THE NIGHTINGALE AS CHRIST IN *L'ADONE* VII

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Scholars of Marino have consistently interpreted the competition between the nightingale and the musician in Canto VII of *L'Adone* in a predominantly secular light. Despite his acknowledgement of the possible religious symbolism in the poem and his recognition of parallels between this episode and Marino's *Dicerie sacre*, Giovanni Pozzi reads the scene as a sign of Marino's acknowledgement of the debate between different poetic styles and his defence of his own new style.¹ Valeria Giannantonio views the episode, in which the musician's victory in skill ends in the death of the bird, as demonstrative of human superiority over all other creatures.² Victor Coehlo focuses on Marino's use of specific terms in the scene in order to show Marino's consciousness of specific musical techniques in vogue during his time, particularly regarding the performance of the *toccata*.³ Yet the sequence of actions, the pathetic and dramatic language with which Marino imbues the episode, and the verbal echoes of Marino's earlier works, particularly the second part of the *Dicerie sacre*, as well as parallels within *L'Adone* itself, all suggest that the episode is charged with an inescapable religious feeling and significance.

Much of the passage's difficulty lies in deciphering the meaning of the nightingale, both as a symbol in Marino's time and as a specific entity within Marino's poem. Is the nightingale here, with its imitation and elabora-

¹Pozzi sees Marino engaged in both a defence of his own poetic style that he associates with the nightingale's challenges to the standard and "equilibrate misura" and "vecchio ritmo" of traditional poetry. He sees also in Marino a desire to emulate one of his poetic models, Claudianus (Marino, *L'Adone e Commento*, 364-365).

²Giannantonio, "Natura e arte," 108-109.

³Coehlo also notes in passing the possibility that the competition is an allegory of the sexual encounter, with the death of the nightingale signalling sexual climax and the coming of dawn at the end of the scene the necessary parting of lovers ("The Lutenist," 397). This interpretation, while interesting, fails to take into account the musician's regretful attitude toward the dead bird, his blaming himself for the death, and his burial of the nightingale.

tion of the musician's song, an essentially positive, negative, or neutral and natural figure? If the nightingale were merely a natural creature with a gift for imitation, Marino would have no need to evoke repeatedly the mythological sadness of the bird: it is called "questo querulo augel" (VII, 41.6; "this plaintive bird"), "l'infelice augellin" (VII, 42.1; "the unhappy bird"), and "l'miser rossignuolo" (VII, 44.4; "the poor nightingale").⁴ While other of its actions, such as singing in sweet supplication for the return of the sun and listening intently to the musician's song, have a certain interpretive neutrality owing to their familiarity within the lyric tradition, the nightingale's strange and unnatural lighting upon the head of the musician forces one to consider it more than a bird. The musician's grief at its death may be explained without recourse to allegory, but his enigmatic gesture of burying the bird within his lute cannot. The nightingale's large role in both the religious and secular literary traditions also makes it a rather charged figure. In troubadour poetry the nightingale served a variety of functions; it was a marker of the natural as opposed to the human; it also represented springtime, sexuality, and a renewal of life;⁵ it was a companion to the mournful lover or one that disputed with the lover.⁶ Religious writings held it to be a mourner of humanity's fall and a singer of Christ's incarnation and passion, a symbol of the contrite human soul,⁷ and a sign of Christ's resurrection and the arrival of the Easter season.⁸ It was also a sign of Christ himself.⁹

In order to arrive at Marino's conception of the significance of the nightingale it is useful to retrace what critics since Pozzi have noticed: Marino's reliance on Famiano Strada's *Prolusiones academicae* for the nightingale scene.¹⁰ Strada's text is couched within a poetic *agon* in which six contemporary poets, among whom Castiglione and Bembo, represent the styles of Latin *auctores*. Imitating the style of Claudianus, Castiglione recounts a story in which a lute player, toward sunset, finds shade beneath

⁴All translations from Marino's texts cited are my own.

⁵Pfeffer, *The Change of Philomel*, 74-75, 132.

⁶Pfeffer, 85-86, 103.

⁷Hodapp, "The Via Mystica," 80-87; Okubo, "Le rossignol," 82-85.

⁸Okubo, "Le rossignol," 82.

⁹Okubo, "Le rossignol," 85-93.

¹⁰In his commentary Pozzi presents the whole of Strada's Latin text (Marino, *L'Adone e Commento*, 366-367). Coelho offers a translation of 52 of Strada's 58 lines, omitting a translation of the final four lines describing the nightingale's death and lines 28-29 (Coelho, "The Lutenist," 412-413).

a holm-oak, and he begins to ease his cares by playing. Then the nightingale of the neighbouring wood, called the muse of the place, the harmless ("inoxia") siren, hears him and comes near him, and resting on the branches just above him, sings back to itself whatever the musician plays. Strada's version, written in Latin, continues to emphasize the competition between the two—the musician exploring all the potential of sound of his instrument and the nightingale replying until its voice cannot match the greatness expressed by the musician. At this point the nightingale dies. Coelho and Pozzi have analyzed to a certain extent the differences between Marino's version and his source text. Yet there remains much to be explored in the comparison. Influenced in part by Petrarch's nightingale poems,¹¹ Marino alters radically the situation of the episode, redefining the two central characters of the scene and the relationship between them.

One of the principal ways in which Marino's version departs from its source text is that it makes explicit that amatory situation of the musician. While the musician in the Strada's passage lightens his cares with his playing (sonanti / lenibat plectro curas, "[he] was playing his lute and easing his cares"¹² 3-4), his "curas" remain ambiguous.¹³ The tranquillity of his song seems to be consonant with the peace he finds in the shelter from the day's heat that he finds in the wood. In contrast, Marino emphasizes the amatory quality of the lute player's music: his "pietoso" ("piteous") song gives vent to his "cordoglio" ("grief"). The musician himself is described as a "solitario amante" (VII, 40.6; "solitary lover") and an "innamorato giovane" (VII, 41.3; "enamoured youth") seeking the solace of solitude in the woods at night, thus evoking the well-known Petrarchan conceit. The flight of Marino's lover recalls the speaker in Petrarch's sonnet 10 who runs toward nature and away from the "palazzi," "teatri" and "logge" and the temptations to virtue that these locations in the city imply.¹⁴ Likewise, Marino's musician comes to the wood "per involarsi ala città" (VII, 41.4; "to flee from the city") and the reality it embodies. The "shade" of night is less shelter from the sun than a flight from the psychological reality of the

¹¹ Marino, *L'Adone e Commento*, 370. Pozzi cites Petrarch's sonnets 10 and 311.

¹² Throughout this article I cite George V. Coelho and Victor Coelho's translation of Strada's *Prohusiones academicae* published in Coelho, "The Lutenist and the Nightingale".

¹³ The lines numbers refer to the excerpt from Strada's text given by Pozzi in his commentary (Marino, *L'Adone e Commento*, 366).

¹⁴ For other examples of theme of the lover's flight to woods see Petrarch's 129, 164, 176, 223, 255 in the *Rime sparse*.

lover's situation. The double covering of the thick forest and the dark sky stresses the lover's entrance into a pristine natural world in which the lover's imagination mingles: "Tacean le selve e dal notturno velo / era occupato in ogni parte il cielo" (VII, 40.7-8; "The woods fell silent, and the sky was covered in every part by the night's veil"). Because this world is closed off from the one he flees, the lover hopes to find consolation in it. His arrival at the forest is a purposeful flight from something, not as in Strada's episode, a fortuitous opportunity to escape the day's heat.

By emphasizing the amatory situation of the musician Marino directs our attention to the lute player's emotional state and mutes the theme of competition so important in Strada's version. In Marino's version the nightingale is felt to be more an intrusion upon the solitary lover than a mere competitor for musical supremacy. While Strada and Marino both feature the increasing frustration of the musician at hearing his music repeated, Marino stresses throughout the emotional quality of the lute player's song. As soon as the musician hears his notes repeated, Strada has him increase the level of difficulty, without any reference to the music's emotional colouring:

... Plenius ergo
explorat citharam tentamentumque futurae
praebeat ut pugnae, percurrit protinus omnes
impulsu pernice fides (12-15)

(therefore he explores the lute, and shows evidence of a future combat, and forthwith runs through all the strings with intense gusto)

Compare this with the similar point of the interaction between the two in Marino's text:

Quei che le fila armoniche percore
sente, nè lascia l'opra, il lieve peso,
anzi il tenor dele *dolenti* note
più forte intanto ad iterare ha preso" (VII, 44.1-4)

(He who struck the harmonious strings feels the light weight, yet does not leave off his work; rather, meanwhile, he began to repeat more strongly the tenor of his *sorrowful* notes"; emphasis mine)

Marino keeps the focus on the mournful quality of the singer, and indeed, of the nightingale itself, as he reinvests it with its role of accompaniment to the lover's lament found in the lyric tradition.¹⁵ As the musician

¹⁵In the tradition this accompaniment could also have an antagonistic quality. Pfeffer cites Gaucelm's nightingale that disputes the lover's mournful state (*The Change of Philomel*, 103).

continues to sing, the sorrow of both characters is featured: “Quei canta, e nel cantar *geme e si lagna*, / e questo il canto e *’l gemito* accompagna” (VII, 44.7-8; “He sings, and in singing *groans and complains*, and it accompanies the song and the *groaning*”; emphasis mine). As in Petrarch’s sonnet 311, where one finds the grieving lover that is accompanied throughout the night by the nightingale, “et tutta notte par che m’accompagne” (“and all night it seems to accompany me”), here the “miser rossignuol” (VII, 44.5) mirrors the emotional state of Marino’s musician. Although Marino’s lover will soon lose his focus on his love and turn toward defeating the nightingale, this space allows Marino to establish a more complex relationship between the lover and the bird.

The redefinition of the singer as lover prepares for Marino’s most important manipulation of Strada’s text—the deepening of the relationship between the nightingale and the man. While Strada describes the bird coming near to the musician, Marino stresses its wilful descent from high in the trees, and while Strada has it rest on the branches, Marino has the nightingale come to rest on the singer’s head. Neither Strada’s verses, nor Petrarch’s two “nightingale” poems can be sources for the nightingale’s actions in this scene. While in sonnets 10 and 311 the nightingale’s lament is a reminder of the speaker’s deeper cares and a spur to virtue, these poems depict a rather loose relationship between the lover and the nightingale. Both figures are absorbed in their own sorrows, and there is no indication that the nightingale has any deeper interest in the lover than in using his music as a catalyst for the expression of its own song. In contrast, in Marino’s version the nightingale is pushed to the centre of the scene—no longer is it merely part of the landscape, as in Petrarch’s “nightingale” sonnets. No longer is it a separate, solitary mourner that only casually affects the soul of the lover. No longer can it be merely a reflection of the poet in love. Now it is an active participant in the other’s sorrow. It descends, lamenting and repeating to itself the lover’s sorrowful words, having interrupted its own sweet murmuring in its own language to investigate the intrusion of the lover’s words (VII, 42-43). The bird descends to the lowest branches as it listens and repeats the words of the lover, until it rests on the head of the lover (VII, 43).

Having no apparent precedent for such a descent,¹⁶ one wonders why Marino ensures that the reader imagines the nightingale progressively

¹⁶In the literature devoted to this theme, including Pfeffer’s extensive study of the late medieval lyric tradition, *The Change of Philomel*, and Jeni Williams’ survey of the nightingale in literature, *Interpreting Nightingales*, I have not found such an instance.

descending and slowly but continually drawing near the lover:

... dale cime del'arbore supreme
 scende pian piano insu i più bassi rami ...
 tanto s'appressa e vola e non s'arresta
 ch'alfin viene a posargli in su la testa" (VII, 43.3-8)

(... it descends slowly from the top of the highest trees to the lowest branches ... it so nears and flies and does not cease until it comes to rest upon his head")

While Strada's nightingale simply appears close to the singer and repeats the notes it hears, Marino's nightingale, in contrast, is pulled down to the lover as if invited by the lover's call: "che par ch'a sè l'inviti e chiami" (VII, 43.2; "which seems to call and invite it to itself"). The descent of the nightingale to the top of the lover's head appears forced and unnatural. Pozzi explains it as Marino's evocation of an allegorical icon of Music, which featured a nightingale upon the head of a human figure.¹⁷ This explanation is consistent with Marino's use of Ripa's icons in many other parts of the poem, particularly in the cantos of the "delizie."¹⁸ Yet it does not take into account that the nightingale upon the head of the singer is not a static image but the consequence of the bird's wilful action. More likely, this physical closeness signals its emotional closeness to the musician, its deep participation in his sorrow, and its purity of motivation. It does not seem poised for a normal competition, for it does not take the normal opposing position and attitude of one entering into an *agon* with another. Its descent to the head of the musician is both a bold and innocent gesture. If this is to be a "pugna," as Marino's language at several points seems to demand, then it will be a competition of a different type.

Marino mitigates the competitive aspect of the scene further by stressing the nightingale's desire merely to repeat, imitate, and emulate the singer. The nightingale's efforts are evident throughout its interaction with the singer. As it descends to the head of the musician, it repeats his notes: "... e ripigliando le cadenze estreme, / quasi ascoltarlo ed emularlo brami"

¹⁷ Marino, *L'Adone e Commento*, 370.

¹⁸ In his commentary Pozzi sees the images of the guardians to the gardens of hearing (VII, 8), taste (VII, 96), and touch (VIII, 4) as deriving from Ripa's *Iconologia*. He also cites the images of Poetry and Music (VII, 64) and Pleasure (VIII, 27) as coming from Ripa. Pozzi notes that other allegorical figures in these cantos, however, have their sources in Poliziano and Claudianus (Marino, *L'Adone e Commento*, 396). Colombo notes how Marino manipulates the images to his own purposes, often transposing features of one of Ripa's icons onto another (Colombo, *Cultura e tradizione*, 25-30).

(VII, 43.5-6; "... and taking up again its last cadences seems almost to wish to listen to him and emulate him") it continues to imitate, "ad iterare ha preso" (VII, 44.4; "intent on imitating him") and is intent on following the singer's lead, even as the singer intensifies his lament: "... quanto più pote / segue suo stile ad imitarlo inteso" (VII, 44, 5-6; "as much as it can, it follows his style, intent on imitating him"); it echoes the musician's lament: "l'altro a replicare tutto il lamento" (VII, 45.3; "the other reproducing the whole lament"), "rifà col rostro" (VII, 46.8; "repeats with its beak") the musician's notes, and continues to answer him: "sempre il seconda" (VII, 47.8; "always rejoins him"). The accompaniment of the nightingale to the lover found in the lyric tradition is intensified to a degree not found elsewhere. The connection between the nightingale's sympathy and its repetition is felt in Marino's phrasing which describes the repetition as occurring even as the nightingale nears the lover: "tanto s'appressa e vola e non s'arresta / ch'alfin viene a posargli insu la testa" (VII, 43.5-8; "and taking up again the last cadences, it seems almost to want to listen to him and emulate him, as it flies close, not stopping until it comes to rest upon his head"). The simultaneous movement toward the lover and the repetition of his words suggests that the imitation is no mere disinterested echo. Indeed, Marino seems to reinvest the sonic repetition with Echo's desire for contact with her beloved. In any case, in this passage the imitation assumes a positive valence that is absent in Strada's version. For Strada, the nightingale's imitation is marked by its virtuosity and garrulousness, not by any sympathy with the musician. As Coelho points out, Strada's nightingale often seeks to outdo the musician, extending its responses beyond the imitation of the musician.¹⁹ In contrast, if Marino's nightingale is "ostinata a cantar" (VII, 47.8; "insisting on singing") and if it is called "lo sfidator" (VII, 48.5; "the challenger"), its motivation seems not to challenge the singer, but rather to sympathize with him: "... e l'altro a replicar tutto il lamento / come pur del suo duol voglia dolersi" (VII, 45.4; "and the other to reproduce the whole lament, as if it wants to mourn the other's mourning"; emphasis mine). Indeed, Marino never gives the bird the ostentation that would border on hubris suggested in Strada's version. Rather, its persistence is defined by its nearly servile and tireless—"infaticabile" (VII, 46, 7; untiring)—repetition of the musician.²⁰ If it exceeds the musician's song,

¹⁹Coelho, "The Lutenist," 396.

²⁰The adjective "infaticabile" is used to describe the heavenly movement of the spheres. See, Marino, *Rime amorose* 35, 5-6 (The editors of the *Rime amorose* cite *Dicerie Sacre*, 225 as a parallel).

“al paragon sovrasti” (VII, 47.4; “it [the nightingale] might surpass its model”), it seems to do so without intending to. Marino’s use of diminutives throughout the scene to describe the nightingale (“augellin” VII, 42.1; “linguetta” VII, 47.7; “augelletto” VII, 53.1) accentuate not so much the small size of the bird but its innocence and simplicity.

In order to dramatize this sympathetic attitude of the nightingale with the man, Marino displaces most descriptions of technical virtuosity in the scene itself from the nightingale onto the singer. This marks a departure from Strada’s version, which describes in detail the nightingale’s responses. For example, Strada reports the nightingale’s third response to the musician in this way:

Nunc ceu rudis aut incerta canendi
proiicit in longum nulloque plicabile flexu
carmen init, simili serie iungique tenore
praebet iter liquidum labenti e pectore voci,
nunc caesim variat modulisque canora minutis
delibrat vocem tremuloque reciprocatur ore (24-29)

(And now, as if untrained and uncertain she stretches out a long burst of / song and begins a melody that is repeated without modification. / And joining in the same mode, / presents a smooth passage (from her throat) for the falling voice. *Now [the nightingale] varies the song in short phrases and clips it with minute measures, and responds with a tremulous mouth*).²¹

In contrast, in Marino’s version one hears only briefly of the way the nightingale “labirinti di voce implica e mesce” (VII, 48.8; “mixes and ties in his labyrinth of sounds”), and even here the nightingale’s response is carefully measured according to, “secondo” (VII, 48.7), the movements of the musician’s playing. One imagines a brief and controlled variation on the player’s theme, not an extended improvisation, as in Strada’s scene. And if the nightingale surpasses the song of the musician, one imagines that it does so in more perfectly singing the musician’s lament.

Marino places the detailed description of the nightingale’s virtuosity in the stanzas preceding the account of the competition, a strategy that preserves the purity of the nightingale’s attitude toward the singer. In Mercury’s preface to the account, Marino rehearses the well-known technical virtuosity of the nightingale, borrowed from Strada and, most likely, Pliny as well.²² Here the nightingale’s profane qualities are described.

²¹ Marino, *L’Adone e Commento*, 366. The text in italics is my addition to the Coehlo translation, which does not account for these lines in Strada’s Latin text as cited by Pozzi.

Following Strada, Marino calls it “la sirena de’ boschi” (VII, 32.4 “the siren of the woods”), as well as “lascivetto cantor” (VII, 34.2; “the flirtatious little singer”). It has a “gola lusinghiera” (VII, 35.1; “charming throat”) and its tongue is likened to a “spada” (“sword”) of a fierce and skilled fencer (VII, 36.3-4). This description encourages one to read this nightingale as slightly different from the one in the story, even though there are some textual connections between the two. For instance, Mercury is prompted to recount the story by the nightingale’s “canto” (VII, 40.1) and the virtuosity that Adonis and he have just heard, thus implying an obvious generic connection between the two birds. In the account of the competition Mercury also notes the nightingale’s “garrula e faconda” (VII, 47.7; “garrulous and fertile”) tongue, vaguely evoking the earlier image of “lascivetto canto” (VII, 34.2; “the flirtatious little singer”).²³ Still, these minor connections do little to dispel the general feeling that somehow the nightingale recounted in the story is unique in its actions and attitude. If Mercury’s story exemplifies the technical virtuosity of the nightingale’s song in general, it more forcefully describes a unique instance in which this virtuosity is linked to humility and purity. Even the adjectives “garrula” and “lascivetto” do not have a strongly negative quality.

The description of the nightingale’s sadness and solitariness seems to outweigh the sexual and capricious qualities implied in the scene. Before the lover enters the wood the nightingale is described as alone, attentively awaiting the coming of dawn: “L’infelice augellin, che sovra un faggio / erasi desto a richiamare il giorno” (VII, 42.1-2; “The unhappy little bird that had risen on a beech tree to call back the day”). This, too, is a detail not in Strada’s account. The beech tree was used by Petrarch as a general sign for the purity of the solitary woods and the springtime.²⁴ The evocation of the “faggio” here seems part of Marino’s overall strategy to place the scene within a lyric context that recalls the lover’s flight to the woods at night. The sadness of the bird recalls the mythological element, which is tied closely to the nightingale’s radical solitude and separateness. Its awaiting the day and attending to the sun were part of the lyric repertory, but this detail also stresses the darkness in which the bird is shrouded. Hence, it is significant when the nightingale descends to the lover and breaks its

²²Pliny, *Natural History*, 345.

²³Giannantonio has also noted the connections between these two sections of Marino’s treatment of the nightingale (“Natura e arte,” 109-110).

²⁴See Petrarch’s *Rime* 129, 44; 176. In Bembo’s lyrics, too, the beech is figure in the ideal landscape, as in sonnet 46 (Bembo, *Prose e rime*).

own solitude. This act is even more notable for its contrast with the birds described in Venus' garden (VII, 20-26). Here, through Mercury, Marino points to the paradoxical state of the birds, that they are essentially solitary, though not alone, as they sing hidden amid the trees. They are engaged in various dialogues with other birds, yet they remain apart and essentially solitary. This idea is evoked clearly in the account of the mourning dove, which Marino calls "solitaria, non sola" (VII, 26.8; "solitary, but not alone"). The "tortorella" here, in contrast to the traditional portrait, does not descend from its branch to the ruin of the fallen elm tree as it mourns the loss of its spouse:

Orfano tronco in secca spiaggia aprica
d'olmo tocco dal ciel la tortorella
non cerca no, ma sovra verde pianta
solitaria, non sola, e vive e canta (VII, 26.5-8)

(The turtle-dove does not search the orphaned trunk of an elm touched by the sky in the dry open slope, no, but flies alone, not lonely above the green plant).

Rather, like the other birds, it will remain hidden and alone. Such a portrait of "normal" birds makes the nightingale's descent in Mercury's account remarkable. Indeed, even the nightingale of Venus' garden is hidden and separate as Adonis listens to it.

The purity and humility of the engaging nightingale contrasts with the scornful resistance of the lover to its accompaniment. The singer's reaction to the innocent bird's responses is characterized as disdainful — "sprezzò la pugna" (VII, 46.1; "he scorned the contest"); "sdegnando il sonatore arguto" (VII, 47.1; "disdaining the penetrating singer"); "scorno prende" (VII, 48.1; "he feels scorn"). This exaggerated reaction points to the imbalance in the lover. His flawed relation to the nightingale is part of this larger problem, and this is reflected in his intrusion into the space of the forest. In contrast to the nightingale, which sings its gentle laments "dolcissimamente" (VII, 42.3; "most sweetly"), the lover wounds ("ferir") the "secreti silenzi" of the wood with his "angosciosi accenti" (VII, 42.6-7; "anguished words"). Thus, the lover "trafitto d'Amor" (VII, 42, 8; "pierced by Amor"), as he strikes the air and infects it with his laments, seems out of harmony with the world, sick, and in need of correction.²⁵ Marino inti-

²⁵This imbalance is not unique to this episode, but finds a precedent in Marino's own writing. In Part I of the *Lira*, Marino emphasizes the night's horror of the lover's anguished "stridi": "... la notte stessa ha del mio stato orrore" (Marino, *Rime marittime* 17, 13).

mates that this correction is produced through the nightingale's participation in the lover's song, as the counterpoint between the two produces a "bel concerto" ("beautiful harmony") that sweetens the universe (VII, 45.5-8). The nightingale brings a sweetness that calms the lover, returns nature to its proper state. This is seen in the contrast between the effect of the lover singing alone, whose song keeps even "Sonno" (VII, 41.2) itself awake, and that of the lover and nightingale together: "... ed allettavan pigre e taciturne / vie più dolce a dormir l'ore notturne" (VII, 45.7-8; "... and they enticed the languid and silent hours of the night to a more sweet sleep"). Now the song seems to be in harmony with the sleep that is fit for the night time. This participation and correction, with its Orphic overtones, however, will be short-lived because of the lover's growing resistance.

In general Marino follows Strada in noting the singer's resistance to the nightingale's participation in his song. After a series of exchanges, both versions reach a similar turning point in the contest when the musician decides that he will win or break his instrument. Yet, while both versions conclude by attributing the failure of the nightingale to its smallness and its simplicity and naturalness, Marino's manipulation of the stages of the contest gives greater prominence to the bird's opposition to war and violence. In Strada's version, when the musician produces warlike sounds the nightingale betrays no difficulty in matching this martial quality: "... alternantique sonore / clarat et infuscat, ceu martia classica pulset" (39-40; "... and alternatively raises her voice then lowers it, just as if she is sounding the battle cry"). Only after the musician raises his technique does he silence the bird. While there are hints of martial sounds in some words in the lute player's final passage, such as "strepit" (47; "he clamours", my translation), one feels the stress on the musician's increased work: "Namque manu per fila volat, simul hos simul illos / explorat numeros chordaeque laborat in omni ..." (45-46; "For he flies through the strings with his hand, one measure after another, / exploring and working every string"). In contrast, in Marino's text when the singer begins to imitate the movements of a "fier conflitto" ("fierce conflict") and a "confuso assalto" ("confused assault") and the "bellicosi strepiti del'armi" ("warlike clanging of arms"; VII, 51.5-8) favoured by Mars, the nightingale fails to respond. The deleterious effects of war and violence on music in general is indicated shortly later in the canto when Mars is predicted to cause the ruin of both sisters of Poetry and Music (VII, 70). The "timpani" recall the bacchanalian rage described in the idyll on Orpheus in *La Sampogna*, published in 1620:

... fra i rochi SISTRI
e i TIMPANI tonanti

e tra i tumulti e gli urli
del femminil drappello
ammutirono i versi (Orfeo, 1086-1090)

(... amidst the raucous rattlers and the thundering drums and amidst the tumult and the shrieks of the mob of women, the versi fall silent).

Just as Orpheus brings all of nature under his spell except for a violent human element, so here the nightingale gains the sympathy of the world except for the musician's. Just as the madness of the ecstatic women drowns out Orpheus' verses, the enraged musician overwhelms the nightingale. Indeed, Marino stresses the nightingale's victimization by the musician's violence and rage.

In both Strada's and Marino's versions the musician's resistance to the nightingale's counterpoint is negative, but in Marino's episode the resistance is more pronounced. Marino emphasizes the musician's anger by having his last passage, the one after the direct challenge to the nightingale, extend to three and a half stanzas (VII, 49-52), compared with the several short exchanges with the bird up to that point. Marino notes that now the musician does not stop to wait for the nightingale's response: "Senza alcuno intervallo e piglia e lassa / la radice del manico e la cima ..." (VII, 50.1-2; "Without a pause, he takes and leaves the root and height of the neck"). Rather, he will try to overwhelm the other, severely misreading the intent of the simple and natural creature and revealing an emotional element not found in Strada's passage. Indeed, it is difficult to accept that the resistance in Marino's text derives simply from the musician's pride in his technique. Marino's careful situating of the scene in a lyric setting helps define the peculiarity of the musician's strong resistance. While the lyric tradition has the lover inviting the nightingale to mourn with him, this lover guards his solitude. Marino himself offers a more traditional view of the lover-nightingale relationship in a poem from the first part of his *Lira*, in which he writes of his grief at the death of a nightingale, a companion to his sorrow: "... e con dolce armonia talor tempravi / gli amari accenti." ("... and with sweet harmony you often tempered bitter words").²⁶ In contrast, in this scene, as the musician becomes aware of the nightingale's capacity to respond to his sorrow, he views it as a challenge to the singularity of his song, the uniqueness of his love, his desired solitude in which he thought no one could participate. And, at a certain point, he no longer defends the singularity of his love, but rather his solitude itself.

²⁶Marino, *Rime boscherecce*, 90.

Marino complicates this resistance still further by stressing the musician's great sorrow at the death of the nightingale: "... per gran pietate / l'estinto corpicel lavò col pianto" (VII, 55.5-6; "... with great pity [the musician] bathed the dead little body with tears"). The musician is changed, as if shaken out of a violent rage, and repentant, he blames himself for the death. Indeed, the concurrence of the return of the day with the death of the bird and the musician's grief emphasizes this return to rationality. No such crisis of conscience is found in Strada's episode. Nor does Strada's musician assume an active role in the mourning or in the burial of the bird within his instrument. In contrast, the death of the nightingale deeply impresses itself upon Marino's lover, but not, as in the poem from the *Lira* cited above, because he loses a companion to his sorrow. The musician's sorrow here is less well defined, though there is a strong sense of regret and guilt in him: "... ed accusò con lagrime e querele / non men sesto che 'l destin crudele" (VII, 55.7-8; "... and with tears and complaints he blamed himself non less than cruel destiny"). The musician perceives clearly that the death of the nightingale is no longer a purely natural event, but rather the result of its interaction with him. The acts of burying the nightingale within his instrument and becoming a witness to its story are tinged with repentance and conviction about the nightingale's heroism. This act of writing with the treasured feather of the nightingale is not merely a gratuitous detail, but points out the deep irony of the victory of the musician, that though he promised to give up his instrument if he did not win, he renounces it anyway. The burial of the bird within the instrument implies the destruction of the instrument. His desired solitude has been converted into a need to bear testimony to another.

The way in which Marino alters Strada's description of the nightingale's death itself ennoble it. Pliny may be the source of both Strada's and Marino's text, at least in regard to the death of the nightingale. Pliny writes that nightingales often competed in singing with each other to the death.²⁷ Yet rather than having the nightingale die suddenly at the height of the contest ("summo in certamine") and fall onto the lute of the victor ("victoris cadit in plectrum"), as in Strada's verse, Marino stresses the growing weariness that leads to the nightingale's death: "e langue e sviene e 'nfievolisce e scoppia" (VII, 54.4; "and it languishes and faints, weakens and collapses"). As it tires in the long struggle, it is called "povero augel" (VII, 54.3). Its "dilicato spirito" is released from its "lingua," thus implying the nobility of its human-like soul. As the musician mourns it, he

²⁷Pliny, *Natural History*, 345.

recalls the nightingale's heroic constancy and strength, even as it dies: "ed ammirando il generoso ingegno, / fin negli aliti estremi invitto e forte" (VII, 56.1-2; "and admiring the generous genius, strong and unconquered up to its last breaths"). Its will remains unconquered—only the frailty of its body succumbs. The positive valence of "generoso" stresses the nightingale's desire to serve, seen in the earlier part of the passage.

What emerges from this close analysis of Marino's redaction of Strada's text is that while Strada is concerned primarily with a competition in musical technique, Marino imbues the story with pathos. In Marino's version the musician is much more than a technician, and the nightingale becomes a heroic figure. Clearly, the passage bears more than the influence of Strada and Pliny alone. Petrarch's nightingale poems figure here, but Marino's episode seems to transform the nightingale of the lyric tradition into something more noble, perhaps even akin to Petrarch's phoenix.²⁸ Indeed, Marino's treatment of the nightingale here differs from his exploration of the figure in his early poetry. Marino's "nightingale" poems in the first part of his *Lira*, published in 1602, describe the bird in the traditional way: as a harbinger of springtime, an inspiration to the poet, a singer of love that represents the world outside the world of politics. Still, some of the language in these lyrics anticipates the passage in *L'Adone*. In sonnet 4, the nightingale is said to call back the dawn (as in VII, 42, 3-4); in the same poem Marino refers to its "infaticabil canto" ("tireless singing"), which corresponds to "infaticabile mostro" (VII, 46.7; "tireless creature"), and its "spirto divin" which is linked to "dilicato spirto" (VII, 54.8). The themes of competition in song, imitation, and death are also found in these early poems relating to the nightingale.²⁹ Yet none of these poems portrays the nightingale in so heroic a way and in so close a relationship with humanity. I suggest that Marino's nightingale here is strongly coloured by the

²⁸I have argued elsewhere that while the phoenix generally symbolizes Laura, in Petrarch's canzone 323 it must signify something greater than Laura, Christ; see Mussio, "The Phoenix Narrative". Okubo cites a religious poem of the thirteenth century that conflates the nightingale with the phoenix ("Le rossignol," 83).

²⁹In sonnet 2 the idea of a "sfida" is present, between the nightingale and "Progne," recalling the mythological aspect of the story. In sonnet 3 the song of the nightingale is imitated by Eco herself. The smallness of the bird is evoked in "picciola piuma" in sonnet 4. The idea of danger and the threat of death are present in both sonnets 2 and 5. In the former the nightingale chastises from within the forest the hunter's "inganni." In the latter the nightingale is invited by the poet to leave the forest of the oaks for the myrtles and vines (Marino, *Rime boscherecce*, 28-31).

poet's awareness of the long tradition of Christian symbolism attached to this bird. Indeed, his new nightingale recalls his treatment of Christ as "musico" in the second part of the *Dicerie sacre*.

The cantos of the "delizie" clearly return to the material that Marino had treated in the *Dicerie sacre* published in 1614.³⁰ Both the *Dicerie sacre* and this group of cantos include a discourse on human perfection (VI, 9f; *Dicerie* I, 106-119 and *Dicerie* II, 233-237), the correspondence between the human body and the structure of the universe (VI, 12-13; *Dicerie* II, 234-235), a description of painting and a catalogue of painters (VI, 54-57; *Dicerie* I, 93), a discussion of the analogy between the sun and God (VI, 99f; *Dicerie* I, 99-106), the vanity of Annone (VII, 25; *Dicerie* II, 264) and the distinction between good music and "metro lascivo" (VII, 2, 1; *Dicerie* II, 292). Many other parallels could be adduced. Guardiani holds that the 1614 version of the poem already certainly included cantos I, III, VIII, XVII, and XVII and that in the period before 1616 Marino inserted much new material, including the group of cantos VI-VIII.³¹ Hence, it is not surprising that many of the details of language and theme found in the nightingale episode in *L'Adone* echo Marino's treatment of music in the *Dicerie sacre*. More significant, many of the qualities of the nightingale itself are also featured in Marino's explication of Christ as divine "musico."

In Part II of the *Dicerie sacre* Marino figures Christ as the "musico" who came to restore the musical harmony of the universe that had fallen into discordance: "... nel bel principio de' tempi, appena incominciato il concerto, ecco chi lo guasta e disturba. ... Volgendo l'uomo l'animo al malvagio essemplio e porgendo l'orecchio alla diabolica suggestione, si desviò dalla sua parte" (253; "... in the beautiful beginning of time, the concert barely begun, behold the one who disturbs and ruins it ... Man, turning his spirit to the evil example [of Lucifer], and heeding the devil's temptation, he veered from his part"). The central myth that Marino employs to convey this idea of Christ as restorative "musico" is that of Pan and Siringa that tells of the nymph Siringa's resistance to the god's love. Pan is forced to fall in love with Siringa who, "sicome selvaggia e ritrosa" ("untamed and resistant"), flees and is transformed into a "palustre canna" ("wetland reed") out

³⁰Pozzi notes the symbolic publication of the *Dicerie Sacre* on 15 April 1614, only two weeks after the publication of Part III of the *Lira*. Pozzi concludes from internal and external evidence that Marino composed Part III of the *Dicerie* in 1609 and Part I in 1613. Given Part II's complexity, Pozzi places its composition between 1607 and 1612 (Marino, *Dicerie sacre*, 22-28).

³¹Guardiani, *La meravigliosa retorica*, 84-89.

of which Pan constructs the "sonora sampogna" ("sonorous bagpipe"). With this instrument he then expresses his "poco felici amori" ("hardly happy love"; 211). In Marino's scheme Pan is Christ. Both are sons of God: "Pan fu figliuolo di Demogorgone: Cristo è figliuolo del Padre eterno" (215; "Pan was the son of the Demigorgon: Christ is the son of the eternal Father"). Like Pan, Christ had two natures joined together (216). Having fallen in love with "umana natura" and "compassato di mille strali il cuore" (217; "his heart heavy with a thousand arrows"), Pan follows it "di Cielo in terra" ("from Heaven to earth"), much as Christ descended from heaven. Just as Pan pursues the resistant nymph, Christ follows the "ingrata e sconoscente" ("ungrateful and unthankful") soul, that "lo schifa e disprezza" ("spurns and despises him") until he arrives tired "all'amaro fiume della sua passione" ("at the bitter river of his passion"; 218). Just as Pan makes "un musicale stromento" from seven reeds and "canta, anzi deplora e piagne" his wasted love, so the "afflitto e addolorato" ("afflicted and saddened"), Christ, still in love with humanity, composes through his human voice his last utterances, "le sette bellissime ed affettuosissime canzonette" ("the seven most beautiful and loving songs") that he sings "sopra la Croce" ("upon the Cross"; 218).

The description of this Pan-Christ reverberates with the nightingale of Canto VII: in both one finds the emphasis on sadness and passion, the apparent love for a resistant beloved, the generosity of spirit in the lover and the willing descent to participate in the beloved's anguished condition and, of course, the sweet singing. While these points of contact also may suggest links to the love situation in the lyric tradition, it is not likely that the nightingale figures the poet in love. In this episode the musician himself is established quite clearly as the lover. The nightingale cannot be a second lover, in the traditional sense, coming to comfort the other. Nor could it signify Amor as the lover's companion, for its dolorous state, its humility, and its heroic death do not accord with the common portraits of Amor. The nightingale's human-like song, its constancy and heroism even as it suffers and dies, and its humility all align it with the Christ of the *Dicerie sacre*.

The description of the variety and range of the nightingale's song in the octaves leading up the recounted episode (VII, 33-36) bears unusually strong traces of Marino's treatment of the human voice in the *Dicerie II* (263). Just as the human voice can stop at a moment ("si tronca") so can the nightingale's ("tronca la voce," VII, 33.3); just as it turns ("torce") and "va serpendo" so does the nightingale turn "torce" its voice (VII, 33.4). Both the human voice and that of the nightingale pick up their songs at once ("ripiglia," VII, 33.3). Both can rise skilfully by scales and can plum-

met sharply. The voice is described thus: "...spesso da monte a valle *a piombo*, o di salto, or per alquanti *gradi*, o per tutta la scala de' suoni *si precipita*" (... often from mountain to valley precipitously, either in one leap or by some steps, or it descends through the whole range of tones"). Compare this to the description of nightingale's rising and falling: "... ondeggiando per *gradi*, in alto essala, / e poich' alquanto si sostiene e folce, / *precipitosa a piombo* alfin si cala" (VII, 35.4-6; "... undulating by *degrees*, exhales upward, and after it is raised a while, at last it fall *precipitously down*"; emphasis mine). The human voice varies its style: "qui *languida* e fioca, colà gagliarda e sostenuta, colà tarda e restia, qui *fuggitiva e veloce*, altrove grave e profonda, altrove acuta e sottile" ("here *languid* and weak, there robust and sustained, there slow and reluctant, here *fleet and fleeing*, in some places serious and profound, in others shrill and subtle", emphasis mine). The nightingale is described in similar terms: "or *languido*, or sublime / varia stil, pause affrena e *fughe affretta*" (VII, 34.5-6; "Now *languid*, now sublime, it varies his style, it pulls back and then *hastens the fugue*"; emphasis mine). The marvel of the human voice is further linked to the nightingale in the greatness of each one's voice in relation to its size: "Vince di grandezza, poiché presupposta la piccolezza del corpo dell'uomo, la sua voce in comparazione delle bestie è molto maggiore" (*Dicerie Sacre*, 262; "In comparison to the other animals the voice of man surpassed their voices in greatness, considering the smallness of the human body"). Similarly, the nightingale stirs wonder because of the power of its voice, as Mercury notes in his rhetorical question: "Diresti mai che tanta lena unisse / in sì poca sostanza un spiritello" (VII, 38.5-6; "Would you have ever said that a little spirit could invite so much wind [lena] in so little substance")? Finally, both the nightingale and the human voice can sound very much like instruments. The nightingale is capable of imitating many instruments: "... ch'imita insieme e 'nsieme in lui s'ammira / cetra flauto liuto organo e lira" (VII, 34.7-8; "so that in imitates together the zither, flute, lute, organ, and lyre, and in him all are admired together"). In the *Dicerie* II Marino remarks that instruments such as the lyre, pipes, and organ (262) are modeled on the human voice.

The similarities in his treatment of the human voice and the nightingale suggest Marino's attempt to link nightingales generally to the human voice. These parallels seem to override the other portrait of the nightingale presented in the *Dicerie* II, that of an imperfect imitator that could not reproduce the human voice (264).³² This is not so much a re-evaluation of

³²Giannantonio bases her view of the inferiority of the nightingale on this passage from the *Dicerie*.

the nightingale in nature as an indication that, since the nightingale signifies more than the natural bird in the passage, it most likely signifies humanity.

If the nightingale generally is a sign of humanity, then the strange nightingale of Mercury's account may be viewed as Christ incarnate. The excellence of this particular nightingale's song which "al paragon sovrasti" (VII, 47.4; "surpasses its example"), as well as this nightingale's unusual servitude toward the musician, supports the view of the nightingale as Christ, who is a kind of perfected humanity on the one hand and a humbled God on the other. Marino's apparent separation of the particular nightingale from the one that Adonis actually hears in the garden—one only knows about this nightingale through Mercury's account—supports this view. This nightingale, one imagines, has all the talent of the one in Venus' garden, but its attitude is strikingly different from the common nightingale. The resistant musician, then, becomes another Siringa, sign of the resistant humanity that is in need of salvation. The musician represents humankind, solipsistic, discordant, and caught in a dark wood. Many of the details of the nightingale's relation to the musician confirm Marino's interest not only in returning to the language of the *Dicerie* II but also in reinserting the theme of Christ as redemptive singer in this passage in *L'Adone*.

The heroism of both the nightingale and Christ is characterized by their compassion for the anguished other. In the first moment of the nightingale passage, the nightingale's sadness and sweet song are linked to its attentiveness to the coming of the sun. Marino had complicated this typically lyric posture in the *Dicerie* II when he compared the mythical account of the swan's gestures to those of Christ. If the mythical and lyrical "Cigno" honours and attends to the sun in "Febo," this other swan, Christ, awaits the word of God himself figured in the sun. Christ, then, dedicated to the "Sole della giustizia" ("Sun of justice"), makes himself a "swan," that is mortal, "per dolore della rovina dell'uomo" ("out of grief for the ruin of man") (*Dicerie* II 335). Hence, the bird's adoration of the sun becomes a sign of Christ's pity for humankind and his willingness to descend into humanity in order to justify it. When read in the light of this passage, the nightingale's enigmatic interest in the musician, its breaking its own solitude, and its descent to the head of the musician can be explained as Christ's wilful descent into intimate and caring dialogue with humanity, a process that ends with his crucifixion. Its sadness then can be viewed as other than merely a vague but persistent gesture toward the tragic myth—now it can be seen as embodying Christ's compassion for humanity.

The nightingale's interaction with the musician is clearly more than a competition. It is characterized as "pugna" (VII, 54.2; VII, 46.1). While "pugna" certainly was used by Marino to mean competition, even a musical composition, the word also describes Christ's vocation in the service of humankind, and Marino uses it thus in the *Dicerie* II. Citing the Gospel of John, Marino writes of Christ's weariness: "*fatigatus ex itinere*, quando nel fiero abbattimento di questa pugna mortale, che vivo sangue sudare gli ha fatto" (360; "wearied from the journey, when in the fierce destruction of this battle that made him sweat living blood"). The emphasis on the "pugna mortale" points most obviously to Christ's death on the cross, but it also described his whole experience as man, as the connection in the above citation between the "pugna" and Christ's "journey" implies. The weariness noted in Christ suggests not only the weakness of the human body but also the great resistance to his message—his song—that he faced in his journey. Although Marino stresses the positive effect of Christ's words on his listeners,³³ he acknowledges that they can irritate the proud soul: "... provocava i sospiri e le lagrime, moveva a dolore, a sdegno, ad orrore, ..." (275-276; "... he provoked sighs and tears, he moved to grief, to disdain, to horror ..."). For his words, Christ is shunned and mistreated: "... lo schifa e disprezza, ma l'ingiuria e tormenta" (218; "[the people] shun and despise him, and hurt and torment him"). Such scorn and disdain, one recalls, typify musician's resistant attitude toward the nightingale's participation in his song, a resistance that causes the nightingale's body to weaken and tire.

The alternation of the musician and the nightingale does produce a "bel concento" (VII, 45.5; "beautiful harmony"). Yet at this point the player has not reached the height of his flight and resistance. He simply allows the nightingale to join him. The "concento" produced by the two recalls Marino's comparison in the *Dicerie* II of the interaction between Christ and the thief to the concourse of two birds, "un paragone di due uccelletti canori, che sopra due arboscelli concertandosi, insieme contrappunteggiano a gara" (342; "a comparison between two melodious birds, that

³³Of his voice Marino writes: "Ma se dolce e soave in tutto il corso della sua vita fu la voce di Cristo, dolcissima e soavissima è oggi nel tempo della passione: e se mentr'egli visse in terra, ebbe sempre gran forza la sua parola, grandissima è da dire che n'abbia oggi mentre morendo pende in Croce ..." (*Dicerie* II, 277; "But if Christ's voice was dolce and mild through the course of his whole life, most sweet and mild is it today in the hour of his suffering: and if while he lived on earth, his word always had great force, most great is its force while dying he hangs upon the Cross").

singing in concert above the little trees, were responding to each in competition"). Marino expands, imagining Christ on the cross as the "vedova tortorella" ("the widowed turtle-dove") that, having lost its consort, scorns happy places and lights upon a "sfrondata pianta" (343; "leafless tree") and the thief as a "rondinella" ("lark") that returns to health in the springtime. Here the "gara" produces "concento" because the thief has broken his resistance to Christ and asked forgiveness. The "concento" produced in the interaction between the musician and the nightingale is more difficult to gauge. One could easily imagine that the "concento" refers to the beautiful sounds produced separately by the musician and the nightingale. Yet one should recall that the anguished cries of the lover alone were out of tune with the tranquillity of the place. The "bel concento" seems to arise despite the mildly resistant attitude of the one to the other's song. As long as he lets the nightingale sing with him his song is somehow freed from its discord. Only when he denies the nightingale all dialogue with himself is the "soave e dilettevol canto" (VII, 55.2; "sweet and delightful song") lost.

The imbalance in the soul that the musician's resistance implies is anticipated in the *Dicerie* II. Here Marino notes that the soul that "non si compunge e non compiangere" ("he does not feel remorse and feel pity") by Christ's singing both in life and in dying is "vie più crudele che Tigre" ("more cruel than a tiger"; 284).³⁴ Marino pursues this idea by concluding that whoever does not find "solazzo" ("relief") in this "piacevol diporto musicale" ("pleasant musical recreation") has a discordant soul: "gli spiriti abbia del tutto fra se stessi discordanti" ("has within themselves completely discordant spirits"; 284). The guilt of the musician after the death of the nightingale and his apparent conversion—he seems to give up the plèctrum for the quill—points to his acknowledgement of a previous internal discord and his entrapment in the world of appearances. Indeed, the exaggerated reaction of the musician and his brilliant assault on the simple bird recalls another "pugna" to which Marino refers in the *Dicerie* II, that between Satan, arrayed in the world's glory, with Christ, "vestito di viltà" ("clothed with lowliness"). While the devil comes with a "stromento pomposo" ("garish instrument") but hides his internal bitterness and discord, Christ arrives in rags and with a "cetera vile" ("lowly lyre"; 309), his majesty hidden. Though no one would suspect who he is, he conquers his

³⁴The image of the cruel soul resistant to music is used also in the introduction to Canto VII: "...nè cor la Scizia ha barbaro cotanto / se non è tigre, a cui non piaccia il canto" (VII, 1, 7-8; "... nor does Scythia have so barbarous a heart, if not that of a tiger, that the song does not please").

garish competitor with his death. Christ sings “dolcissimamente” (310), and through his death defeats the devil and frees the soul from the “romori del mondo traditore e gli allettamenti de’ piaceri sensibili” (286; “noises of the betraying world and the temptations of the senses’ pleasures”). Just so, the nightingale’s sweet and simple song—it sings “dolcissimamente” (VII, 42.3)—contrasts with the flashy and unbalanced playing of the musician and ultimately conquers it.

Much of the resistance of the musician to the nightingale in this “pugna” is figured as flight. The musician attempts to keep himself apart from the participation of the nightingale. As soon as the nightingale repeats his song, he moves to more difficult and complex techniques, his fingers often suggesting flight itself: “Volge le chiavi, i nervi tira e scende / con passata maggior fino ala rosa” (VII, 48.3-4; “He turns the keys, pulls the strings and descends with greater speed all the way to the rose”) and “con crome *in fuga* e sincope a traverso / pose ogni studio a variare il verso” (VII, 49.7-8; “with eighth notes in *fugue* and syncopation throughout he placed every effort to vary the verse”; emphasis mine). Just so, Marino had figured as flight Siringa’s resistance to Pan and that of the human soul to Christ. Indeed, the descent into the body and Christ’s mission is figured as a pursuit: “Seguendo adunque ingrata e sconoscente, dico l’anima fuggitiva” (218; “Following then the ungrateful and thankless one, I mean the fleeing soul”). Marino expands upon this theme when he cites Christ’s words to God the Father in accepting the task of saving humankind, Marino writes: “Corsi peregrinando dietro alla fuga di questa ingrata per la traccia dei miei dolori a passi di gigante e correndo giubiliva e gioiva” (278; “As a pilgrim I ran after the flight of this ingrate, through the path of my suffering with the steps of a giant, and running I rejoiced and exalted”). The stress is on Christ’s persistent and patient, and even joyous pursuit of humanity, even to his death.

The nightingale’s relation to Christ is most evident in the description of its heroic suffering and death. Constant in its will, the nightingale continues to desire to answer the musician, even to its death, and Marino likens the beauty of its voice to a dying torch:

Così qual face che vacilla e manca,
e maggior nel mancar luce raddoppia,
dala lingua che mai ceder non volse
il dilicato spirito si sciolse” (VII, 54.5-8)

(Thus like a torch that vacillates and grows weak and in its weakness redoubles greater light, the delicate spirit was loosed from the tongue that never wanted to yield)

Marino had used this precise image in the *Dicerie* II to portray Christ's loving words as he died on the cross: "Quasi fiaccola che giunta presso al consumarsi, gitta maggior vampo di luce ... mentre all'ora estrema si avvicina, *in finem dilexit eos*" (*Dicerie* II 334; "As a little torch that is near consuming itself throws a greater flash of light ... while he nears his last hour, he loved them"). This is not simply a casual reuse of a stock image, for in both passages the beauty in death is linked to the singer's constancy of will toward his object. Christ will continue to cherish humanity even "all'ora estrema" of his suffering, and only the frailty of its body will force the nightingale to be silent. In both passages the singers are portrayed as patient victims of violence who betray no trace of ill will toward their "adversaries." Both express growing weakness and the contrast between their heroic spirit and their frail bodies. Both "languish" as they near death. The "povero" nightingale "langue e sviene e 'nfievolisce e scoppia" (VII, 54.4; "languishes and faints, weakens and collapses") much as Christ "in legno secco languisce..." (*Dicerie* II, 343; "languishes on the dry wood").

Even as he is persecuted Christ remained constant in his love. Much as Christ's sadness is tempered by great love expressed in his words, the nightingale's grief is allayed by its singing. In the *Dicerie* II Marino compares the nightingale's song itself to one of Christ's seven utterances on the cross. Like the mythical Philomena, Christ, expressing a sense of abandonment, calls out to his father as he is tortured by human blindness. Like the nightingale, Christ tempers his sadness with a great love that gives his song sweetness. Marino pursues the analogy between the bird and Christ still further, offering an etymology of the name "philomena:" "O quanto ben conviensi a Cristo questo nome amoroso, poichè Filomena altra cosa non significa che dolcezza e melodia d'Amore" (357; "O how well this loving name fits Christ, since Philomena means nothing other than the sweetness and melody of Love"). This extended analogy between the nightingale and Christ as "music" suggests the importance of the nightingale in Marino's imagination as a figure for Christ. Indeed, it serves as a figure for Christ also in the *Dicerie* I, where the Philomena's embroidery is related to Christ's shroud, which is a visual marker of his passion (161-162)

The connection between the nightingale's interest in the musician and Christ's love for humanity is signalled at the end of the episode at which Marino virtually repeats the idea voiced in the *Dicerie* II that holds that the "vero maestro della musica è Amore" (218; "the true master of music is Love"). Mercury concludes his account of the nightingale with a similar nod to this perhaps commonplace idea: "Ma chi fu che l'instrusse? il maestro vero, / non so se 'l sai, fu di quest'arte Amore" (VII, 57.1-2; "But who

was it who taught him? The true master of this art, I do not know if you know it, was Amor").³⁵ Love had taught the nightingale its song, and love is the source of the song. Yet this implied verbal connection between the nightingale and Christ is mitigated by the poem's subsequent preoccupation with mythology. In the *Dicerie* II, the connection between Christ's music and his love for humanity is developed not only through the comparison of Pan's playing his pipes. Christ's music is also figured as the blows upon his body (307). In contrast, Marino allows the Christian implications of "Amore" to be dropped, and Amor becomes the mythological figure. The poem's focus quickly turns to an account of the origin of Amor's learning music from Vulcan's smithy (VII, 58-62). By the end of this discourse the connection between music and love is reduced to the idea that music brings relief to the lover: "... nè trova altro refugio ed altra pace / un tormentato cor che suoni e canti" (VII, 62.3-4; "... nor does a tormented heart find other refuge and other peace than sounds [*suoni*] and songs"). This statement seems to disregard completely the battle between the nightingale and the musician the enervating effect of the nightingale's music upon the musician. The question of Marino's addition of octaves 57-63 to the passage in the years between 1617 and the definitive version of 1623 complicates further the transition from the nightingale episode.³⁶ The addition may imply that Marino viewed the maxim about love and music as connected to this mythological and lyric material that follows. The addition of the allegorical portrait of the sisters, Poetry and Music, further diffuses the religious content of the nightingale scene.³⁷ Yet this movement away from the religious feeling of the previous stanzas does not nullify it. It does not render the reading invalid. Rather, it hints that Marino did not want to linger too long on the Christian content of the scene, nor did he wish to make the religious tone of the scene too explicit.

Reading the nightingale passage through the lens of the *Dicerie sacre*

³⁵That Marino later in the treatise reverses his position only confirms that the earlier evocation of the connection between Christ's love and music is not casual. "Ma qui sono ora io costretto a dire il contrario: Musica docet Amorem; poiche dalla Musica oltramirabile di questo Cigno amoroso, non è dottrina nè secreto d'amore che non s'impari" (338; "But here I am now constrained to say the opposite: Music teaches Amor; since from the most admirable Music of his loving Swan there is no teaching or secret of love that is not learned").

³⁶For explanations of these added cantos, see Pozzi's comments in Marino, *L'Adone e Commento*, 775 and Porcelli, *Le misure della fabbrica*. Pozzi argues that the additions were made to produce symmetry of parts in the early part of the canto.

has certain pitfalls. One can be accused of reading the text with certain prejudices that blind one to the work's complexities. I have tried to avoid this in the close reading of Marino's nightingale episode in the first part of this article in which I point to the changes Marino made to his undisputed source Text. I have then proceeded towards an interpretation based on these subtle, but important changes. The reuse of terms, phrases, and comparisons need not imply the author's intention to have the reader view these words through the filter of their original context. The new context will obviously change the words' significance. There is much such reuse of images in *La Sampogna*, particularly in the idylls of *Orfeo* and *Siringa*.³⁸ For instance, Orpheus' last moments anticipate the language used to describe the nightingale's death:

... qual face, che nel fine
indebolisce e manca
con fievol tremolio
languidissimamente
gorgoliando vacilla insù l'estremo (240)

(... as a torch, that at its end, weakens and grows faint with a slight tremor, most languidly gurgling, it wavers at its last hour")

Yet one should not link too closely the defeated Orpheus of this poem with either the nightingale or Christ because of this resemblance in language. Yet I have tried to show in the second part of the paper that many of the difficult questions surrounding the enigmatic nightingale are elucidated by close parallels in theme and language in the *Dicerie* II.

All critics agree that the scene must be understood allegorically. Yet no one interpretation seems to have captured the spirit of the passage. One is left with a kind of interpretative ambiguity. Is it enough to say that the nightingale has many attributes accorded to Christ and stop there? Indeed, there are parts of the episode that the Christ allegory struggles to account for, such as the "bel concento" produced by the nightingale and the scornful player. Is it enough to say, with Guardiani, that Marino's imagination is confident that *L'Adone*, with its "miriade di connotazioni che sono capaci

³⁸In the *Orfeo*, the first idyll of Marino's *La Sampogna*, one finds many other themes and phrases found in the *Dicerie sacre*. There are similar portraits of the nightingale and turtle dove (125-130). The description of Orpheus' playing recalls the description of the human voice (220-275). Marino also plays with the idea of the origin of the nightingale's song, attributing it here to Orpheus (914-195).

di evocare" will find "punti di incrocio e di sostegno" and will engage not one ideology but all?³⁹ Does Marino purposely employ ambiguous language in the nightingale episode in order to permit a variety of readings, no one more privileged than the next?

While in this case Marino seems to avoid overt Christian allegory, there are clear signs of his insistence on hinting at a world outside the apparently pagan world of Venus' garden. His importation of many of the language and themes of the Christ as "musico" into the nightingale scene is one way in which he achieves this. This desire is confirmed by the insertion of the description of the passion-flower in Canto VI in a position parallel to that of the nightingale. Critics have speculated that Marino includes a description of the newly-discovered passion-flower in Canto VI, despite its literal absence from the garden of Venus, because of his interest in novelty and obscure references.⁴⁰ This may be true, yet its relation to the nightingale should not be ignored. Like the nightingale, the passion-flower culminates a long catalogue, and it too is exalted above all others: "Or miracolo maggior la terra scopre" (VI, 138.5; "Now the earth discovers a greater miracle"). Like the nightingale of Mercury's story, it is not present in Venus' garden. If the nightingale is Christ's song in his passion, the flower represents Christ's a visual sign of his incarnation and passion, his "writing" upon nature. Christ's love is stamped onto nature: "... quasi bei fogli apre le foglie un fiore,/ fiore, anzi libro, ove Gesù trafitto/ con strane note il suo martirio ha scritto" (VI, 138, 6-8; "... a flower opens its leaves like beautiful pages, a flower, or rather a book, where Jesus, pierced, wrote his suffering with marvellous words"). Besides echoing Marino's discourse of God as divine painter in the second part of *Dicerie* I,⁴¹ thus calling to mind the link between the nightingale and the flower in their relation to Marino's earlier treatise, this passage, like the nightingale episode, hints at the alternative to both Venus' luxurious garden and the lover's dark wood.

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³⁹Guardiani, *La meravigliosa retorica*, 98.

⁴⁰Pozzi in Marino, *L'Adone e Commento*, 247-348; Colombo sees the source as a group of writers from Bologna (Colombo, 46-48).

⁴¹See in particular Marino's treatment of Christ's shroud as a place on which he "wrote" his love for humanity (161-162). In addition, Christ's writing is interestingly compared to Philomena's weaving.

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