

Philomena by Matthew Arnold

Philomena is a wonderful poem by a great poet and critic of Victorian Period Matthew Arnold. The poem *Philomena* is based on the myth of Greek. Philomena by Matthew Arnold follows a narrator who after encountering a nightingale in the woods in England, interprets, its calls for the sound of mourning. The narrator speaks of and to this nightingale as if it is the embodiment of the Greek mythological figure *Philomena*.

The speaker questions the bird, asking if still she feels the pain of her past life or if this beautiful English vista relieves the former to be the case and calls upon the Roman Christian Saint Eugenia to help remove some portion of Philomena / the nightingale's agony. The speaker senses from the bird that it /she is experiencing equal parts of agony and triumph from the memories of the past.

The way in which Matthew Arnold has brought this story, told with the powers and rule of Greek gods, into modern English society and Christianity, relays a very poignant message about the strength of grief. This character, pulled from her origins, centuries previous, is still being impacted by her past assault. The narrator hopes to accomplish for her

what the gods of the past could not, restore her peace by relieving some portion of her anguish. He calls on a Christian saint for assistance and is genuinely moved by her distress.

Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that all emotional aspects of this character have been imbued onto a single nightingale that the speaker has stumbled upon. The amount of empathy that the narrator is experiencing, to interpret this story, is remarkable.

The poem concludes with the plea to saint Eugenia; begging her to see how still Philomena is affected by her past. Still there is the Eternal passion and eternal pain.

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