is hard to imagine any trait of "relentless insolence" about the world-weary poet who has been singing so disconsolately of the passing glory of youth.

The famous picture he draws of the labors of the sun throws a still different light upon Mimnermus:

"For Helius has gained toil for all his days, and there

8. Frag. 2, B.

9. Frag. 6, B.

10. Frag. 9, B.

is never any rest for him or for his horses, when rosy-fingered Eos leaves the ocean and climbs the heaven. For the much-prayed for hollow bed wrought of precious gold by the hands of Hephaestus and with wings beneath it bears him quickly over the waves to the water's marge while he sleeps, from the land of the Hesperides to the realm of the Ethiopians where his rushing car and horses stand waiting until Eos, child of dawn, shall come. And then Hyperion's son mounts another car.¹¹

It is surely unjust to characterize the mood of Mimnermus' elegy as prevailingly erotic, if we judge him by the fragments that remain to us; rather we should call the mood of these fragments gnomic just as Grey's Elegy in a Country Churchyard may be called gnomic--sombre reflections upon the thought or fact of death and upon the futility of life.

We have left of Mimnermus about eighty-four verses.

Archilochus, an Ionian of Paros, flourished about 670 B.C. He is famous for his originality in the use of iambs, but is also an undoubted master of the elegy. The Greeks of the classical age ranked him with Homer and Pindar in greatness of genius. He lived in a time of storm and stress and his life reflected his age. He was a warrior and fought in various parts of the Greek world. His ruling

11. Frag. 12 B.

passion seemed to be an intense pride that hastened to repay injury with injury and insult with insult. Passionately in love with Neobule, daughter of Lycambes, Archilochus was as frank as Catullus in expressing that love. But when he was rejected by Lycambes he poured forth his hurt pride and thwarted love in such fierce invective that, tradition asserts, Lycambes and his daughters hanged themselves. He was killed in battle against Naxos.

We have left of his elegy some forty verses, mostly referring to war or its practises. These little bits of verse, fragmentary as they are, serve to indicate the genuine inspiration that stirred him and made him an object of reverence to the Greeks.

He reveals himself through his verse more than any of the older elegists. He says:

"I am the servant of sovereign Enyalios and I know the lovely gift of the muses."¹²

Again, "My bread is kneaded with a spear, and wine of Ismarus is mixed with a spear, and I drink leaning upon my spear."¹³

There is much vigor in this battle scene: "Not many bows are drawn, nor many slings brandished when Ares joins the battle on the plain; but there will be grievous toil of swords, for yonder the spear-famed lords of Euboea are the

12. Frag. 1 B.

13. Frag. 2 B.

demons of this battle.¹⁴

He is not afraid to express his feelings frankly in the very face of adverse public opinion:

"Some Sacian glories in a shield that I against my will left beside a bramble bush. A bully shield, but I myself escaped the end of death--let that old shield go hang. Another day I'll get no worse a one."¹⁵

Genuinely elegiac in tone is this lament for his brother-in-law who was drowned at sea:

"No one of thy townsmen, Pericles, laden with stony griefs, will be happy, and no city joyful. For over such have gone the billows of the roaring sea and we have hearts swelling with sorrow. But be comforted, for the gods, dear friend, have given us endurance strong as a cure for ills for which there is no mending. One man has this lot at one time, another at another; and now it is turned upon us and we mourned the bleeding wound and anon it is the lot of others. But up, put away womanish sorrow and be strong."¹⁶

The mood in this elegy is genuinely threnodic. The other fragments are difficult of classification, for their tone is so extremely personal, so free from exhortation or reflection or brooding love that they qualify for none of

14. Frag. 3 B.

15. Frag. 6 B.

16. Frag. 9 B.

the accepted elegiac moods. If the fragments were longer, we might be able to assign each to its type, but this does not seem possible under present conditions.

Solon, the Athenian, who flourished about 590 B.C., was a statesman, law-giver, reformer, soldier, patriot, and poet. We have left of his elegy about two-hundred verses. His prevailing mood is gnomic though much of his verse is hortatory, and some even erotic in character. When he was a very young man he arose in the assembly and recited a fiery elegy urging the Athenians to win back Salamis from the Megarians--a theme forbidden by law. So effective was his plea he was appointed leader of the expedition to reclaim Salamis and proved himself a wise and successful general. When he was older, he was equally successful in reforming unjust laws and in organizing the state along worthy lines.

Solon used the elegy to express his ideas of good government and reform, and his verse reveals a man honorable in politics, considerate toward the commons, and wise in adjusting difficulties. The man we see in his poetry is a man of gracious humanity and high thought.

His gnomic elegies have points in common with Theognis and Mimnermus and his Salamis might belong to either Callinus or Tyrtaeus.

In the following his mood seems to be erotic and faint-

ly echoes Mimnermus' first fragment:

"In the works of Dionysus and the muses and of her who was born at Cyprus now is my delight for they bring men joy and cheer."¹⁷

These savor of Theognis with just a touch of Mimnermus:

"Thus all we men of mortal mold, good alike and bad, think, by straining every nerve, to win a fair name, each man for himself by his own unaided efforts, until something befall him from without; then straightway cometh pain. Till then like gaping fools we amuse ourselves with empty dreams."¹⁸

"Destiny bringeth to mankind both good and evil, and the gifts which come from the immortal gods are not to be refused. Danger, we may be sure, followeth all the works of men, and none knoweth at its beginning, which way an undertaking will turn."¹⁹

Very little of the Salamis is left, but what we have reveals its mood as plainly hortatory. For example:

"As my own herald have I come from beloved Salamis to sing you a poem I have fashioned in lieu of speech."²⁰

"Then may I change my fatherland and become a native of Pholegandros or Sicinos instead of an Athenian. For I should soon be hearing men say: 'He is of Attica, one of those who gave up Salamis.' "²¹

17. Linforth, Solon the Athenian p 157

18. Ibid. p 167

19. Ibid. p 167

20. Ibid. p 151

21. Ibid. p 161

As an example of his gnostic mood we have the following ten ages of man:

"A boy, before he cometh to man's estate, and while he is still a child, getteth and loseth his rampart of teeth within the first seven years. When god bringeth the second seven to a close, the signs of budding manhood begin to show. In the third period, a downy beard appeareth, though the limbs have not reached their full growth, and the boyish bloom of the complexion fadeth. In the fourth period of seven years, every man is at the prime of this physical strength.....The fifth period is the season for a man to bethink him of marriage and seek offspring against the future. In the sixth, experience of every sort carrieth his mind on to perfection, and he feeleth no longer the same inclination to the wild pranks of youth. In the seventh seven, he is at his prime in mind and tongue, and also in the eighth, the two together making fourteen years. In the ninth period, though he still retaineth some force, he is feebler both in wisdom and in speech and faileth of great achievement. If a man attaineth to the full measure of the tenth period, the fate of death, if it come upon him, cometh not untimely."²²

Theognis of Megara next claims our attention. He was a Dorian noble of that city and flourished about 540 B.C.

22. Linforth, Solon the Ath. p 147

Much of his verse is addressed to a young fellow-nobleman, Cyrnus, the son of Polypas. In accordance with an old Dorian custom, older men were chosen as sponsors or patrons of younger men, and often gave personal service somewhat in the manner of the fag in the English schools. Theognis seems to have had such an attendant in Cyrnus. To this young protégé the poet expresses almost every sort of sentiment that might serve to mould a young man's thought and habit. We see through these verses an aristocrat of aristocrats with all the virtues and some of the vices of his class and time. Violent changes swept over Megara during his life and he reveals by a few deft touches the misrule of the nobles, the rise of a tyranny and its fall, the haughty return to power of the oligarchs, and the establishment of a democracy. Theognis hated the tyranny almost as much as he despised the democracy and seems also to deplore the arrogant pride of his own class. Thus he warns Cyrnus, who must have held some office of importance:

"Pride and oppressive rule destroyed the state
Of the Magnesians--Such was Smyrna's fate,
Smyrna the rich, and Colophon the great
And ours, my friend, will follow soon or late."²³

And thus he describes the state under the democracy:

"Cyrnus, this state is still a state indeed; but the

23. Frere ap. Banks, Res. Cal. and Theog. p 445.

people truly are other, who aforetime knew nor rights nor laws, but were wont to wear-out goat-skins about their sides, and to inhabit this city like stags without the walls. And now, son of Polypas, they are nobles: but they who were better-most of yore now are of-low-degree: Who can endure to look at these things.*24

When the tyrant Theagenes dies and his fellow citizens are thronging to attend the funeral, Theognis says:

"I will not go, neither shall a tyrant be honored by me, nor go beneath the earth with wailing over his tomb. No, nor would he if I were dead either be grieved or let fall warm tears adown his eyes.*25

He objects strenuously to the mating of vulgar wealth with good birth and high breeding and fears for the resulting race:

*With kine and horses, Kurnus, we proceed
 By reasonable rules, and choose a breed
 For profit and increase, at any price,
 Of a sound stock without defect or vice.
 But in the daily matches that we make
 The price is everything; for money's sake
 Men marry, women are in marriage given--
 The churl or ruffian that in wealth has thriven

24. Banks, Hes. Cal. and Theog. p 220

25. Ibid. p 282

May match his offspring with the proudest race--
 Thus everything is mixed, noble and base!
 If then in outward manner form and mind
 You find us a degraded motley kind
 Wonder no more, my friend! the cause is plain
 And to lament the consequence is vain.*26

The context of many of Theognis' poems seems to suggest that they were recited at banquets. Theognis may well have belonged to one of those select social clubs, common among Dorians as an appendix to the public tables. At these clubs the gnomic elegy was very popular and as a rule very disconsolate--as hopelessly fatalistic as the following are:

"No costly sacrifice nor offerings given
 Can change the purpose of the powers of heaven.
 Whatever fate ordains, danger or hurt
 Or death predestined, nothing can avert.*27

"Karnus, believe it, future good or ill
 No moral effort, intellect or will
 Determine it, but heaven's superior will.
 We struggle onward ignorant and blind
 For a result unknown and undesigned,
 Avoiding seeming ills, misunderstood,
 Embracing evil as a seeming good.

26. Frere ap. Banks, Hes. Cal. and Theog. p. 442

27. Ibid. p. 448

.....
 We strive like children, and th'almighty plan
 Controls the froward weak children of man.*28

Even more depressing because more personal are these:

"I hear, son of Polypas, the voice of the shrill-cry-
 ing crane, even her, who to mortals comes as harbinger of
 the season for ploughing; and it smote my dark heart that
 others possess my flourishing fields, neither do my mules
 drag the bent-poles of the plough, on account of that ever
 to be remembered voyage.*29

Frere in his ingenious attempt to arrange Theognis' fragments in chronological order, places the above at the time of the confiscation of Theognis' property when the people had ousted the nobles. He places the following, also, at that time:

"How hath our spirit had the heart to sing to the flute-player? But from the forum is seen the limits of the land, which maintains with her fruits men wearing at feasts and on auburn locks purple garlands. Nay, come now, Scythian, shave thy hair and cease from revelling, and lament the fragment country lost." 30

Frere infers that after Theognis' exile to Sicily no more elegies were addressed to Cyrnus. He represents the

28. Frere ap. Banks, Hes. Cal. and Theog. p 464

29. Banks, Hes. Cal. and Theog. p 281

30. Ibid. p 263

poet in Sicily as poor to the point of destitution, forced to earn his living by his music and poetry among inconsiderate people. Whether this is true or not, after some years of exile Theognis returned to Megara just before the Persian Wars. To this period of exile and return Frere assigns the following, which is truly and traditionally elegiac in tone:

"Not to be born, never to see the sun,
No worldly blessing is a greater one,
And the next best is speedily to die
And lapt beneath a load of earth to lie."³¹

Theognis runs the gamut of elegiac moods, being in turn, didactic, hortatory, gnomic, erotic, and threnodic, though this last mood is almost entirely lacking in his work.

Simonides of Ceos, (556-468) son of Leoprepes, ranks as one of the great lyric poets of Greece. He was called Melicertes because of the sweetness of his style. His literary remains include elegies, dirges, paeans, eulogies, and epigrams of every sort. These last are for the most part in the elegiac meter and are models for all time in simplicity and beauty. The exquisite dirge Danae, is probably his most famous single poem, and well deserves its fame, yet, although its mood is distinctly threnodic, we

31. Frere ap. Banks, Hes. Cal. and Theog. p 481

may not call it elegy.

As to Simonides' personal traits we have much ancient testimony. We gather from such sources that he was of extreme penuriousness especially in his old age; that he was the first professional poet and wrote at the order of the rich and great; that he had a remarkable memory, and was the first to devise a system of memory aids.

Three poems are mentioned by Suidas as being in the elegiac meter; The Kingdom of Cambyses and Darius, The Sea-Fight with Xerxes, and The Sea-Fight off Artemisium and there were undoubtedly others. His style is distinguished by an apt choice of words and by skill in combining them.

Simonides lived during the wonderful period of the Persian Wars and has become the voice of "The glory that was Greece ."

We quote from the scanty fragments of his elegy on the Battle of Plataea:

"And those that live in Corinth town, the city of Glaucus, made unto themselves a right noble witness of their deeds by honouring the gold that is in the sky; and that gold doth increase and spread wide their fame and the fame of their fathers; for whereas gold is the kindest of all hosts when it shineth in the sky, it comes an evil guest unto

those that receive it in their hand.* 32

The mood of this whole elegy was probably somewhat threnodic but certainly the above fragment savors of the didactic. The following is distinctly gnomic; and resembles Mimnermus and Theognis:

"But there's one saying of the man of Chios which passes all, 'The life of a man is even as the life of a green leaf;' yet few that receive it with the ear lay it away in the breast; for there's a hope which springeth in every heart that is young, and so long as man possesseth the flowery bloom of youth there is much that his light heart deems to have no end, counting neither on age nor death, and taking no thought for sickness in time of health. Poor fools they to think so, and not to know that the time of youth and life is but short for such as be mortal! Wherefore be thou wise in time, and fail not when the end is near to give thy soul freely of the best." 33

Simonides' sepulchral epigrams will be studied in a later chapter.

During the fifth century B. C., we may say that almost everybody who tried to write at all dabbled a little in elegy. Writers of tragedy, comedy, satire, history, and philosophy, all tried elegy or at least epigram in elegiac meter.

32 Lyra Graec. p 335

33 Ibid. p 339

Antimachus of Colophon (460-431), an Alexandrian born before his time, wrote a long erotic and threnodic elegy mourning the death of his Lyde. Ancient testimony implies that this poem was full of mythological learning, by which the poet reminds himself that the loves of other men have died. Callimachus, Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid may have known this work and imitated it to some extent. The fragments that remain to us, however, are too scanty for us to pass judgment.

Dionysius Calchus has left us sympotic elegy, glory-fying drinking, Crates, gnomic elegy that probably was composed for the symposium; Critias, one of the thirty tyrants, Simias of Thebes, Ion, the tragedian, Evenus, have all left us some elegy. We also have inconsiderable fragments by Aristotle, Xenophanes, Thucydides.

The fragments of Evenus are rather interesting, in that his gnomic utterances have a flavor of freshness. For example:

"Moderation in Bacchus is best, not much and not too little, for he is the cause of sorrow and madness."

"It is very advantageous to have courage with wisdom. Without wisdom courage is injurious and brings harm."

"Often times the wrath of men reveals a secret thought which is far worse than madness."

"Throughout all time a child is to his father either

fear or grief."

Every necessary thing is a vexation."

In conclusion, it might be well to emphasize again the point mentioned at the beginning of this chapter; that is, that the old Greek elegy is a sincere expression, for the most part, of changing conditions in society and politics. There was something to correct, something to deplore, something to praise, something to mourn; and the elegy, with its tradition of mournful reflection, gave poets, philosophers, and reformers a compact and convenient medium for what they had to say.

CHAPTER IV

ALEXANDRIAN ELEGY

The Alexandrian elegy flourishing at the Ptolemies' court in Alexandria, as said before, was quite different from the classical elegy, both in nature and tendencies. The explanation seems to be found in the very character of the elegiac tradition. Elegy to the older Greeks had been a way of expressing personal emotion, plaintive by preference, but intensely personal. Just as the social conditions of their respective periods found a clear bright mirror in elegy, so the pedantic, efflorescent, extravagant, sentimental, luxurious Alexandrian age used the elegy to reflect its social conditions through the personal expression of its great writers. In the hands of Hermesianax, Philetas, and Callimachus the distich took part in all sorts of love affairs, mostly unsavory, and also told long involved stories drawn from mythology, instances that might serve to illuminate a character or to obscure a situation. All, or virtually all, the Alexandrians wrote elegy, if we may believe ancient testimony, but very little of it remains to us. Their work seems to have been polished to an appearance of glittering beauty that filled the dazzled Romans with a desire for similar production. The fragments that remain of Alexandrian elegy, however, do not justify the high esteem

of the Romans, except perhaps the fragments of Callimachus. The moods of the Alexandrian elegy may be called threnodic-erotic, gnomic-erotic, didactic-erotic, and plain erotic, except where the elegy is purely narrative, in which case it is difficult to make any adequate classification of mood.

Antimachus, as suggested in the preceding chapter, must be considered as an Alexandrian born before his time--for his Lyde was purely Alexandrian in form and spirit, and he was counted by the Alexandrians as one of themselves. His style showed the pedantic learning that reveled in mythological instances, the passion for listing or cataloging, and that love interest gone awry that sometimes fairly makes us sick of all erotic elegy.

The first of the real Alexandrians to demand our attention, however, is Philetas of Cos--a delicate young scholar so devoted to study that he forgot to eat enough and had to wear lead in his shoes to keep the wind from blowing him away, or so it is said. He was born about 340 B.C., and lived in his native city, Cos, until he had won a high reputation for learning and had drawn many pupils to his lecture-room, among these were Hermesianax, Zenodotus, and Theocritus. Ptolemy the First, hearing of his fame, called him to Alexandria to be tutor for the young Philadelphus and made him a sort of court poet, grammarian, and philosopher. Worn out with hard study, he died when comparatively young, where-

upon the inhabitants of Cos erected a statue in his honor. Of his work we have barely fifty verses, disconnected and of various metres. Some of these are evidently parts of the epic, *Hermes*. His elegy, we know from the testimonia, was dedicated to his mistress *Battis* and perhaps called by her name. We judge this to have been a long work, consisting of separate pieces, whose subjects were drawn from mythology--stories to explain his own love raptures and love-pangs. We judge that Propertius drew much inspiration from *Philetas*. One fragment of six verses, preserved by *Stobaeus*, describes the grief of *Demeter* for her stolen daughter, and points the lesson that grief is a companion of love, whether it be the love of a mother or love between man and woman.¹ In this fragment *Philetas* may be said to write in the plaintive gnomic mood of traditional elegy.

Besides the large work, inspired by *Battis*, *Philetas* wrote a number of *παίγνια*, or light trifles, on various themes, mostly erotic in character. This little passage, preserved by *Stobaeus* and translated by *Couat*, breathes the spirit of *Mimnermus*:

"Aussi tandis que les années nombreuses, envoyées par Zeus, passent à leur heure, sur la terre et sur la mer, la destinée, hélas! ne m'enlève aucun de mes maux; ils s'enracinent au contraire et grandissent les uns après les autres."²

1. *Couat*, *La Poes. Alex.* p 73

2. *Ibid.* p 75

There is also reason to believe that Philetas may have given Tibullus precedent for the bucolic flavor of some of his elegy.³

The next of the Alexandrian elegists is Hermesianax pupil and friend of Philetas. He was born at Colophon about 330 B.C. Typical of his day and generation both in form and manner of writing, strangely enough he is seldom cited by the Greeks and not at all by the Romans; though all the Roman elegists seem to have imitated him more or less, especially in versification. He is reputed to have written one epic, The Persians, and three books of elegies on his mistress, Leontium.

Of these elegies Athenaeus has preserved about a hundred verses from the third book.⁴ The plan of the work seems to have been to catalog in a well-organized way certain love episodes that might prove the awful power of sovereign love over victims, learned and unlearned. In the fragment quoted by Athenaeus, we have a list of poets and philosophers, from Orpheus to Philetas, who had been enslaved by love to tragic discomfiture. In this poem, as far as we can judge, Hermesianax did not portray the ardors of his own passion as did Propertius, but by telling these stories permits the lady to draw her own conclusions and to use her own imagination.

3. Athen. II p 71 a; V p 192 e.

4. N. 13 p 26

The mood of these elegies should perhaps be called didactic-erotic-plaintive in that the stories told are of unhappy love-affairs.

Phanocles, the third elegist of this school, cataloged in the manner of Hermesianax the loves of men for boys, that had brought sorrow and madness. A fragment of twenty-eight verses is preserved by Stobaeus and describes the death of Orpheus at the hands of the Thracian women because, as Phanocles says, "He was the first in Thrace to love young boys." Happily, this version of the death of Orpheus has not been followed by later writers. Phanocles' mood in this fragment is partly erotic, partly threnodic and we may consider the whole elegy to have been tinged with the didactic mood, since he is evidently trying to teach the dire power of such unnatural attachments.

Alexander of Aetolia, the next elegist of note, was born at Pleuron about 320 B.C. His renown for learning caused Ptolemy Philadelphus to summon him as assistant in organizing the great library at Alexandria. He was primarily a scholar, but even while engaged in his library work wrote much verse in various metres. He is said to have composed two groups of elegies, Apollo and The Muses. In the first he makes Apollo catalog love affairs for him, and prophesy their outcome, a clever scheme whereby the poet may tell more than he could possibly have known. The mood is erotic with a slight flavor

of the didactic.

The greatest and best-known of the Alexandrians is Callimachus, born at Cyrene about 305 B.C., he was a descendant of the founder of that city and was very proud of his race. He died about 240 B.C. He was considered a great master by his contemporaries and by the Romans of the Augustan age, and the fragments we have of his work show considerable genius. Two practically complete poems in distichs remain to us; one the hymn called The Bath of Pallas, the other Catullus' translation of the Lock of Berenice. Neither of these is typically elegiac in theme, in fact both are of a far more cheerful spirit than the elegies of the other Alexandrians. Not even the sorrows of love lend plaintiveness to these poems, for the former is a cheerful address to Pallas to come to her bath and favor the people of Argos--written for an Argive festival; and the other has a lock of hair tell its adventures and incidentally flatter Berenice, the queen.

The Bath of Pallas is of considerable interest and is told with much ease of style. It is difficult to tell just why Callimachus used the distich for this one only of his hymns. It may be true, as has been suggested, that he considered the elegy especially adapted to light or frivolous subject matter, things written in a holiday mood, so to speak, and so for this festival hymn found it appropriate.

It breaks all the traditions of elegy, however, since it is impersonal and narrative, where it is not plain description, and the only trace of an elegiac mood would be an undertone of the didactic in seeming to teach mortals how to reverence a goddess.

The Lock of Berenice is also narrative and combines delicate raillery with courtly flattery and astronomical learning. The only mood at all prominent here seems to be the erotic.

Other titles of elegies that are virtually lost to us are: Ibis, against a rival, Apollonius; one celebrating the marriage of Arsinoe; and a triumphal elegy in honor of Sosibius. There are a number of fine epigrams in the elegiac distich.

The last of the elegies of which we have any considerable fragment is the Aitia, Causes. The name of this work is enigmatic, and the purpose and plan even more so. It seems to have been a long work consisting of distinct incidents or stories. What the thread of connection is that binds these together is hard to say. Ancient testimony throws some light. Diodorus in an epigram makes this statement:

"O greatly renowned Dream of the wise son of Battos, surely thou wert of horn, not of ivory. For thou didst reveal to us such things as hitherto we mortals have not known,

both about the immortals and about the demigods, what time thou didst carry him away from Libya to Helicon and didst take and set him in the midst of the Pierides. And they in answer to his questions told him the Causes, both touching the primeval heroes and touching the blessed gods."⁵

This epigram gives much interesting information: first, that the whole work must have been written as though a dream revelation; second, that the subject matter was gods and heroes, and from some fragments of the poem we may guess this included the founding of various institutions, games, forms of worship, neighborhood customs, and similar things. It would be natural for such a work to be filled with stories, and of this sort, from what remains to us, the Aitia seems.

Different parts of the poem must have had different moods and, in fact, all the moods of elegy. The longest fragment is a story that tells the rather charming love-affair of Acontius and Cydippe. This is purely narrative; but fragments from other stories and incidents seem of a different nature. The following is somewhat gnomic:

"That man finds old age lighter whom boys love, and, as if he were their father, lead by the hand unto his own door."⁶

There were four books of the Aitia--a mine of ancient legendary lore.

5. Mair, L.C.L. Cal. Lyc.Ar. p 185

6. Ibid. 1,3 (11) p 107

All the Alexandrians were erotic in mood but Callimachus seems less morbid, more subtly ironical than the others, and surely more versatile.

With Callimachus the important Alexandrian elegy ends. There were many writers of elegy, however, whose work has utterly vanished: Iratus, the friend of Callimachus, wrote a book of jesting elegies, probably on the order of epigram; Euphorion must have written his lament on the death of Pythagoras in distichs; but these are lost and perhaps well lost.

In conclusion we must emphasize again the erotic character of virtually all Alexandrian elegy--an eroticism not personal and passionate as was the eroticism of the Romans, but "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."

CHAPTER V

THE SEPULCHRAL EPIGRAM

The probable close connection between elegy and epigram has been mentioned in the chapter on The Distich. The early epigram was an inscription carved on some sort of monument and thus funereal or sepulchral epigrams were very numerous. The chief difference between the elegy and the epigram of this early day seems to be that the epigram, though in elegiac distichs, was made short enough to be practicable on a monument, while elegy was a song of mourning intended to be sung or recited with flute accompaniment in honor of the dead at the funeral feast or privately among the friends of the deceased or publicly when the dead in battle were bewailed. Just as elegy was diverted from its original purpose and made to do other and all sorts of work, so epigram went through almost exactly the same stages of change and at last became what it is now--a short pithy saying in verse. Owing to this similar origin and development it seems fitting, therefore, that our study of the elegy and its moods should include a brief consideration of the sepulchral epigram and its moods.

Two types of sepulchral epigrams must be noted: first, the kind actually carved on tombs; second, those written in honor of the dead, somewhat after the manner of the modern

obituary, generally of a more literary nature than the actual tomb inscriptions. There were many written of both types. The Greek Anthology, however, from which we draw our material is mostly compiled from collections of literary epigrams. Owing to the fact that several writers not too far in time from their sources made such collections, we have a rich store for use in study. Such collections were: Meleager's Wreath of the first century B.C., Philippus' Wreath of the second century A.D., and the Cycle of Agathias of the sixth century A.D.

These epigrams were written in honor of groups and of individuals, for famous people, and for obscure people whose names alone remain, imaginary epitaphs for real and imaginary heroes, to glorify, to satirize, to point a moral or furnish a horrible example, to console the relatives of the dead; and among the writers of epigram we find some of the greatest names in Greek literature.

Sepulchral epigram may almost all be classified under the various moods of elegy proper, hortatory, didactic, gnomic, threnodic, and erotic.

Under the hortatory type we include all the patriotic epigrams written to glorify the dead in battle, for they seem to be merely short definite applications of the hortatory elegy of Callinus and Tyrtaeus. Simonides has given us the most perfect examples of this type in the touching and beautiful verses he wrote for the Greek heroes who fell in the Persian

Wars. These have never been equaled in any literature in respect to clearness, terseness, and expressiveness.

It is perhaps sufficient for illustration to quote two of his less familiar ones. The first is for those who were slain at the Eurymedon, the second for those who died in defense of Tegea:

"Once in the breasts of these men did Ares wash with red rain his long-barbed arrows. Instead of men who stood and faced the shafts this earth covers memorials of the dead, lifeless memorials of their living selves."¹

"Because of these men's manly virtue the smoke of the burning of spacious Tegea has not gone to the sky; for they chose to leave their children a country green and gay with freedom, and themselves to die in the forefront of the battle."²

Others by Simonides are, the famous one for the Spartans of Thermopylae, the two for the dead at Plataea, and the one for the Corinthians who fell at Salamis.

Both Plato and Aeschylus have written excellent epigrams of this type.³

It seems feasible to group those of the gnomic and didactic type together and to include in this all that point a moral or teach a lesson either by example or precept. Here

1. Grk. Anth. II VII 443

2. Lyra Graec. II p 359

3. Grk. Anth. II Bk. VII 256 and 255 Others are 436, 431, 442

we shall place the imaginary epitaphs that hold up some famous man to admiration or obloquy, and the epigrams that reflect sadly on the vicissitudes of life and the inevitability of death.

The following by Diogenes Laertius of the third century A.D., takes Arcesilaus as the text for a temperance lecture:

"Arcesilaus why did you drink so much wine, and so unsparingly as to slip out of your senses? I am not so sorry for you because you died as because you did violence to the Muses by using immoderate cups."⁴

This anonymous example will serve to illustrate the gnostic type:

"Time wears stone away and spares not iron, but with one sickle destroys all things that are. So this grave mound of Laertes that is near the shore is being melted away by the cold rain. But the hero's name is ever young, for time can not, even if he will, make poesy dim."⁵

Of course, all sepulchral epigrams may be considered more or less threnodic, but certain ones seem purely threnodic in that they express sorrow for the dead without any attempt to preach or teach. Many beautiful epigrams are in the purely threnodic mood; a mother mourns for her son, dead in his youth, or for a lovely maiden daughter; a husband la-

4. Grk. Anth. II Bk. VII 104 See also 106, 120, 45

5. Ibid. 225 also 126

ments his dear wife, and a father his stalwart boys. The following anonymous tribute is taken from a stone found in Corinth, and shows deep affection:

"This little stone, good Sabinus, is a memorial of our great friendship. I shall ever miss thee; and if so it may be, when with the dead thou drinkest of Lethe, drink not thou forgetfulness of me."⁶

Sepulchral epigrams that may be considered erotic in mood have much in common with the purely threnodic type treated above; there are some, however, that without any hint of real personal mourning, speak of the vanished charms of dead courtesans, and others where lovers mourn over their beloved, that may be properly included among those of the erotic type. The following by Meleager is long enough to be called an elegy and sad enough to be called a dirge:

"Tears, the last gift of my love, even down through the earth I send to thee in Hades, Heliadora--tears ill to shed, and on thy much-wept tomb I pour them in memory of longing, in memory of affection. Piteously, piteously doth Meleager lament for thee who are still dear to him in death, paying a vain tribute to Acheron. Alas! Alas! there is my beautiful one, my heart's desire? Death has taken her, has taken her, and the flower in full bloom is defiled by the dust. But Earth my mother, nurturer of all, I beseech thee, clasp her

6. Grk. Anth. II Bk VII 346, Others are 298, 300, 334, 336, 340.

gently to thy bosom, her whom all bewail."⁷

From this short review, we can see how the sepulchral epigram follows the traditional moods of the elegy, and how in many cases it is more like elegy than it is typically epigrammatic.

It is interesting to note that the first appearance of the elegiac distich in Latin is in the shape of a sepulchral epigram.⁸ This seems to hint at the traditional association of mourning and elegy and epigram which we have stressed above.

7. Grk. Anth. II Bk VII 476, Others are 449, 669, 670, 223, 221, 219

8. Cx Bk Lat Vs. 34

CHAPTER VI

ROMAN ELEGY

Roman elegy has been characterized as the child and imitator of the Alexandrian elegy; if so, the child developed traits of disposition unknown to the father and the imitator overreached its model. Four great elegists, Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid, made Roman elegy almost a creation--certainly much more than an imitation. In their hands the distich tends to become a thought unit after the manner of the heroic couplet in English, a character it never attained among the Greeks, and the subject-matter itself runs the gamut of strong emotion, generally erotic and generally tinged with melancholy as the Greek tradition would demand. The Roman elegy, however, is far more vividly personal than the Greek elegy. The Lesbias and Cynthias and Delias are flesh and blood, of the earth earthy; and their lovers sing of their charms and infidelities in strains human and passionate. These ladies are not misty ideals but Roman coquettes in an age when coquetry was a fine art.

In some ways we may say the society that produced this elegy was very like the society that had produced the Alexandrian elegy. There was the same deification of pleasure, the same absence of serious interest in politics, the same marital unrest and infidelity, the same luxury among the rich; but

where the Alexandriens had been pedantic and scholarly the Romans were proud and lustful lords of creation. The things that pertained to their daily life and made them happy or miserable were more important subjects for song than all the lore of the ancients--in fact were more important than song itself. Elegy was here a mirror to society just as it had always been.

Roman elegy is as erotic as Alexandrian but in a different way, we feel that the Roman elegists are really in love, with the possible exception of Ovid, while the Alexandrians are talking about love and addressing dissertations on lovers to their mistresses merely because such was expected of them and because on such a theme they could make elegant verses.

In spite of this erotic reputation, however, it would be well to remember that the word, elegy, as used by the Romans, never quite lost its mournful meaning,¹ and that their earliest distichs were employed for epitaphs. One of the earliest was Ennius' epitaph for himself, referred to in the preceding chapter;² the other two were written by Ennius for Scipio Africanus. The longer one follows;

A sole ex oriente supra Maeotis paludes

nemo est qui factis aequiperare potest.

si fas endo plagas caelestum ascendere cuiquam est,

mi soli caeli maxima porta patet.³

1. Hor. Ep. II 2, 75

2. Page 68

3. Ox. Bk. Lat. Verse 32

The two oldest erotic elegies or epigrams that have come to us from Rome seem to be the one by Valerius Aeditius (100 B.C.), a fairly creditable performance, and the one by Q. Lutatius Catulus, rather more commonplace in theme and treatment:

"Why bring a torch, Phalerus," says Aeditius, "when we have no need of one? We will go so; the flame in our hearts gives enough light, for the torch the savage force of the wind can extinguish or a white shower rushing headlong from the sky; but against this fire of love no force can prevail save love's own self."⁴

Catulus tells us that he has lost his heart and though he knows perfectly well where to find it he is a little bit afraid to go after it.⁵

The representative elegists of the age of Cicero were Calvus and Catullus. Calvus is virtually lost to us, though he enjoyed a high reputation among his contemporaries. His elegy on the death of his wife Quintilia seems to have been both erotic and threnodic in mood.

Catullus was a great original poet. He was born about 84 B.C., and died in his early thirties. In his use of the Greek metres he merely paved the way for the more skilful Horace, but in fire of inspiration and spontaneity of expression he stands at the head of the Roman lyricists.

4. Ox. Bk. Lat. Verse 46

5. Ibid. 47

Almost half his work is in distichs, the mechanics of which he seemed to model after the older Greek elegists. His longest work in distichs is the translation from Callimachus, mentioned in a previous chapter⁶—the Lock of Berenice. Most of his own elegies are short and exceedingly personal, whether he utters scathing denunciation of someone he does not like,⁷ is blown about by contrary winds of desire for his Lesbia,⁸ mourns in dignified beauty of phrase for his dear lost brother,⁹ or writes in tender sympathy to some friend who has suffered bereavement.¹⁰

In the following we have a good example of the erotic mood as Catullus uses it:

Nulla potest mulier tantum se dicere amatam
 vere, quantum a me Lesbia amata mea's.
 nulla fides ullo fuit unquam foedere tenta,
 quanta in amore tuo ex parte reperta meast.¹¹

These lines are truly threnodic:

Troia (nefas) commune sepulcrum Asiae Europaeque,
 Troia virum et virtutum omnium acerba cinis,
 quae ne etiam nostro letum miserabile fratri
 attulit. ei misero frater adempte mihi,

6. p. 59

7. Cat. XCVIII

8. Cat. CIX, CII, CVII, LXXXV, LXXV

9. Cat. CI, LXV, LXVIII 1 47

10. Cat. XCVI

11. LXXXVII

ei misero fratri iucundum lumen ademptum,
 tecum una totast nostra sepulta domus;
 omnia tecum una perierunt guadia nostra,
 quae tuus in vita dulcis alebat amor.¹²

This poem to comfort Calvus is gnomic and threnodic:

Si quicquam mutis gratum acceptumne sepulcris
 accidere a nostro, Calve, dolore potest,
 quo desiderio veteres renovamus amores
 atque olim amissas flemus amicitias,
 certe non tanto mors immatura dolorist
 Quintiliae, quantum gaudet amore tuo.¹³

The gnomic mood prevails also in Catullus' address to himself where he deplores his unhappy love for Lesbia and calls upon the gods to free him, since he has lived a good life.¹⁴

There is a tone of bitter reflection in the following:

Desine de quoquam quicquam bene velle mereri
 aut aliquem fieri posse putare pium.
 omnia sunt ingrata, nihil fecisse benigne;
 immo etiam taedet, taedet obstque magis;¹⁵

Catullus' passion for Lesbia colors his whole thought and work and even if it did make him a greater poet because of its stark and terrible sincerity, it surely shortened his

12. Cat. LXVIII v 47

13. Note 10

14. Cat. LXXVI

15. Cat. LXXIII 1-4

life, for he was not much past thirty when he died--all zest for living literally dry at its source.

Albius Tibullus the second of the Roman group was born about 54 B.C., and died, as Domitius Marsus' epitaph tells us, the same year Virgil died, 19 B.C.

Tibullus leaves us two books of elegies, one dedicated to Delia and the other to Nemesis, successively his mistresses. Aside from the eroticism of these elegies a few general qualities must be noted: first, the bucolic flavor--Tibullus loves the country and loves to write about it; second, his affection and admiration for Messala, constantly evidenced; third, the slight atmosphere of didacticism surrounding all his work--as of a second Tibullus, aristocratic, somewhat austere, with high ideals of conduct, standing with a scourge back of the wanton young poet.

The general tone of the elegies is mournful--the taste left in our mouths is bitter. We see in this work both disillusion and deterioration, a far from cheerful pair.

Tibullus belonged to Messala's literary coterie, though he had a friend in Horace, who was of Maecenas' group. He was of a knightly family and sufficiently rich. His amatory verses follow familiar lines. In the first book we see how Delia, whom he taught to love, becomes too apt a pupil and is bought by a wealthier suitor. In the early stages of this affair the poet evidences genuine affection for Delia;¹⁶ but

16. Tib. I, V 21-35

toward the last this changes into a mixture of scorn and brute passion that has no real liking in it. So, though the mood of these elegies to Delia are very erotic, their eroticism rings all the changes of which love itself is capable. The second book, to Nemesis, in its erotic moods is all on the lower level.

In the following we find Tibullus in the gnomie mood typical of Mimnermus:

at si tardus eris errabis. transit aetas
 quam cito! non segnis stat remeate dies.
 quam cito purpureos deperdit terra colores,
 quam cito formosas populus alta comas.
 quam iacet, infirmae venere ubi fata senectae,
 qui prior Eleo est carcere missus equus.
 vidi iam iuvenem premeret cum senior aetas
 maerentem stultos praeteriisse dies.
 crudeles divi! serpens novus exiit annos:
 formae non ullam fata dedere moram."¹⁷

Again:

"heu sero revocatur amor seroque iuventas
 cum vetus infecit cana senecta caput.

 at tu dum primi floret tibi temporis aetas
 utere: non tardo labitur illa pede."¹⁸

17. Tib. I IV 27-39

18. Tib. I VIII 41,42 and 47,48

He is quite often in the didactic mood as in his fine tirades against war¹⁹ and luxury. The following lines are exceedingly vivid:

"o pereat quicumque legit viridesque smaragdos
 et niveam Tyrio murice tingit ovem.
 addit avaritiae causas et Coa puellis
 vestis et e rubro lucida concha mari."²⁰

The lines of lament for Nemesis' young sister who had been killed by a fall from an upper window are threnodic in mood, though there is in them an element of trying to work on the feelings of Nemesis that makes the lament seem rather heartless. For instance:

"parce, per immatura tuae precor ossa sororis;
 sic bene sub tenera parva quiescat humo."²¹

Contrary to the practices of his Alexandrian models there is no excessive use of myth in Tibullus; that he is intrinsically Roman and not Greek in feeling is evidenced by his patriotic elegies in the second book.²²

The third book of elegies included with the Tibullus books is by various authors, probably members of the Messala circle. None of these compositions can be assigned with certainty to Tibullus, though the six elegies of the Lygdamus group may be his, as some suppose.

19. Tib. I X 33-57, 67, 68

20. Tib. II IV 27-30

21. II VI 29-30

22. Tib. II. I; X;

These elegies form a sort of love-sequence, wherein Lygdamus first mourns the absence of Neaera, then dreams she is unfaithful and mourns over the dream, and finally seems to find consolation in a feast. The second elegy of the series is very plaintive and may be considered an example of the threnodic mood. The third has a charming expression of his love:

"sit mihi paupertas tecum iucunda, Neaera:
 at sine te regum munera nulla volo.
 o niveam quae te poterit mihi reddere lucem!
 o mihi felicem terque quaterque diem!"²³

The last elegies are eleven in number, five about the love of Sulpicia and Cerinthus, possibly by Tibullus, the remaining six by Sulpicia herself--exceedingly erotic in mood. Sulpicia was a kinswoman of Messala and was a lady of talent and frankness.

Sextus Propertius with his four books of elegies next claims our attention. He was born at Assisi about 47 B.C., and died about 15 B.C. His family also was equestrian. His verse is all more or less permeated by his passion for Cynthia, a beautiful courtesan, whom he would probably have married had not the lex Papia Poppaea forbidden such matches. She was the love of his life, however, in spite of unfaithfulness on both sides. Because of this unfaithfulness the elegies sketch

a turbulent and degrading affair.

The work of Propertius is more like that of his Alexandrian models than is the work of Catullus and Tibullus. He uses a wealth of mythological reference and tells many legends in detail; and follows closely Hermesianax and Callimachus in versification--though he goes farther in the use of rhyme.

In the earlier days of his love for Cynthia there are many charming erotic passages. For example:

"Tu mihi sola domus, tu, Cynthia sola parentes,
Omnia tu nostrae tempora laetitiae.

Seu tristis veniam seu contra laetus amicis,
Quidquid ero, dicam 'Cynthia causa fuit.'"²⁴

But Cynthia was soon found to be unfaithful and his love-songs were too often tinged with lamentation. There is something exceedingly depressing in his continual brooding over his disappointment and pain. With a plaintiveness truly elegiac he pictures his death and Cynthia mourning for him:

"Tu tamen amisso non numquam flebis amico:
Fas est praeteritos semper amare viros.

.....

Sed frustra mutos revocabis, Cynthia, Manes;
Nam meae quid poterunt ossa minuta loqui?"²⁵

The following passage shows the gnomic mood, and like Tibullus' similar passage reminds us of Mimnermus:

24. Prop. I XI 23-26

25. Prop. II XIII 51-52, 57-58

"Tu modo, dum licet, o fructum ne desere vitae,
 Omnia si dederis oscula, pauca dabis.
 Ac veluti folia arentes liquere corollas,
 Quae passim calathis strata natere vides:
 Sic nobis, qui nunc magnum spiramus amantes
 Forsitan includet crastina fata dies."²⁶

We find several examples of the threnodic mood in the beautiful lament for Paetus.

The first elegy in the fourth book is patriotic and contains some good instances of the hortatory mood.

The most versatile and productive of the Roman elegists was Publius Ovidius Naso, commonly called Ovid. He was born at Sulmo, March 20, 43 B.C., and was of an equestrian family. He was educated for a public career, but so great was his talent for verse-making that everything he tried to write took metrical form and at last he gave up oratory for the profession of poetry. Ovid was married three times, the first two followed by quick divorces, the last accompanied by considerable affection and lasting until the poet's death.

From his twentieth year on Ovid wrote and wrote much--a long literary career covering almost forty years. He became the admired and flattered idol of the ultra-fashionable at Augustus' court, and naturally enough his head was somewhat turned. He wrote for his public--a clever dissolute public

that was not to be reformed by any princely edict or restrained from pursuing its wanton desires. In 8 A.D., probably because of the immoral teachings in his writings or because Ovid knew something compromising to the imperial family, the poet was exiled to Tomi, far away in the Black Sea region, where he lived a miserable life until he died at the age of sixty-one.

Most of Ovid's works are written in the elegiac distich and he attained a rare mastery of this verse form. His books of elegies are: the Heroides, love-laments in the form of letters from forsaken heroines to their lovers; Ars Amatoria, which has been called a treatise on seduction; Remedia Amoris; de Medicamine Faciei; Ibis, against a rival; the Amores, three books of supposedly personal love elegies; the Tristia and the Ex Ponto, both written to lament over his exile; and the Fasti, or Roman calendar.

In these poems Ovid's versification is faultless, his words are well-chosen and picturesque; but in very little of this enormous output is there any perceptible feeling of gripping sincerity. His work is mostly objective and not subjective--and objectivity is contrary to the very nature of the elegiac tradition. In his amatory verse Ovid shows much knowledge of feminine arts and wiles, yet somehow his portrayal of love leaves us cold, he seems to be playing at it, not experiencing it.

Most of the Amores are written to or about Ovid's mistress Corinna, who seems to have been beautiful, but ordinary. These are prevailingly erotic in mood as the name would imply. Like Propertius Ovid delights in mythological references. The extravagance of language in the following does not ring true-- but is surely erotic in mood:

tum mihi, si premerem ventosas horridus Alpes,
 dummodo cum domina, molle fuisset iter;
 cum domina Libycas ausim perrumpere Syrtes
 et dare non aequis vela ferenda Notis.
 non quae virgineo portenta sub inguine latrant,
 nec timeam vestros, curva Malea, sinus;²⁷

The lament for Corinna's parrot is so inferior to Catullus' charming lament for Lesbia's sparrow it is almost impossible to study it per se, for Ovid evidently had the earlier poem in mind and probably thought he was vastly more artistic in his effort. We must admit that Ovid's poem is musical, yet it is entirely lacking in pathos. Its mood is supposed to be threnodic but becomes a sort of mock-threnodic instead. Such fine language as the following makes the parrot seem a very insignificant bird:

"ite, piee volucres, et plangite pectora pinnis
 et rigido teneras ungue notate genas;

27. Ov. Amor. II. 16, 19-24

horrida pro maestis lanietur pluma capillis,
 pro longa resonent carmina vestra tuba!"²⁸

The De Medicamine Faciei may be called didactic in mood since it tells beauties how to take care of their valuable faces; while the Ars Amatoria and the Remedia Amoris should be characterized as erotic-didactic. In all these Ovid fortifies his advice by mythological example.

As suggested above, the Heroides are the love letters of forsaken ladies of heroic times and deviate from the elegiac tradition in being purely objective as far as Ovid is concerned. They are skilfully and attractively written and in some instances with considerable understanding of character, and they are true to their historical or legendary reputations. As to mood there is much of the didactic, much of the erotic, and much hard to classify because it seems purely narrative in character.

The five books of the Tristia and the four of the Ex Ponto as wails of despair from lonely exile are extremely plaintive and in many instances show the hopeless gnomic mood noted in the work of the old Greek elegists. At least these poems are personal and give us a sense of reality we do not get from any of the earlier works.

Of single poems the lament for Tibullus²⁹ in the Amores is perhaps most outstanding. We see in this poem all Ovid's

28. Ov. Amor. II, VI 3-6

29. Ov. Amor. III, IX

characteristics of style--his diffuseness, his use of mythological reference, his graceful diction--but above all we see him at his best and most sincere self, as he pays this tribute to a friend and fellow-poet.

After Ovid there are no Roman writers that can properly be called elegists, though there are many bits of elegiac verse scattered freely through Roman literature as long as such literature might be said to exist. The anonymous epitaph of Homonoea and Atimetus (circa 35 A. D.) is truly threnodic in mood. The following lines illustrate its spirit:

" 'parce tuam, coniux, fletu quassare iuventam
 fataque maerendo sollicitare mea
 nil prosunt lacrimae nec possunt fata moueri.
 viximus, hic omnis exitus unus habet.' "30

L. Annaeus Seneca (4 B.C.-65 A.D.) wrote some very good distichs. The little eight verse elegy on Time is gnomic in mood. Its last distich follows:

" omnia mors poscit. lex est, non poena, perire;
 hic aliquo mundus tempore nullus erit."31

Petronius Arbiter, of the same period leaves us some short erotic elegy of the conventional type. 32

Martial, of a generation later, wrote most of his epigrams in the elegiac distich, but the mass of these cannot be called

30. Ox Bk Lat Verse 230, 1

31. Ibid 232

32. Ibid 250, 251, 254

elegy. The little tribute to Alcimus³³ is tenderly threnodic as is the epitaph for Lucan.³⁴

Of longer pieces in distichs L. Caelius Lactantius Firmianus (290 A.D.) has left us an example in his account of the Phoenix.³⁵ This is much in the style of the Alexandrians' narrative elegies; there are also several epitaphs that deserve the name of threnodic elegy because of their length. Among these is the laudatory one of twenty-six distichs for the actor Vitalis,³⁶ and the longer one by Ausonius for his father.³⁷ Ausonius (310-395 A.D.) has left us a tender little erotic elegy to his wife, that seems to show a very sincere affection. The following will illustrate:

"Uxor, vivamusque ut viximus et teneamus
nomina, quae primo sumsimus in thalamo:
nec ferat ulla dies, ut commutemur in aevo,
quin sibi sim iuvenis tuque puella mihi."³⁸

In the fifth century A.D., Claudius Claudianus, Rutilius Claudius Namatianus, and Avianus all wrote elegy that has come down to us. The subject matter of the first is varied--laudatory,³⁹ descriptive,⁴⁰ and a letter full of mythological

33. Mar. I LXXXVIII

34. Mar. VI, XXI, XXII

35. Ox Bk Lat Verse 310

36. Ibid 315

37. Ibid 340

38. Ibid 328 1-4

39. Ibid 363

40. Ibid 368

reference.⁴¹ From the second we have a long elegy on Rome;⁴² and the third puts the old fables in distichs.⁴³

During the middle ages as said in an earlier chapter⁴⁴ the distich was used for all sorts of purposes, sermons, biographies, prefaces to narrative poems, catalogues; and we find no outstanding work of genius in all this mass of literature. It is a curious fact that through all these toils and denaturing afflictions elegy clung to its old tradition of melancholy reflection.

41. Ox Bk Lat Verse 369

42. Ibid. 373

43. Ibid. 370, 372

44. page 28

CHAPTER VII

INTRODUCTORY ENGLISH ELEGY

In the study of any literary form its origin and the early phases of its development are always matters of great interest and value. In the case of a definite form like the elegy, taken into an alien language and adapted to suit its forms and to express its meanings, the process of crystallization from the fluid early state to something that really belonged to the adopting language and literature, the narrowing of moods to accord with the English genius, and the correspondence of results with what was produced in older literatures, are all considerations of great importance to our subject.

Before English literature was exposed to classical influences and thus to the elegy, the Anglo-Saxon melancholy had tinged and often permeated it. In fact, most of the Anglo-Saxon lyrics we have left are of the nature of laments that might easily be called elegy: for example, Deor's Lament, The Wanderer, The Seafarer, The Wife's Letter. We have confined our study, however, to the English adaptations and imitations of the classical elegy, and to its corporation into English Literature at the time of the Renaissance and after the word, elegy, was used by the English for certain of their compositions.

The elegy was introduced into England through the study of Ovid and Propertius, though in English poetry it always kept the earliest Greek connotation, a funeral song of lament. As early as the latter part of the fifteenth century we find Skelton writing an Elegy upon the Dethe of the Erle of Northumberlande, with an introductory and a concluding poem in Latin elegiac distichs, the versification of which is an imitation of Propertius. The English part of the poem is rather poor stuff, laudatory in nature, didactic and threnodic in mood and as bombastic as eulogies of the great seem doomed by nature to become:

O cruell Mars, thou dedly god of war!

O dolorous tewisday, dedicate to thy name

When thou shoke thy sworde so noble a man to mar!

O ground ungracious, unhappy be thy fame,

Which werte endyed with rede bloud of the same

Most noble erle! O foule mysuryd ground,

Whereon he got his final dedely wounde! ¹

The Latin part of the poem also is without particular merit save in its excellent intention.

Skelton has another Latin elegy in memory of Margaret, Countess of Derby, and an English "moan," after the manner of the one quoted above, on the occasion of the death of King Edward the Fourth. In fact, Skelton was somewhat addicted

1. Lloyd Elegies Anc. and Mod. I p 166

to elegy, and his contemporaries seem to have encouraged him in this vice. His satiric Dirige of Phylluppe quaintly laments the untimely demise of "Phillipe Sparow," an English rival of Corinna's parrot and Lesbia's sparrow. Ovid became somewhat lengthy in his grief for Corinna's parrot, but he is brief compared with "Mistress Scroupe's" elaboration of sorrow and praise for her pet. In this poem the gnomonic mood vies with the threnodic and mock-threnodic. If Mimnermus had had Skelton's mastery of English spelling he might have produced the following:

Of fortune this the chaunce
Standeth in varyance;
Oft times after plessaunce,
Tryble and greuaunce;
No man can be sure
Allway to have pleasure.²

In spite of its lightness this long lament has delicately pathetic lines with some little beauty of expression and shows quite clearly the influence of the great Roman elegists on English writers of the fifteenth century; it shows also that the first appeal elegy had for the English was not as a name for every and any sort of light verse but as a song of definite mourning for the dead.

The great sixteenth century was much given to classical

2. Lloyd Elegies Anc. and Mod. I p 96

models and elegy was a type of composition that appealed to the Englishman's taste for melancholy. In 1542, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, wrote a fine elegiac tribute to his friend and fellow-poet, Sir Thomas Wyatt.³ The praise in this is extravagant but by no means undeserved if we may believe what history says of Wyatt. Three years later when Surrey was in prison at Windsor he wrote an elegy of the gnomic type, in which are such elements of personal grief, sombre thought, and gentle moralizing we are inclined to agree with Courthope when he says:

"I know of few verses in the whole range of human poetry in which the voice of nature utters the accents of grief with more simplicity and truth; it seems to me to be the most pathetic personal elegy in English poetry."⁴

Though the prevailing mood in this poem is gnomic there is also a hint of the erotic mood in the lines where Surrey speaks of his early love-ventures. He begins the lament by deploring the fact that Windsor should be his prison, Windsor where he had spent his happiest youthful days. He closes the half-hundred lines of reflective sadness with the following:

"O place of bliss, renewer of my woes!
Give me account where is my noble fere?
Whom in thy halls thou didst each night enclose,
To other lief, but unto me most dear.'

3. Ward, Eng. Poets II p 261

4. Courthope, Hist. Eng. Poet. II p 85

Echo alas! that doth my sorrow rue,
 Returns thereto a hollow sound of plaint.
 Thus I alone where all my freedom grew,
 In prison pine with bondage and restraint;
 And with remembrance of the greater grief
 To banish the less, I find by chief relief."⁵

In 1576 George Gascoigne's Complaint of Philomene was published--a pastoral elegy that is erotic in mood. The jingling verse, however, does not seem adapted to the theme--despairing love.

In 1579 Puttenham defines elegy as a song of long lamentation.⁶ This definition seems to us both just and significant, for with the poets of the period grief was exceedingly wordy and becomes a weariness to the soul of the modern reader; while the fact that elegy is called lamentation is surely significant in our study of moods. Evidently Puttenham considered lament the proper field of elegy or he would have broadened his definition to cover other types of verse.

Frances Veres in his quaint Sketch of English Art, Literature and Music up to 1598 gives this summary of elegiac history, making elegy mean love lamentation:

"As these are famous among the Greeks for elegies, Melanthus, Mimnermus Colophonius, Olympius Mysius, Parthenius Nic-

5. Ward. Eng. Poets I p 258,9

6. Ap. Gosse. Encyc. Brit.

aeus, Philetas Cous, Theognis Megarensis, and Pigres Halicarnassaeus; and among the Latins, Maecenas, Ovid, Tibullus, Propertius, C. Valgius, Cassius Severus, and Clodius Sabinus; so these are the most passionate among us to bewail and bemoan the perplexities of love, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, Sir Thomas Wyatt, the elder, Sir Francis Bryan, Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Edward Dyer, Spenser, Daniel Drayton, Whetstone, Gascoigne, Samuel Page."⁷

Included in the works of Edmund Spenser we find an interesting little group of elegies which mourn the death of Sir Philip Sidney, that perfect flower of chivalry. More than a hundred poems thus honor him, but this little group of seven, headed by Spenser's Astrophel, in variety of treatment and authorship is truly representative of the lament literature of the age and gives us concentrated material for study. Furthermore, here if anywhere, we should find traces of an English attempt to imitate, adapt or modify the elegiac distich for lament uses in case there had been any such attempt among the Elizabethans.

Spenser's Astrophel is a pastoral elegy and follows the pastoral convention brought into early favor by a study of Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus. Since the poem is of this type we naturally find there no trace of the distich. Spenser's multiplication of images of woe through many stanzas becomes

7. Arber. Eng. Garner II p 100

tiresome in the extreme, more so because the grief does not seem particularly poignant or vitally sincere. The mood is threnodic and erotic-threnodic.

The Doleful Lay of Glorinda by Mary Sidney, Countess Pembroke, Sir Philip's sister, is also pastoral, threnodic in mood and not of any particular merit.

Brysket makes two contributions, The Mourning Muse of Thestylis and a pastoral eclogue. The Mourning Muse laments in long six-stress stanzas with interwoven rhymes. The eclogue has the extravagance and unreality of most pastoral eclogues. The mood is threnodic.

Matthew Roydon's Elegie is not quite so encumbered with beasts and birds and disconsolate shepherds yet has a marked pastoral flavor. The following will illustrate the character of the poem:

"Incontinent with trembling sound,
He woefully gan to complain,
Such were the accents as might wound
And tear a diamond rock in twain.
After his throbs did somewhat stay,
Thus woefully he gan to say:

.....

'O Grief that liest upon my soul
As heavy as a mount of lead
The remnants of my life control,

Consort me quickly with the dead,
 Half of this heart, this sprite, this will,
 Died in the breast of Astrophil.' "

There is one stanza of Roydon's poem that is particularly appealing and seems truly descriptive of Sidney. This stanza forms a later part of the shepherd's complaint:

"A sweet attractive kind of grace,
 A full assurance given by looks,
 Continuall comfort in a face,
 The lineaments of Gospel bookes.
 I trow that countenance cannot lie,
 Whose thoughts are legible in the eie."

But, alas! thirty-nine stanzas of such grief blunt our sensibilities to the pathos of the conclusion:

"And here my pen is forced to shrink,
 My tears discolor so mine ink."

The mood of this poem is threnodic, obviously with no trace of the distich or any adaptation of it.

There are two anonymous epitaphs, one later attributed to Raleigh, the other to Greville, Lord Brooke. Raleigh's poem conforms more closely than those we have been studying to the old classical elegy, both in manner of treatment and in length, fifteen four line stanzas; but it is of no particular literary merit. Its mood is threnodic.

Greville's Epitaph, however, seems worthy of more notice,

since it has all the good qualities of Raleigh's poem and some excellencies of its own. It consists of ten four-line stanzas with the rhyme scheme, aabb, the first and third lines six-stress, the second and fourth, seven-stress. This irregularity of line length in the stanza is somewhat reminiscent of the distich. The whole poem is more effective than the others of the group because of its comparative simplicity and seeming sincerity. Perhaps the utter absence of the pastoral element is what most commends it to modern taste. The lines below will illustrate its poetical quality:

"Knowledge her light hath lost, valor has slain her knight;

Sidney is dead! Dead is my friend! Dead is the world's delight!"

"A spotless friend, a matchless man, whose vertue ever shinde."

In this group of elegies we find the threnodic mood predominant as is quite natural considering the occasion of its publication. We find in addition traces of the gnomic and of the erotic moods. There are, however, no traces of an attempt at an elegiac meter, that is, a verse-form peculiarly fitted to lament context. Greville's versification is rather effective, but evidently is not intended as a model for future mourners since the author does not even take the trouble to claim his contribution by signing it.

The century following the Elizabethan Age is of peculiar

interest since it is the period in which the English elegy becomes individual, finds itself, so to speak, broadens and then narrows into what we call elegy today.

During this period elegy was a favorite mode of expression. Every occasion of public or private grief was made memorable by its elegy. During this period, too, attempts were made to take the lament idea away from elegy and to leave it as free in subject matter as the sonnet. Thus four types of elegiac poetry prevailed. First, may be named the threnodic elegy that follows the pastoral convention and usually makes opportunity to teach a little through the shepherds' mouths--Spenser's Astrophel and Milton's Lycidas are elegies of this very popular type. Second, is the threnodic elegy that is not pastoral in character and generally is personal--examples are: Ben Jonson's elegy on Shakespeare and Cowley's fine lines in honor of his friend, Mr. Hervey. Third, is the elegy that is frankly erotic and either bewails the "pangs of disprized love" or records the triumphs and delights of successful love--Ben Jonson's An Elegy, John Donne's love elegies, and Hammond's love elegies are examples. The fourth type is the gnomic elegy that reflects sombrely or tenderly on the thought of death change and time--Gray's Elegy and most of Shenstone's elegies are of this type.

The first two types we may dismiss briefly since there are many such elegies and since they accord in mood with what

we call elegy now. Poems of the third and the fourth types, however, since they have not succeeded in making the purely erotic and the purely gnomic elegy popular in the literature of today, demand closer consideration as stages in the development of modern elegy.

Most of the Elizabethans sang of the sorrows of love in strains erotic enough in all conscience to prove the influence of Propertius and Tibullus upon them. Ben Jonson in the Elegy mentioned above groans over the hard heart of his lady. Spenser gives vent to despairing passion in some of his Amor-etti Sonnets.⁸ Shakespeare has sonnets of a similar nature. In both Spenser and Shakespeare Petrarch's influence is keenly felt. We doubt, however, that such poems were ever classed with elegiac literature or that their authors and their age ever intended them to be so classed.

The love wails of the next half century ran closer to the Roman models. William Habington (1605-1654) wrote a group of poems in sonnet form, called Castara, poems that may be considered elegies. This work consists of four parts: (1) The Mistress, (2) The Wife, (3) The Friend, on the death of George Talbot, (4) The Holy Man, meditations on death. The first two parts are definitely erotic in mood. There are clear echoes of Propertius⁹ in the poems, Upon Castara's Absence and To Castara Inquiring Why I Loved Her.

8. Amor. Sonnets XXXI, XLI, XLII.

9. See Prop. II iii, III v

The love elegies of John Donne, somewhat like the above in character, leave us in no doubt as to the author's intention--he calls them elegies. Since he has other elegies of the threnodic and gnomic types we may infer that his idea of the field of elegy was much like that of the Romans.

Donne's nineteen love elegies record the progress of the author's affair with another man's wife frankly and somewhat grossly. Donne possessed a dual nature--one sensuous, one religious--that constantly surprises us by its contradictions. The young enthusiast, mastered by curiosity or by a desire to experience life in all its phases, seems deliberately to have cultivated the amour mentioned so that he might observe and describe his emotional symptoms. We see in the subject matter of these poems much that reminds us of the Romans. In fact, if Donne's love elegies are not imitations, they surely prove that love of that type runs in a mold the centuries have made and hardened beyond possibility of change. If, however, Donne was trying to set a pattern for English elegy he failed, for elegy that is merely erotic has not appealed to English taste. Donne uses the heroic couplet in these poems, a verse-form that seems closely to approach the spirit of the distich because of its compactness.

Milton's Latin elegies should not be omitted from any discussion of imitations of Propertius and Tibullus. He has left us seven of these on various subjects--the seventh decidedly

erotic in mood since it records an occasion when he fell in love at first sight. He uses the elegiac distich and does it gracefully:

"Unam forte aliis supereminuisse notabam
Principium nostri lux erat illa mali,
Sic Venus obtaret mortalibus ipsa videre,
Sic regina deum conspicienda fuit."

The fact that two of these elegies are threnodic in mood and that the other four are light dissertations in letter form prevaillingly didactic and gnostic, makes us inclined to believe that Milton considered elegy a suitable carrier for all sorts of personal reflections, grave and gay. In the second elegy, however, On the Death of the University Beadle, the following lines would indicate that the tradition of mourning influenced even his thought of elegy:

"Fundat et ipsa modos querebunda Elegeia tristes
Personet et talis naenia maesta scolis."

Milton's wealth of mythological reference makes these poems seem an echo of Propertius. His versification and variety of subject-matter also mirror Propertius. These Latin poems by a great Englishman convince us still more that during this introductory period the Roman influence in matters of mood was very great.

Anthony Hammond in the first half of the eighteenth century uses elegy to express only the emotions of love. He feels



himself the English Tibullus when he depicts his Miss Dashwood happy with him in some silvan retreat. His amorous bits of mediocrity are said to have influenced both Shenstone and Gray in their choice of an elegiac stanza--four alternately rhymed five-stress lines--but his experiment in subject-matter did not appeal to them as especially successful or interesting, and, in fact, did not make the purely erotic elegy any more popular than it had been before.

Shenstone, also of the eighteenth century, leaves us in no doubt as to his intentions and opinions, for he writes an introduction to his elegies in which he gives a resume of the early history of elegy and states his own conclusions as to its province and scope. He believes that elegy may express any sentimental mood, that it need not be sorrowful, though it may be and often is, but that it must be reflective. He characterizes it as,

"A kind of poetrythat magnifies the sweets of liberty and independence, that endears the honest delight of love and friendship, that celebrates the glory of a good name after death, that ridicules the futile arrogance of birth, that recommends the innocent amusement of letters, and insensibly prepares the mind for that humanity it inculcates."¹⁰

For the expression of such sentiments he strongly endorses the four-line stanza referred to above.

10. Shenstone's Introduction to Elegies.

A glance at Shenstone's elegies will suffice. The book contains twenty-six poems, varying in length, subject and mood, though, as his introductory would indicate, the gnomic mood overshadows all the others. He prefaces most of the individual poems with quaint explanatory remarks, modestly put in the third person; for example:

"He compares his humble fortune with the distress of others; and his subjection to Delia, with the miserable servitude of an African slave."¹¹ The mood here is plainly erotic-gnomic.

"He indulges in the suggestions of spleen."¹² The mood of this is gnomic of the more melancholy type.

"He suggests the advantages of birth to a person of merit, and the folly of a superciliousness that is built upon that sole foundation."¹³ In this we find both the didactic and the gnomic moods.

"He complains how soon the pleasing novelty of life is over."¹⁴ This reminds us of Mimnermus and Theognis.

Shenstone's gnomic tendencies take our thoughts by easy transition to a consideration of other elegies of the fourth type, that is, the elegy that reflects sombrely on the thought of death, age and change, and is therefore purely gnomic in mood. Many very beautiful English poems may be classed thus. This gnomic mood in connection with the threnodic pervades

- 11. Elegy XV
- 12. Elegy XVII
- 13. Elegy XVI
- 14. Elegy XI

almost all the elegiac poetry of the present time also. The seventeenth century, however, fairly reveled in reflective gloom.

Henry King (1591-1667) wrote some elegy that may be called threnodic in mood, but more that is typically gnomic. The following from A Dirge leaves the reader with a deep sense of the vanity of all things earthly:

"What is the existance of man's life?

.....

It is a dial which points out
The sunset as it moves about
And shadows out in lines of night
The subtle stages of time's flight,
Till all-obscuring earth hath laid
The body in perpetual shade.

It is a weary interlude
Which doth short joy, long woes include;
The world the stage; the prologue tears,
The acts vain hopes and varied fears;
The scene shuts up with loss of breath,
And leaves no epilogue but death."¹⁵

Sir John Davies (1569-1626) wrote a long didactic-gnomic elegy called Nosce Teipsum on the immortality of the soul.

Henry Vaughan (1621-1695) wrote mournful reflective poems

15. Lloyd. El. Anc. and Mod. p 236

some of which are particularly interesting in versification, since the stanza seems to be an English adaptation of the elegiac distich and gives the same effect as of a baffled falling back upon itself. The following stanza will serve as illustration:

"And yet as angels in some brighter dream
 Call to the soul when man doth sleep
 So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted
 themes

And into glory peep." 16.

Gray's Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard, to be discussed in the next chapter, is typical of the gnomic elegy of the eighteenth century.

There was a great mass of similar poetry written during this period: Young's Night Thoughts, Thompson's Seasons, Pope's Essay on Man. The world was given over to plaintive moralizing. Some of this poetry is called elegy, some of it by less suggestive names but it is all tarred with the same dark brush of sepulchral gloom.

It is irrelevant in a study of mood to attempt a classification of all the elegiac poetry of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries; one point, however should be emphasized: that is, that no attempt to

16. Friends Departed from Baldwin The Bk. of El.

make English elegy light and frivolous, as Alexandrian and Roman elegy often was, has ever been at all successful. The prevailing moods of English elegy have always been threnodic and gnomic.

As to the distich or an English substitute for the distich existing for plaintive poetry we have no sufficient evidence. Hammond, Shenstone, and Gray with their following failed to make their chosen stanza more than a passing fad. It is clearly seen that English poets like to put their laments into the measure that seems most convenient and that they are not bound by any tradition. Vaughan's stanza quoted above seems unusually effective, however, and might be recommended to the mourning poets of tomorrow.

CHAPTER VIII

REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH ELEGIES

We have found the elegy in English literature narrowed in mood almost to the threnodic and the gnomic. In spite of all attempts to make of equal importance the elegy that sang the sorrows of love, by Donne and Hammond and Shenstone and others, English elegy is inextricably bound to death and the thoughts of death. From the great mass of the poems that mourn the sickle strokes of the Reaper, there are some that may be selected as representative and particularly beautiful. From the study of the moods in these the characteristic moods of all English elegy may be inferred.

The poems chosen for detailed study are: Milton's Lycidas, Cowley's elegy On the Death of Mr. William Hervey, Shelley's Adonais, Matthew Arnold's Thyrsis, Tennyson's In Memoriam, Swinburne's Ave atque Vale, Gray's Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard; to these are added two American poems: Whitman's When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed and Emerson's Threnody.

Of these, Lycidas, Adonais, and Thyrsis are bound more or less to classical models and employ the pastoral names and phrases of Bion, Theocritus, and Moschus. All of them are written for the sake of some dead friend or acquaintance--for even Gray's Elegy, though through the main poem it seems to

reflect on the general idea of death, shows by the epitaph that some definite person was the cause of the lament.

Lycidas, a pastoral elegy, was written to commemorate the death of Edward King, one of Milton's Cambridge friends. This young scholar was of considerable promise and of high social standing--deservedly popular among his mates. During the summer vacation of 1637 he was drowned just off the English coast as he was on the way to Ireland. When news of his death came to his college friends they prepared for his memorial a volume of verse which was issued from the university press in 1638. Milton's Lycidas was the last poem in this volume.

At the time he wrote this poem Milton was stirred not only by a sense of personal bereavement, but by the thought that his country and church had lost a noble son who, if he had lived, might have helped to cleanse them from evil taint. So, Lycidas does more than mourn; it teaches, exhorts, and reflects.

In reading the stately and beautiful lines of this poem, it is a little difficult to realize always that it is a lament for a real human being and not a tale of olden days, so wrapped about is the theme with thoughts of shepherds and fauns and nymphs and Greek fountains. So much, in fact, is pagan, that mention of the "Pilot of the Galilean Lake" and the "dear might of Him that walked the waves" seems oddly incongruous.

But the seeming contradiction is not a contradiction after all, for Lycidas is Christian--intensely religious--but for the sake of grace and loveliness it has merely donned a pagan dress.

There is real grief in the following that makes them touchingly threnodic:

"For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.

.....

He must not float upon his watery bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of some melodious tear."

There is contemplative tenderness in these:

"For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade and rill;"

And a wail of despair in these:

"But, oh! the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone and never must return!
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes, mourn."

The following fine passage is gnomic in mood:

"Alas! what boots it with uncessant care
To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?"

Were it not better done, as others use,
 To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
 Or with the tangles of Nessera's hair?
 Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
 (That last infirmity of noble minds)
 To scorn delights and live laborious days;
 But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
 And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
 Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears,
 And slits the thin-spun life."

In the above is the same tone of dreary reflection on the futility of all human achievement noticed so frequently in the work of the old Greek elegists; but Milton does not stop with this reflection, he has Phoebus in didactic strains tell us that

"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
 Nor in the glistering foil
 Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies,
 But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes
 And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
 As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
 Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed."

The poet, in his fiery indignation against the false shepherds of the flock of Christ, grows violently hortatory:

"Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold

A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least
That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!

What reck's it them? What need they? They are sped;"

Thus through the mouth of "the Pilot of the Galilean Lake" we see Milton's earnest purpose to teach and arouse the church.

Contrary to the spirit of the old Greek elegy, there is no hopeless sense of depression left with us at the end of this poem; we are reminded that goodness and piety may bloom again in another world, and that in this world men have work to do and must not take time for long bootless mourning. The last line is not heartless but is a call to service:

"To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new."

Abraham Cowley, too, mourns for a dear friend in his elegy On the Death of Mr. William Hervey. In fact, this elegy contains almost no didacticism, and though it is a little wordy in places its spirit is purely threnodic throughout. It consists of ten eight-line stanzas with the rhyme scheme aabbcdde, five-stress with the exception of lines 4, 6, and 7, which are four-stress. This is not at all like the distich, though the stanza has somewhat of a melancholy effect seemingly produced by the position of the four-stress lines.

These lines in spite of their commonplace diction breathe simple love and grief:

"My sweet companion and my gentle peer,

Why hast thou left me thus unkindly here,
Thy end forever and my life to moan?

O, thou hast left me all alone!"

"My dearest friend, would I had died for thee!
Life and this world henceforth will tedious be!"

"Silent and sad I walk about all day,
As sullen ghosts stalk speechless by
Where their hid treasures lie;
Alas! my treasure's gone; why do I stay?"

The sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth stanzas give a clear picture of a gracious, scholarly and finely-cultured personality--with love as the master portraitist. For example:

"Large was his soul; as large a soul as e'er
Submitted to inform a body here;"

"Knowledge he only sought, and so soon caught
As if for him knowledge had rather sought;"

"His mirth was the pure spirits of various wit,
Yet never did his God or friends forget;"

In typical elegiac fashion the first four lines in the last stanza reflect on the degraded and unhappy condition of the age:

"But happy thou, ta'en from this frantic age,

Where ignorance and hypocrisy does rage!
 A fitter time for heaven no soul e'er chose--
 The place now only free from those."

This poem is not of first rank as poetry, but as elegy it seems to offer suggestions to would-be writers of this type of verse; for its whole effect is of friendship and grief, and the versification suits the theme.

Shelley's Adonais, mourning for the untimely death of Keats, is a pastoral lament of haunting melodious beauty quite different from Lycidas both in form and in purpose yet exemplifying the same elegiac moods. Shelley and Keats were friends but were not particularly intimate; so this poem was not actuated by warm personal affection and a desolate sense of personal loss but by admiration for Keats' genius and by indignation toward the unjust criticism that Shelley believed had shortened his comrade's life. Adonais, then, is a defense of poets and poetry, a moan for beauty vanished from the earth, a strong exhortation against narrowness of thought and vision. In diction it is closely modeled after Bion's lament for Adonis and even translates literally certain refrain-phrases.

The poem consists of fifty-five nine-line stanzas, eight lines five-stress, and the ninth six-stress. There is thus that break in the even flow of the metrical pattern that seems so effective in songs of lamentation. The rhyme scheme is ababbcbcc.

Four moods prevail in this poem: the didactic, the thren-

odic, the hortatory, and the gnomic.

In these lovely lines Shelley teaches his own religion:

"He is made one with Nature: there is heard
 His voice in all her music, from the moan
 Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;
 He is a presence to be felt and known
 In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
 Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
 Which has withdrawn his being to its own;

.....

He is a portion of the loveliness
 Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
 His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
 Sweeps through the dull sense world, compelling there
 All new successions to the forms they wear;"

The poet's feeling against narrow people who mistreat poets and who try to confine free spirits within prison cells of thought and foolish convention is very strong. These lines seem to hint at some particular wretch and are strongly hortatory in tone:

"Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!
 Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
 Thou noteless blot on a remembered name!
 But be thyself, and know thyself to be!
 And ever at thy season be thou free

To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow:"

There are other lines of similar import intended to make any unjust critic, save the most obtuse, squirm as he reads.

In the following the gnostic mood predominates--the gnostic mood, however, decked out in strangely vigorous words:

"'Tis we who, lost in stormy visions, keep
 With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
 And in mad trance strike with our spirit's knife
 Invulnerable nothings.--We decay
 Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
 Convulse us and consume us day by day,
 And cold hopes swarm like worms within our
 living clay."

This has a different tone and most beautiful imagery; it may be considered a combination of the didactic and the gnostic moods:

"Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
 Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
 Until Death tramples it to fragments.--Die,
 If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
 Follow where all is fled!"

There are many passages that are threnodic in mood, as one would expect in a poem of this nature. As said above, however, there is not much strong personal affection indicated by them:

"Alas! that all we loved of him should be,
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal! Woe is me!"

"He will awake no more, oh, never more!--
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace,
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place;"

No personal friend, overcome by love and grief, would ever allow the dreadful thought of corruption to come so soon into his mind.

Oddly enough, in spite of the fact that we feel Milton's personal grief more than we feel Shelley's, the dramatization in Adonais is weaker than it is in Lycidas; that is to say, Milton's poem is so clothed upon by the pastoral convention that we lose sometimes our feeling that Lycidas is Edward King, Milton's friend; in the case of Adonais all the gods and goddesses and personified fancies do not blind us to the vision of a human being dead and bewept,--a human being whom the poet knew.

Matthew Arnold's Thyrsis is also a pastoral elegy and was written to honor the memory of a friend, the poet Clough. The pastoral element here finds place in a lovely English countryside--so vividly described that it fairly blooms before us as

we read, and Sicilian shepherds piping along the Thames seem no great incongruity. The rich blue skies of the south shine softly through the gray English mists with an effect of tear-filled eyes that is touching and appropriate. There is little or none of the didactic in this poem; its general mood is gnomic-threnodic--a calm tenderness of reflection the aftertaste of which is not bitter but sweet, no wild fury of lamentation--heartache and heart break--but strong, pure, changeless, affection that is spiritually able to leap over the physical barrier death has set. Thyrsis is one of the really great English elegies.

The imagery of pastoral life does not for a moment obscure our perception that this is a memorial for a dead friend. Longing and regret flow through it and over it. The following passages illustrate its thoughtful sadness, a musing over things that have been and can be no more, and its last little lift of courage and hope--lacking in pagan poetry but found in almost all Christian literature, even the most sorrowful:

"But Thyrsis nevermore we swains shall see;
See him come back and cut a smoother reed,
And blow a strain the world at last shall heed--
For Time, not Corydon, hath conquered thee!"

"Yes, thou art gone! and round me too the night
In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.
I see her veil drawn soft across the day,

division. There is no poem in the English language more nobly threnodic or more sincere in tone. This was written to commemorate the death of Tennyson's second self, young Arthur Hallam, in 1833. Between these young men had been one of those rare friendships that crown the years of any life with beauty, be the period of its flower long or short.

In Memoriam is not a poem of calm appreciation or of warm admiration, or of merited honor to a fine man. It has all these elements in it, but above all it is the conflict between intense personal grief and faith in God's good will. In spite of the restraint and philosophical dignity of the language we can feel this struggle, and we can rejoice with a sense of personal victory in the outcome. For all of us have stumbled blindly along roads of grief and some of us have been lost in the darkness. Hence the mood of In Memoriam can best be characterized as gnomic-threnodic--it grieves but it also reflects.

The first three stanzas of the prologue, gnomic in mood, seem to give the text for the whole composition, and indeed it is said this prologue was written last:

"Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove;

Thine are these orbs of light and shade;
 Thou madest life in man and brute;
 Thou madest Death; and lo, thy foot
 Is on the skull that thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
 Thou madest man, he knows not why,
 He thinks he was not made to die;
 And thou hast made him: thou art just."

Some of the more clearly threnodic stanzas follow:

"I sometimes hold it half a sin
 To put in words the grief I feel;
 For words, like nature, half reveal
 And half conceal the Soul within."

"In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
 Like coarsest clothes against the cold:
 But that large grief which these enfold
 Is given in outline and no more."

"My Arthur, whom I shall not see
 Till all my widowed race be run;
 Dear as the mother to the son,
 More than my brothers are to me."

Finally in these beautiful reflective stanzas Tennyson reaches a high ground of hope and courage, in his prayer:

"That we may lift from out of dust
A voice as unto him that hears,
A cry above the conquered years
To one that with us works, and trust,
With faith that comes from self control,
The truths that never can be proved,
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul."

Swinburne's Ave atque Vale was written in memory of the poet Baudelaire, whom Swinburne knew, but who was not bound to him by intimate friendship. The name, of course, is taken from Catullus' little elegy to his brother's dust; but here the resemblance ends; for where Catullus is almost laconically brief and austere in expression, Swinburne is diffuse and often obscure. The lines of the poem, however, are hauntingly beautiful in their long alliterative sweep. We are held by them as by a strain of wild sweet music, the strain of the Phrygian flute perhaps, enthralling the ears--breaking the heart. Swinburne, too, uses elegy to teach his religion. The most pagan, we feel, of all the Victorians, there is in this poem the same assembling of impotent old gods, the same half-desperate questioning of the meaning of their godhood that we find in the ancient Greeks and Romans. We guess that Swinburne's god is beauty and that he worships at "Proserpine's veiled head" be-

cause those dim mystical dreams of the gods of Greece seem to him more beautiful than the tortured Galilean's real spiritual loveliness.

From the poem our picture of Baudelaire is somewhat vague. He is presented as a "sleepless heart and sombre soul unsleeping," a "sad soul," a "sweet strange elder singer" whose lips are touched "with bitter wine" and nourished "with bitter bread" who had been compelled by some evil love-affair into the "footless places" and the "shadows hot from hell;" a man who saw "Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us: Fierce loves and lovely leaf buds poisonous," "Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech."

The general mood of this poem is gnomic but there are many threnodic lines and some didactic ones--always overshadowed by the prevailing gnomic character of the whole.

The following are threnodic-gnomic in mood:

"It is enough; the end and the beginning
 Are one thing to thee who art past the end.
 O hand unclasp'd of unbeholden friend,
 For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,
 No triumph and no labour and no lust,
 Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.
 O quiet eyes wherein the light saith naught,

 Sleep, and have sleep for light.

"Thou art too far for wings of words to follow,
Far too far off for thought or any prayer.

.....

Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,
Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,
Our dreams pursue our dead and do not find."

"For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,
Take at my hands this garland, and farewell."

In these is a hopeless questioning of death and time:

"Hast thou found any likeness for thy vision?
O gardener of strange flowers, what bud, what
bloom,

Hast thou found sown, what gather'd in the
gloom?

What of despair, of rapture, of derision,
What of life is there, what of ill or good?
Are the fruits gray like dust or bright like
blood?"

In answer he seems to get only "some dim derision of mysterious laughter" "some little sound of unregarded tears," "some cadence of dead sighs."

The twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth stanzas set forth the mystic Pantheism that is evidently Swinburne's religion. The spirit of the poem is infinitely depressing.

The mood of Gray's Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard is prevailingly gnomic with slight traces of the didactic. It was intended to follow a sort of elegiac tradition by using the verse form employed by Hammond and Shenstone, and the reflective content advocated by the latter as the proper province of elegy.

We see the poet looking about over the graves of a country churchyard and reflecting sadly on the futility of life and the swift oblivion of death--themes Mimnermus and Solon, and Theognis had found to their liking long before. Some fine reflective passages dignify this poem. For example:

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike th'inevitable hour;
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

"Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?"

"For who, to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing ling'ring look behind?"

In the epitaph Gray dedicates the poem to "A Youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown." He closes his summary of the life and character of this "melancholy" youth by commending his

soul to God, thus touching with hope of eternal life the ashes to ashes and dust to dust impression his elegy gives us.

The two American elegies chosen for study are of a character widely different both from the British poems we have discussed and also from each other. Emerson's Threnody is melodious, beautifully metrical, passionately threnodic, philosophical in its hope and faith, and is drawn from the deeps of a father's warm love for a promising son. Whitman's When Lilacs last in the Dooryard Bloomed honors Lincoln by portraying the grief of a nation as well as the personal grief of a friend and depicts death as a beneficent healer of all wounds.

Whitman's When Lilacs last in the Dooryard Bloomed is a lyric outburst that seems to justify and dignify Whitman's peculiar style. His use of the star and the bird in the poem is charmingly symbolic--the setting evening star, bright and large, is the light of Lincoln's life, and the bird is the spirit of his life and the memory of his being that will sing on and on wherever souls of men will listen. Here Whitman intrudes very little of that soddenly prosaic material with which he often sees fit to burden his verse. This elegy consists of sixteen divisions of varying lengths, in all a few more than two-hundred lines. The moods are threnodic and

gnomic with occasional passages that may be considered didactic.

The personality of Lincoln is not strongly brought out in these lines, but the grief and horror of Whitman are:

"O powerful western fallen star!

O shades of night--O moody, tearful night!

O great star disappear'd--O the black murk
that hides the star!

O cruel hands that hold me powerless--O help-
less soul of me!

O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free
my soul"

Here is the same grief, the same dread question flung into the darkness, that Tennyson and Emerson expressed for us each in his own manner from the depths of his own suffering.

We get a clear picture of the dismal funeral train as it winds across the spring-filled nation, the dirges in the night, "dim-lit churches" and "shuddering organs," "With the tolling, tolling bells' perpetual clang" and then the tributes of fragrant lilac laid upon the coffin.

The following is threnodic in mood:

"O how shall I warble myself for the dead one
there I loved?

And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet
soul that has gone?

And what shall my perfume be for the grave of
him I loved?"

The song to death may be considered gnomic and threnodic, and is unusual in that it does not rail at the cruelty of death but praises its beauty and tenderness. For example:

"The night in silence under many a star,
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave
whose voice I know,
And the soul turning to thee, O vast and well-
veil'd death,

And the body gratefully nestling close to thee."

Emerson's Threnody is threnodic gnomic and didactic in moods, and it is difficult to decide which mood predominates. The poem is exquisite in sweetness, unsurpassed in elegiac literature in yearning tenderness. It consists of almost three hundred lines of irregular length and indefinite rhyme-scheme though four-stress rhymed couplets predominate. It is not stanzaic in structure.

The picture Emerson gives us of the joyous talented boy is vivid and lovely. At first we feel that the poet is sunk in an agony of intense grief; then we sense his gradual awakening to a perception of divine purpose and divine love--to the working of a larger law. In some respects Threnody reminds us of In Memoriam, particularly in the effect, drawn not so much from the actual words as from the sense of loss and struggle

back of the words--the sense of victory won at a cost.

The following passages are beautifully threnodic in mood:

"The South-wind brings
 Life, sunshine, and desire,
 And on every mount and meadow
 Breathes aromatic fire;
 But over the dead he has no power,
 The lost, the lost, he cannot restore;
 And, looking over the hills, I mourn
 The darling who shall not return."

In the above passage is also a gnomic strain--it is so hard for a mourning spirit to watch nature, seemingly callous, reclothe the wintry earth with spring.

"On that shaded day,
 Dark with more clouds than tempests are,
 When thou didst yield thy innocent breath
 In birdlike heavings unto death,
 Night came and Nature had not thee;
 I said 'We are mates in misery.'
 The morrow dawned with needless glow;
 Each snowbird chirped, each fowl must crow;
 Each tramper started; but the feet
 Of the most beautiful and sweet
 Of human youth had left the hill
 And garden,--they were bound and still."

"O child of paradise,
 Boy who made dear his father's home,
 In whose deep eyes
 Men read the welfare of the times to come,
 I am too much bereft.
 The world dishonored thou hast left.
 O truth's and nature's costly lie!
 O trusted broken prophecy!

In the following there is the didactic mood strongly
 colored by the gnomic:

"The deep Heart answered, 'Weapest thou?
 Worthier cause for passion wild
 If I had not taken the child.

.....

Think'st Beauty vanished from the coast
 Of matter, and thy darling lost?

.....

To-morrow, when the masks shall fall
 That dizen Nature's carnival,
 The pure shall see by their own will,
 Which overflowing Love shall fill,
 'Tis not within the force of fate
 The fate-conjoined to separate."

Here is God, imminent in all loveliness of nature:

"Light is light which radiates,

Blood is blood which circulates,
 Life is life which generates,
 And many seeming life is one."

"Revere the Maker; fetch thine eye
 Up to his style, and manners of the sky.

Not of adamant and gold

Built he heaven stark and cold;

No, but a nest of bending reeds,

Flowering grass, and scented weeds;

.....

Built of tears and sacred flames,

And virtue reaching to its aims;

Built of furtherance and pursuing,

Not of spent deeds, but of doing.

.....

House and tenant go to ground,

Lost in God, in Godhead found."

Whatever is the mystical philosophy that Emerson is trying to teach and preach in these lines, at least we are left with his strong courage to live and love breathing through us. It is a vital thing of faith that helps even where we do not quite understand. As elegy this poem is splendidly adequate--as Christian elegy, that is; and it ranks with the very greatest specimens of its type.

From the study of the moods of these English elegies it is

evident that the great overshadowing mood is the threnodic since each mourns for the dead, but that under this great shadow the gnomic mood is the one most used; that next to it is the purely threnodic, with the didactic also as a close third; that the hortatory is felt occasionally but is more often felt than it is actually expressed in words; and that the erotic mood in these great elegiac poems occurs not at all.

In conclusion these points may be emphasized. First, Greek and Roman elegy, tied to the distich, and English elegy emancipated from it, go very much the same way to say much the same things, to lament, to instruct, to reflect, to discourse on generally plaintive themes dealing with death in its mysterious conquest over life. Second, the English elegy goes back and back over the ages and takes its character from the earliest Greek conception of elegy--a kind of lament without reference to metrical form. Third, English elegy has developed into one of the noblest types of English poetry, and in its grandeur and beauty and tenderness and dignity it is and has been surpassed by no language in any literature.

CONCLUSION

In this study of the elegy we have found a variety of moods throughout Greek, Roman, and post-Renaissance English literature; the patriotic or hortatory, the gnomic, the threnodic, the erotic, the didactic, all bound together by one tradition of mourning--a tradition that seems to point back unerringly to the lament songs of Asia Minor, connected with the music of the flute. It seems safe to assert that all elegiac literature is characterized by a certain plaintiveness. Elegy is the voice of complaint whether tyranny, war, love, an outraged moral sense, or sorrow for the dead, may have chosen it as an appropriate form of expression. We have seen, furthermore, that all the moods of classical elegy are found in modern English elegy, but that the didactic, the patriotic, the gnomic, and the erotic moods have been subordinated to the threnodic; so that virtually all present-day poetry, called elegy, voices sorrow for the dead or reflects sombrely on the thought of death.

This study has made evident to us that the universal use of the distich for classical elegy has found no noteworthy imitation among the makers of English elegy; that the English have not even dared to invent or adapt a meter that might serve to take the place of the distich; but that they have used for lament poetry any and all meters, from the sonnet to free-

verse. An examination into the interrelations of mood and meter, however, seems to justify the Greeks in setting aside the distich to express the plaintive emotions of traditional elegy; for the metrical effect of the distich is as of something broken and foiled. In English elegy the versification that manages to give a similar impression seems most effective; as we have noted in Tennyson's In Memoriam, Vaughan's Friends Departed, and Emerson's Threnody.

Finally we must conclude that elegy is national rather than international in character, in that each literature where we have found it has made of it a creation rather than an imitation. Greek elegy, Roman elegy, English elegy, though united by one tradition are yet essentially Greek, Roman, and English, and in no way more so than in their respective expansion or restriction of the elegiac moods. Thus the gnomic and the patriotic moods lead among the older Greeks, the didactic and the erotic among the Alexandrians, the erotic and the threnodic among the Romans, the threnodic and the gnomic among the English; and each has been seen to echo national traits and ideals through varying conditions of society.

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