CHAPTER 1

Species Lyric

My focus in Chapters 1, 2, and 3 will be on lyric poetry, where in verse for children and elsewhere, species began to speak during the nineteenth century. As we will see, the stereotyping of animal utterances in onomatopoeias is an ancient poetic device which has always had the implication that animals of a single species share a single voice. As early as 1819, Keats's "Ode" refers to the "self-same song" (65) of the nightingale that sounds the same in 1819 as it did to Ruth when she was a gleaner in Judea. Though the nightingale does not speak in the poem, nor is its song represented in an onomatopoeia, these lines endow it with a species identity defined by an unchanging voice. Later in the nineteenth century, at a crossing of poetic history and the history of science, onomatopoeia comes to be used as an aid to species identification, and a genre I will call species lyric emerges in which species are personified and endowed with speech to describe their own habits, diet, and appearance. A little-noticed work for children published anonymously in 1832 was as far as I know the first work in any genre to use onomatopoeia as an aid to species identification, and also enables us to establish the generic traits of species lyric. It was titled *The Minstrelsy of the Woods, or Sketches and Songs Connected with the Natural History of . . . British and Foreign Birds*.[1] It is explicitly addressed to young readers, both in its dedication to the anonymous author's "beloved young relatives" and in the introductory poem, "To my Brother's Children." The book's introduction states its debt to Thomas Bewick's *History of British Birds* (1797–1804) and to Georges Cuvier's *The Animal Kingdom* (published in 1807 as *Le Règne Animal*). Bewick and Cuvier are indeed major sources for *Minstrelsy*'s descriptions of birds' appearance and habit; it also draws from them fundamental principles of organization. The basic object of study in *Minstrelsy*, as in Bewick and Cuvier, is the species, and the work's aim is to teach its readers to identify the species of birds they encounter in the wild. Its organization is thus modeled on that which Bewick made standard for field guides to this day, with the work divided

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into sections grouping birds by families, and, within these sections, a chapter devoted to each species. The family divisions used, however, are not the traditional ones found in Bewick, but the six orders of Cuvier's classification.

To the taxonomic markers of habit, plumage, and so forth that it adopts from Bewick and Cuvier, *Minstrelsy* adds phonetic transcriptions of bird calls. In some cases, these transcriptions are traditional, as when the cry of the tawny owl is described as "well imitated by the syllables *tee-whit* or *too-whit*, and the hollow shuddering kind of note *too-whoo*."[2] The book's title points two ways; as well as a handbook on identifying birds by their song, it is also a miscellany of poetry about birds. While it includes long passages from other poets including James Thomson and Charlotte Smith, much of *Minstrelsy*'s poetry is original. Each of the birds it treats has a poem dedicated to it, in many of which the birds speak for themselves, with the syllabic transcription of their songs making a refrain. Thus, "The Song of the Wood-Grouse":[3]

> You must look for me
> On my mountain tree,
> Where the hardy pine uncultured grows,
> Where the foaming torrent wildly flows,
> There look for me,
> On my mountain tree,
> With my clarion note *he-de-he-de-he*.[4]

This lyric's speaker is not exactly an individual grouse. Rather, the lyric subject in this poem is a species, and the landscape it represents is not a particular place but a species' habitat, in which is set the syllabified call that typifies the species in the abstract. Formally, the lyric's most striking feature, shared by other poems in the volume, is the split between the speech in which the wood-grouse describes itself and the incorporated call that it quotes as an onomatopoeia. This split between onomatopoeia and speech will recur in different forms throughout the studies that follow and will open fissures in the species concept itself. In this chapter and the next, we will observe a generic contrast between texts that endow animals with speech and texts that represent their calls by onomatopoeia. In reading Darwin, we will attend to a related problem in the representation of species when we trace the recurrent tension in his work between representations of species consciousness and of the automatic and involuntary behaviours in which species identity is embodied.

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Both the genres of animal onomatopoeia and that of species lyric flourished during the nineteenth century. We will return to onomatopoeia in Chapter 3; species lyric will be considered here as providing clearer examples of the emergence of biological species and populations in literary history as collective subjects. Species lyrics with a singular speaker personifying a species, as in *Minstrelsy*, are relatively rare. Poems in which the species speaks in chorus, though, become common enough during the century to be an object of parody. An example attributed to Thomas Hardy from 1912 can stand for many others. It was not published under his name, but appeared in *The Book of Baby Birds*, a work for children authored by his second wife, to characterize the yellowhammer:

> When, towards the summer's close,
> Lanes are dry,
> And unclipt the hedgethorn rows,
> There we fly!
>
> While the harvest wagons pass
> With their load,
> Shedding corn upon the grass
> By the road.
>
> In a flock we follow them,
> On and on,
> Seize a wheat-ear by the stem
> And are gone. . . .
>
> With our funny little song,
> Thus you may
> Often see us flit along,
> Day by day . . . . (1–16; ellipses thus in the original)

As we will see, in poetry published under his own name, Hardy resists the idea that species are a form of collective life, as well as the use of onomatopoeia to give such lives voice. But here, writing anonymously in what by this time had become a conventional genre, especially in works for children, he adheres closely to the model Sarah Waring had established eighty years before. In this poem, the yellowhammer speaks as a species, describing its own habits, diet, habitat, and song as aids to recognition for young readers.

Unlike Hardy, his contemporary Rudyard Kipling is committed throughout his work to representing and distinguishing what he takes to be species and racial types. In Part III, I will discuss the Lamarckian fables of the *Just-So Stories* (1902) and the species relations in *The Jungle Book* (1894). When in the latter text, Kipling writes a species lyric for monkeys,

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its major concern is to police the distinction between species, which it represents as threatened by interspecies envy and rivalry, and by the monkey species' gift for mimicry:

> Here we go in flung festoon,
> Half way up to the jealous moon!
> Don't you envy our pranceful bands?
> Don't you wish you had extra hands?
> Wouldn't you like it if your tails were – *so* –
> Curved in the shape of a Cupid's bow?
> Now you're angry, but – never mind,
> *Brother, thy tail hangs down behind!*
> . . . .
>
> All the talk we ever have heard
> Uttered by bat or beast or bird –
> Hide or fin or scale or feather –
> Jabber it quickly and all together!
> Excellent! Wonderful! Once again!
> Now we are talking just like men.
> Let's pretend we are . . . never mind,
> *Brother, thy tail hangs down behind!*
> This is the way of the Monkey-kind.[5]

As we will see in Part III, Kipling's representation of the human boy Mowgli whose education is *The Jungle Book*'s subject defines him as a universal animal – one who can learn to speak with all the other animals in their own languages. The monkey appears in this lyric as a parody of the human – a mimic who can "talk just like men" by reproducing the sounds of all the other beasts and birds as "jabber." In Chapter 2, we will discuss the suspicion of onomatopoeia as a form of mimicry that pervades nineteenth-century English poetry from the Romantics on; Kipling's representation of monkeys in this species lyric belongs to this tendency.

In the course of the nineteenth century, defining and policing species identity became a project inseparable from racial politics. The poetics of species lyric resemble and shade into those of lyrics that personify racial identities. This is the formal premise of Langston Hughes's "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" (1921).

> I've known rivers:
> I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the
> flow of human blood in human veins.
>
> My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

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I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.[6]

Here, as in other poems I have listed, a first-person lyric subject personifies an identity that encompasses many individual lives. This aspect of Hughes's project in this poem seems clear; we should not, however, take for granted that it will always be obvious when an individual lyric speaker embodies a species or racial identity. In the decade before he died in 1892, Alfred Tennyson wrote in a note to his 1850 poem *In Memoriam* that "'I' is not always the author speaking of himself, but the voice of the human race speaking through him."[7] Making *In Memoriam* a species lyric focuses or refocuses the poem's explicit discussion of the improvement of the human "type" over the course of time in its epilogue; if the speaker personifies the human race, however, he does so from the standpoint of whiteness.[8] In a late section, the poem imagines how in the time to come, the race will "Move upwards, working out the beast, / And let the ape and tiger die" (118. 27–8). References to the ape and the tiger are frequently used in Victorian racist discourse to animalize racial others; in 1865, during the controversy occasioned by Governor Edward Eyre's mass murders in Morant Bay, Jamaica, Tennyson himself (who subscribed to Eyre's legal defence fund), intervened in a discussion of the events by repeating "n*****s are tigers, n*****s are tigers."[9] In the nineteenth century, the life of the species becomes inseparable from extinctionist discourse directed at presumptively competing species, and also at the racial other.

As biological species and races become historical agents, then, they also become able to speak in lyric. By 1876, species lyric appears to have become recognizable enough as a poetic genre to be parodied. In Chapter 3, we will see how central jokes about natural history and taxonomy are to the nonsense of Edward Lear; in this context, it's not surprising to find him writing a parody of species lyric. I will be arguing in particular that the nonsense words in Lear's late verse are a kind of anti-onomatopoeia, as we

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see in "The Pelican Chorus," where the pelicans describe their habitat, diet, and song:

> We live on the Nile. The Nile we love.
> By night we sleep on the cliffs above;
> By day we fish, and at eve we stand
> On long bare islands of yellow sand.
> And when the sun sinks slowly down
> . . . .
>
> Wing to wing we dance around, –
> Stamping our feet with a flumpy sound,
> Opening our mouths as Pelicans ought,
> And this is the song we nightly snort; –
> Ploffskin, Pluffskin, Pelican jee!
> We think no birds so happy as we!
> Plumskin, Ploshkin, Pelican jill!
> We think so then and we thought so still! (9–13, 17–24)

I will return to the antithetical relation between onomatopoeia and nonsense in Lear; in this stanza, he uses onomatopoeia, not as a means of recording the species' characteristic song, but rather to register the "flumpy" sound of webbed feet on sand. The pelicans' song itself, far from being onomatopoeic, is made of densely layered linguistic, rhetorical, and grammatical word games. The suspension of meaning in the song derives not from the primacy of sound, but from incoherence, paradox, and aporia in the process of signification. The pelicans' utterance is not outside language, like a bird's song, but rather belongs to too many languages: "Ploffskin" and "Ploshkin" sound like Russian, while "Pelican jee" includes a term of endearment from Hindustani. The irony of "We think no birds so happy as we" is not resolved by the poem's story, which concerns the ambivalent feelings of the parent pelicans on the day of their daughter's marriage to a crane. And rhetorical balance of the last line produces grammatical and logical perplexities that defy explication; Sara Lodge discovered that it parodies the Augustan style of a sentence in a 1770 speech by Lord Mansfield, which Lear knew from Lindley Murray's *English Reader*.[10] The pelican's nightly song locates them not in a field guide, but in an anthology.

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The emergence of biological species and populations onto the stage of history as collective subjects was a long process, dating back to the

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eighteenth century and the emergence of statistical demographics, of scientific breeding, and of Malthusian political economy. In this book, however, my discussion of the problematic of species will center on the work of Charles Darwin. I hope this move seems intuitive, given the fundamental importance of Darwin's work to the nineteenth-century species concept. Though, even if the move to Darwin seems intuitive, it must be confessed that while his best-known book ostensibly has "species" as its topic, Darwin's work in fact has surprisingly little to say about the concepts of species and population. In particular, Darwin overwhelmingly theorizes natural selection as operating on individual organisms. The same is true of sexual selection. In Darwin's theory, individual traits that give an advantage in survival or reproduction tend to become dispersed in the population as a whole, but there is no mechanism by which a population as such can be subject to selection. In evolutionary theory in our own time, natural selection is understood having multiple levels of operation – possibly acting on the gene, the family, and the entire population or group, as well as on the individual living being.[11]

Darwin's work, as I have said, deals almost exclusively with selective forces that act on individuals. One exception to this generalization, though, is a passage from *The Origin of Species* where he theorizes what has come to be known as kin selection. In a chapter where he considers apparent difficulties confronting the theory of natural selection, Darwin devotes an extended passage to the problem posed for his theory by the existence of neuter or sterile members of insect species with body types specially adapted for the role they play in the communal life of the hive or of the ant colony. The problem posed by neuters, which Darwin initially thought posed an "insuperable" difficulty for his theory (*Origin*, 175), is that their adaptations seem impossible to account for by natural selection, which works on variations that spread in a population when they are transmitted by inheritance.

Darwin solved this problem by recognizing that individual organisms are not the only objects of natural selection. The comparative advantage to a population of close kin bestowed by the traits of members who do not reproduce can be transmitted by heredity through their relatives. As Darwin says, "selection may be applied to the family, as well as to the individual" (*Origin*, 177).

His evidence for this claim, as often in *The Origin*, comes from selection under domestication: "A well-flavoured vegetable is cooked, and the individual is destroyed; but the horticulturist sows seeds of the

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same stock, and confidently expects to get nearly the same variety; breeders of cattle wish the flesh and fat to be well marbled together: the animal has been slaughtered, but the breeder goes with confidence to the same family" (177). Darwin's analogy compares non-reproductive members of a population to animals and vegetables killed for food. The analogy is not directly eugenic; it doesn't describe killings that aim to improve the species. It suggests – in some ways more disturbingly – that the species or family is constituted as an object of selection by a primal sacrifice. Darwin's personified "Nature" – if she existed – could certainly select a trait without killing its bearer; but for a population or family to become recognizable to science or indeed to poetry, a sacrifice seems to be required, just as in artificial selection, the establishment of a new breed of tasty vegetables or of cattle with well-marbled meat requires sacrificing one of its members.

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault proposed that in the nineteenth century, "Western man" learned "what it meant to be a living species."[12] By so learning, "he" acquired a new form of identity and became able to say, as in the remarkable passage of Foucauldian ventriloquism already quoted: "I – as species rather than individual."[13] To consider the question of who it is that can say "I" in this way, and under what circumstances, I return to lyric to close this chapter by considering two poems that engage critically with the conventions of the species lyric. In both works, the question whether the speaker is an individual bird or an entire species lies at the center of the poem's interpretation. The first of these poems is Algernon Swinburne's "Itylus," written in 1863 or 1864 and published in his 1866 volume *Poems and Ballads*. A major part of Swinburne's project in this entire volume is to unravel the fictions of presence that enable Romantic lyric and its ironized Victorian doppelganger, the dramatic monologue. The volume thus abounds in "heres" and "nows" without a stable referent ("The Garden of Proserpine") and confessional utterances that turn out never to have been spoken ("The Triumph of Time"). Even in a volume so self-conscious in its reflection on lyric norms, "Itylus" may be the single poem most actively self-reflexive about its own genre. The poem's speaker is Philomela, after her transformation into a nightingale. The words of the poem can thus be identified with the nightingale's song, a canonical figure for lyric utterance in Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, Barrett Browning, and elsewhere.

Besides its renown as a songbird, the nightingale's return to Europe in the spring and its habit of singing at night are two other traits that recur

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in its appearances as a figure for lyric; they determine the time and season in which Swinburne's poem appears to present its speaker:

> I the nightingale all spring through
> . . . .
> Clothed with the light of the night on the dew,
> Sing, while the hours and the wild birds follow,
> Take flight and follow and find the sun. (19–24)[14]

Even in this stanza, a single sentence with the present-tense declaration "I . . . sing" at its center, the present – spring, night-time – is defined antithetically. The nightingale sings clothed with "the light of the night"; the wild birds that follow it into the northern spring are said to "find the sun" – though, coming as they do from the south, they might equally be said to flee it.

The chiastic interchange of opposed terms is indeed the organizing principle of this poem. The song of the nightingale, who was once Philomela, is addressed to her sister the swallow, formerly Procne. The difference between the two birds as it is presented in the nightingale's song is the basis for the canonical reading of "Itylus," in which Margot Louis argues that each of the birds personifies a style of nineteenth-century lyric: the nightingale is haunted by the memory of traumatic past she and her sister share, and represents an art of truth-telling; her utterance is her rebuke to what Louis terms art of denial, personified by the swallow, whom her sister charges with singing in forgetfulness.[15] The antithesis between the sisters is real and important, but the drama of the poem comes from its tendency to collapse as the nightingale worries whether she can remain different from her sister: "Hast thou forgotten ere I forget?" she asks; "Can I remember if thou forget?" The main sense of the nightingale's address to her sister is that she should stop singing: "O swallow, sister, O rapid swallow, / I pray thee sing not a little space" (49–50). It doesn't require a very subtle dialectician to see that in a poem about two singing birds, the one whose song urges the other to be silent is as much her double as her opposite: both birds, after all, are singing.

The differences between them, problematic as they are, are differences of species. The nightingale and the swallow have different songs, though the poem does not represent this difference. They also differ in their migratory habits, a difference whose appearance in the poem shows Swinburne's awareness of current natural history. Until the nineteenth century, Europeans did not know what became of the swallow in winter. Unlike nightingales, whose migration to North Africa and Arabia was generally

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understood, the swallow's migration was a mystery, and indeed writers from Aristotle to Gilbert White of Selborne held that swallows did not migrate at all but rather went into hibernation.[16] Only after 1808, when a French ship reported encountering swallows off Senegal in October, did it come to be accepted that the European swallow winters in the southern hemisphere, often in sub-Saharan Africa.[17]

In Swinburne's poem, the nightingale's address to the swallow refers repeatedly to their different migratory habits:

> O swallow, sister, O fair swift swallow,
> Why wilt thou fly after spring to the south,
> The soft south whither thine heart is set? (7–9)

These references also decentre the nightingale's own speech, which I read earlier as taking place in the spring. If that is the case, how could she speak to her sister and rebuke her for seeking spring elsewhere? There is no here and now in this poem that is not also far away. (Which is not to address the ambiguity of "after," which could either have a spatial reference, meaning "fly towards," or a temporal one, meaning "fly when spring is done.")

Another kind of ambiguity appears in the poem because what seem like specifications of presence can also be read as abstractions. When the nightingale tells us that she sings "all spring through," "Clothed with the light of the night on the dew," she may not be describing her own particular circumstances in the present moment of her song, but giving an abstract account of her habits. She would speak as the personification of her species, brought forward to represent it as in other species lyrics. The place and time from which this description issues would also be abstract and impossible to identify with any of the times and places referred to in the poem, notwithstanding its appearance of lyric immediacy. This is what it would mean for a species to be a lyric subject, who could say – or sing – "I – as species." In Swinburne's lyric practice, the "I" who speaks for the species is not present, but rather enacts the displacement or depresencing of the individual lyric subject.

The poem thus stages, on one hand, a dialogue between two sisters, and, on the other, a contrast between two species. The choice between these two readings might be understood as depending on whether we understand lyric as predominantly a dramatic form – that is, as mimetic – or as a rhetorical one in which a personified abstraction is characterized metonymically by a list of specific traits. The poem allegorizes this undecidability in its own concept of lyric by narrating the split between

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the sisters, telling the story that led to their transformation into birds of different species. The symbol of both their sameness and their difference, the symbol in which the poem's ambiguities are concentrated, is that of blood. As sisters, Procne and Philomela are figuratively of one blood. After Philomela's rape by Procne's husband, Tereus, he renders her mute by tearing out her tongue. Blood, however, substitutes for her lost power of speech and becomes the means by which the bond between the sisters is restored, when the imprisoned Philomela tells her story by weaving it in "a scarlet design on a white ground" and having the resulting fabric smuggled to Procne – Swinburne's "woven web that was plain to follow" (52). Blood is the thread that re-establishes the bond of kinship between the sisters, decisively privileging it over Procne's relation by marriage to her husband.

But the trace of blood also becomes the elementary form of difference that, in Swinburne's rendering of the story, finally divides the sisters for good and transforms them into creatures of different species. In Ovid's version, after Procne learns of her sister's rape, she rescues her, and, to punish Tereus, the two sisters slaughter his and Procne's son, Itys. (The name "Itylus" in Swinburne's title is a diminutive form of Itys.) Having killed the boy, they "cooked his flesh, braising some in bronze pots, and roasting some on spits," and served it as a meal for his father. Only when Tereus has eaten his fill does "Philomela [leap] forward . . . her hair spattered with the blood of the boy she had madly murdered [and] thrust Itys' head, dripping with gore, before his father's face" (*Metamorphoses* 6). At this, the enraged father draws his sword and rushes in pursuit of the sisters, whereupon the gods, appalled at the scene, intervene and transform all three into birds of different species – a hoopoe, a swallow, and a nightingale.

It is the difference in species, and the difference in song, between the nightingale and the swallow that Swinburne's poem ascribes to the differentiating agency of a blood trace:

> O sister, sister, thy first-begotten!
> The hands that cling and the feet that follow,
> The voice of the child's blood crying yet
> *Who hath remembered me? who hath forgotten*?
> Thou hast forgotten, O summer swallow,
> But the world shall end when I forget. (55–60)

The trace of Itylus's blood makes a difference between the kind of animal that can follow it and the kind that can't. It calls out in a trope that echoes the reference to Abel's blood in Genesis 4:10 but is only heard by one bird

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and not by the other. For the nightingale who remembers, but only for her, it asks a question that establishes an unbridgeable difference between her and the swallow. Like the traces of blood haunting Victorian poems contemporary with "Itylus," such as Tennyson's *Maud* and Christina Rossetti's "The Convent Threshold," Itylus's memory contains within itself the possibility of its own erasure or non-existence. One bird in Swinburne's poem remains on the trace; for the other, it has gone. The swallow strays (43), but the nightingale remains fixed "To the place of the slaying of Itylus, / The feast of Daulis, the Thracian sea" (47–8).

Swinburne's poem can thus be read as a fable about the origin of species with the ambivalence of blood ties at its center. In this fable, as in Darwin's analogical account of kin selection, species identity originates when someone is killed and eaten. The species can come into being only as a subject in a state of melancholy.

This conclusion may very well seem too sweeping, and is perhaps based on a fanciful conjunction of texts. But in this book's final part, I will discuss the emergent science of anthropology, founded in the decade of *Poems and Ballads* on the basis of Darwin's work, whose major early contribution was the theory of totemism, proposing that all human kinship systems were originally founded on a concept of "blood brotherhood" established by ritual sacrifice and food sharing. Totem theory influenced late Victorian Gothic, especially *Dracula*, where we also find a theory of species identity founded on blood sacrifice. Notwithstanding my dalliance with lyric in this chapter, Gothic from *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man* to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, and *Dracula* may well be the richer genre in examples of the new biopolitical subject, who assumes the first person "as a species rather than as an individual."

***

To close this consideration of species lyric, I turn again to Hardy, this time to poems published under his own name. "The Robin" was published in *Moments of Vision* (1917), and, like "Itylus," it has a bird for its speaker:[18]

When up aloft
I fly and fly,
I see in pools
The shining sky,
And a happy bird
Am I, am I!

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When I descend
Towards their brink
I stand, and look,
And stoop, and drink,
And bathe my wings,
And chink and prink.

When winter frost
Makes earth as steel
I search and search
But find no meal,
And most unhappy
Then I feel.

But when it lasts,
And snows still fall,
I get to feel
No grief at all,
For I turn to a cold stiff
Feathery ball!

As in Swinburne's poem, the interpretation of this also turns on whether its speaker is an individual or a species, and so on whether this poem should be read as a species lyric. In "The Robin," the divergence between the experience of an individual bird and the abstract position from which it is narrated takes place during the course of the poem, culminating in what appears to be the speaker's narration of his own death. By the end of the poem, the speaker has emerged as a personification of the robin species in the abstract, whose life is unaffected by the death of its individual members.

The turn in the poem occurs at its midpoint, between stanzas two and three, as the season changes from summer to winter. The end of stanza two is also the moment when the robin's speech is briefly suspended to incorporate an onomatopoeic representation of its non-linguistic call "chink and prink." "Prink" is a near-synonym for "preen" and has a semantic function in designating the bird's self grooming, as well an onomatopoeic one; "chink" is a pure onomatopoeia for the robin's low chatter as it bathes.

In the coming chapters, I will argue that onomatopoeia is associated by Hardy and other poets with the impersonal life of animal species, especially birds. The incorporation of onomatopoeia here coincides with the bringing to a point of the question that organizes the first half of the poem, that of the robin's awareness of its species identity. Does the robin know it is a robin? Throughout the opening two stanzas, it looks into pools, and the poem

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represents it as always on the brink of seeing its own reflection. This is literally its position in stanza two; in stanza one, its situation on the brink of seeing itself is built into the experience of reading, as the line break at the end of line five briefly allows us to read "bird" as the object of "see" and to imagine the robin in flight, looking at a pool and seeing its own reflection as well as that of the sky – before the next line transforms it into the subject of a subsequent verb: "I see in pools / The shining sky, / And a happy bird." Throughout its opening two stanzas, Hardy's poem verges on showing the robin's self-recognition. When the bird drinks the water in which its reflection appears, it precipitates the change of seasons in the poem's second half and brings on its own death. The robin shares the fate of Narcissus, doomed to die if he recognizes himself.

Like Lear's "Pelican Chorus" and Swinburne's "Itylus," Hardy's "The Robin" makes a critical response to the poetic and natural-historical genre of the species lyric; in this poem, the topic is the speaker's recognition of his own species identity. Here as in Swinburne, species identity comes into being as self-alienation and melancholy.

Hardy expresses trouble elsewhere in his work at the idea of collective life. In the late "Sine Prole" ["Without Children"] (1925), he reflects on his relation to his own lineal forebears and on his childlessness. He views his "line . . . As one long life" (4, 8), which now, in his person, sees "the close . . . coming" (10), and "Makes to Being its parting bow" in the poem itself (12). The speaker in this poem too is a kind of collective subject, here embodying a kin group.

And in this poem as in "The Robin," to embrace such a collective is to embrace death. In thinking about this topic with reference to human beings, Hardy makes clear its biopolitical dimension, as he concludes by reframing the looming extinction of his "line" explicitly in terms of race, contrasting his own equanimity at the prospect with the supposed concern for their racial future shown by Jews in biblical times: "Unlike Jahveh's ancient nation, / Little in their line's cessation / Moderns see for surge of sighs" (13–15). Hardy's own childlessness is thus disturbingly imagined as a practice of autogenocide, which the Jews are represented as blindly or stubbornly rejecting.

"Sine Prole" shows a particular combination of the originally Christian conception of the Jew as essentially anti-modern because incapable of embracing his own extinction, with a nineteenth-century idea of the history of the race as embodying a collective life. But it shares with Swinburne's poem the sense that there is something melancholy about species life. In the remainder of this book, I will explore this sense as it is

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manifest in late Victorian anthropology, poetry, and Gothic fiction. I will also pursue the related topic of species identity as automatism, first in poetic onomatopoeia and subsequently in a reading of Darwin. In my discussion of Darwin, a recurrent topic will be the continuity of his thought and Freud's, and I will close with a consideration of how the problematic of species Freud inherits from Darwin shapes cruxes in his thinking of sexuality, kinship, and the drive.

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